

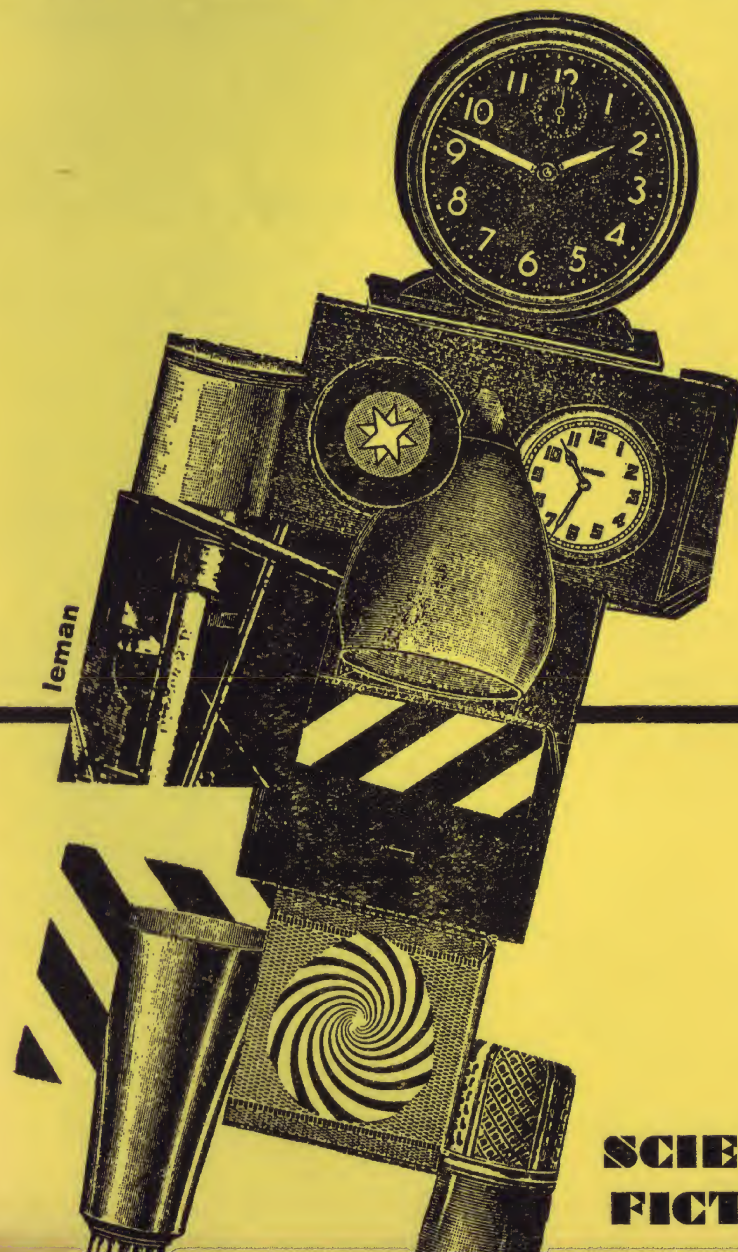
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# Science Fiction and anarchism

## JOHN PILGRIM

THIS ESSAY IS BASICALLY AN EXPANDED VERSION of lectures given to the Heretics Club of Cambridge University and to the London Anarchist Group, in 1960. I would therefore only claim that the conclusions I reached, and the overwhelmingly libertarian tendency that I observed in science fiction is valid up to that date. There may in fact have been some major changes in the attitudes of writers since my notes were prepared, although to the best of my knowledge the strong libertarian bias that I observed is still extant. In one or two places I am quoting from memory as I have been unable to obtain the books I wanted, and I apologise in advance for any misquotations that may have inadvertently crept into the text. Finally I must make some acknowledgement to Mr. Edmund Crispin, whose anthologies of science fiction for Faber and Faber are still the finest of their kind, and whose introductory essays I have shamelessly pillaged.

\* \* \*

THE MAIN DIFFICULTY EXPERIENCED BY AN ANARCHIST in trying to convince a non-anarchist of the validity, or even the sanity of his views, is the basic idea that authoritarianism of some kind is necessary in order to prevent society lapsing into a catch-as-catch-can barbarism. The same cliches are trotted out all the time on these occasions: "We have to have law and order", "It would mean survival of the most ruthless", "What's to stop someone beating your head in with an axe", "Who will clean the sewers", and so on. Those members of the public who stop to think about the problem at all tend to dismiss anarchism as a beautiful but impossible ideal. (So do the "permanent protesters" but that's another question). The vast majority are not even aware that such an ideal exists; to them anarchy is synonymous with chaos and as they are not given to reading political pamphlets they remain isolated from the

*JOHN PILGRIM has been a regular soldier, journalist, professional washboard player and barrow boy. He "left a brutal-type grammar school at 15½ and is now studying for the teaching profession", and believes that any hope of an anarchist society lies with the sociologists developing a method of working towards one.*

vanguard of liberal thought which is anarchism.

The problem therefore was to make the public aware of this ideal of a free society; to get them to realise that repressive governments and police forces were not necessary evils to be borne stoically in exchange for a television set and a washing machine; that there was a substantial body of thought in existence that rejected the acquisitive, technology is all and humanity can go to hell, values of what is laughingly termed "our civilisation". As the vast majority of the population tended to shy away from anything that smelled of politics I felt that it would be necessary to get anarchist ideas into popular entertainment; a novel or short story based on anarchist ideas would reach a large number of people that political essays never touch. And when someone had assimilated the concept of the sort of freedom which anarchists desire, in light reading, the ideas that he heard expressed by an anarchist speaker, or found in anarchist literature, would not seem so alien.

It was while thinking around this problem that I realised there was already in existence a literary form, which was, if not anarchist, at least consistently liberal and anti-authoritarian in its social views, and that was science fiction. It was a short story called *Security Risk*, in *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION* a monthly American magazine\*, that had in fact, first interested me in ideas that I later found to be embodied in anarchism. This story was written at the height in the McCarthy era and concerned a sociologist who made the first crack in an apparently impregnable social order in which McCarthyism had become the completely dominant factor. It appeared at the time to be a fair prophecy of the way America was heading, of what it would have become had McCarthy retained his power.

As late as 1960 most of the anarchists I met felt that science fiction was beneath their notice. The general picture of the medium seemed to be that of a half naked nubile young woman seized in the claws of a flying dinosaur while the Errol Flynn of the spaceways attempted simultaneously to rescue her and fight off a colony of giant intelligent ants. Now this picture of science fiction bears as much relation to the bulk of the medium as does the Chestertonian vision of the anarchist as a cloaked and bearded figure carrying spherical "bomb" does to the editor of this periodical. In neither case does the public image bear much relationship to the reality.

In the body of this essay I have concentrated on the kind of science fiction that appears in the monthly magazines. I have ignored the Utopian literature of the past (a subject much better dealt with in Marie Louise Berneri's *Journey through Utopia*) and I have also ignored work by mainstream writers that might be considered as coming within the science fiction field. Books like *Brave New World* and *1984* may or may not be science fiction but they also have been more adequately dealt with elsewhere, and in any case are hardly representative of the medium. Neither do I consider it necessary to drag in the name of William Golding, as Kingsley Amis does in his *New Maps of Hell*, in order to show that science fiction is respectable. Golding's use of a

\* Now known as *ANALOG*.

common SF device, that of isolating a group of individuals in order to portray and analyse their attempts to build a culture does not make *Lord of the Flies* science fiction any more than the use of derby hat mutes makes Rhapsody in Blue jazz. The analogy is a good one. Just as the jazz critic/historian of ten years ago was always bringing up the interest displayed by Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud and Ravel in jazz, so Amis, (whose views on jazz are even sillier than his views on science fiction) continually evokes the names of Golding, Orwell and Wells.

I feel that as SF is the medium in which most of the genuinely subversive thought of our time is set down it has no need of the kind of academic respectability that Amis would wish on it. Indeed that sort of respectability could well lead to its early demise. The writing which I wish to discuss is the sort of thing that appears in monthly magazines like *NEW WORLDS*, *ANALOG*, *GALAXY*, and so on. Between the covers of magazines like this most of the criticism, discussion, and examination of our present social and political attitudes is carried on, outside, that is, of technical journals like *NEW SOCIETY*. As far as the general public is concerned science fiction magazines are the only form of popular fiction that, *as a matter of course*, present ideas that the supporter of the *status quo* would regard as subversive.

For instance the short story *Stone and Crystal* from *Science Fantasy*. As in many magazine editors in the SF field, John Carnell the editor, writes little introductory paragraphs, in case the reader misses the moral, what Edmund Crispin has termed "silly ejaculatory editorial epigraphs". The introduction to this story reads "*The so-called march of Progress always tramples something out of existence. Extend technology to an ultimate degree and it will eventually cancel out individualism*". The story that follows is a horribly effective warning against a too enthusiastic worship of science.

One of the basic premises of science fiction, not so common in mainstream fiction, is that established laws, customs, morals and taboos, are not constants, not all time truths, but part of a planetary culture that may be good or bad, but whose value must be assessed in terms of that culture's ability to give the individuals who comprise it the freedom to develop themselves to the full extent of their capabilities. A common use of this premise is in a setting where Earth is the most advanced culture in the Galaxy so far discovered. The hero is the social engineer who uses his advanced techniques to change the course of a planetary culture if it appears to be developing on totalitarian lines, in an attempt to prevent that culture from indulging in the kind of internecine wars that in the remote past nearly wiped out Earth. Equally often Earth is shown as a backward barbarous culture, so ethically undeveloped that they actually kill each other, and have governments and wars and police. In fact this type of story is so common in the monthlies that their continued survival is a source of some surprise.

I have already mentioned *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION* and the violently anti-McCarthy story they published. This magazine has an excellent record in that respect. At a time when the organs of mass communication in the States were terrified of printing the slightest criticism of McCarthy, *ASTOUNDING* ran editorial after editorial slamming

McCarthyism the whole security system, and the deleterious effects of witch hunts on creativity. To this day John Campbell the editor, is still running leaders on the stultifying effects of the security system on individual freedom, the rejection by the American establishment of really original ideas, and the dangers of a sheeplike acceptance of what the Government and Authority says, to what is left of values in Western culture.

Quite recently ASTOUNDING published a delightful story set some time in the future about a character called Tom Paine who wandered round the inhabited Universe causing social upheavals on planets that were becoming a little set in their ways. One of the protagonists in the story makes some highly unkind remarks about an anarchist planet, called Kropotkin, that he is about to visit. He is sternly admonished by his partner who gives him a run down on the fundamentals of anarchist belief and ends, "And never forget that anarchism is the noblest social philosophy that man has ever evolved. There is no better way for men to live together".

It is no accident that the science fiction magazines continually portray ideas that the average establishment man would regard as dangerously progressive. It is because *the very nature* of science fiction compels the writer, and therefore the reader, to examine what is wrong with society, where humanity went off the rails, and what the present political systems are leading to. As Edmund Crispin says in his introductory essay to his first anthology of science fiction for Faber & Faber:

There can be no doubt that science fiction is much engrossed with Doom . . . we are never going to understand the crucial reason for this unless we analyse the events from which, in these stories, the various sorts of nemesis arise; until we note how in *Dormant*, for instance the disaster is brought about by the arrogance, rashness and warmongering of man; in *The New Wine*, by the over-hasty application of a new scientific technique; in *No Woman Born*, by the foolhardy, if well meant, alliance of living organic matter with a machine . . . Science fiction is sceptical about *man*, it cannot in the ordinary way trust him to colonise other planets, other galaxies, without vandalism and brutality . . .

Now whether this is a good or a bad thing may be a matter for argument; but no one can deny that in 20th century popular literature it is a very new thing . . . only in realistic, "reported" fiction like Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, can an amoral attitude be maintained; the fancy, in story-telling demands decisions about right and wrong, good and bad, before it can consent to function at all—and every SF writer must make those decisions daily, whether he is conscious of doing so or not. Moreover he cannot rely on any mere *conventions* of morality to guide him, for he is constantly adumbrating dilemmas which in their detail, at least, are of quite unprecedented kind. And here is the nub of the matter. SF is not all pessimism: . . . but it certainly is all ethics, politics and sociology, is in fact a layman's textbook of vividly stated problems in those fields. In general the problems are implicit rather than consciously defined . . . but whether the author chooses to make them explicit or not, the problems are constantly there, *because SF's subject matter compels them to be there* . . .

To think about ethics, politics and sociology in macrocosmic terms may admittedly have its dangers but it is surely—in that it implies a consideration of first principles—a great deal better than never thinking about those

chronically relevant topics at all . . . the inexorable condition laid down by science fiction's subject matter will remain: readers will continue to have their noses rubbed in ethics, politics and sociology—not to mention religion—and will find the process enthralling.

*Science fiction is sceptical about man.* This does not imply that it is unsympathetic to man, indeed, the scepticism is in fact the result of a genuine sympathy for the human condition that is brought out again and again in all science fiction above the space-opera level. A story like *Flowers for Algernon* shows a concern for the human condition that is far removed from H. G. Wells two dimensional figures, which so often, in his "scientific romances" at least, seem merely devices to keep the plot rolling. This combination of scepticism for man's view of himself as "Lord of the Universe" and sympathy for his situation is brought out superbly in Francis Donovan's *The Short Life*. Here man is shown as a freak in a universe of telepaths. Such a freak that a story in which a writer on another planet imagines the development of a sentient non-telepathic race is laughed away as science fiction of the most improbable sort. The lack of ability to communicate clearly is held to be the reason why man developed a competitive authoritarian society instead of a co-operative anarchic one, and he is shown as a tormented frantically frightened creature trying desperately to cope with the fear and misery engendered by this unnatural competition. The Challon, the visiting race, are horrified by the results upon human beings of the coercive nature of human societies, and their reaction is very much that of the anarchist:

Thus a moral issue was raised. To the Challon, the control or coercion of an independent intelligence was a cardinal outrage. No greater sanctity existed than the sanctity of the individual, for anything that prejudiced or restricted the right of the individual to full mastery of himself was worse even than the deliberate taking of life. It was murder of the ego . . .

This particular story, under the guise of explaining the Challon to a human being, goes into a great deal of detail as to the nature of what human beings have termed "guilt" and "shame" and takes the view that only the development of genuinely sane individuals can save the human race.

*They Shall Have Stars* on the other hand, is a straightforward adventure story, of a fairly typical kind; a gigantic scientific project operating from Jupiter's satellites, ending with the development of anti-gravity and an anti-agathic drug. But all the way through the novel runs implicit criticism of Western society, by this time as repressive as Stalin's Russia. There is a vicious portrait of a McCarthy-like senator obsessed with defeating the wicked menace of communism and caring little that in the process he reduces the West to the same state that he deplors in Russia. It ends, hopefully for an SF story, with a group of people who have bucked the system setting off to create a free society in another solar system. Banal as the plot outlines may appear, the book is in fact a powerful attack on authoritarianism, power politics, and the evils of the military mind's concept of security.

A more depressing, and because of this, perhaps more typical novel is Vonnegut's *Player Piano*. This postulates an authoritarian society

with a rigid caste system based on intelligence quotients; as one of the characters says "A better criterion than money perhaps, but not much". For the hierarchy is built upon more than just intelligence. Someone in the ruling caste must be intelligent true, but intelligent in certain approved directions, i.e. management or engineering. The only way that this barrier can be crossed is by marriage, for, as one of the protagonists says ruefully, "some things never change. Big tits will still get you in anywhere".

The managers and engineers who are running the world after the third world war have in fact managed to create a society that is free from want and war; nevertheless they find themselves facing a revolution because in the long run people need more than "two meals a day and clean straw to roll in". The rising tide of unemployment in this highly automated society does not create any real physical want—nobody goes hungry—but all sense of usefulness is being taken away from the people. The present eight hours a day conveyor belt mentality has become the normal way of life for everyone, but as the have-nots include some very bright people whose talents do not run to management and engineering, the nucleus is provided of an intelligent underground movement. In the following quotes one of the underground is explaining to a potential recruit:

... This trouble we've got now, it's been going on a long while, not just since the last war. Maybe the actual jobs weren't being taken from the people but the sense of participation, the sense of importance, was. Go to the library sometime and take a look at the magazines and papers as far back as World War II. Even then there was a lot of talk about know-how winning the war of production—*know-how*, not people, not the mediocre people running most of the machines . . . Even then people didn't understand much about the machines they worked at or the things they were making. They may have been participating in the economy but not in a way that was very satisfying to the ego. And . . . this crusading spirit of the managers and engineers, the idea of designing and manufacturing and distributing as a sort of holy war; all that folklore was cooked up by public relations men to make big business popular . . . Now the managers and engineers believe with all their hearts the glorious things their forbears hired people to say about them. Yesterdays snow job becomes today's sermon.

Vonnegut's novel is, of course, in the tradition of the anti-utopias and ends in the usual depressing manner. After the revolution, or rather insurrection, and the initial smashing of the machines that accompanies it, the people leave the barricades and go back to repairing the machines that will put people like themselves out of work. Like much anti-utopian and anarchist writing the problem is stated and analysed efficiently but no solution is suggested.

On a more popular level a libertarian idea is often thrown away casually with no real discussion, nevertheless its presence can alter the slant of the book. Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*, for instance. This is a science fiction detective story set at a period when telepathy has become an accepted power for a large part of the population and psychotherapeutic techniques are much further advanced than at present. People like the hero/villian Reich who want a return to the 20th

Century system of power politics are regarded as sick people and treated as such. At the end of the book this conversation occurs: "Three or four hundred years ago the cops used to catch people like Reich just to kill them. Capital punishment they called it ". . ." But it doesn't make sense. If a man's got the guts and talent to buck society he's obviously above average . . . You want to turn him into a plus value . . . Why throw him away? Do that enough times and all you have left are the sheep". "I don't know. Maybe in those days they wanted sheep".

This particular novel, a popular entertainment mind, not a philosophical dissertation, ends in an outburst from one of the protagonists in which the following words occur: ". . . *there is nothing in man but love and faith and courage, kindness generosity and sacrifice. All else is but the barrier of your blindness . . .*" Such lines may not be brilliant, or new to the readers of this journal, perhaps, but they are surely a new thing in popular fiction.

A major virtue of science fiction is that even where no progressive or anarchist ideas are advanced, moral questions are discussed in a manner quite unheard of in the equivalent outlets for mainstream fiction. Blish's tour de force, *A Case of Conscience*, for example is written from the viewpoint of a Catholic priest who is the biologist on a scientific team surveying a recently discovered planet. As Crispin says, "It has been a long while since frankly commercial magazines could offer their readers a story of this calibre and still flourish in the process".

*A Case of Conscience* is something of an exception in its sympathetic treatment of religion. A far more common attitude is portrayed in Harry Harrison's *Alien Agony* which poses the question of the amount of harm that the introduction of religion would do to a race who had managed to develop without any concept of the supernatural, or of God. The authors standpoint here is that the harm would be enormous and irreparable, and this horrific little tale was written for a public that, by and large, would not normally regard the discussion of such hypothetical situations as an entertaining way of spending an evening.

It is this constant examination of moral, ethical, and social questions that makes science fiction so important in popular literature. For instance Philip Wylie, author of the "Crunch and Des" series for television, wrote a science fiction novel *The Disappearance*, using as his base the idea that most of the ills of human civilisations can be attributed to sexual maladjustment between individuals and an enormous dislocation between the sexes as a whole. In view of the validity of the following quotation it is difficult to understand critics like Tony Gibson continuing to dismiss SF as childish escapism.

We may by now be cerebral dinosaurs, using our brains as those animals used their bodies, merely to deal and ward off terrible blows. The human brain could have been meant for something else: not to promulgate one war after another for hundreds of centuries as we've done; not to promulgate ideas of shame and guilt either as has been done in the name of Christ for two thousand years; not to scrape up and waste every usable molecule of matter on the planet, as has been done since history shows a record: the human brain was meant for something else . . .

At another point the author says "It is expectable in a species that

has perverted its instincts for its immediate vanity (as religions, faiths, dogmas, dialectics, etc.) that strong cultural compulsions and taboos would everywhere surround the ancient potent instincts of sex, and such, of course, is the case. Western man's religions (and hence his culture) are rooted in sex management and sustained by incalculated sex fears. Disobedience of the sacred laws or the common rules is a sin or a crime. Sex hunger has been made shameful so as to elevate the vanity of man in relation to the other animals and so as to enhance the controlling power of cultural tradition and its agencies, the churches, the courts, and so on. The inescapable result is anxiety and tension in society; hypocrisy confusion, neuroses and madness; along with vast safety valves of vulgar activities in which libido is expended in acceptable forms".

I have departed from my own ruling to use the established magazine science fiction writers work as examples because this brilliant and little known book is one of the most convincing diagnosis of the ills of human society with which I have met, because it is an interesting use by a mainstream, if off-beat writer, of science fiction devices in order to deliver a message, and because it inspired a successor.

This was Theodore Sturgeon's *Venus Plus X* a book which owed its genesis to *The Disappearance*. In this book, which was serialised in the monthly *New Worlds*, the author postulates a society set up in isolation in order to preserve at least part of humanity from the coming holocaust. This isolated society is preserved from hatred and disruption by a surgically induced bi-sexuality and thus the avoidance of sexual conflicts avoids hatred in society generally. The idea behind this society is that of the essential oneness of humanity and the people who set it up believe, and the further development of it seems to show, that when this identity of interests is realised the artificial crutch implanted by the founders will no longer be needed.

Both *The Disappearance* and *Venus Plus X* are unusual in that there is a great deal of explicit philosophical discussion. This directly didactic approach is unusual in that the more common approach, doubtless forced in some cases on the authors by the exigencies of magazine publishing is to leave the philosophical implications of the story implicit and show any social theories actively at work among members of an alien race or on another planet. An excellent example of this is Eric Frank Russell's *And Then There Were None*. This portrays a planet settled by some followers of Gandhi and their successful thwarting of an attempted colonisation by an Imperialist Earth. The society portrayed is purely an anarchist one; land is owned by the person who is prepared to farm it, money is non-existent and the economy is run by a system of mutual obligation, combined with a fierce regard for individual independence. The word the visitors keep tripping over is *Myob* (mind your own business) and all public places have the "mystic" symbol  $F=Iw$  displayed prominently on the walls. Some of the more intelligent spacemen come to realise that this means "Freedom=I won't", and with the realisation that a mass refusal to take orders from self appointed authorities is the only road to personal, political and economic freedom large numbers of the earth delegation

begin to desert.

It is interesting to note that this story was written in 1950 and published in America during the McCarthy era, long before the current outburst of civil disobedience had got under way. It would be pertinent to consider just how much influence this much anthologised tale has had in forming the political opinions of the fallout generation. It might well be found to be far larger than might be supposed for a story published in a magazine called *Astounding Science Fiction*. William Sloane in his anthology *Stories for Tomorrow* said, (of *And then there were none*):

Human beings . . . resist regimentation with something deep and indestructible within themselves. Brute force, the tyrannies of power and orthodox disciplines can suppress and thwart this resistance, but the only drink in all human experience headier than pure alcohol is the well-water of freedom—individual freedom. No human being who has once drunk of it will settle for anything less . . . This is a story for patriots, for philosophers, and for anyone who suspects that the fetishes of a regimented order of life are worth merely the lip service they invariably demand . . .

This antipathetic attitude to force is a common one in science fiction. The theme of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, *Violence is the last resort of the incompetent* is indicative of the general science fiction writer's attitude to war.

An exception to this rule is Robert Heinlein, whose brilliant craftsmanship and story telling ability would make him a literary must if only he had decided to write "literature" instead of science fiction. His *tour de force*, "Starship Troopers", is one of the very few examples of retrogressive, one might even say fascist thought, in the entire range of science fiction writing.

This book is written from the viewpoint of a professional soldier 5,000 years in the future. The book won the International Fantasy Award for 1959 and is unique in the attacks that were made on the author when the award was made. The postulated future society of this book is a limited democracy in that an individual can only vote if he has first served a period in the armed services. Service is otherwise voluntary and every discouragement is put in the way of those attempting to enlist. The social order has restored flogging, for both adults and juveniles, and public hanging, and this has resulted, apparently, in the practical wiping out of anti-social behaviour such as child murder. This is all explained with such deadpan earnestness, and such complete disregard for such facts as we have on the causes of anti-social behaviour (and the deterrent effects of hanging and flogging) that it could be argued that his delineation of this future society was meant to point up the horrors of our own. It is always dangerous to attribute the ideas of a novel to the author, and those people who claimed that the author, in a country where the military were taking increasing control of public affairs, was trying to show the repellent nature of the military mind had a valid case. For it is certain that the mere act of trying to write objectively about a future "fascist" society would reveal it in such a brutal light that the reader would immediately recoil from it. Certainly a tremendous attack was mounted against Heinlein by those

who condemned the book as a glorification of violence, war and genocide, and it is therefore pertinent to quote two sections from the book where the philosophy of it's rulers is explained.

The first section is taken from the early part of the book where a sergeant at a training camp is explaining the "facts of life" to a new recruit.

... There can be circumstances when it's just as foolish to hit an enemy city with an H bomb as to spank a baby with an axe. War is not violence and killing, pure and simple; war is *controlled* violence, for a purpose. The purpose is never to kill the enemy just to be killing him . . . but to make him do what you want him to do. Not killing . . . but controlled and purposeful violence. But it's not your business to decide the purpose or the control. It's never a soldiers' business to decide when, or where—or how—or *why*—he fights; that belongs to the statesmen and the generals. The statesmen decide why and how much; the generals take it from there and tell us where and when and how. *We* supply the violence; other people—"older and wiser heads", as they say—supply the control. Which is as it should be.

The next quotation is taken from a discussion in a philosophy class at an officer training school.

... Both for practical reasons and for mathematically verifiable moral reasons, authority and responsibility must be equal . . . to permit irresponsible authority is to sow disaster; to hold a man responsible for anything he does not control is to behave with blind idiocy. The unlimited democracies were unstable because their citizens were not responsible for the fashion in which they exerted their authority . . . other than through the tragic logic of history. The unique "poll-tax" that we must pay was unheard of. No attempt was made to determine whether a voter was socially responsible to the extent of his literally unlimited authority. If he voted the impossible the disastrous possible happened instead—and responsibility was forced on him willy-nilly and destroyed both him and his foundationless temple.

A little later the student is given an essay to write proving that "war and moral perfection derive from the same genetic inheritance".

Some of his ideas on the subject follow:

Morals—all correct moral rules—derive from the instinct to survive, moral behaviour is survival behaviour above the individual level—as in a father who dies to save his children. But since population pressure results from the process of surviving through others, then war, because it results from population pressure derives from the same inherited instinct which produces all moral rules suitable for human beings.

Then after saying that limiting the birth rate will only result in the human race being "engulfed" he ends:

Man is what he is, a wild animal with the will to survive . . . Unless one accepts that anything one says about morals, war, politics . . . is nonsense. Correct morals arise from knowing what man *is*—not what do-gooders and well meaning Aunt Nellies would like him to be.

The universe will let us know—later—whether or not Man has any "right" to expand through it.

The obvious horror of this philosophy and the results of it shown in the body of the book, might well lead the reader into thinking that the author could not possibly have believed what he was writing. However, the appearance of Heinlein's *Day After Tomorrow*, proved beyond all doubt that Heinlein is that virtually unique creature, a fascist

science fiction writer.

This is certainly not apparent in his earlier work but in recent years he seems to have become obsessed with the idea of the "leader", the Nietzschean superman who will save mankind from itself. The kind of society he appears to endorse is fascist in the sense that Sparta was fascist. And from this he has developed the kind of jingoistic racialism that appears in *The Day After Tomorrow*. In this book the Pan-Asians, (the old fashioned "fiendish Chinese" in a new guise) have taken over America and are subduing it with the utmost cruelty. The whites (the American negro has apparently vanished) eventually triumph by "keeping the American constitution firmly in mind".

But the hysterical absurdities of Heinlein's later work do not invalidate the overwhelmingly libertarian tendencies of the major part of science fiction. In fact it could well be argued that part of the libertarian nature of science fiction is a built-in effect, for the setting of Heinlein's ideas in a science fiction medium show up, in sharper relief than mainstream fiction could ever do, the repulsive nature of his philosophy.

I have dealt with Heinlein at length because he is so atypical in the science fiction world, a fact that is evidenced by the furor his recent books have caused. But even his work contains elements of one of the most common themes in the medium, the "warning", or "this will happen if" type of novel. It is the ubiquitousness of the apocalyptic type of story that has led to the accusation that science fiction is purely obsessed with doom. This is untrue, but the writer takes the present trends and extrapolates from them. If therefore, there is a lot of doom in science fiction it is because the world today seems bent on suicide, a tendency that is hardly the fault of the science fiction writer.

One of the tendencies apparent to even the casual observer today is the rate at which big business and advertising control ever increasing areas of our lives and our society, and it is therefore hardly surprising that this tendency is often examined in science fiction. Two writers, working in collaboration who have achieved a notable success with this type of theme are C. M. Kornbluth and F. Pohl. Their most famous novel, *The Space Merchants* (unsubtle pun here, very common in SF) postulates a world dominated by giant advertising combines and as usual, the hero is the man who leads the revolution against the established order. It seems to be the tendency of this type of novel to take the attitude that there is no salvation on earth, and as in *They Shall Have Stars*, the revolutionaries steal a space-ship and make for another planetary system.

The other notable book by these two is *Gladiator at Law*, and is unusual in that the insurrection is successful. The Villian here is the ICI type of monopoly and the ruling powers put on vast and incredibly cruel circuses to distract the proletariat from their lack of nourishment, physical and spiritual. These circuses are in fact the Roman type of gladiatorial combat with all the refinements of technology that the times can provide, much as Nazi Germany refined and perfected the experiments in mass murder carried out by the Americans at Andersonville, and by the British in the plantation of Ireland. Once again the hero is

the rebel, the non-conformist. Fairly often, in this type of story the individual is defeated but occasionally some of the more optimistic writers assert that the individual can win against a monolithic authority, or at least can maintain his personal integrity against all attempts to make him conform, although he might lose his life in the process.

A really brilliant book of this type, and here I am again stepping slightly outside my terms of reference, is David Karp's *One*. Here, by a judicious mixture of elements from Kafka's *Trial* and *1984*, a terrifying picture of the future is created that is all the more horrific for what is left unsaid. In *One* the corporate society is firmly in the saddle and everyone is encouraged to send in reports on the people they live and work with. There is a constant statistical sampling of these reports, not for what they contain about the spy's contacts but for what they reveal about the spy. One of these, a professor at a university is gradually becoming perturbed at the continual decline in the amount of original thought in his student's work, but he continues to send in his reports on the students and fellow teachers. The point of all this is that anyone harbouring heretical thoughts about the state, or even anyone judged to be psychologically capable of forming such thoughts, is brainwashed and given a new personality, a new background, and is left with no memory of his former existence. The optimism of the book lies in the fact that no matter what is done to the main protagonist his individuality starts to show through. Since this book was written we have perceptibly advanced towards the type of society portrayed in it and therefore its message, that only death can destroy the personality completely, is a little more cheering than appears at first sight.

From time to time I have tangled with various people in the pages of *FREEDOM* because they appeared to be taking the absurd ideas of Kingsley Amis seriously. Amis's ideas on the medium appear to have come from a series of quick sample readings of SF material carried out in order to get a lecture tour of America, and his reputation as a light novelist should not deceive people into thinking his an adequately equipped intellectual oracle for such off-beat amusements as jazz and science fiction. One of his more astonishing blunders was to say that in science fiction the scientist is never wrong. Now this just isn't true. SF is as critical of the new gods as of the old and in fact a fairly hefty proportion of the medium is taken up with the defects, moral or otherwise of the scientist. Even where there is no direct criticism the SF writer tends to cut the scientist down to size by putting him in a situation where his science is useless. *The XI Effect* is a nice example of this type, as is Simak's *Beachhead*. Edmund Crispin's anthologies for Faber can be taken as fairly representative of the genre and in the first collection alone, a volume of 14 stories, contains four stories, that, to say the least, are a little sceptical of the automatic benefits of advanced scientific techniques. This characteristic, "to misdoubt, fairly seriously, the wisdom and moral responsibility of technological priesthoods" says Crispin in *Best of SF Two* is a healthy scepticism, for only by perennial widespread mistrust can the power of rulers of any kind—politicians, ecclesiastics, scientists, managers, trade unions, bureaucrats, bankers or commissars—be kept restricted within tolerable bounds".

An impressive instinct of this scepticism can be found in Frederic Brown's short story *The Weapon*. A scientist working on a new kind of ultimate weapon is visited by a man who tries to persuade him to stop his present line of research; the scientist, Dr. Graham, refuses saying, "I know all the arguments . . . possibly there is truth in what you believe, but it does not concern me. I'm a scientist, and only a scientist . . . advancing science is my sole concern".

Dr. Graham leaves his visitor to make him a drink. While he is doing this the visitor goes to the bedroom where the scientist's fifteen year old but mongoloid son lies, leaving what he terms a small gift . . . the doctor goes to see his imbecile son and finds him playing with the "gift". The final line of the story reads "*Only a madman would give a loaded revolver to an idiot*".

This straightforward little morality tale, so typical of the science fiction short story, completely negates Kingsley Amis's statement, a statement that could, in fact, only have been made by someone like Amis, who has the kind of superficial acquaintanceship with the subject that passes for expertise among today's "bright young dons".

In fact the type of scientist who acts as handmaiden to the military always comes in for fairly rough handling in SF, as does the military mind. Sometimes, it is true; one finds the "I'm only a simple soldier doing my duty bit" but in the overwhelming proportion of stories the professional killer is lampooned, satirised, or shown as the villain of the piece. An obvious example of this, too well known to be discussed here, is Mordecai Roschwald's *Level 7*. This horrifying picture of the all too probably future has been called by J. B. Priestley "the most powerful attack yet on the whole nuclear madness". Certainly it should be compulsory reading for the "lucky" administrators who are going to staff our RSG's.

A criticism that has been levelled at science fiction since it was discovered by the university intellectuals to be a useful and amusing eccentricity for "Lucky Jims" is that if its writers are going to concern themselves with ethics and sociology they might as well write mainstream fiction which can do the job better. This is as valid as saying that jazz musicians might as well give up and play "straight" music as both kinds use similar scales and chords. In fact the premise is untrue. If fiction is to deal with large general issues it can do so better by recourse to fantasy than by the methods of mainstream fiction; something that Thomas More, Swift, and Butler had already shown.

Edmund Crispin put this point well in one of his prefaces when he said, "Those of you who have read Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer*, will recall how often the book grinds to a boring halt to give Mr. Propter the opportunity for a lengthy lecture. If a science fiction writer wishes to be didactic he can demonstrate his point, showing Propters views in action among members of an alien race, and rub the point home with an account of the relationship between these beings and man".

An interesting example of this is Rex Gordon's *Utopia 239*. The first half of this novel is set in the near future when the world is divided up into police states of a 1984 type. A major atomic war is imminent



and a scientist who has devised a means of time travel is trying to persuade his daughter's lover to join them on their trip to the future, saying, "We are an old country and less frightened than most, but it is not in our hands. It is in the hands of the Americans . . . and the Russians . . . Fighting people are either bad people or frightened people . . . But there are no police to arrest the Pentagons and the Kremllins".

Now this is not exactly a literary masterpiece. It is only just above the level of women's magazine fiction. But I use this book as an example because the future in which these three find themselves is an anarchist society and the book goes into some detail as to how this society works. In the centre of the main town is a stone set up as a memorial to the founder of the community. It is inscribed with these words.

*The Gospel of this Community.  
That no one shall have the power to issue orders  
That a state of Anarchy shall prevail  
That freedom shall be unlimited . . . uncircumscribed by law . . . unfettered  
by taxation . . .  
Trial shall be by instant jury . . . malice alone shall carry punishment . . . the  
punishers shall be tried for malice.*

Later one of the members of the community amplifies their trial system and the way in which their social system works. "The young married couples live as single units or in complex groups of families; the young people live in their own community where their voluntary schooling takes place; there is a community of old people where the elderly can settle, *if they wish*, so that they do not spend their declining years alone . . . and we can afford to let the young learn by experience, rather than orders, we can create this community, because we carry no army on our backs, we carry no officials . . ." And of the "legal system" one of the men explains, "any group of men here at any time, can try any other group of men for malice. Your lives are in our hands and ours are in yours. A man . . . must call his friends together, meet, try, and inflict punishment on the spot. Then he is in turn tried for malice. It is a dangerous procedure. It is extremely likely that he will suffer the punishment that he has himself inflicted. For he has interfered with freedom, and every man's hand is against him unless he can show just and overwhelming cause. You can do what you like in that town down there provided only you injure no other person".

One cannot but reflect for a moment on the salutary effect that trying a judge and jury for malice would have on our legal system even as it exists at the moment. Basically the theme of this book is that government is slavery, and unnecessary slavery at that, and it is this view of the doubtful benefits that governments confer that makes science fiction so important at a time when centralised authoritarianism is becoming epidemic.

For instance Charles Eric Maine's *Subterfuge*, is basically a thriller within the science fiction format. I haven't the space here to discuss the plot but towards the end of the book the following questions are posed.

Does the State have the right to compel one of its citizens to work on a security project? Werner had tumbled on a discovery that could shift the entire balance of power in a world hovering on the brink of total war, but his inherent pacifism would never have allowed him to participate in the development of a new and more precise kind of ultimate weapon. Where then did individual liberty end and social duty begin? And so far as ethics were concerned, could the requisitioning of a man in the interests of defence and security be justified by any standards, particularly when it involved mental conditioning and indoctrination . . . Did Werner have the right to deny the State his services, or, in the final analysis, did the State have the right to enforce co-operation in any one of its subjects.

None of this may seem to be particularly original but in 1959, when that book was published it was a very new thing to find in popular fiction. The perfidy of governments is something of an obsession with Maine, and in his best book *The Tide Went Out* he gives a brilliant description of a catastrophe brought on by nuclear tests and the way in which the world's governments, using their control of police and armies, secure themselves on the polar ice caps, leaving 99 per cent of the people to die of thirst, starvation, and disease.

This idea is carried much further in Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo 90* in which pacifists have assumed government and "power corrupting" as usual, bring the world to the brink of the fourth World War. In fact this book is so complex and packed with ideas that it requires a long analysis to itself. Like Wylie, Sturgeon and Alex Comfort (in *Come out to Play*) he seems to find at least part of the origin of the lust for power in sexual maladjustment and under the slogan "Don't be a victim and don't victimise" he has written a complex novel of the manner in which the world's most idealistic government inevitably follows the laws of the nature of power.

Thus although science fiction stories on the simplest lever of appreciation can be regarded as fairy tales they differ from conventional fairy tales, (to paraphrase the doyen of the genre Edmund Crispin) in carrying a massive load of religious, political, ethical and sociological implication and so provide intellectual stimulation of a kind not met with in contemporary fiction. The critical examination of humanity and its institutions that plays so large a part in the medium could be considered destructive in that dilemmas and problems are pointed out far more often than solutions are suggested, but writers are not social engineers, and it is enough that, as the stupidities and cruelties of human governments and their pernicious effect on individuality are presented, science fiction gives to many people their first glimpse of what is wrong with our society. This is what really matters: in an age when all the pressure is on non-thinking conformity, science fiction enlivens and provokes the intellect, and strikes a blow for free creative thought at the cultural necrophiliacs who have dominated our culture and stultified our universities since the Renaissance started the educational vogue for feeding on the decaying corpses and doubtful virtues of dead cultures.

## England in the wild

ARTHUR ULOTH

RICHARD JEFFERIES IS GENERALLY KNOWN as the author of *The Story of my Heart*, not as a pioneer of science fiction. His strange prophetic novel, *After London* or *Wild England* is forgotten. It probably makes more sense now than it did when it was first published in 1886.

The nineteenth century had much greater belief in itself than the twentieth has. This confidence seemed amply justified by the rapid strides made in science and technology, and also in social reform. There had never been anything like it before. A genial optimism breathes in the works of Kropotkin and his predecessors. Although it was also a century of the most terrible social injustice, such as we today would be ashamed to allow, it was natural for many to believe that if so much had already been accomplished even more could be done in the future. A whole series of utopian novels were written such as Cabet's *Icarie*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and Morris' *News from Nowhere*. Few of them, except *Nowhere*, are read nowadays, and the twentieth century has not been prolific in utopian writing. Instead we get the prophecy of doom, *Brave New World* and *1984*.

It is doubtful whether this really shows modern people to be more enlightened than their grandfathers. Nothing has happened in the twentieth century that has not already happened many times before in the world's history. But in the nineteenth century slavery and genocide were carried on "somewhere East of Suez . . . where there ain't no Ten Commandments". The twentieth century saw these ancient scourges back in Europe again, after a couple of centuries of absence. It has been sufficient to produce a great engulfing wave of cynicism and despair, which may be even more unfortunate in its effects than the optimism of sixty or seventy years ago. A people who have lost faith in the future have none.

Richard Jefferies' book has more in common with such tales as *1984* or *The Lord of the Flies* than it has with anything in its own age. He begins with a long introduction, describing an England abandoned by its people. He writes as if from the point of view of a descendant of the handful of survivors, a man living in a medieval culture. This scribe has no real idea at all of what kind of catastrophe it was that emptied the land of most of its people. As in the Dark Ages, there is a sense of a great past, now irrevocably lost. There is nothing left but a few ruins, and nearly all the records have perished.

ARTHUR ULOTH's article on "John Rae and the Myths of War" appeared in ANARCHY 23. He has always been fascinated by the sort of literature which speculates about what will follow civilisation.

The scribe concludes that the population had sailed away to the west or south "where the greatest extent of ocean is understood to exist", where "none of our vessels in the present day dare venture", which explains why no word has come back from them, no rumour or news of any sort.

"As for the most part, those who were left behind were ignorant, rude and unlettered, it consequently happened that many of the marvellous things which the ancients did, and the secrets of their science, are known to us by name only . . . they also sent intelligence to the utmost parts of the earth along wires which were not tubular but solid, and therefore could not transmit sound, and yet the person who received the message could hear and recognise the voice of the sender a thousand miles away. With certain machines worked by fire, they traversed the land swift as the swallow glides through the sky, but of these things not a relic remains to us. What metal-work or wheels or bars of iron were left, and might have given us a clue, were all broken up and melted down for use in other ways when metal became scarce. Mounds of earth are said still to exist in the woods, which originally formed the roads for these machines, but they are now so low, and so covered with thickets, that nothing can be learnt from them; and indeed, though I have heard of their existence, I have never seen one. Great holes were made through the very hills for the passage of the iron chariot, but they are now blocked by the fallen roofs, nor dare any one explore such parts as may yet be open. Where are the wonderful structures with which the men of those days were lifted to the skies, rising above the clouds? These marvellous things are to us little more than the fables of the giants and of the old gods that walked upon the earth, which were fables even to those whom we call the ancients."

Society has broken down into a little world of villages and small towns. The geography of England has changed considerably. Rivers have silted up, and the ruins of London have blocked the outlet of the Thames, with the result that an inland sea has formed in the basins of the Thames and the Avon, and round this lake of fresh water are a series of viciously squabbling little city-states and petty kingdoms.

The Cymry come down from the West, claiming the land was originally theirs. The Irish also invade. The Gypsies are organised in independent tribes, raiding everybody else, and there are groups of still more primitive people, descendants of the tramps and vagrants of the old society. Every group is against every other.

A sort of Protestantism and Catholicism also survive, but intellectual, religious and artistic life is very restricted. One gets no sense, as one does with medieval Europe, of the great world stretching out all round, even if unexplored. There are no Marco Polos. The Channel is very nearly the limit of this claustrophobic little universe.

Society is based on serfdom and slavery. Although the overwhelmingly powerful Thought Police are absent, social control is just as tight, since everyone spies on and distrusts his neighbour. "Seen thus from below, the whole society appeared rotten and corrupted, coarse to the last degree, animated only by the lowest motives . . . As himself of noble birth Felix had hitherto seen things only from the point of view

of his own class. Now he associated with grooms, he began to see society from their point of view, and recognised how feebly it was held together by brute force, intrigue, cord and axe, and woman's flattery. But a push seemed needed to overthrow it. Yet it was quite secure, nevertheless, as there was none to give that push, and if any such plot had been formed, those very slaves who suffered the most would have been the very men to give information, and to torture the plotters."

The first part of the book gives a long description of the growth of the forests, and the reconquest by the wild animals, or by the feral strains that have developed from the domestic animals run wild. In our time every animal that is not domesticated is in immediate or ultimate danger of extinction, but in *Wild England* it is man who is only just holding his own. This section of the book is rather long, proportionately to the rest, and I think that the writer probably preferred to tell of animals and their doings rather than of men. Which is not surprising.

The second half of the novel is devoted to the adventures of Felix Aquila, the son of an aristocrat who is out of favour at court. He is a frustrated young man, indeed a remarkably modern type of hero, with little in common with the fine upstanding young Englishmen of Victorian popular fiction. He may be considered an honest self-portrait of the author, for he has the same introversion, love of solitude and nature, and a certain inability to cope with society as it is.

Yet, neurotic, lacking in self-assurance, inclined to delusions of persecution though he is, he is not an "anti-hero". One can not only sympathise with him, one can also to some extent identify, in a way that one cannot, unless one is highly masochistic, with Winston Smith, or the persecuted schoolboy in *The Lord of the Flies*. For despite his neuroticism he is capable of taking action, and of achieving things, once he is able to escape from the constriction of the world in which he has been brought up.

He collects such old books and documents as have survived from the previous civilisation, but his intellectual pursuits are out of place in a society of barbarian noblemen. He is skilled with the bow, but the sword is the weapon of his class. The bow is the arm of the commoner, and so is despised. Finally he sets out on the Great Lake, in a small outrigger canoe that he has built himself, to seek his fortune.

The Lake is one of the characters of the story. We see it in all its moods. Its sweet water, its currents, its storms, its shores, its sand-banks, its wild life are all minutely described. One almost wishes the holocaust would come, so that it will be possible to sail upon the waters of this beautiful inland sea.

Felix' efforts to take service under one of the petty kinglets comes to a disastrous end when he incurs the jealousy of a powerful baron, and he flees from mankind, out into the widest part of the Lake, coming at last to a strange land.

Gradually the tree-covered, bird-haunted islands, among which he has been sailing, give way to barren and uninhabited sand-banks. As he goes further eastwards a yellow vapour closes in around him, and the water, formerly so pure, is now flecked with floating scum. Eventually he lands on a bank of black sand. The atmosphere is now hot

and oppressive, and the water has acquired a dark colour, unknown elsewhere on the Lake, and an offensive odour that prevents drinking, so he turns inland in the hope of finding a spring. The whole land is covered with vapour.

"The sun had not sunk, but had disappeared as a disk. In its place was a billow of blood, for so it looked, a vast upheaved billow of glowing blood surging on the horizon. Over it flickered a tint of palest blue, like that seen in fire. The black waves reflected the glow, and the yellow vapour around was suffused with it . . . In the level plain the desolation was yet more marked; there was not a grassblade or a plant; the surface was hard, black and burned, resembling iron, and indeed in places it resounded to his feet, though he supposed that the echo came from hollow passages beneath."

He stumbles, as he thinks, upon a skeleton.

"Another glance, however, showed that it was merely the impression of one, the actual bones had long since disappeared. The ribs, the skull and limbs were drawn on the black ground in white lines as if it had been done with a broad piece of chalk . . ."

"Presently a white object appeared ahead, and on coming to it he found it was a wall, white as snow, with some kind of crystal. He touched it, when the wall fell immediately, with a crushing sound as if pulverised, and disappeared in a vast cavern at his feet."

He finds his way back to his boat, following his own footmarks, which glow with a phosphorescent light, and, although almost overcome by the fumes, he succeeds in escaping alive from this deadly region.

"He had penetrated into the midst of that dreadful place, of which he had heard many a tradition: how the earth was poison, the water poison, the air poison, the very light of heaven, falling through such an atmosphere, poison . . . The earth on which he walked, the black earth, leaving phosphoric footmarks behind him, was composed of the mouldered bodies of millions of men who had passed away in the centuries during which the city existed . . ." The bones he had seen were those of a treasure seeker who had stayed in the area too long.

The rest of the story is something of an anti-climax after this. Felix sails southward across the Lake and encounters a race of shepherds, among whom he rises to pre-eminence on account of his skill in archery, which was not appreciated among his own people. Here he is able to carve out for himself a kingdom, though of a more democratic kind than most. The shepherds have some elements of the Noble Savage in them. They are the least vicious people in the book. Yet one gets the feeling that the writer's powers of invention began to fail him at this point.

I am inclined to a belief that may seem mystical to some, namely that people are able to get a glimpse every now and then of the future, since time, as a series of consecutive instants of equal duration, is a convenience for purposes of measurement rather than a reality. What has happened is still going on somewhere. What is to happen is already happening now. J. B. Priestly's fantasy, *The Doomsday Men*, written just before the Second World War, contains the description of the explosion of a device of terrific power in a tower situated in the desert

of the American South-West. A distorted glimpse of the first experiment with an atomic bomb, or just a lucky guess?

Jefferies was thinking of the London of the Industrial Revolution, the city of the pea-soup fog. Yet sometimes he seems to describe even more deadly things.

"Upon the surface of the water there was a greenish yellow oil, to touch which was death to any creature; it was the very essence of corruption. Sometimes it floated before the wind, and fragments became attached to reeds or flags far from the place itself. If a moorhen or duck chanced to rub the reed, and but one drop stuck to its feather, it forthwith died." On reading this my first thought was of radioactive waste.

In the social sphere Jefferies foresaw the class divisions of nineteenth century English society hardening into *apartheid*. The slaves occupy completely separate towns from those inhabited by their masters. There is a description of the horror of his hero, when he finds that he has inadvertently sat down to share a meal with a man of the slave class. He manages however to overcome his repugnance, and even to shake hands with the man on leaving the house. Except that slaves and masters are all of one colour it might be modern South Africa.

This strange book has not the compulsive power of *1984*. Yet it wears better than many other prophecies, and could still come true. Orwell's book already seems a little dated; a future totalitarian society would more likely resemble *A Brave New World*. Wells' *War in the Air*, though it gives a fairly good compressed summary of World Wars I and II, and probably III, is dated by its technology. The air-ship never became the decisive weapon that Wells thought it would. But the sub-medieval society Jefferies describes could still come into being, indeed it is the most likely sort of society to do so after an atomic war, unless all life were obliterated.

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*EARTH ABIDES* by George R. Stewart, published in this country by Gollancz in 1950 and reprinted as a paperback several times since, is a long and competent novel in which an obscure airborne microbe wipes out mankind, all but a few individuals here and there. They are left (in the United States) with the vast storehouse and superstructure of modern civilisation from which to supply themselves with food, clothes, and tools. Otherwise they start life afresh from zero: no government, nothing in the way of constraints and restraints. The hero is a research graduate in a not very useful branch of science, but he can think usefully and ends by becoming a sort of god for the community he has organised. The story does not end as anarchists would like it to end, but for every reader it provides a constant supply of stimulation and a sort of permanent quiz based on such questions as: How would you tackle this problem? What would you do in these circumstances? The author writes with a Defoe-like verisimilitude, and a fascinating wealth of ecological detail.

## Burrowing for bureaucracy

JEREMY JOHN

IN MONCK STREET, WESTMINSTER, not 500 yards from Big Ben, are two enormous rotundas, growing from a huge, man-made crater in the earth, which look like the eyes of a cheap science fiction monster. All around them, in hollows in the ground and on mounds, are mechanical grabs, bulldozers and cranes. They are on a large site which is being built up, burrowed into, altered and protected by an incredible swarming army of engineers, architects, builders, drivers, labourers and Ministry security men. At first sight it looks like an ant-hill, or, less prosaically, a picture of one of the giant peasant labour forces in China building a new dam. But use a little imagination and it becomes a fantastically elaborate set for a new science fiction film about "the creature from the bowels of the Earth", with a cast of thousands examining the eyes of the vast monster which has been buried for centuries under the placid soil of London, enjoying a monstrous sci-fic sleep. The labour force is going to extricate it and, I presume, unintentionally let it loose to cause havoc in Central London, where it will eventually be destroyed by honest, cheerful troops and ridiculous, friendly policemen in their comical day-to-day uniform. In fact the site is not a film set but a deep shelter and the labour force is not extricating a monster but burying one—the likely central headquarters of the governmental system of post-nuclear war dictatorship. And, if it is to be destroyed, it'll have to be destroyed by the people, because the troops and police are too busy protecting it.

It seems appropriate to review "The Walter Report",\* which details the birth and development of the Regional Government system, in an issue of ANARCHY devoted to Science Fiction. The pamphlet seems to be an extraordinary fusion of fact and fantasy—but unfortunately it's all true.

Most of the material in the pamphlet was once covered by the screen of official secrecy and although it isn't any more it still remains largely inaccessible to the public because it has been released only in dribs and drabs here and there. Nicolas Walter has discovered many invaluable sources which he has listed—more turn up every day if one looks around—and from them he has gathered an astonishing amount of information around which he has written a pamphlet notable for its clarity and punch and available to as many people as want it. It's hardly surprising that it is *Solidarity's* all time best seller. It's not only the most generally interesting and most generally relevant thing they've done but it's also excellently produced—an example of just how good duplicated publications can be.

\* *THE R.S.G.s—1919-1963* by Nicolas Walter (*Solidarity* Pamphlet No. 15, published by Bob Potter, 197 Kings Cross Road, London, W.C.1., Sixpence).

When the R.S.G. "affair" broke last Easter with the publication by the Spies for Peace of *Danger! Official Secret*,† the existence of the Regional Seats of Government was taken to be yet another example of how cold-blooded the Government had become with its preparations for World War III. I remember being told at R.S.G. 6 on Easter Saturday that the R.S.G. network was part of a "foul Tory plot". I wonder if that Glaswegian trotskyst has since read this pamphlet and seen evidence of the complicity of the Labour movement in this "plot to destroy the working peoples of the world"? In fact the system of regional government, with regional commissioners and regional bureaucracy for regional dictatorship is forty-four years old and has earlier antecedents both here and abroad. Napoleon and Hitler favoured similar regional systems and in 1655 the English dictator Oliver Cromwell divided England and Wales into eleven regions, each under the control of a major-general who, in the last resort, had total power over his region. Ireland and Scotland were already under similar military governors so even the number of regions was the same as today, though they had different control centres and did not cover identical geographical areas.

We discover from Nicolas Walter that "the present system developed during the 'thirties as part of the Government's plans for dealing with air raids or invasion from abroad; but that system derived from the system developed during the 'twenties as part of the Government's plans for dealing with strikes or revolution at home". The system began in 1919 with the creation, by the Lloyd George Coalition Government, of an emergency supply and transport system (1919-26), the main function of which was to break strikes. Before the strike-breaking system was partially tested during the General Strike of May 1926, a parallel secret Civil Defence system, for use in international rather than class warfare, was being evolved (1924-38). This, in turn, became the open Civil Defence system of World War II, which evolved yet again into the secret Civil Defence system against which the Spies for Peace directed their pamphlet. The new pamphlet is well documented and gives the story in as much detail as the average reader can stand, let alone need. There is a useful bibliography and appendices for anyone intending to use the pamphlet as the basis for further research.

I found the last part of the pamphlet—about the present system of funk-holes—more pertinent than the strictly historical part. It is interesting, historically, to know that the Labour Party used the system against strikers in 1924, took part in it during World War II and recommended its revival in 1951 and 1955, but it is not very surprising! It's more to the point to know that the Government is building itself a huge shelter system in the West of England. Presumably this is to be the first luxury subterranean hotel of the New World Order which will grow up after nuclear war has obliterated all those people "unfit to rule". There may be something we can do about that; but history is unalterable unless one is a totalitarian.

We also discover that the London underground shelter system of

† Facsimile reprint available from National Committee of 100, One Shilling.

World War II has been modernised, altered and extended. Much of this information was printed by the press at the time but either most of us weren't around at the time or we didn't pay much attention. At the beginning of 1960, Chapman Pincher, writing in the *Daily Express*, said that many hundreds of civil servants were working in shelters, not deemed H-Bomb-proof, and that tunnels were being converted into offices for security staff and overflow staff from the Works Ministry, the Service Ministries and the Post Office. The tunnels, he informed us, were under Leicester Square, Victoria, Holborn and Whitehall and, according to Frank Gullett writing in the *Daily Worker* in September 1951, were originally built as atom bomb proof shelters for top bureaucrats, Cabinet Ministers and Defence Chiefs. In December 1959 Pincher said that a new system, designed to withstand anything but a direct H-Bomb hit, was being built outside London for "key people" and national art treasures, but not the public. This had already cost £10,000,000. In a later article, on Spies for Peace, he described the new shelter in the West Country as a "bomb-proof underground citadel for the central government". Nicolas Walter comments: "It would not be surprising if the Spies for Peace have turned their suspicious eyes to the Mendip Hills. The omission of any information about the central seat of Government from their pamphlet was disappointing". In any case, according to Mr. Henry Brooke, the best-loved public figure in Western Europe, less than a quarter of the estimated cost of the system has been spent so far, so there is time to look around. It is, after all, more real, more important and more frightening than science fiction.

This pamphlet is fascinating reading for any anarchist because it shows us precisely the extent to which modern governments can be trusted, and is an interesting case history of authoritarianism and political delinquency. It also shows the complete failure of the modern state to deal with the problems and contradictions implicit in its own unlimited power and, further, indicates an area in which the anarchist movement at large might usefully involve itself. There is plenty of "legal" spying for peace to be done and, as Nicolas Walter contends, "our best chance against our known and unknown rulers is that there are plenty more spies for peace".

## Teenage unemployment — what it really feels like

### TOM PICKARD

I HAVE BEEN UNEMPLOYED FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS. Since I left school I have had two jobs, one in a warehouse, this lasted for nine months before I was fired, the other was at Woolworths. I was there for two months, and along with five others was sacked for slacking.

It is a pleasant experience to be on the dole for this period of time, though it has its disadvantages; I mean when I want a job, and this often happens—you miss the pick in the hand feeling and the smell of the factory etc. (I think it's your mates you miss most). Of course you forget the clocking-in and the captivity bits—but then you want the job because the lass is up the stick or something, and you can't get it. Usually though, when they are there to get, the wages are so poor for lads, that I prefer my dole money.

And if I seriously wanted a job I couldn't get one because of my record: (which is not half as bad as some of the other lads' are).

Q: How many jobs have you had?

A: Two. One at Finneys Seeds and one at Woolworths.

Q: Why did you leave?

A: I didn't. I got fired.

Q: From both?

A: Yes.

Q: How long have you been unemployed?

A: Two years this Christmas.

Q: Which School and what standard achieved?

A: Firefield Sec. Mod. and I didn't take any exams because I was in the "D Form" all the way through.

Most of the interviews I've had, have taken this form, and I never got the job. Another disadvantage is the National Assistance Board. As soon as I applied for National Assistance they sent an inspector who comes snooping, makes snide comments about us not being married, and suggests I move on to another district in search of work . . . Move

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*TOM PICKARD is eighteen and lives in Newcastle. He has been unemployed for two out of the three years since he left school.*

on to another parish . . . That suggestion is mad. Tyneside is not the only black spot.

Snide things happen all the time on the dole, things which no one does anything about. Employers have a choice of a dozen lads, and therefore offer a very low price—knowing someone will take it. They know that pressure from parents—who want their kids working no matter what—gives them the opportunity to fix wages to their own liking.

Lots of lads hate being on the dole, because to many of them it means being out of pocket. The boys who have just left school and are entitled to no money because they've paid no stamps, and are too young to claim national assistance, will jump at the chance of any job. These are the lads who the car-wash firms are aiming at.

Every time I have been offered work at the dole, one of the jobs will be car-washing. If at any time I go in and ask what they have, car-washing will always be mentioned. All the lads who have been on the dole for long will avoid the car-washing firms. In any case it is the lads of fifteen who are preferred. They can be paid the lowest wages—£2. 17s. The hours are long and the breaks short. Half an hour for lunch. They are expected to work alternate week-ends. The job is very heavy and most of the boys can't stick it very long—but the money is better than they would get on the dole.

Usually after a week they are fired for sciving (resting?) or have had all they can stick and hand their notice in, which means they are on the dole again with no or little benefit. Usually most lads hand in their cards and so are not entitled to benefit for six weeks.

Once again they are at home during the day, being nagged at by their mothers for giving the job up, and for living off her. So the chances are that they will take another dead-end racket job, when it comes along, are increased.

Obviously as more kids leave school and fall into similar situations, the exploitation of the unemployed will continue. The Youth Employment Officers take little interest in this sort of thing and *no* action against it. I have heard an employer complaining over the phone that the boys sent to him were not suitable for the situation, and as a rate-payer he was being badly done to. The poor cunt wants his labourers with degrees. "I herewith return goods stamped *not suitable*. In future please send me best stock".

The officer at the phone was all "Yes sir, and no sir, and let me lick your balls". I don't know what powers or authority they have, but it is not used *against* the employers (that is in aid of the workers), but *for* them it seems. They are not there for the welfare of the unemployed (as I mistakenly thought till now) whatever they think—they aren't there to see us "done right by", to look after us. They are there to put us into categories and to know which one to send after which job, which ones Mr. Woolworth and Mr. Carwash wants, which one Councillor Smith wants for his comfortable, but modest little firm's office, and which thick and tough ones could be sent to Wimpeys for laying roads. (Though now they want the intelligent ones for labouring even.)

# Kenneth Patchen

CHARLES RADCLIFFE & DIANA SHELLEY

*Laureate of the Doomed Youth of the Third World War—*

KENNETH REXROTH.



REXROTH'S DESCRIPTION OF THE AMERICAN POET AND PAINTER, Kenneth Patchen, is only a small part of the story. Patchen is one of the few poets of the last thirty years who has lived up to his responsibility as a man and yet managed to create fine poetry. In the age of the Doomsday Machine and the State Machine this is quite as much as we had a right to expect.

Patchen is the poet of the lover, the protester, the revolutionary, the bewildered and the inarticulate as well as the doomed. He is opposed to authority and "bloodfed politics", opposed to war and the State. He is on the side not only of the "victims who know they are victims" but also "the victims who think they are winners" wrote Alex Comfort in an introduction to a Patchen collection. It is because of this uncompromising dual commitment that Patchen has been able to retain his integrity, both as a man and as an artist. He is not committed to East or West, black or white (he knows "that one of my hands is black, and one is white"). He is engaged in humanity. His "genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter". He recognises that each man is divided within himself, that no man can ever be certain. He has a strange duality himself. At times he would obviously be quite happy to tear down the whole authoritarian structure and cut the throats of those within it, but he also recognises that there has been too much bloodshed, too much cruelty, too much misery: "Until it changes, I shall be forever killing; and be killed".

Few details about Patchen the man have seeped through to the casual reader in this country. He was born in Ohio in December 1911, and was educated at the University of Wisconsin. As a young man he did a variety of jobs and worked in a steel mill, but since 1936, when he gained a Guggenheim fellowship for his first volume of poetry, *Before the Brave*, he has devoted his life to poetry, prose and painting. He is married. He is, along with poets like Langston Hughes, one of the originators of Jazz Poetry, some of which he has recorded. He has also made recordings of *Poemscapes*, *Love Poetry* and *Funny Fables*, which are enough to ensure his reputation and are available in this country from time to time. He has a soft and caressing reading voice, ideally suited to his own verse; anyone who has enjoyed or been moved by his poetry would be well advised to hear him reading it.

As well as being a writer of merit Patchen is a considerably talented painter—those who read ANARCHY'S nearest American equivalent, *Liberation*, will have seen his delightful illustrations, whimsical and tender, with their gentle or ironic inscriptions. From these alone one

can gather that Patchen is a solitary individual, "moving with the times but not in step". A man of courage and integrity, he has been blessed with a relatively small but enduringly loyal readership. Those who know his name have usually read his poetry; he is thus saved from praise without readership—the fate of so many poets. He is, in his publishers' words, "repaid by that carefully articulated curse (or cure) of silence which official circles have in all periods reserved for his kind". His poems do not appear, flashily set-out, in glossy women's journals, he is ignored by the literary lions, unpraised by *The Observer*, and as a result he has retained his honesty, his conscience and his ability to write. Henry Miller says of him that he "represents all that a poet should represent, whether expressing himself in verse, in prose, in painting or in his life".

Patchen writes in a contemporary language and his poetry, though not unintellectual, is seldom bogged down in a morass of unintelligible, esoteric intellectualism. He rigorously eschews the "rehearsed response". His poetry is often incoherent—the agonised scream of the witness of a public brutality. That it can be incoherent at such times is understandable and refreshing: poets have for too long been prone to understate glibly or ironically on such occasions—Patchen has no time for the apathetic shrug of the law-abiding citizen. Comfort has described the impression left by Patchen's poetry as "very like a blow in its total effect, and . . . equally impossible to analyse".

Patchen is arguably the foremost living poet of resistance; he has toughness and tenderness, passion and calm in the right proportions. He is rarely hysterical but his indignation at the failure of man to live nobly does not allow him to be dispassionate. He is a romantic (in the sense that Comfort uses the word in *Art and Social Responsibility*), a man with a sense of individuality which enables him to feel more intensely the universal agony, the alienation of man from a natural pattern of life, and the stupidity of people allowing this to happen. Like Comfort's romantic, his is the fight against obedience, the fight against death:

*"I should like to pray now if I can stay out of a trench to do it  
There is no war between us, brothers.  
There is only one war anywhere."*

Patchen is out in front, a trail-blazer for the better society who does not retreat into a cocoon of self-pity or excuse himself by saying that it is too early or too late. A man of humour and passionate conviction that men may prevail, he is one of the legion of active and vocal free men who may make a healthy society more than the pipe-dream of prematurely ageing revolutionaries. We are all indebted to him, "even unto the last and most fanatically ardent defender of the world" says Henry Miller.

Apart from the poems of anger, of despair and of horror, Patchen has written the most consistently beautiful love poems of this century. But even in love, he remembers his horror—now it is outside, something which must not be allowed to invade the last stronghold of freedom and peace: the love between a man and woman. "—Away from this kingdom, from this last undeposited place, I would keep our governments, our

civilisation, and all other spirit-forsaken and corrupt institutions". Sometimes his love is great enough to fill the universe, sometimes only a room; but then:

*"Any person who loves another person,  
Wherever in the world, is with us in this room—  
Even though there are battlefields."*

Many people who should know a great deal better are critical of Patchen. He has been described as everything from a right-wing stalking horse to a sentimental liberal of pseudo-human sympathies, a fey and childish purveyor of kitsch whimsy. To those who deplore his "superficiality" we can only offer *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*, surely one of the most notable books of this century. In it Patchen has erected a monument to Man's confusion, dignity and crass folly. ("Power" he says "is an image in the mythology of the slave"). It is the allegorical journey of a modern Everyman into the darkest and most frightening recesses of the human mind and soul. The journey is described poetically; with anger, compassion and intense imagination. The book is harrowing and witty, grotesque and beautiful. It screams, laughs and sobs its anguished message of love and pity. "Albion Moonlight is the most naked figure of man I have ever encountered in all literature" says Henry Miller. In the words of Comfort, surely (like Miller) not a man to be taken in by platitudes posing as a revolutionary literature: "In this century only Kafka has written prose as vibrantly alive and sensitive to every least cell change in the agonised flesh of these times as cries up from every page of *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*". It is a remarkable book, an extreme in the literature of dissent; coherent and tortured, bitter and tender, appalled and humorous, aggressive and calm. But, more than dissent, it is a supreme work of art produced against all the odds of the war-crazed forties. It is a book more relevant today than when it was written and one that no anarchist who cares at all for literature should fail to beg, borrow or steal—and read.

Alex Comfort has said that the existence of medical science and "this (i.e. Patchen's) kind of poetry are the only two factors which give contemporary Western life any claim to be called a civilisation" and he ended his introduction (written in 1946) with the words: "If the spirit of Patchen comes to reach a new conscript generation, if his poetry and his attitude to poetry gives the new generation a voice, there will be a sound in the street that will not be rain". There are signs that this is beginning to happen; despite Patchen, it may be too late; if it is, we can at least join him and:

*"... continue to praise truth and justice  
Though the eyes of the stars turn black  
And the smoking juice of the Universe,  
Like the ruptured brain of God,  
Pours down upon us in a final consecration."*

## Reflected in a puddle . . .

CATHERINE GIBSON

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO WORK BEHIND THAT WINDOW, there was only an asphalt passage with a brick wall running along the other side; a nice mellow brick wall, with a gate set in it, through which the primary school children poured four times a day, twice in and twice out. They ranged very widely, those children, in the matter of size and shape and general approach to life. You could see it all just by looking through the window, especially when they were coming out of school in the afternoon, because then they were at their most exuberant and uninhibited—or anyway less inhibited by accompany parents and the long day ahead of them.

One day in Spring, the asphalt was cut away by a gang of Council workers, leaving a tiny tree planted in the dusty soil beneath. It was quite a small round hole and the tree, which looked just like a bare stick, was supported by another stick. I can't remember how long it took them to put up the ugly circular wire guard, but after that the tree got no peace! It was like asking for trouble.

The children kicked the guard, they pulled it, they climbed up it, they stuffed things down inside it and poked through it to get them out again. No matter what the weather was doing, there was always an opportunity for some of the children to vent their spite on the Council's little effort to beautify the passage. If they had not put up the guard I think the tree might have survived. Its defencelessness could have brought out the corresponding desire to protect, and anyway it would have looked more potentially beautiful.

The children's imagination might possibly have seen the passage coolly shaded by spreading green branches and they might, perhaps have been seen standing around the hole in awed discussion. Better still if they had planted the tree themselves, or if the Borough Engineer had enlisted their help. Can you imagine what elaborate precautions might have been made to see the fulfilment of such a responsibility. But the ways of the adult world are to blunder on, reducing their graceful gesture to an insult, and their children to hooligans.

So although the tree did throw out some green shoots and look quite hopeful for a while, it was foredoomed. And long after it had withered away, the guard remained, determinedly surviving its purpose, which it had so lamentably failed to fulfil, stuffed like a rubbish basket with bottles, tins and papers. A council which had thought of a tree

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*CATHERINE GIBSON was born in Tasmania and lived in New Guinea before becoming a technical librarian in London.*



to beautify that spot, did not think of removing its pathetic wreckage.

Well they did remove it eventually, I think a year later, having given up hope of the tree at last. So the round hole in the asphalt was left to collect the rain and that is how the puddle came to be there. It proved to be more attractive to the children than the wire guard, and open to an even wider variety of attentions.

The small round hole was soon filled with water, and the dust became mud. There seemed only a few days in the year when there was no water and no mud, and only then was the hole ignored. It seemed to be an oasis of "unmake" in the finished, buttoned-up environment. Its influence was out of all proportion to its size. I am often impressed with the thought of how little things really are so much more important than the rather stereotyped plans we make for our lives—and the lives of others.

Here was a little mud and water, elemental and real, and the children shed their carefully instilled sense of the fitness of things, by coming out of school and stamping through it, or pushing each other into it, or stirring it about with a stick. One of the best things they have found to do, is to put a foot into the puddle so as to get it well saturated and then make muddy foot-marks as far as possible along the dry asphalt. Another good thing to do is to stamp on the surface of the water so that everyone around gets splashed. This always raises a great outcry, especially if adults are around, and many a child gets dragged home amid general recriminations.

Then there are the small children who fall into it because they are not looking where they are going. They too usually have parental scoldings added to their discomfort, and are surprised, I'm sure, to find how difficult life can be.

Some children are not interested. They go about their business solemnly, perhaps because they are in charge of smaller children, or because they have ceased to see their surroundings. Perhaps puddles to them are just one more thing to be avoided in life. You can't after all, expect children to keep their freedom for long with so many things to harass them. Its surprising how quickly they come to learn to adapt themselves to life. I've watched a child's face change from wondering anticipation to apprehension in a few months. It would be a long journey back to wholeness for that child—and this because some adults were themselves incomplete, and in their own fear, planted inadequacies in virgin soil to prove something to themselves. To reflect yourself in someone else, if possible permanently, is a great comfort. For all their talk of children needing security, it seems that it is *adult* security which has to be bolstered up by bullying and moulding children: adult reality that must express itself in reassuring repetition of unrealities.

So the joyless ones, the disenchanting, look askance at the ones who still like to squelch and spatter. When it rained the drops danced very merrily in the puddle, and when it snowed, the puddle was obliterated in the uniform whiteness, and even the dullest child is not proof against such temptation to every sense—and some could even discover a midget skating rink beneath the powdery surface of the puddle.

In the summer when everything was hot and dry, the school was

closed and the gate shut. Two little boys came back to the puddle just to be sure it was still there, and scattered the dust with their cricket bats. And then this autumn the Council men came to re-surface the passage. The children were enchanted with the smell of hot bitumen and in the expertise of the asphalters. But the puddle is gone, and their heels drum along the new black surface unchallenged and undistracted by the glimpse of another world beneath.

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## Correction to Anarchy 33:

In the bibliography of Alex Comfort the first item on p. 358 should read:

*Art and Social Responsibility* Falcon Press 1947

and the following item was omitted from the second section on p. 358:

*Social Responsibility in Science and Art* Peace News 1952.

## Anarchy to cost more

ANARCHY enters its fourth volume next month, and we have reluctantly to raise the price and the subscription rate. Since this journal began in 1961 each item in the cost of producing it has risen—paper, typesetting, printing, binding and postage.

From January therefore, the price of ANARCHY will be increased to 2s. (30c.) a copy, and the annual subscription rate to 25s. (\$3.50). The airmail rate will be 47s. (\$7.00).

The price of FREEDOM will remain unchanged at 4d. and its annual subscription rate will stay at 20s. (\$3.00), or by airmail 45s. (\$7.00).

The combined annual subscription to ANARCHY and FREEDOM will go up to 40s. (\$6.00).

Unexpired subscriptions will be honoured at the old rates. A number of readers have still not yet renewed their subscriptions for 1963. They will greatly assist us, and avoid possible confusion if they post their renewals (at the old rate of course!) before 1964. Apart from administrative considerations, we badly need the money to meet Freedom Press commitments for this year.

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