

*Those forests unapproachable by death,
That shall endure as long as man endures
To think, to hope, to worship and to feel,
To struggle, to be lost within himself
In trepidation, from the blank abyss
To look with bodily eyes and be consoled.*

He would not be Wordsworth without it; and yet. . . . Keats found a great phrase, summing up the blend of admiration and censure which we cannot but feel, in the presence of his unflagging solemn self-preoccupation: "the egotistical sublime." Censure there must be; we cannot ignore the ordinal moral meaning of the word egotism. But in mitigation we must remember that few original geniuses have ever been met with such derision and incomprehension.

Yes, the Keatsian phrase fits Joyce as perfectly as it fits Wordsworth; he was egotistical and he was sublime, and he needed to weld these qualities together into a carapace that would help him to endure misunderstanding

and ridicule. In the end, Joyce strikes one as a lesser artist than Yeats, for precisely the reason that Yeats could take his carapace off when necessary. Yeats' stubborn pride, his fierce joy in isolation and *plaisir aristocratique de déplaire*, are fully developed by the time he writes "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing"; but he can come out from his shell, and be soft and vulnerable to life, and so he goes on developing, suffering, growing. Joyce, after *Ulysses*, cultivated the ultimate defiance of the artist: "this is right because I do it." In the end, his refusal to explain himself, to listen to any syllable of criticism, is symptomatic of a hardening of the mental arteries. He was, we may fancy, not altogether joking—not joking at all, perhaps?—when he wrote to Miss Weaver about *Work in Progress*: "I know it is no more than a game, but it is a game that I have learned to play in my own way. Children may just as well play as not. The ogre will come in any case."

Visit to Inner Space

On Nuttall's "Bomb Culture" — By DAVID MARTIN

IT IS CHARACTERISTIC of a writer like Jeff Nuttall that he has no external biography.¹ The fly-leaf gives us a foreground not a background: there isn't even a claim to the status of "genuine working class." We know that he plays the trumpet, but do not know where he went to school. "Nuttall" suggests Lancashire. Was he the clever boy who went to the Grammar School, found it stiff and stuffy, and then drifted into those groups of jazz club drop-outs described in Brian Jackson's study of *Working Class Community*?

One wants to know those things because he is so confusing. He speaks with many voices, all of them interesting, but it is difficult to know which is his. One moment he is a rural innocent dancing around a phallus, the next restating the Augustinian doctrine of original sin and empathising with William Burroughs on the margins of Manicheanism. He is also confused and confusing in the sequence of his ideas, not of course that one would expect an exemplar of McLuhanite psychic subversion to write with the linear rationality of an Ayer.

More than that he confuses his own autobiography with the history of a culture—as if the Direct Grant Schools had already disappeared. No doubt he is the new new wave, but often the fate of waves is to disappear into the sands. Towards the end of the book he seems on the verge of a breakdown and then suddenly turns and addresses the psychic world (and himself) in terms which suggest a "return" to right reason. One has the impression he may soon be able to listen to Mozart without wanting to smash something. His is the kind of rich, disordered imagination that has to explore all his own contradictions before it can begin to establish any form of coherence. This book could be the end of one stage and intimation of the next.

LET ME TAKE his main thesis: that the rebellious culture produced by the "Bomb"—the Bomb being a kind of concentrated symbol for the last quarter of a century, is a reaction in favour of life by all those who cannot accept the suicide pact made by the Squares: the Fathers and the Politicians. The inhabitants of the Bomb Culture live in a uniquely contingent world and it is the politicians who are to blame. This argument is not of course a new one: referring to the late 1920s Herbert Butterfield remarked on

¹ *Bomb Culture*. By JEFF NUTTALL. MacGibbon and Kee, 36s.

a tendency to blame the Fall on to the politicians and the older generation. For Mr. Nuttall one doesn't need to be born again to escape the Fall: it is enough to have been born after 1945. The Fall-out supplants the Fall.

The denigration of politicians by those who are ignorant of politics or who are hooked on the pleasures of moral indignation is frequent enough and occurs as much on the Right as it does on the Left. But in Jeff Nuttall's case it is a flight from politics by someone who has half-glimpsed the complexities of the situation and who can only blame the politician for his limited success in dealing with such complexities. Yet political success is always limited because the material of the politicians' art is the most recalcitrant of all. Mr. Nuttall's complaints are those of an action painter sneering at somebody who works in mosaic. Most of the time it is a triumph to survive; and the achievements of a de Gaulle are positively Byzantine in every sense.

This is where the paradoxes of our situation are most evident; and no explanation of our situation is adequate which does not lean heavily on paradox. The point is that our world is both more contingent, because of the politicians, and also more secure, equally because of the politicians. We feel on the edge of de-

struction *and* on the margin of undreamt-of securities, horrified and dazzled by a cosmic question mark and a cosmic promise.

Mr. Nuttall's explanation leans too much on his own autobiography in that most young people are *not* facing that cosmic question mark but simply luxuriating in the securities at a level which allows them no access to the costs humanity has paid to acquire them, nor even to the very notion of cost, let alone of opportunity cost. (Leave that to bourgeois economists: but it is a central concept of sociology as well.) After all, it is the generation immediately preceding my own and Mr. Nuttall's which *should* be alienated. They lived, contrary to his supposition, in just as contingent a world as ours, though the form of the contingency was different; and they were actually asked to pay the costs of alternative choices, including those Marxists who actually had to run Communist societies as distinct from those whose Marxism is that of playboys in the Western World. (Cf. *Student Power*, by Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn.) Now, however, we in Western Europe are no longer asked to pay, except in terms of the psychological turmoil illustrated in this book, precisely because of the Bomb we execrate and because the shield of the hated Americans protects us. Perhaps this is partly

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Censorship in a Liberal Society

BY HARRY M. CLOR

Mr Clor develops a definition of obscenity (whereby sexual obscenity is seen as only one form) based upon ethical, literary and psychological criteria. He then convincingly demonstrates that a systematic and reasoned argument can be made for legal control of obscenity—one that does not rest ultimately upon religious or nonrational considerations. 86s

The Rules of the Game in Paris

BY NATHAN LEITES

"What Nathan Leites is looking for, and finds, is a set of tendencies, of ways of feeling, of attitudes, that appear to him to be more or less characteristic of a given sector of the French people. He observes the French as they live and speak, as they behave and, above all, as they write. And he does so with the utmost possible detachment."—Raymond Aron 117s

Community Problem Solving

The Delinquency Example

BY IRVING A. SPERGEL

Mr Spergel, asserting that delinquency and other critical problems of inner cities must be confronted consciously and systematically rather than intuitively, explores the variety of approaches available for both the professional social worker and the concerned layman. 90s

why we hate them: they preserve us even from the unpleasant experience of conscription. In short, the spiritual exhibitionists of our time have the money and the opportunity to mount their travelling exhibitions because of their "lying Dads," precisely because of American power and the sheltering, tolerant affluence of the despised liberal societies. Mr. Nuttall is quite wrong: the fathers ate the "sour grapes" (however much it is the children's teeth which are set on edge), and some of them have even enough security to enjoy the luxurious guilts of the really rich.

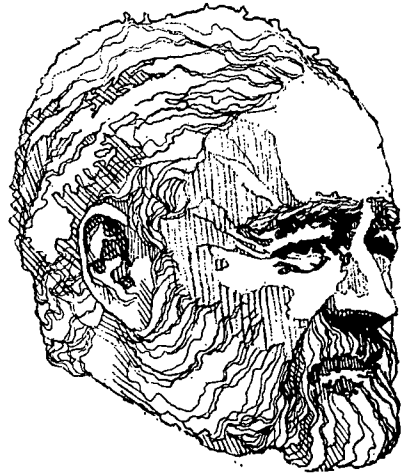
JEFF NUTTALL is more convincing when he describes the sequence of sub-cultural development, and in detail he is highly perceptive. He believes a convergence has gradually taken place between the student world and the culture of the under-privileged. This convergence produces a world-wide coalition against the squares, for which the assistance and leadership of the Left-liberals is no longer necessary. The old lib-labs—a Kingsley Martin or a John Collins—specialised in "honourable argument" not psychic subversion. But in a world where the linear sequence of logic has become the total and immediate impact of the image, the only viable tactic is to massage the soft psychic underbelly of the system. *C.N.D.* was the last time the old Left-liberal led the new generation: when that had failed the young decided to do their own thing. After that not even Arnold Wesker's Culture-for-the-Masses was acceptable. The sequence ran from the "Teds" to "the Underground," with the Goon Show, skiffle, and the Beatles expanding the link between students and the underprivileged. The sub-cultures of the world united against Culture; and the new clerks betrayed Culture in its own citadel.

Sometimes Nuttall writes as if this were new: certainly the treason to culture in the old sense seems to me notable in its extent. Roy Fuller's recent lecture (*T.L.S.*, "Philistines and Jacobins," 20 February 1969) has argued that the prosperous Philistines of the last century were as nothing compared to prosperous barbarians of the present. Yet the ideas are not original and the range of artistic reference and literary quotation in this book sets them, however, unsystematically, in some sort of historical depth. Indeed *Bomb Culture* is a sort of extended epilogue to Mario's Praz's *The Romantic Agony* and an anthology of the spiritual disorders consequent on Romanticism. My own work on pacifism analysed the last outbreak of these phenomena in the 1930s: the inherent antagonism between the Left rationalists and the Romantic anarchists, and the recurring overlapping sequences of dreaminess and activism,

withdrawal and potency, making love and making war.

Indeed some of the categories of the sociology of religion are worth invoking in dealing with this kind of material. Broadly we are dealing with modern versions of the mystical and sectarian mode of protest. The mystical mode recovers the total simplicity of the world of the Child and aspires to a unity of experience, with or without drugs. In this condition the mystic may also find himself exploring every negative experience in order to make possible his return to the world as a "total" human being. Meanwhile he cannot meet the demands of the world or comprehend its external complexity because nothing is relevant except his own internal experience and his quest for wholeness. If wholeness cannot be achieved he confines himself to exploring the fullest extent of negation in all its Manichean disgust and obscene diversity. Nuttall describes this state of mind in William Burroughs. This is not usually a serious danger to society, except in so far as such people can combine the child's world with a total lack of self-control in which the experience of God is achieved orgiastically. It remains a nuisance, of course, because the mystic is outside of time, of rational social-organisation, of technical efficiency, even indeed outside communication (especially, on occasion, the communication of language). Hence the preference for art and film. He achieves a psychic return to an unsemanticised world before the word brought order and temporal sequence out of chaos. To quote from a manifesto in this book, he aspires to a "world without clocks."

THE OTHER MODE is a sectarian one which is also the next point of development in the child's world: binary discriminations—hence, perhaps, the role of this notion in facilitating the popularity of Lévi-Strauss. The world of politics is seen in terms of straight oppositions derived from the vocabulary of religion, not only True and False Consciousness but the children of Light and the children of Darkness. Moreover, original sin is an important category misused to indicate the systematic character of the evil which encompassed every aspect of the great society you are fighting against. Everything connects with everything else: Viet Nam and examinations, or (to use an example given in this book) the "Moors murder" was a sign that "it" had started. On the whole this type of politics, in which all the categories of political calculation and balance of evils are indiscriminately overwhelmed by the categories of sectarian religion, is more characteristic of the so-called "Socialist Societies" in our universities than of the Underground described by Nuttall. Never-



HEM ING WAY

The Life Story
by Carlos Baker

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COLLINS

theless he has his own basic division into Hippies and Squares in which the former possess all the ontological advantages. Quite characteristically he believes that only the young semi-psychopath is capable of creation just as only he is capable of genuine, enjoyable procreation. To adapt to his own style: the sex life of the squares always goes off at half-cock. Nor it is credible to him that even squares trained in universities are capable of seeing "orient and immortal wheat" through their windows at ten o'clock in the morning.

Yet the "creative" work he cites (leaving Mailer aside) shows little enough capacity, and his only riposte is to claim that "toffee-nosed" university people are debarred from appreciating those marvellous offerings. Indeed, now that the men of the Underground have been through a "range of exaltation and despair unique since Shakespeare" their "supremely informed sensibilities" are ready to surprise us all.

Happily such faith is matched by saving doubts. First, he queries whether the Underground may not be an inverted case of the evils it most declaims against. Second, he restates not only the orthodox doctrine of original sin but also the Christian doctrine of mystical experience. In his view, to be alienated is the defining characteristic of being human—and the attempt to end the rich possibilities of alienation, and the divine purpose underlying it, is man's most disastrous aspiration. As regards mysticism: "You can't dig It if you are It." He invites "us back to the Self, to classic form and rational serenity...."

It is almost as if he realised that the dynamism of our civilisation depended on an interplay between distortions too gross and balances too serene. To rest in the achievements of that civilisation is certainly not enough, but it does look as if Mr. Nuttall may be tired of peddling his own accelerated obsolescence. I doubt whether he is quite ready to enjoy the praise of a square but I'm afraid I have to say it—both he and his book are, as the Laugh-In man has it, very interesting.

Young Man from the Rhondda

Print of a Hare's Foot. An Autobiographical Beginning. By RHYS DAVIES. Heinemann, 50s.

MR. RHYS DAVIES is a very good writer who in a long life has never had the public recognition he deserves. One hopes that these

chapters of autobiography will help to repair the omission and serve to remind people that he is among the best short story writers of our time. Indeed, they have the same qualities of freshness and compassion that are revealed in his stories; the difference is that here it is his own experiences which Mr. Davies recounts, only he sees them with very much the same eye as he turns upon those of others.

Print of a Hare's Foot tells the story of Mr. Davies' early life, first in childhood and youth in one of the most remote outposts of the Rhondda at the beginning of this century, and later as a young man on the threshold of a literary career in London. Mr. Davies is an old man now, but one has the sense that he still sees with a boy's clear vision. Many people before him have attempted to describe the extraordinary, one is tempted to say unique, society that until recently existed in the mining valleys of South Wales; no one, I think, has brought it to life quite so vividly as Mr. Davies does here.

It was in many ways a savage and violent society, marked by the scars of some of the harshest industrial conflicts this country has ever known. Yet its harshness was tempered by the dignity and warmth, a sense of shared humanity, which the South Wales miner never lost in good times as in bad. It was also, in one of its aspects, an almost claustrophobically closed society; the strange landscape of the South Wales mining valleys, in which the rural and the industrial combine so dramatically, was the background to a peculiarly close and intimate social life in which religion, beer, song, rugby football, socialism and whippets all had their part to play. Yet, in another aspect, it was a society which was open to all the world; the valleys, the grimy streams that ran down them, the coal that came out of their bowels, the tramline following the course of the single village street of the Rhondda, all made their way down to the docks and ships of Cardiff, and through them made their presence felt at the ends of the world. The Rhondda was a major factor in the industrialisation of the planet; and in the same way the miners' struggle for a life which recognised his human dignity made him a participant, and a leader, in a world-wide conflict.

MR. DAVIES' ACCOUNT of his childhood and youth in this exotic society has a wonderful spontaneity; every detail in it is vivid, exact, authentic, and never blurred by overemphasis or exaggeration. He has the seeing eye of the born writer, but what comes as a surprise is that he preserves the same simplicity and clarity of vision in the very different world of literary London in the 1920s; the scene here is, for most