

# BEYOND 7

PART 2





# CONTENTS OF PART TWO.

NAKED REPETERCON	Peter White wallows in humourous hypoplespian masochism	Page 1
SHENLEY	A look at treatment of mental illnesses, by Charles Platt	Page 5
BEMs NOT ALL SF!	Extract from a report that first appeared in THE GUARDIAN	Page 9
GEORGE ORWELL	George Orwell points out where Pat Kearney went wrong. Er....	Page 11
MACABRE MAYHEM	Alan Dodd views horror films in a funny way	Page 13
SF AND ADVERTISING	Richard Gordon wonders how prophetic sf views of advertising are	Page 15
SF AND SOCIOLOGY	John Barnsley finds a surprising number of interesting parallels	Page 18
THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS	Roy Kay justifies his addiction to escapism	Page 21
KINGSLEY AMIS	Peter White opens up the author and has a look inside	Page 27
AS I WAS SAYING...	Beryl Henley surveys letters on the POST HIROSHIMA SYNDROME, and pounds a New Theory	Page 30

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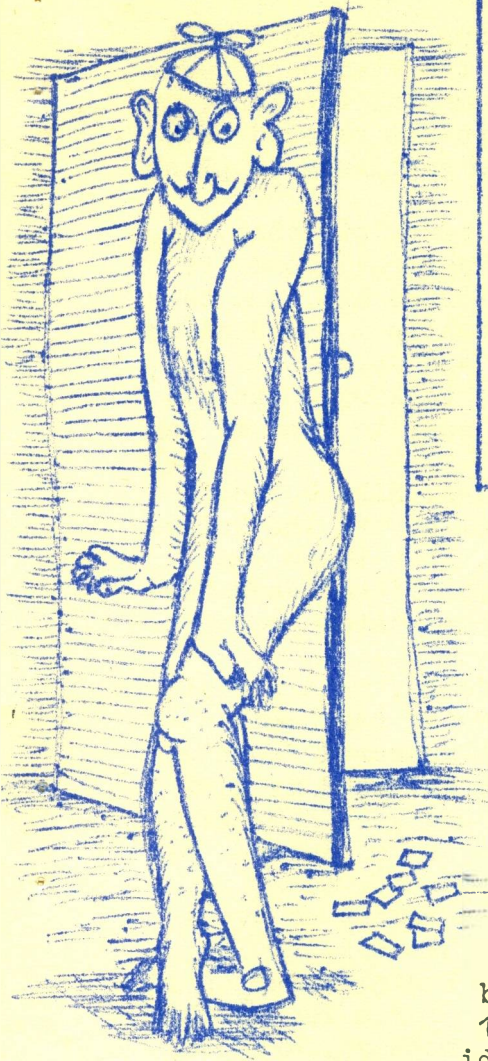
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# NAKED REPETERCON! A CONVENTION REPORT- BY PETER WHITE



In one of Satre's plays a man says to another "Do you mean you would judge the whole of someone's life by one single action?" to which the other simply replies "Why not?"

Why not indeed? And, more to the point, which action or episode of life would we have our whole existence judged by? For my choice the episode must be the 1964 BSFA convention; the more I think about it the more it seems that this was the only truly significant event in my life. The 18 years and one day before this climactic event shouldn't go unmentioned: they were the formative years during which I developed the reflexes and talents that saw me through the Petercon. But I will gloss over this introduction and begin my story on that afternoon of Friday the 27th March 1964. After a weary train journey, during which I mistakenly identified every mildly neurotic traveller as a fellow fan, and was bitten by a poodle dog, I arrived outside the Bull

Hotel, Peterborough, and hesitated outside the doors. Now was no time for shyness; away with self-doubt, I told myself, glancing down to see if my zipper was done up. Thus reassured I felt myself capable of entering the tight-packed crowd of unknown fans that must surely at this very moment be milling round inside the double doors. A valiant trumpet seemed to sound, and waving my case above my head I burst in.

There was no one in sight.

Somewhat subdued I checked in at the desk and began the long climb to my room. The hotel was a sinister wasteland. The thick carpet deadened the sound of my footsteps, my nervous cough was lost in the infinite labyrinth of corridors. The walls were covered with musty oil paintings of epicene gentlemen and run-down farms. Here and there little groups of silent fans lingered at corridor junctions. They said nothing to me as I passed, clutching my suitcase like a tutelary icon. I seemed to wade through treacle...

in my third sleep I awoke near a lake  
where waters of two streams were coming to die.

Around the table women were reading.

And the monk was silent in the shadow.

Slowly I crossed the bridge and at the bottom of the turgid

I saw the slow passing of a big black fish.

/water

Somehow I came back to reality and found my room. After dumping my cases I went outside, into the grim corridor again, and began looking for the staircase down. A strange thing had happened, and I could almost feel the elemental fabric of creation warping around my ears as the staircase coordinate points receded into distant space-time and I became trapped in a dreadful moebius continuum of plush carpets and corridors to the sky that does not change.

I cannot say how long I wandered, filled with the dread certainty that the staircase was no more, and that I, a wandering-Scot figure, would be doomed to haunt the Bull hotel until the very fires of the multiverse burned out, and entropy itself vanished into the gaping maw of infinity. But finally I heard a fog-horn voice that cut loud and clear across the gulfs of chaos and up the stairs. It was Ella Parker, who was erected by Trinity House, and set talking as an aid to navigation. Following the sound of her voice it was quite easy to find my way down to the reception lounge.

Later in the evening the informal side of things got going. Mike Moorcock entertained everybody unfortunate enough to be in earshot when he and the Belly-flops played a vast number of musical instruments very badly. Then there was wrestling. For some reason a match was arranged between "French Fiend" Jackubowski and "Mauler" Pat Kearney. The 'sick' improvisations of commentator Moorcock will long be remembered.

"That's blood folks. Real blood! Look at that! He's spewed, folks. That's real spew there folks. You're all enjoying this, aren't you folks?" he screamed.

Next morning I was wakened by a sweet female voice which murmured "Morning tea, sir" in a way that suggested infinite promise. I hastily unlocked my door and Mike Moorcock, Lang Jones and Mary Reed burst inside. (I had seen Mary for the first time the night before when I had watched fascinated as Pat Kearney had slipped his arm around her slim waist. I had begun to pant, but Pat, tired perhaps from his wrestling exertions, could go no further). For a moment or two I was confused by the influx of people. Thinking that the hotel was sinking into the North sea, and that we would have to take to the boats, I began to run round and round the room looking for my life jacket. They watched me for a few moments and then went off to find their next victim. When they left I woke up, dressed, and went down for breakfast.

The day's programme was quite enjoyable, and in the evening the Science Fiction club of London gave a wine party after the fancy dress parade. The party went, I believe, with a swing. Ken Slater had a large stock of sf books for sale in one of the lounges, and a display of artwork was also laid out. The display of books was really very depressing; only when you see a couple of hundred titles side by side do you realise how little sf is remotely worth the effort of reading. But the artwork was of a very high standard, especially the paintings of Eddie Jones and Max Jackubowski's cousin Jackubowicz, who could hardly speak one word of English, and understood half a dozen. As the evening wore on things began to happen -- Charles Platt was almost throttled by Alan Rispin -- but finally most people retired to bed.

Next morning it was obvious that the strain was beginning to tell; signs were clearly visible on most faces. Many missed breakfast, and some also missed the BSFA meeting that followed. The meeting itself was hardly impressive. Candidates for posts were elected without even having to platform, though they were kind enough to show us their faces and give us a smile (except for Rod Milner who wasn't there) before voting took place. As there was no competition of any sort, the new committee was decided on very quickly. During debates a strongly vocal group tried to persuade everybody to exclude "Europeans" from







the British Science Fiction Association, the theme being "If they want an sf club, they can get one of their own!" The main argument was that they couldn't be trusted with library books. When it was pointed out that postal costs rule out the use of the library by overseas members anyway the plea was changed to "They can't be trusted with money". Finally, thank God, the whole thing was dropped, but it left a nasty taste in my mouth and has destroyed any opinion I had previously held of certain people in the BSFA.

In the afternoon the Delta group showed several films, one of which was very good, and all but one of which were enjoyable. But it is very hard to understand how a small group of uncritical enthusiasts could have stampeded the convention into donating part of the profits to the Aliens, to help with their next film. The Group could have asked for money on an individual basis, but the proceeds of one convention should all go to the next con. It is even questionable whether it is right for a convention of this type to make more than a very marginal profit. Just as Ted Tubb, a founder member of the BSFA who let his membership lapse was ignored at the AGM when he tried to explain why people left the BSFA, so were all dissenting voices ignored after the films had been shown.

In the evening room parties were in abundance and a great deal of drink was drunk. High spot was the Hum and Sway session, a sort of religious ceremony organised by Mike Moorcock and Ted Tubb. After an awe-inspiring amount of libation, drinking and kazoo playing, sword-waving and chants of 'drink! drink!', Ted eventually made contact with the Mighty One, helping him from under the table where he had fallen presumably in a wild religious frenzy. But Mike was not hurt, and the ceremony went on to new heights as virgins were sacrificed and resurrected.

After this my memories become extremely fragmented. I remember how narrow the corridors became late at night. They shrank so much I found it impossible to walk down them without colliding with first one wall and then the other. As I approached a state of pure euphoria Lang Jones ran up to me and shouted: "You must see it, you must see it! Norman Sherlock is drunk and wandering around the corridors dressed in his underpants."

He was, too.

And so the next morning I whisked off with Charles Platt in his clapped out Vauxhall. We left behind the melancholy remains of the morning after: Jakubowicz trying to explain his hangover in broken English: "It's all going, how you say? Roun' and roun'," pale faced fans trying to flog reluctant motor scooters into life, etc etc.

POSTSCRIPT: Later, as I stood on Waterloo station, a girl I know saw me and came over. Her smile of recognition disappeared at once. "My God!" she said, horror burning in her eyes, "you look terrible; are you ill?" Acid was squirting periodically into my mouth like the automatic flush of a urinal. Between waves of crapula I gasped, "No, just a little tired." She looked at my face, and then down at my suitcase.

"Where have you been?" she asked, and suspicion sharpened her voice. She quite evidently refused to believe my story of three days spent at an innocent science fiction convention. With a snort of disgust she turned away and tottered off on her idiot high heels. Clickety-click. The harsh sound of moral condemnation.

There are 120 stories in the Naked Repetercon: this has been one of them.

--PETER WHITE.

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Undoubtedly our attitude towards the mental patient is more enlightened than it was fifty years ago; undoubtedly the layman's irrational fear is less in evidence.

Yet this improvement is in conscious thought alone; instinctive reaction, even in better-informed and more open-minded people, has not yet had time to become re-orientated to regarding mental illness in exactly the same way as physical illness. Most people today accept the idea of psychiatric treatment; but when confronted with the fact that a friend is undergoing it they may nevertheless be thrown off balance.

It was not entirely devoid of apprehension that I entered the grounds of Shenley

Hospital. Logically, I knew roughly what insanity meant. But the cumulative effect of seeing film sequences of prisons packed with drooling, clawing lunatics (remember

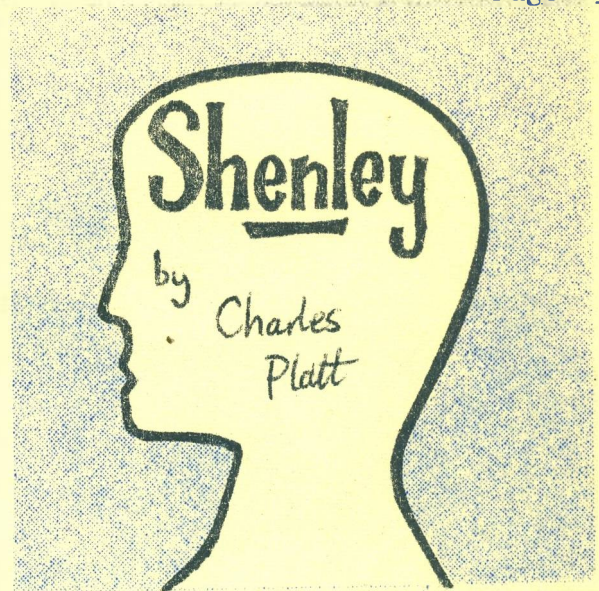
that scene in "Suddenly Last Summer"?) plus, of course, rumours of screams from shock treatment patients in a hospital near Letchworth, couldn't be suppressed entirely.

It was quite an anticlimax when I saw the charming, restful, green and flowery grounds of the hospital, with widely-spaced red brick buildings housing the wards set well back from the small private road that leads to the central building. The scene hardly matched my intuitive image of a 'nut house'. And throughout the tour that Gerald Kirsch had kindly arranged for me my first impressions were fortified. The ordinary-looking people I had passed on the way into the hospital were not staff, they were patients; the wards weren't locked; there were no excruciating screams. One illusion was shattered after another. There may be a social stigma attached to psychiatric treatment in the mind of the 'normal' person of the outside world; at Shenley, I was overcome continually by the utterly sane and healthy mental attitude to mental unhealth. Shenley's calm and rational attitude only threw my own fears and prejudices into sharper focus.

The photographs accompanying this article illustrate the tour that I made. In the occupational therapy building, the traditional basket work plays a very minor part compared with such occupations as wrought iron work, activity in the typing pool, assembling cardboard boxes for an outside firm, and sorting stamps for an outside dealer. (This, you will note, is productive, useful activity with a purpose to it). The occupational therapy building can be converted to form a makeshift theatre, tables pushed to one end to form a stage, and occasionally the patients stage a play.

The red buildings I had seen consisted of individual patients' bed-sitting rooms, communal wards for sleeping, and rooms for meals and daytime use. Practically all the patients are up and dressed each day; a large proportion have jobs outside the hospital. Television occupies a lot of the time of those remaining within the hospital and not engaged in occupational therapy.

On our way through the grounds to the art department, we stopped at a small chapel that has been built entirely by the patients, from cemented brick blocks, corrugated iron and pre-formed steel rafters. I found that rather than appear ugly, the rather crude materials used in the building's construction gave it an air of simple, pleasant charm.







In the art department, the most noticeable feature to the visitor is a mural that covers one wall completely (see photograph on opposite page), on which many patients have left their marks. Animals and figures contributing to the 'jungle' theme each exhibit the mental characteristics of the patient who created them. These and other paintings created by patients are, as might be expected, subtly different from art executed by slightly more 'normal' artists. Some pictures that I saw were unsuccessful from an artistic (though not necessarily from a therapeutic) viewpoint, but one or two possessed a remarkable, weird, almost unearthly quality, that was in some cases not merely eye-catching, but beautiful.

A sub-section of the art department is the screen printing dept, primarily devoted to producing decorated tiles (see photograph) some of which possess **commercial** value.

"The Block" is the rather sinister title given to a group of wards containing more acutely ill cases. Most are elderly; through inadequate treatment in the past, tragically many have a greatly reduced hope of cure, and may be deep in their state of insanity.



Top Photograph: one of the wards.

Middle Photograph: a typical view of one of the paths through the grounds.

Bottom Photograph: the interior of the chapel that was built by the patients.





The scene of the patients at teatime was disturbing in an extremely deep-seated way; I was an imposter walking practically unnoticed in a world where the values of my society had been warped and upset. Poignant images were all around: an old lady carefully spreading butter over her trembling hand, another licking marmalade off her fingers; an old man sitting straight in his chair, grinning, and endlessly repeating the same phrase in a clipped, staccato voice. There was a lack of reason or order, of the customs and habits we expect automatically, that was especially unsettling coupled with the knowledge that some of the patients might never live in the outside world again. I was reminded, though, that no case is ever regarded as incurable, there is always a chance of recovery or at least amelioration, and in fact it often happens that patients who have been acutely ill for many years suddenly and spontaneously recover.

The methods of treatment used at Shenley are in no sense unusual or original. Occupational therapy, group discussion, in some cases insulin coma or electrical treatment (though the former has largely been replaced by drugs and the latter retains none of its once-fearsome aspects), and of course individual psychotherapy; --these are the doctor's tools for treatment. They are effective, but not with the speed or the high percentage of success one expects a modern drug to cure a physical ailment. In a world fond of the term 'breakthrough', one inevitably asks about the startling advances that must have occurred in the field of psychiatry.

The fact is, there is nothing as tangible as a new drug (though drugs, and especially tranquilisers, have a large place in treatment) to act as an easy-to-grasp symbol of the advances that have occurred. To explain this situation, consider the case of schizophrenia. Seventy per cent of hospital psychiatric patients suffer from this mental illness, which has its major symptoms as lack of response on the part of the patient to other people and his environment.

Since the turn of the century schizophrenia has been the foremost concern of researchers in Europe and the USA. In the same way that antibiotics provide an **Right:** the mural in the art dept. that was painted by a large number of patients.

**Below:** In the silk screen printing dept a patient decorates white tiles.





almost magical cure for many troublesome diseases, so it was hoped that there would be a simple biological cure for schizophrenia; but it now appears probable that no such clear-cut cure exists. It seemed a relationship had been discovered between certain hallucinogenic drugs (eg, Mescaline) and schizophrenia, when the drugs were shown to produce similar symptoms, by what might be the same process that caused the mental illness: disorder of serotonin metabolism in the brain. But further experiments failed to yield concrete results and it is still unclear whether schizophrenia is in fact a disease caused by biological malfunctioning.

Schizoid patients are uncooperative and the relationship they develop with the doctor treating them is actually liable to affect the symptoms, thus making objective study and recording of results tiresome and involved. Other forms of mental illness are hereditary, and this link-up was looked for in schizophrenia. It now seems, though, that the hereditary factor is recessive; and the illness is still largely an unsolved mystery.

This perhaps helps to illustrate the elusiveness of mental illness when scientific methods of research are applied, and explains why there has been more progress in the application of therapy and treatment of the patient as an individual than there has in advancement of the therapy itself. It is now realised that work therapy, group therapy, open door policies, television and social events are extremely important in promoting the recovery of the patient, however unspectacular they may seem as breakthroughs in treatment to the layman.

On a more subjective, emotional level I was struck personally by the peace and friendliness of the environment at Shenley. It is a closed society free from social pressure, worry, lack of understanding and material concerns such as are found in the hard outside world. Therapy apart, conditions are as conducive as they can be towards promoting the recovery of patients.

After my short visit I feel I have a better awareness of what mental illness means. Surely the root of the fears and suspicions associated with insanity and lesser forms of disturbance arise from lack of knowledge, more than anything else: whereas treatment of a physical disease can be explained in almost mechanical, easily-understood terms, a psychiatrist is hard put to convey even the fundamentals of his work to the layman. In the face of such a lack of understanding of mental illness and its methods of cure, inevitably fear of the unknown arises.

If this article does anything to promote understanding and knowledge of the subject, it will have more than fulfilled its purpose.

--CHARLES PLATT.

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FOOTNOTE: Readers of this magazine will be aware that there are few if any sf stories dealing with future psychiatric advances. This is probably because there is no current trend in psychiatry for the writer to extrapolate. Even the occasional biological fantasies that have come from Jose Farmer or Sturgeon leave untouched the world of the mind and its future developments (psi excluded), which is indeed strange appearing alongside the highly imaginative biological ideas, described in fine detail, that Farmer is famous for. Ballard offers rather overdone psychological dramas which, though intriguing, fail to appear genuine or factually based; and otherwise we are left with the type of story that employs clash-of-characters as a basis for plot. This, while good writing, is in itself not a step forward: the characters are those of 20th century human beings.

It would seem there is need of a writer qualified to write stories based firmly on present day knowledge of the mind and human actions and motivations, extrapolated into the future. How much more interesting this would be to read about than a cardboard present-day character in a future world where a present-day trend familiar to everyone has been rather obviously made a predominant factor.

--CP



# BEMS AREN'T ALL S.F...

This report is reprinted courtesy of The Guardian, where it originally appeared on September 1st 1964. In spite of its rather inaccurate presentation, (there were some glaring errors and misquotes that I have corrected as best I could), I think it shows through that the conference described must have been an interesting and unusual one.

The 15-legged, three-eyed, purple-tentacled creature of another planet is biologically possible, and no one should pooh-pooh the unsophisticated science fiction author who writes about it.

Professor W.T. Williams, one of the four Southampton scientists who considered the contribution of science fiction to science, suggested this to the general section of the conference.

"Those science fiction writers who simply postulate earth-type planets on which space travellers meet bizarre creatures, sometimes of great intelligence, are often thought of as being unsophisticated. But our present scientific knowledge suggests that it is their prophecies which are the most plausible, and their aliens the type which we are most likely to meet." Introducing himself and other scientists who advised on how to get to distant planets, who to see when you got there and what sort of social system to expect, Professor Williams, who is professor of botany at Southampton University, said that the best, most imaginative science fiction was never written by scientists. All active scientists must, to some extent, be prisoners of current scientific thought.

Some ideas of the professional science fiction writer, however implausible, might only be impossible if the universe was really as the scientists thought it was. "Examining stories might enable the scientist to understand better the nature of his own mental scientific inhibitions. A carefully selected course of science fiction would be an invaluable -- and salutary -- part of a scientist's training."

Mr G.S. Robinson, lecturer in philosophy, recommended faster than light travel as a practical means of reaching the galaxies, though he admitted it contradicted relativity theory. But, as Mr Robinson pointed out, this theory involved at least one empirical claim.

Professor Williams returned to discuss "bug eyed monsters". He said that as a biologist he was prepared to accept that intelligent bems lived on earth type worlds, providing the monsters were large enough to accommodate a brain.

Stories about insect-like creatures of high intelligence were fantasies, not science fiction. Nearly every science fiction writer distinguished between plants and animals; this was reasonable. An intelligent plant would be large and virtually immobile. John Wyndham's Triffids might be justified biologically because they were only slightly mobile and of rudimentary intelligence.

Exploring different worlds with unbreathable atmospheres or corrosive seas, Professor Williams mentioned Jupiter, which is probably composed largely of liquid ammonia under great pressure. "It is at least chemically conceivable that in those eternally cold seas there may be swimming intelligent animals with an internal chemistry fundamentally very like our own." But if



there were (he added ... disappointingly) neither of us could enter the other's world and survive. But assuming that a creature is encountered by a space traveller and wants to exchange a friendly word, what do you do? Dr D.M.A. Mercer (a physicist) said there might be some intelligent races too introspective to want contact with anyone outside; or they might have solved all their political and economic problems and were spending their time watching television. But for less insular planetary beings by a train of pulses could be sent -- pictures of circles, which he reckoned they would understand. A picture of single and double circles representing two types of elementary particles in the atom would probably be recognised. "The alien races will then know that we understand molecular reactions," said Dr Mercer hopefully.

For space ships that might reach us before we reach Them an enormous chain of beacons on land showing, say, Pythagoras's theorem might be suitable, "although we might well want to indicate that we had progressed further than the ancient Greeks".

As for the social system to be found by any space traveller, Mr A.R. Manser (lecturer in philosophy) dismissed ant-type creatures as not having enough intelligence to enable human visitors to communicate with them. It appeared highly likely that any alien society with a technology comparable to or higher than our own would be similar in many respects. It would also be composed of beings whose basic pattern of life was much like ours -- though their physical shape might be different.

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**GEORGE ORWELL**

surveyed by  
Paul Kearney

The problem of where to place George Orwell in politics is one which has faced many of his critics. The Communists declare him to be 'misguided', even 'mixed up'. They say, when referring to "1984", that he intended to write an attack on Communism and the Socialist State, but that in fact what he had done was to describe Fascism. On the other hand, the Fascists claim that he wrote a precise description of life under Socialism. Indeed, Orwell's description of conditions in "1984" is not so very far removed from Russia today, or more particularly, East Germany. With the exception of the viewers in every room and similar devices fashionable in science fiction, East Berlin cities do bear close resemblance to the city described in "1984": the cold, bleak and cheerless streets, the endless ruins, the huge pictures of The Leader at street corners. In "1984" it's big brother. In East Berlin it's Lenin: the similarity is obvious. But what most people fail to realise is that Orwell, rather than merely attack Socialism (and Fascism, as we shall see later) set out to destroy the belief in the necessity for centralised authority, which immediately places him with the Anarchists. The centralised, bureaucratic set-up of "1984" with its infinite ranks of officials, each of less importance than the next, is very similar to the organisation existing in Russia and, indeed, to a lesser degree in most Western countries. The Thought Police are clearly the equivalent of the Soviet O.G.P.U., and the 'proles' are perhaps the farm labourers and small industrial



workers living today in Russia, always fearful of the authority of the Central Committee and its cohorts.

This incredible system of bureaucracy and officialdom is also a feature of the Fascist corporate State to a large degree, since both Communism and Fascism are extremes of Totalitarianism; both have only one party and, in effect, no free elections.

Both have centralised authority, and both have the effect of crushing the individual will to its own ends. Of Orwell's books, "1984" is the only truly Libertarian one he has written, since the others, with the possible exception of HOMAGE TO CATALONIA in which he freely sides with the Anarchists, deal with individual aspects of capitalistic exploitation and domination. It is in "1984" that Orwell reveals his feelings about the authoritarian state and in one simple sentence, "If there is hope, it lies in the Proles," he sums up the Anarchist belief that a truly free society can only be brought about by the workers themselves.

ANIMAL FARM, on the other hand, is a far more direct work, since it allegorically traces the history of the Russian revolution from its idealistic and revolutionary beginnings to its reactionary and bourgeois conclusion. The last scene in the story, in which the pigs who, because of their assumed 'superior intellect' are put in power, take out subscriptions to popular periodicals and walk on their hind legs with humans, is one way of showing how the Russian Bolshevik hierarchy have gradually conformed to Western standards, and the similarity of the struggles between the animals and the conflicts between the various Bolshevik factions in the 1920s is unmistakable.

Yet despite Orwell's apparent antagonism to what were originally revolutionary movements, his love of the proletariat and his constant defence of their fight for freedom is deep and sincere. I say Orwell's "apparent" antagonism, because in fact he doesn't speak out against a movement which is truly revolutionary; he supports it up to the hilt and even, as when he went to Spain during the Civil War, joins in. But he does seek to attack the counter-revolutionary canker which must inevitably set in after the initial insurrection, and he realises that this canker is the result of the lack of education on the part of the working class. It is at this point, I feel, that Orwell becomes muddled. No doubt as a result of his bourgeois upbringing at Eton and the stifling experiences of being an official in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, he does not appear able to grasp the fact that it is the duty of the capitalist classes to keep the workers ignorant in order to maintain their authority over them. Allow the working class to become educated in the proper sense of the word, allow them to see how cruelly they are treated and the position of the privileged few will be in acute danger of collapse. It is for this one flaw in Orwell's ideology that many left wing intellectuals and radicals condemn him, but I don't feel that what in effect is a minor discrepancy when weighed against his otherwise truly passionate Libertarian spirit should be counted as an adverse mark against him. Perhaps if Orwell had had a working class background and had been able to escape the bourgeois influences which no doubt coloured his outlook, he would have been able to realise the crushing and successful efforts of the capitalist state machine to keep the working class ignorant and subjugate.

Orwell deliberately set out to live with the proletariat, to share in their work and hardships, and he suffered perhaps more than most other English revolutionary writers before or since. His experiences in the industrial North, recounted vividly in THE ROAD TO WIGAN PIER, are written with a passionate and desperate urgency, revealing starkly the plight of the industrial worker in England, and strike, for the complacent reader, a hard blow at the type of politics which produced the Means Test, and more recently





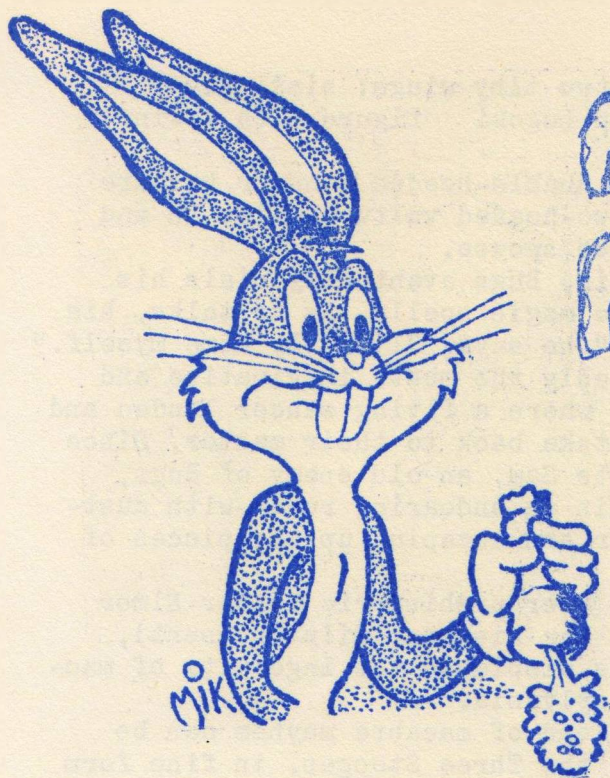
the Rent Act and the Immigration Bill. It is a sombre and harrowing book, and yet it shows that even under the worst conditions the humour, and, by extension of a natural, inborn mental freedom, the revolutionary spirit, can never be completely crushed. *DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON*, on the other hand, has a different feel about it. *THE ROAD TO WIGAN PIER* is a straight reportage of facts as seen by an outside observer. Orwell, although living in the poorest districts of Wigan and Sheffield and visiting coal mines and factories, did so in the capacity of a reporter, without the accompanying fear of destitution and the work house. But in *DOWN AND OUT*, he deliberately cut himself off from outside help and literally starved in order to savour the shocking conditions in which millions are forced to live in order to support the privileged classes. He worked in the sweatshops of hotel kitchens, living on handouts and perks. When he didn't have a bed to sleep in, he slept on the kitchen floor. When he was ill he went to the free hospital (recounted in his essay, *HOW THE POOR DIE*) and watched as the patients suffered and died under horribly inadequate medical attention.

In some respects, *DOWN AND OUT* is similar to Henry Miller's *TROPIC OF CANCER* but only insofar as location and living conditions are similar. Miller lived in poverty and hardship for purely selfish reasons, and did so as a means to obtain self-liberation in order to break away from his bourgeois background. He succeeded in obtaining his liberation, and in so doing freed himself from the forces of corruption that stifle the artist. Having achieved his aim he wrote with a virtuosity which is almost without parallel in English literature. *TROPIC OF CANCER* is a personal work with no pretensions of being a social drama, and yet Miller is undoubtedly a revolutionist, but in the same way as Thoreau. Both opted out of social obligations to achieve their individual freedom, but realised, through their experiences and new-found freedom, the evils of state power, becoming in their own way Anarchists of the individualist variety.

Orwell, however, had other motive entirely for his excursions into poverty and despair. He sought to find the truth, and to reveal it to a sadly apathetic world in the hope that people would realise the subjugation under which others were living. Orwell had no personal or selfish motives; he loved people sufficiently to suffer for them and at the same time show them what was wrong with the world.

--Pat Kearney





# macabre mayhem

alan dodd

There can often be found a lot of good fantasy and science fiction in the most unlikely places, not the least of which are the small cartoon theatres in the London Jacey chain, specialising in a seventy five minute programme of cartoons, newsreels and comedies at seat prices of 2/- and 2/6d. They can sometimes provide a most amusing and lucrative hunting ground for the connoisseur on the look out for something unusual in his genre.

Where else, for example, could one find Bugs Bunny meeting a vampire? "Transylvania 6-5000" has Bugs Bunny borrowing underground, presumably to Pennsylvania; but coming up against the hard roots of a tree he emerges into the dim light of Transylvania. A female vulture with two heads sits on a tree regarding him quizzically. Vultures like fat rabbits. Even rabbits enquiring "What's up, Doc?"; and in no time Bugs is hurriedly knocking on the door of the local 'hotel', which turns out to be a mist-enshrouded Gothic castle with a door shaped like a coffin, from within which peers a couple of beady eyes.

Opening the door, a voice very like Bela Lugosi welcomes him in.... into a setting of which any fantasy artist could be proud. Gothic staircases, long shadows, coffin-shaped doors, statuary marked 'skull duggery', and a library of volumes including "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Vampire."

While not wishing to appear ungrateful for the offer of a room from the vampire, Bugs has only come in to use the telephone. He walks around the castle with the vampire behind him alternately changing into a bat when his back is turned and back into a human when Bugs turns round, all to the sounds of cackling, fiendish laughter which Bugs seems to regard as being odd but which he does not in fact mention.

Picking up a volume of black magic from a shelf Bugs finds himself unconsciously remembering odd words which he mutters while wandering around. Unknown to him, "Abracadabra" changes the vampire into a vampire bat, and "Hocus Pocus" changes him back into human form.

Thus when suspended from the ceiling as a bat, about to zoom down on to Bugs, the vampire suddenly finds himself transformed into a man, and with no visible means of support and a look of cadaverous horror on his face he goes plunging down to the stone floor below. In his Lugosi cloak and human guise he picks up a huge slab of stone to crush Bugs when a "Hocus Pocus" transforms him instantly back into a tiny bat, now carrying a huge stone over his head. The bat gazes up in awed terror at the huge weight he has been carrying, just as it falls to earth with him underneath it. After several combats of this nature the unfortunate bat finds Bugs has the words mixed up, and by judicious combination of the two comes up with "Abra-pocus", which affects the bat to produce a huge



human-size head and top hat suspended from two tiny wings; similarly "hocus-cadabra" produces a fully suited, cloaked Lugosi figure with a tiny bat-head in the middle of his collar.

Only when he has succeeded in creating a double-headed monster vulture does Bugs cease casting spells, as the female two-headed vulture flies in and pursues the converted vampire as her would-be spouse.

From a telephone booth shaped like a coffin, Bugs eventually dials his travel agency and explains the situation and the magic spells. As he talks, his ears change into vampire wings. "Aw, forget it," he says, "I'll fly home myself."

For Bugs Bunny connoisseurs this is undoubtedly the most imaginative and cleverly designed fantasy since the adventure where a flying saucer landed and robots came out looking for specimen beings to take back to their master. Since their master resembled the red-bearded Yosemite Sam, an old enemy of Bugs, this was only the start of an epic culminating in an endearing robot with dust-pan and brush coming along after every encounter and sweeping up the pieces of broken robot.

Bugs Bunny has in the past been victorious over prehistoric hunter Elmer Fudd, knights in armour, robots, the Coyote (by far his most wily opponent), Yosemite Sam and invaders in space; but none has displayed the ingenuity of macabre humour so well as in his excursion to Transylvania.

At the same cartoon theatre, a different blend of macabre mayhem can be found in the indisputably destructive comedy of the Three Stooges, in fine form in DOPEY DICKS. Mad scientist Philip van Zandt has been having trouble with his robot: it cannot see properly despite new cranial accessories and keeps walking into tables and light fixtures. Van Zandt decides the only solution is to obtain one more item for the robot: a human head!

The Three Stooges meanwhile are cleaning the office of a private detective agency. A blonde enters and asks them to come along to a house where mysterious happenings are occurring, and, unable to convince her that they are not in fact detectives, the Three Stooges drive up to the old house, through the flashing lightning of a stormy night so beloved of monster films, where inside Dr. van Zandt has just about decided to use the head of his assistant the butler, to the dismay of the latter. However, the three investigators arrive just in time, and the butler lets them in, chuckling in anticipation.

"Look into this," orders van Zandt, pointing to a hole in the lab. table. Moe looks down, and a big knife on a spring flashes past, missing him by inches. In no time at all the house seems filled with madmen brandishing gleaming knives while the Three Stooges dash in and out of rooms, closets, under beds, disguised as lamp standards while their pursuers keep asking, "Don't you want to help science?" Shemp tries to phone the police but rushes off screaming when the headless robot suddenly starts walking towards him. Finally the three get outside the house and stop a passing car, tumble in and drive off into the night. Then they have a look at the driver.

He has no head --

For a little out-of-the-way fun, and a little hunting and haunting around, one can find quite a few little gems of harmless fantasy and have quite a few laughs in the process, too.





One of the most noticeable features of ~~modern~~ at Utopian science fiction of the past decade is its preoccupation with the powers and dangers of advertising. It is surprising to see how many new writers in the field have written an attack on these dangers carried to an extreme.

The picture usually drawn is of a world dominated by giant advertising and commercial concerns which pump their wares at a sheep-like and receptive public, which is capable of believing anything and which has little choice in any case. In many of these stories, subliminal advertising, though officially banned, is used alongside psychologically planned

techniques designed to appeal to the basic instincts of the buyer without his realising it. This perhaps reflects our mistrust and anxiety about present-day advertising, where we can never be absolutely sure what methods are being used, to make us buy the goods.

Examples are Ballard's **THE SUBLIMINAL MAN** and Pohl's **THE WIZARDS OF PUNG'S CORNERS**, which can be taken seriously in spite of its lightheartedness. In the Ballard story we are shown the world's population in about forty years' time engaged in a continual spending spree, every hour of the day. To get enough money for this, longer and longer working hours are being instituted. Curious giant towers are being erected everywhere, and only the traditional lone rebel realises that these 'signs' are broadcasting subliminal commands ordering the populace to buy even more than they already are, in an effort to keep the economy stable. The rebel persuades the hero of the truth of the fact, and is later killed in an effort to destroy the towers. The hero succumbs to the towers' commands even though he knows what they really are.

In the Pohl story, an old and apparently harmless film is being shown on the hero's tv. Using his hand as a stroboscope, he demonstrates that between the frames of the film another image, of a nude girl clutching a cereal packet, is flashed on the screen. Naturally, the audience immediately feels a longing for the cereal advertised.

These and many other sf stories portray the world at the absolute mercy of advertising concerns. It is difficult to evaluate how true this pessimistic view is of the present situation. One can never know the magnitude of the effect of tv commercials; a conscious response of laughter, annoyance or indifference is little guide to the extent that they alter one's buying habits.

It is hard to tell apart from merely making his wares known to the public, how far an advertiser has succeeded in adding compulsion to his message. See an advertisement enough times, and people may try the product out of curiosity; they may find they dislike the product, and drop it, or they may keep using it. Either way it is quite possible that the initial curiosity was compulsive, created by the advertisement.

Even in the most amateurish or innocuous advertisements there is the possibility that after being subjected to an overwhelming amount of them even the most independent person might have his individual preferences drowned in a flood of insistent commands. We occasionally see an attempt by an author to portray such a situation, in which the general technique is to try to over-



whelm the reader by sheer force of words. Such portrayals usually fail because their pictures are too surrealist~~ic~~ to achieve any semblance of reality. However, one passage in James Gunn's story, EVERY DAY IS CHRISTMAS, gives some idea of what undergoing such a mental barrage would be like.

KALEIDOSCOPE:

"....ALL IS CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT...."

Wreaths, holly, bells, candles -- green and red; a man in a red and white suit.

A flaming sun. GIVE-GIVE-GIVE-GIVE-GIVE.....

A swirl of colours, a pattern of dots, smoke rising...

WHIR-R-R. "Be-e-e-e BEWITCHING! BUY-Y-Y-Y BEWITCHING!" Thump! Thump!

Eyes, blank eyes, painted eyes.

Also of course there is the passage from Pohl's THE TUNNEL UNDER THE WORLD:

The bellow caught him from behind; it was almost like a hard slap on the ears.

A harsh, sneering voice, louder than the arch-angel's trumpet, howled:

"Have you got a freezer? IT STINKS! If it isn't a Feckle freezer, IT STINKS! If it's a last-year's Feckle Freezer, IT STINKS! Only this year's Feckle Freezer is any good at all! You know who owns an Ajax freezer? Fairies own Ajax freezers! You know who owns a Triplecold freezer? Commies own Triplecold freezers! Every freezer but a brand-new Feckle freezer STINKS!" The voice screamed inarticulately with rage. "I'm warning you! Get out and buy a Feckle freezer right away! Hurry for Feckle! Hurry for Feckle! Hurry hurry hurry, Feckle Feckle Feckle... ..  
..Cheap freezers ruin your food. You'll get sick and throw up. You'll get sick and die. Buy a Feckle, Feckle, Feckle!....

The images that these two extracts present are only frightening because they are recognisably the trend which advertising is following. But it is surely a mistake to think that the man of the future will have no protection against such compulsive advertising. It might well take the shape of a sophisticated ear plug that would shut out the sounds of screaming commercials and allow the individual to find an island of peace amidst a chaotic sea of noise. There is such a device in Henry Kuttner's short story YEAR DAY. Also in this story special microphones "...picked up the yells of the city screaming its commercials to the sky and neutralised them to dead silence. The ultrasonics shook the air enough so that the blazing advertising of New York ran together in a blurred, melting waterfall of meaningless colours." Such developments to combat advertising's assault on privacy are both logical and obvious, and there is no reason to suppose

that commercials will have it their own way. One of the main reasons for the popularity in the USA of a remote control for adjusting the volume of a tv set is that it allows immediate quelling of the commercials.

However, there is another danger, also mentioned in the Kuttner story, and one that has become readily apparent in the ten years since he wrote it. That is the exploitation and conditioning of children by advertising techniques:

"The commercials work on emotion. They find out your weak spots. They aim at your basic drives... 'It's that damned conditioning, drummed into your head as soon as you're old enough to know what words mean. Movies, TV, magazines, book-reels, every medium of communication there is. Aimed at just one thing -- to make you buy. And doing it by trickery. Building up artificial fears and needs until you don't know what's real and what isn't.'"

An adult should have a reasonable degree of immunity against such forces, but a child has none. Its brain is like a blank tape, ready to record whatever impressions come its way. And the results of such indoctrination are already be-



coming apparent. The Pop Music industry is ramming its way into every home by means of gigantic magazine publishers and advertising organisations, and whilst there is nothing intrinsically wrong with pop music as such, there is much wrong with a system that creates an artificial need and allows relatively normal people to be built up into minor deities, worshipped by thousands of teenagers and even younger people. This particular industry is capturing its addicts younger and younger. To quote a mundane example, according to the Sunday Times the average age of the Rolling Stones Fan Club Member is under ten. And all this adulation is only part of the massive advertising campaigns aimed at today's children and adolescents, with their remarkable wealth.

The results of it all can be nothing but harmful. Taking it all as a whole, one begins to think that the picture painted by many sf writers of a world of sheep ruled by advertising may one day be true. Get at people young enough, conveniently forget about such impediments as ethics, or morals, and anything can be accomplished. That it will catch its disciples at an early age is surely the real danger of advertising.

At present many people can still disregard commercials to some extent, but our world is steadily moving towards a state where advertising affects our habits more than any other factor. Subliminal advertising is banned, and it is time that ordinary means of conveying ad. messages were more strictly controlled. For while adults may be only partially susceptible to advertising, it is having a dangerous conditioning affect on our children; who are, of course, the adults of tomorrow.

--RICHARD GORDON.

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# Sociology & SF

BY JOHN H. BARNESLEY

As a student of Sociology and a consumer and infrequent writer of sf, I have been led to notice certain comparisons and likenesses between these two fields of interest. What follows is not a sociological study of the science fiction novel -- though since the few studies which have been made on this subject have been essentially literary in character, such an attempt should be fruitful and interesting, especially if correctly placed in historical context -- it is rather a selection of similarities and attendant ideas which follow from these.

Firstly, and most obviously, the two fields share to a large extent

public stereotypes such as youthful, marginal, attraditional (hence, incidentally, more acceptable to the American social climate) and somewhat immature subject matter. Hopefully, these images, certainly with selected bases in fact, are changing. In the realm of sf one must mention the endeavours of Kingsley Amis to shower the subject with academic respectability; but however laudable these aims may be I think their consummation has been limited by recognition of Mr Amis' previous unlikely gadfly career of enthusiasms which have ranged from modern jazz to rococo design (generally held in distaste by the cognoscenti) and recently to a critique, or rather a justification, of our other cultural hero, James Bond. Today for many Amis is the necessary good quality stamp for sf but his associations with other elements of the 'candy floss' culture have resulted in his claims being met with a slightly amused condescension among the intelligentsia -- at least, that is the case in my experience at University.

But although science fiction may not as yet have secured academic status, its public status improves. We may note a few indicators of this change: Firstly, readership figures have greatly increased and so formerly hostile publishers grant it recognition, TV makes a bow to its existence, and viewing figures inform us that both the BBC serial and the ITV series are popular. Further, sf's subject matter seduces such 'straight' writers as Howard Fast into its fold, and finally

Hollywood decides to make a really serious film of a book by its nearby author, Ray Bradbury. Thus the image improves.

Similarly, Sociology becomes more respectable and useful as its exponents turn from a mere collection of opinions and from dramatic studies of gangsters, to more theoretically useful subjects; and as it lowers its sights from all-embracing 'grand theory' to a closer relation with reality. Of course, if one is more promiscuous with the term 'Sociology' the authors of it and sf have often coincided: one might quote H.G.Wells, a part time Fabian; Jules Verne, I am told, was equally concerned with social issues; and, anyway, aren't all sociological and science fiction writers at one time or another concerned with the future of Man?

One factual source of the distasteful stereotype mentioned above is the idiosyncratic 'in-group' language which both subjects have been wont to use. Often, of course, the concepts are the same: for example, I have before me a short story by Murray Leinster which commences: "The urge was part of an Antarean experiment in artificial ecological imbalance, though of course the cave folk could not guess that." Often these sterile sounding words are necessary, often not. In Sociology the late C. Wright Mills has dubbed this lingo "socspeak" and explains it as part of the "mannerism of the non-committed". This explanation is often applicable to science fiction, especially where an attempt is being



made to give the story a scientific atmosphere. But there is another explanation, equally relevant and sociological in nature, and that is that the language of each subject reflects an assertion of independence (in, one might add, the face of criticism) and thereby also fulfills the function of unifying the subject and emphasizing the coherence of the in-group.

"Immature" was quoted as a stereotype shared by sociology and sf, and indeed both subjects are young relative to other sciences and other literature respectively. Of course, one can reveal Aristotle and Plato as sociologists and other ancients as embryonic science fiction writers. But as unified and accepted subjects, both are distinctly products of twentieth century conditions, and both, incidentally, share their classics from the late nineteenth century, classics which arose in the spate of interest evoked by the effects of industrialism and, when capitalism was turning down from its zenith, a series of hypotheses on the future of Man in an industrial society. After a flood of scientific advance, its ethos permeated fiction and as technical progress became more the norm and social change accelerated, the shape of things to come loomed high in the minds of the public. And so the mythology of science, or 'science fiction', acquired a readership. Cheap publishing and the rise of the paperback (the second stage in the rise of the novel to its present position as the central art medium) spread the Word to the masses.

Sociology pursued a remarkably similar course, finding its appeal in the mythology of the oddities of modern society and also flooding the paperback market with such top-selling 'pop' sociologists as Vance Packard, whose remarkable exposes of that psychological jungle, the American supermarket, and the unlikely activities of the Status Seekers, read (at least, to the rural British) disturbingly like science fiction.

As unfettered capitalism declined a new spectre rose in all modern industrial societies: bureaucracy; grey, monolithic, disenchanted. Sociology had a new and important field of enquiry and science fiction provided one of the avenues of escape from the uncreative, dull, repetitive jobs which had proliferated, and was especially applicable to the children of our brave new world, reared amongst the progress and mystery of science and technology which their parents tended to view with awe. The leading sociologist, Max Weber, when studying the increasing 'disenchantment' of the modern world, refers to the tension between the emotional desires of the heart (in love with mystery, affection and tradition), and the dominant rationalistic interpretation of the worlds of nature and man. (The success of the Nazis, of course, sourced from the former). Science fiction occupies the odd position of satisfying the former desires often by extending the technical materials of the rationalist world beyond the present. In some of these extensions Man becomes better adapted to his rational environment (e.g. "Brave New World"), in many Man satisfies his affective nature in space travel, finding an excellent escape amongst stars from a bureaucratic world. In yet other stories an end to the mechanised rational world is foreseen, perhaps through the agency of nuclear war, (eg Canticle for Liebowitz), or perhaps without recourse to war. The sociologist Lewis Mumford et al. have suggested that the eventual result of technological progress may well be a breakup of the monolithic structure of contemporary industry, accompanied by a geographic decentralisation and a return to organic social order in which the individual will develop more freely than in the recent past. (Such a picture was admirably described in Clifford Simak's "City" collection of stories).

Thus the modern world is increasingly rational as opposed to many primitive societies where the magical view of the universe still holds sway. Mr. Evans Pritchard has noted that once the premises of the magical perspective are accepted it is irrefutable. Further, the magical view can explain all events since the element of chance is eliminated by the idea that the connection between cause and effect is not, as science would assert, a law, but is based on wish,



intent (e.g. magic spells) and personal action. Of course, the great advantage of the magical viewpoint is that it not only explains why things happen, but why they happen to you personally, a matter which impersonal science cannot explain. Man is thus related organically to the universe. This desire for relatedness in a world of science is occasionally attempted in science fiction where the bent is more philosophical or religious; for example, in some of the novels of Cooper, Hoyle or Miller, but par excellence in 'Childhood's End'.

But the essence of science fiction is the sociological tenet that the norms, values and institutions of the present are not to be approached as all-time truths but as relative to the social-historical context of their existence. Thus sf tends to contain a critical element which tends to justify one anarchist's appreciative view of it as "the medium in which most of the genuinely subversive thought of our time is set down." Similarly, sociology in its early days was considered subversive, conducive to immorality, and socialist in nature. Today many criticisms are levelled at sociology for not being subversive enough, for being rather the slave of bureaucratic interests and, of course, little science fiction is considered by the traditionalists to be politically or ethically subversive. Little, but not all: the Cambridge sociologist, Donald Macrae, in his "Ideology and Society" claims that Orwell's "1984" must, at the time, have led many to join the ranks of the Bolsheviks. Thus sociology and science fiction observe the confusing reality of today through similar glasses, often using the same concepts and frequently coming to the same conclusions, implicitly or explicitly. One must remember that the bulk of both subjects sources from a country in which the ideas of sociology are as much a part of the tenure of life as conservatism used to be in this country; I refer, of course, to America. But while sociology is inexorably bound to the Earth and data on its history, science fiction has the advantage of being able to draw its alternatives to the present social structure from among the stars.

Referring to history, an interesting thought is that if futuristic science fiction were written in the thirteenth century it would have no doubt depicted the approach to the Last Day when the Earthly City would be swallowed up in flames and the good and evil separated, the former to dwell in felicity with God in the Heavenly City and the latter to rot in hell. In the enlightenment of the eighteenth century the future was seen as a beautiful but secular dream in which the human race moved towards perfectibility (an idea which for Fourier entailed men being ten feet tall under socialism!) and an increasing understanding of and control over the immutable laws of nature: the "Heavenly city" was to be built on Earth. The nineteenth century was a time of evolutionist, anarchist and Marxist speculations. What of the twentieth century -- how has its climate of opinion fashioned the picture of the future?

No longer do we possess the assurance of a divine drama evolving in history, no longer do we think of changeless laws of nature to be discovered. We master and measure without assuming any underlying teleological agency. Thus the predictions of sociologists and science fiction writers share little unity. Some paint a galactic future, others a wateland arising from excess rationality, yet others a wasteland following a nuclear holocaust, Man being condemned to live in dark underground cellars, or else to trudge over the barren surface to crop the stunted nettles of his woe and drink the bracken waters of his shame.

The future has yet to vindicate these claims.

--JOHN H. BARNESLEY.

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For a while now, something new and original has been on the comic book scene. With titles like "The Power of Iron Man", "The Fantastic Four", and "The Amazing Spider Man" the Marvel Comics Group has been blazing new trails, coming up with something very different from the stereotyped comic book.

For the last decade a section of the science fiction fraternity has been mourning the loss of that "sense of wonder". Marvel have revived the old sense of wonder, bringing it to the world of comics. They have created a virtual army of some of the most unusual "super heroes" ever to have appeared in the pages of that exclusive American institution, the comic book. For example, DareDevil, one of Marvel's newest stars, must have one of the most original gimmicks ever. DareDevil is blind, but has developed his other senses to the extent where he is almost invincible as a 'justice' fighter.

Stan Lee, the creator of all the Marvel series, manages expertly to maintain the interest in every story by a unique trick -- in comic books -- of switching between two or three scenes of action, adding interesting sub-plots, and unwinding the main plot in such a way that tension is always maintained. From issue to issue of a particular magazine the same basic conflicts are kept simmering, without anything actually being resolved. The characters and their histories are interconnected like the many intertwined threads of a soap opera tv serial, with the result that reading your first Marvel comic can be like reading your first fanzine: half the time you don't understand what's going on, but you realise all the same you are enjoying the experience. And after reading the thing, you know you will have to find out more of what it was all about. From then on, you're hooked... and Marvel will have gained another reader to add to their rapidly growing legion of fans on both sides of the Atlantic.

It is difficult to describe the exact appeal these stories have. One of the most important ingredients is a sizeable chunk of humour. Marvel could never be accused of taking themselves too seriously, for, in addition to the way in which they avoid any attempt at scientific credibility, titles like "The Man Menace of the Macabre Mole Man", "The Crimson Dynamo Strikes Again" and "The Thinker and his Awesome Android" reflect the typical tongue-in-cheek melodrama of their stories.

In the comic world, it has always been the tradition to project larger than life images, to simplify characterisation into cut-and-dried black and white terms. While the Marvel heroes are certainly larger than life, their characterisation is unpredictable. Several of the villains hover on the verge of being heroes, and The Hulk, one of their greatest creations, is a Jeekyll and Hyde type of individual who alternately saves the human race and attempts to tear it apart with his bare hands. "More Powerful! More Dangerous! More Uncontrollable than ever before!! Here comes the Hulk!"

Humour and characterisation apart, the appeal of Marvel comics is largely tied up with their sheer impact. Their covers are plastered with arrows and flashes singing the praises of the stories inside. "Another Mighty Milestone in the Marvel age of comics" ... "Page after page of pulse-pounding thrills" ... "The battle of the century!"... The stories themselves, almost all extra-length features, are, at their best, extremely ingenious and extremely violent. Some people





might object to the violence, almost a standard feature of Marvel plots, but to take it away would be to remove a large part of the all-important impact.

Marvel seem to work with a tight team of artists. Stan Lee provides all of the plots and turns out most of the scripts. Jack Kirby is their star artist, other comic veterans including Steve Ditko, Don Heck and Dick Ayers. The team is not, of course, infallible; they can and do produce the occasional stinker. But these are few and far between, and the success rate at the moment is surprisingly high. Far from going sour, the team seems to be just getting into its stride.

Let's take a look at a few typical issues. Hailed (by the Marvel group itself) as "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine", "The Fantastic Four" is their most popular series. The foursome here is worth looking at in more detail. They are supposedly mutants -- though their origin is not specifically detailed -- endowed with their various super powers by an accident involving cosmic rays. (Cosmic Rays, by the way, are a popular Marvel dodge. It's surprising the things that can be explained away by the mere mention of them.)

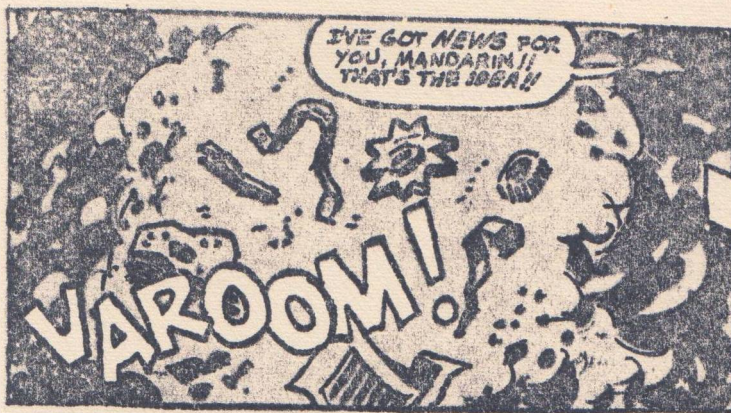
The leader of the Fantastic Four is Reed Richards, the brains behind the group. He has an extensive laboratory which looks as though it would need the entire resources of the United States to finance. (Where the money actually comes from is not clear). Reed is continually coming up with various gadgets which tend to turn out to be just the thing later on to save the group from doom at the hands of the current antagonist. Also, as a kind of special bonus, Reed Richards has the ability to stretch his body in every direction, somewhat reminiscent of the old 'Plastic Man' and the new 'DC' creation 'The Elongated Man'.

Richards is struck with true comic-book-type love for Sue Storm, second member of the team, who is also the Invisible Girl. Apart from her ability to vanish at will she can also throw force fields around people. She feels the same way about Richards that he does about her, but the situation is confused by the fact that Richards is uncertain whether Sue really loves him or "Sub Mariner", a King Neptune-like villain-hero. REED: "No! Don't answer that, Sue! I'd rather not know your answer!" SUE: (Thinks) "Oh, Reed, you blind fool! Of course it's you I love! But how can I ever convince you?..." "And so we leave the fabulous Fantastic Four as its silent leader heads for home...his sure hands and steady eyes giving no clue to the uncertainty and anguish that fill his heart!"

Sue Storm's brother Johnny, the youngest and 'typically teenage' member of the foursome, has a hot-blooded nature. In fact they call him the Human Torch. Shouting "Flame On," he sort of... ignites... bursts into flame to become... well, a human torch! Wary villains are supplied with buckets of water and asbestos armour.

Last comes The Thing. Again a victim of cosmic rays, Ben Grimm has been transformed into a burly, rock-hided Thing, whose obnoxious cuteness provides the 'comic relief' in the series. The following typical Thing dialogue comes from a battle between him and The Hulk. The fight has brought them to New York Harbour and our hero has just climbed out of the water into a motor boat. THING: "Boy! Good thing I'm lighter and faster! Hey! This little honey is just what I need!" HULK: "You can't escape me that way, Thing!" THING: "Escape you?? Are you kiddin'?? I'm just trying to give you a chance to surrender before I annihilate ya!" Even the Thing has a love life. He loves Anita, a blind girl, who, of course, loves him for what he is Inside. TORCH: "You're nuts Thing! She's in love with you... even if you're too dumb to see it!" THING: "Don't give me that, kid! She's in love with what she thinks I am! What happens if she ever gets her eyesight back?? I ain't exactly prince Charming!" REED: Quiet! She just came in!" ANITA: "Ben, are you here? I have to talk to you!" THING: "Sure, baby! What is it, what's wrong?" ANITA: "I've decided we mustn't see each other any more, Ben dear! I came to say goodbye!" THING: "Hah! I knew it! I was right all the





I HAVE BUT ONE THOUGHT  
IN MIND -- BUT ONE  
BURNING AMBITION...

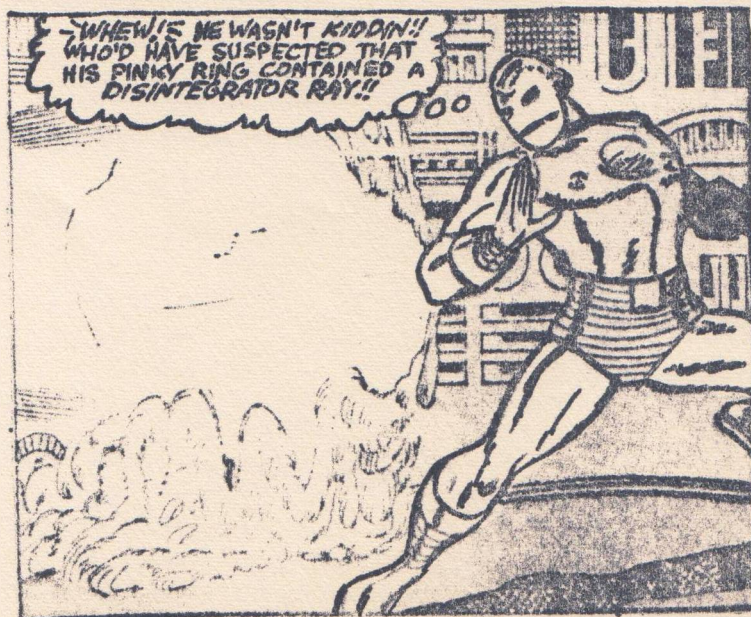


...AND IT IS TO SEE YOU COM-  
PLETELY DESTROYED BEFORE MY  
EYES, NOW, WHILE YOU ARE  
ALONE IN MY CASTLE, WITH NO  
WAY TO ESCAPE, WITH NO PLACE  
TO TURN...

...YOU SHALL  
FEEL THE  
POWER  
OF MY RINGS  
AS NO VICTIM  
BEFORE YOU  
HAS EVER  
FELT THEM!!!



NOTHING CAN SAVE YOU NOW, IRON  
MAN! YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR!  
I NO LONGER CARE ABOUT MISSILES,  
ABOUT WORLD CONQUEST, ABOUT  
ANYTHING!



WHEW! HE WASN'T KIDDIN'!!  
WHO'D HAVE SUSPECTED THAT  
HIS PINKY RING CONTAINED A  
DISINTEGRATOR RAY!!



SO! AGAIN YOU TRY TO FLEE  
ME! BUT THIS TIME YOU  
SHALL NOT SUCCEED!  
REMEMBER -- NO ONE  
ESCAPES THE MANDARIN!!!



time! You finally realised I ain't good enough for you! And it's true honey!! I don't blame ya!!" SUE: (thinks) 'I can't believe it! Those two mean the world to each other!" ANITA: No, Ben! No, my darling! It is I who is not good enough for you! You're so wonderful...ANY girl would be proud to have your love! I can't let you waste your life with me...Just out of pity!!" THING: "You think I see you out of pity?! Dpn't ever say that again, here?! You're the grèatest thing that ever happened to me! Now I realise that it's you and me, baby... and that's the way it'll always be!" ANITA: "Oh, Ben...Ben..!"

These quotes are verbatim, by the way. Every golden cliché has been left intact.

"The Iron Man" is another of Marvel's heroes-with-a-problem. Iron Man, whose secret identity hides millionaire playboy Tony Stark, head of a Long Island weapons factory, has trouble with his heart, which contains a piece of shrapnel. Here he is in a rebellious mood: "I'm sick of being Iron Man! Sick of having to wear an electronic chest plate 24 hours a day! Sick of living on borrowed time...never knowing which moment will be my last! Inside my armour I'm one of the strongest beings ever to walk the earth! My transistor-powered strength is capable of almost any task! The name of Iron Man makes strong men tremble." (Pounds wall). "But what good does it do me?? I can never relax.... never be without my chest plate... never lead a normal life!! I'm worth millions ...I'm famous, successful, chased by the world's most beautiful women... But it all means nothing! Nothing!!" (Pounds wall some more). "Nobody can help me! Nobody can repair my damaged heart! Nobody can guarantee how much longer it will keep beating! Nobody can ever know the torment felt by Iron Man!"

Sad, ain't ... er, isn't ...it? The Marvel writing style can be described as nearing ultimate melodrama. It bears all the hallmarks of out-and-out hack-work; and this perhaps is what makes it so much fun to read.

There is something special about the walking stick of Doctor Blake, a hero based very loosely on a Norse legend. "Dramatically, the slender, lame doctor grasps his rough-hewn walking stick in his two hands, and then, he thumps it once upon the floor... And a split second later, the mortal Dr Blake is replaced by the mightiest of immortals... THOR, God of Thunder!" Note, he doesn't even have to say SEAZAM. Thor's power comes from his enchanted hammer, which he throws in the direction he wishes to travel, and then holds on to the handle. While Thor, Dr Blake is responsible to his father Odin, master of the Norse gods who live in Asgard, a floating asteroid joined to Earth by a rainbow bridge, visible only to the gods. Asgard houses assorted immortals, including Thor's enemies: Loki, the evil one, and the sexy Enchantress.

The Thor series, not surprisingly, has a decidedly mythological flavour. For instance, in a recent Thor epic, "Giants Walk The Earth", Odin, in Earthly guise (a green suit and a hat) pays a visit to our planet, where he meets Thor. ODIN: "Thor! It is you!" THOR: "Noblest of lords, forgive me for speaking first, but grave danger threatens! Surtur and Skagg are about to attack the Earth!! Balder has just brought the news from Asgard!" ODIN: "The human race must not witness what is about to occur!! Stand back, my son! I have an awesome feat to perform!" CAPTION: "Then, at a gesture from the monarch of Asgard, the very fabric of time itself stands still, as the entire human race, under an irresistible spell, is instantly transported to a dimension beyond the ken of the human mind!"

There are no half measures with Marvel comics...

It would be impossible to feature all the products of Lee's works in this one article. Even now the surface has hardly been scratched. "Strange Tales" features "The Mysterious Doctor Strange", a magnificent Ditko creation portraying the mystic arts. A series told against a background of black and white magic, ectoplasmic forms, enchanted amulets and awesome magic rites. Here Ditko is at his best and the artwork has to be seen to be believed. In a recent



story, Strange falls asleep without protecting himself from the forces of the nightmare dimension. NIGHTMARE: "I'll get you yet, accursed one!! I can wait for all eternity if need be! Sonner or later you will relax your guard again -- and when you do -- I'll finish you forever!! Do you hear me? Forever!!"

STRANGE: "Dawn is breaking over the city... I hear you! I can feel the power of your hatred! But I have a stronger power -- for I possess the power of justice and truth -- and so I fear you not!!" CAPTION: "Moments later -- or is it hours or years?? -- for time has no meaning in the nightmare dimension -- Dr Strange awakens, safe once more in the sanctuary of his candlelit chamber!" STRANGE: "The city cannot suspect the strange forces lurking beyond the border of man's imagination! But, so long as they exist, so long will Dr Strange be here to battle them, in the name of humanity!"

And there has still been no mention of either Giant Man, The Mighty Avengers, or even X-men. Maybe they'd better be left to the imagination.

The standard Marvel plotting formula is simply this: They take a flashy hero and put him in contact with equally flashy villains. The result: a battle of gimmicks. The villains usually live to fight another day; and they usually do, in a latter comic.

One of the ways Marvel creates its villains is by adapting the heroes of their competitors. "Hawkeye -- The Marksman", a villain, has the gimmick arrows and paraphernalia of the DC Comics "Green Arrow"... although the Marvel character is a decided improvement on the original. Sometimes, in searching for a villain with a gimmick, they go overboard and only succeed in creating the laughable. Villains like "Paste Pot Pete", whose weapon consists of a spray gun which squirts gobs of super-power glue.

One of the writer's favorite villains is Madam Natasha, the Black Widow, a sultry Russian spy who does her best to undermine US security. Then come the Dictator-Mad-Scientist types like the Macabre Mole Man who resides beneath the Earth's surface, now and again making another bid to conquer the surface world, along with his zombie-like minions, but usually only to be foiled by the Fantastic Four. And then there's the decidedly cobra-like "Human Cobra", and the decidedlt octopus-like "Dr Octopus".....

Marvel Comics are amusing and entertaining, a pleasant diversion from the often over-pompous world of straight science fiction. They are imported by Thorpe and Porter Ltd, overprinted with the British price of 9d. Look on the bookstalls, pick up a few copies. When you get home, sit with your feet up, your sense of wonder sharpened and your disbelief suspended. If you catch Stan Lee and Co. on top form, you may even enjoy yourself.

---ROY KAY.

Bibliography: THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP. XCurrently available titles.

- "The Fantastic Four" (Monthly)
- "Journey Into Mystery with THOR" (Monthly)
- "The Avengers" (Bi-monthly)
- "Tales to Astonish" (Giant Man/Hulk) (Monthly)
- "Strange Tales" (Human Torch and Thing/Dr Strange) (Monthly)
- "X-Men" (Bi-monthly)
- "DareDevil" (Bi-Monthly)
- "Tales of Suspense, featuring The Power of Iron Man" (Monthly)
- "The Amazing Spider-Man" (Monthly)

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# KINGSLEY

THE MAN  
AND HIS  
WORK SUR-  
VEYED BY  
PETER  
WHITE

# AMIS

THE 4TH OF  
OUR ARTICLE  
& INTERVIEW  
SERIES ON  
WRITERS &  
EDITORS

In a slightly stuffy age, when to take oneself seriously is the hallmark of intellectual aspiration, Kingsley Amis is a refreshing naughty boy. It is not over-dramatic to say that he is hated, and that he seems to enjoy and encourage this hatred. Amis is lapsed middle-class, and this alone is enough to earn him the hatred of the devout. But more than this, his anti-Establishment attitudes still hit even the most complacent, despite the fact that rebellion in the arts has become an accepted part of the Establishment itself. With simple irony Amis can outrage even the most suburban bourgeois, while TW3 and the like is unthinkingly absorbed as wholesome weekend entertainment. What makes his deflations of the gas-filled sacred cows so powerful is, among other things, his witty and outrageous rudeness. This capacity for the witty insult is typically public school, and his peculiar education is another interesting feature of his career. To succeed as a highbrow in England today one should either have no roots, or no background. Amis was born middle-class and educated public-school, but despite this terrible handicap he has managed to make himself heard every bit as much as the North Country gang of rebels with their folksy accents.

Amis was born in Clapham in 1922, and was educated at City of London School on the Victoria Embankment. He is rarely mentioned in those draughty classrooms, having created some disturbance when he included some recognisable caricatures of masters in an article in THE SPECTATOR, and is probably classified as a failure who somehow slipped through the indoctrination net.

From school Amis went on to St Johns College, Oxford, and was soon known as a brilliant, if rather unconventional, academic. After the war, during which he served in the Army, Amis lectured in English at University College, Swansea. He spent a year as a Visiting Fellow in Creative Writing at Princetown University, where he delivered a series of lectures on criticism that were later to form the basis of NEW MAPS OF HELL. From the conventional point of view his greatest success was his award of a fellowship at Peterhouse, Cambridge. For various reasons, However, Cambridge University life did not appeal to him -- shortly after he arrived he heard one stuffy don ask another why the College had stooped to awarding fellowships to pornographers -- and he left both Peterhouse and Britain. He now lives abroad with his wife and children.

Although it is true to say that Amis is a comic novelist, one cannot dismiss him merely as this alone, for he is also one of the greatest observers of the English social scene, and one of the originators of a whole new school of



social novel writing. It has been suggested that Jim Dixon, the hero of Amis's first novel LUCKY JIM, was the original 'angry young man'. Of course, this is nonsense, and the novel, though a virtuoso performance, was merely a romp, containing a few good-humoured jabs at redbrick society. In its style, and awareness of the contemporary scene, as well as in its occasional bitterness, LUCKY JIM set the mood for Amis's later more serious novels. Also apparent in this first novel is an underlying superstition, a belief in infantile magic. G.S. Fraser has written:

"He (Jim Dixon) is also a male Cinderella, for one can find in the novel bad and good magicians (professor Welch and the rich man from London), an ogress, a thwarted witch or enchantress, and a defeated boaster". Or as Bernard Bergonzi puts it:

"One sometimes feels that Amis's world, with its strange correspondences existing just below the naturalistic surface, is one where ugly old women might well be thought of as witches, and in some cases given the traditionally appropriate treatment. For in Amis's fiction there is an inescapable note of cruel and even sadistic fantasy..."

If one looks hard enough, fairy tale symbolism may be detected in all of Amis's novels. This irrationality exists in strange collusion with burning realism, and I find the mixture rather attractive.

It would be pointless to mention his novels in detail, or summarise their plots, as his very individual talent for capturing the true flavour of modern England can only be appreciated after reading the books. Amis has progressed from a comic novelist with serious undertones to a serious novelist with comic elements. The laughs are still there in his latest novels, but their ultimate effect is profoundly depressing. While admitting that the work was a success, the OBSERVER reviewer said of ONE FAT ENGLISHMAN, Amis's most recent novel, "A world of drunks, bores and half wits is deep enough to supply amusement only for a single reading." Perhaps this is Amis's attitude to life itself.

His fiction has been one of the greatest influences in English Literature during the last few years, though it is as well to remember that Amis still has not realised his full potential as a novelist. Anthony Burgess and Iris Murdoch in particular owe much to him.

Associated with the movement which attacked neo-Romanticism by subjecting poetry to disciples of carefully analyzed emotion and tradition form, Amis's poetry is distinctive but hardly as important as his prose. About poetry he has written: "...nobody wants any more poems on the grander themes for a few years, but at the same time nobody wants any more poems about philosophers or painters or novelists or art galleries or mythology or foreign cities or other poems. At least I hope nobody wants them."

For those unaware of Amis as a poet "THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY: A LANGUAGE GAME" makes a good introduction, being fairly typical of the formality, directness, simplicity and lack of ornamentation that are features of his poetry:

Do this. Don't move. O'Grady says do this,  
You get a move on, see, do what I say.  
Look lively when I say O'Grady says.

Say this. Shut up. O'Grady says say this,  
You talk fast without thinking what to say.  
What goes is what I say O'Grady says.

Or rather let me put the point like this:  
O'Grady says what goes is what I say  
O'Grady says; that's what O'Grady says.



By substituting you can shorten this,  
 Since any God you like will do to say  
 The things you like, that's what O'Grady says.

The harm lies not in that, but in that this  
 Progression's first and last terms are I say  
 O'Grady says, not just O'Grady says.

Yet it's O'Grady must be out of this  
 Before what we say goes, not what we say  
 O'Grady says. Or so O'Grady says.

NEW MAPS OF HELL, Amis's famous essay on science fiction, is by far the best thing that has happened to modern science fiction. Although there are many criticisms one can make of this book, it was by far the best written and most comprehensive survey that has yet been made of the genre. His witty reviews in the OBSERVER have also served to popularise sf, and are a first step towards serious criticism of the genre.

Amis has been accused of militant philistinism, but in fact his jabs at Henry James and Jane Austin are really aimed at ecstatic Jamesians and Janeians, who are surely fair game.

Perhaps the real reason for his unpopularity with so many people is his fearless opposition to pomposity and intellectual pretension. As an anti-intellectual intellectual, Amis is disliked both by the traditional academics and by the self-conscious portion of the avant-garde that takes its lead from San Francisco, or perhaps from Lord Russell as well. But anyone who admires a really individual mind must be interested in the picaresque exploits of Kingsley Amis through the petrified landscapes of stuffy highbrow-land.

-----PETER WHITE.





# BERYL HENLEY: INCORPORATING A NEW THEORY □□□ AS i Was saying...

The article which I wrote for BEYOND 5, concerning reincarnation, elicited a number of comments, some of them caustic, most of them rejecting my statement of personal belief. THE POST HIROSHIMA SYNDROME in B6, called forth even more comment. I am indebted to the Editor for the chance to reply to some of his letter-of-comment writers.

First, may I draw everyone's attention to a paragraph of my last article. I repeat: "I am not condoning their behaviour. What I am trying to do is offer a possible theory to account for it." Please note, I said a "possible theory". I didn't claim that what I wrote was indisputable fact.

Right, then. The comments sent in range over a wide spectrum, from personal remarks to reasoned assessments of my theory. I was accused of romanticism re the past. Exaggerating out of all proportion. An out-and-out mystic. The article showed 'A charmingly idealistic naiveite'. I am 'Blighted with an affliction known as narrow-mindedness.' (Hmmm....) 'Old Henley and her bright idea kick' (well, it's cheaper than rum...) Facetiousness. Funny woman. The article 'reads like something out of Campbell and ANALOG'. I'm flattered! (Though that probably wasn't the writer's intention...) 'Psychotic'. I'm FLATTENED!

Pete Weston's castigation is accepted with equanimity, but I would again stress that I was propounding a theory in the hope that those who read it -- particularly those in the age group concerned -- would write in and express their own viewpoints. It would be interesting to chew it over with a few of the hell-raisers themselves, though it probably wouldn't be at all enlightening.

I was very interested in Gerald Kirsch's statistics last issue -- though I'd have liked a wider cross section -- and intended to write to him personally to see if he could carry the matter further, but... "The road to hell...."

I am also told by more than one correspondent that I am guilty of generalisation and 'group-labelling'. But that's exactly what I don't like doing -- I tried to make this clear in the first two paragraphs of the article!

Dave Hale writes: "Each age has its problems, and the individual in each age faces the prospect of personal extinction just as much as he does today. It was either disease killing you before you were thirty, the whim of some tyrant or war lord, starvation, or war. I don't think many people worry about racial



extinction .. the people who fight and riot today are inconsequential children, from bad homes and areas with a predisposition to these acts." These are good points; I can only repeat that few people worry about it consciously, but, again, few people know (or care) what may be going on in the depths of their subconscious minds where, it is said, our 'racial instincts' operate.

On the other hand, Archie Mercer says: "Beryl also mentions deprivation leading to boredom leading to antisocial behaviour in the young. Not all anti-social youths necessarily come from the deprived classes. Boredom, yes. But the young rich can be bored too, and the cities of the world have before now been terrorised by gangs of bored rich out for kicks." (I hear that the film *STOLEN HOURS* was based on the doings of just such a group). "In the 20th century western world, the probability of publicity if apprehended acts (one hopes) against a recurrence of this particular state of affairs; but it has been known".

I agree about the bored young rich -- some of the capers which University students, at Oxford and Cambridge in particular, get up to on Rag Days are often attributed to 'sheer high spirits', and excused on the grounds that they are 'perpetuated in a good cause'. Yet these same activities, if indulged in by 'working class' youths, would, perhaps, result in appearance in court and accusations of hooliganism, and so on.

However, I tend to agree with another correspondent, who avers that the violent youngsters enjoy the limelight of publicity, however bad it is. It seems as if they reason along the lines that if they can't get approving attention, they'll make do with the tut-tutting kind, this being preferable to being ignored completely.

The reasons postulated for delinquency in letters received also cover a wide range, and most of them have something to commend them. The kids don't know why they do it. Boredom. Broken homes, bad living conditions, the pace of modern living... all these certainly contribute to the problem. Yet not all the children who have to suffer such conditions become hoodlums, and some of the children free of such influences do end up as delinquents. This being so, the 'causes' would seem to be more excuses for antisocial behaviour rather than contributing factors to delinquency. I'll return to this point later.

Another writer offers "social aimlessness. No goals to fight for. War binds people together, but we have nothing." What about the struggle to maintain peace? However, from a 16-year-old, these are perceptive remarks and tie in neatly with a conversation that took place between Charles Platt and myself last time he visited. I said much the same thing, about social aimlessness, to him, and added that until space exploration really gets under way, there are no new frontiers to be opened up, no natural challenges to be met and conquered.

And even space exploration will, one assumes, be for only the highly intelligent and highly trained.

Overcrowding in schools and lack of personal attention from teachers is another valid factor, especially as these conditions often lead to boredom for the brighter child. A class, like a war-time convoy, has to travel at the speed of the slowest member.

Lack of a hobby, says Doreen Parker. This leads to lack of general interest in life, of course. But today's youngsters have so much done and provided for them that it would seem they have little incentive to create their own interests, amusements and entertainment. Which is probably one of the reasons why there are, in this country alone, over ten thousand beat groups, professional and amateur. At least these youngsters are doing something with their spare time, creating something off their own bat -- even if most of it isn't



exactly praiseworthy.

Someone else quotes "homes where both parents are out at work all day." Again, this state of affairs does not necessarily lead to juvenile delinquency among the "latch-key kids". Redditch is very much like the Lancashire mill towns, in that its needle-making and fishing tackle industries demand a great deal of female labour. The vast majority of Redditch women have jobs of some kind, and I don't think our delinquency rate is higher, as a result, than that of towns of comparable size in other areas.

Terry Jeeves seems to be the only correspondent who puts the blame in part on mass media such as TV. He adds that they "spread news of what the other nits are doing." I'd say that they also contribute heavily to the general boredom. Young people can't play table tennis, build model aeroplanes, whoop it up a bit with other kids -- or type stencils! -- when an entire family and the tv set have to spend their evenings in one living room. Which leads me to ask: why are so few average-size houses built without a 'parlour' these days? It isn't always possible for a child to pursue his/her spare time activities in a bedroom.

Then there is "Basic laziness", and wanting to be amused and entertained rather than create such interests for themselves. From one angle, this is a problem created by higher wages and more comfortable standards of living. From another angle, it's far from a new idea!

All the points that were made and offered were more or less valid. But they are not universally applicable. Take the possible cause: boredom. One boy will try to combat it by buying a guitar on the never-never and joining a beat group. Another will 'get into bad company', start drinking, get into fights, and end up in court. A third will find his natural outlet in sport, either through his own initiative or through a youth club or organisation. A fourth goes into night school to improve his chances of getting a worthwhile job. And a fifth discovers books, haunts the local library -- may even turn into a sf fan.

Parental interest and encouragement -- or lack of it -- also exerts a considerable influence. The fact remains, though, that some of the violent faction come from good homes and have had their fair share of parental affection and attention. And the converse also is true in many cases.

None of the causes suggested in letters explain all juvenile delinquency cases.

WARNING NOTICE: I am about to advance another (no doubt crackpot) THEORY. Will those who have lost interest here please move on to the next page?

I don't think anyone has tied in my article on Reincarnation with last issue's POST HIROSHIMA SYNDROME. There is a connexion. A theoretical one. In order to be reborn into a new body, one's old body must first die. If this can be accepted as a premise, then it follows that many people who are today in their teens or early twenties died or were killed in the last war. Therefore, could it not be that the violent element of today's youth is made up of those who met violent deaths 'last time', and have carried basic, subconscious memories of it into the 'present round'? And that the 'last-time' deaths of today's decent, hard-working youngsters were perhaps non-violent, not completely unexpected, and didn't take place in an atmosphere of tension, fear and hatred?

That's all. Except that it may surprise Gerald Kirsch to know that I heartily agree with his final sentence. And I'd appreciate a personal letter from Michael Moore of Portslade. (Please?)

--BERYL HENLEY

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