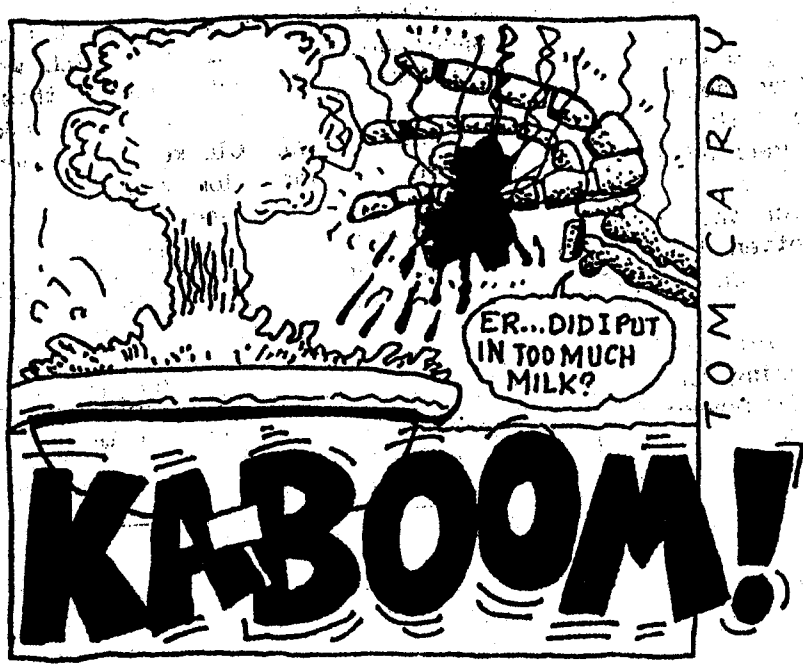
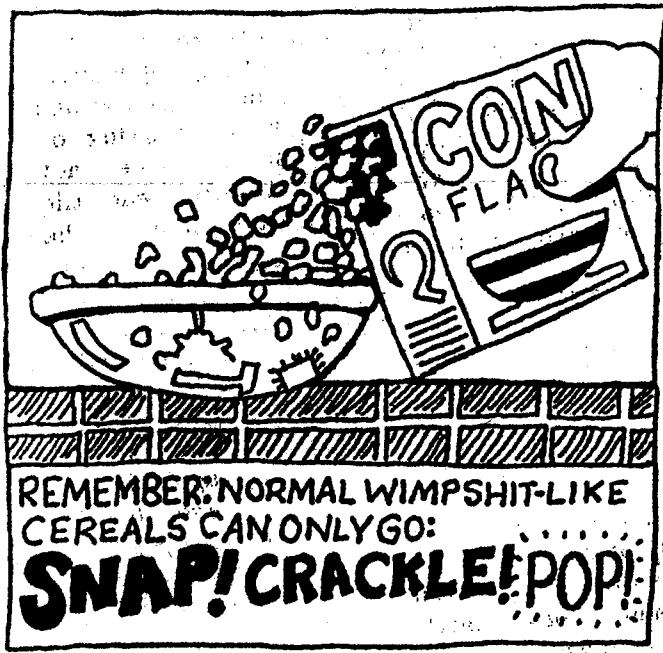


HOW TO SPOT A CEREAL KILLER



TOM C. ARDY

FUCK THE TORIES

THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE WORKERS, SOLDIERS, PEASANTS AND GREEN VOTERS OF THE 22 DENBIGH STREET PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY COLLECTIVE (ANARCHIC)

Dated September 1989, and slightly later than we'd initially promised ourselves it would be (but not so's you'd notice — and did we ever tell you our schedule anyway?), the spiffing seventh issue of this wondrous proletarian etc. etc. fanzine crunches hungrily through your mailbox, brusquely shouldering aside all the other unsolicited fannish ephemera and acting (for at least the duration of this paragraph) just like the tediously unreconstructed sub-Trotskyist vanguard of the vanguard its past rhetoric has sometimes presented it as. "The masculinisation of the struggle", as Beatrix Campbell once described this sort of behaviour; in this instance doubtless a side-effect of the fact that *this issue contains no Judith Hanna article at all!* Despite having been given innumerable deadlines by which to finish either her ideologically correct account of a trip to North Wales or her equally impeccable examination of the guppie lifestyle, Ms Hanna preferred to squander her hard-earned leisure time reading detective trash borrowed from the local library and toiling on her mighty Georgette Hayer thesis. (Georgette fucking Hayer! I ask you....the fact that -- and I can scarcely believe this either — *D. West* is reported to read the stuff too does not make it any more respectable in the eyes of the other half of the editorial team.) So here's what you can look forward to instead:

FORWARD INTO THE PAST: OR TELLING LIES AS USUAL? --

Joseph Nicholas	page 3
TWO THOUSAND WORDS: A SHORT, GRITTY HISTORY OF A SMALL SEEDY ROCK VENUE — Gwyneth Jones	page 11
A POEM — Peter Darby	page 14
THE PHILOSOPHY OF FLIGHT -- Leigh Edmonds	page 15
A SHORT RANT, WITH EXAMPLES -- Joseph Nicholas	page 18
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The cover is by Tom Cardy, New Zealand fan currently resident in the UK; the internal illustrations have been looted from the usual sources (some of which we can't now identify because we neglected to write them down). The printing of this as of the previous two issues was done by Rob Hansen, to whom many fulsome thanks are due. The electrostencils for this issue were provided by Vince Clarke. The soundtrack for the paste-up was provided by R. E. M., The Pogues, Transvision Vamp, The Stone Roses, The Men They Couldn't Hang, and The Darling Buds. Other sponsors wished to remain unidentified, fearing for the future of their corporate image. The editorial address, for those who've forgotten it, is: Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, United Kingdom.

This fanzine is available for all the usual reasons, and supports all the usual liberal causes -- including the slow flaying alive over a low flame of Mrs Margaret Thatcher. Next stop: the Soviet Union and Soviet Central Asia (it's where we're going for our holiday this year). Judith Hanna for a fanwriter Hugo!

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**FORWARD INTO THE PAST:
OR TELLING LIES AS USUAL?**

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Our first visit to Silbury Hill and the stone circle of Avebury, with our friend Keith from Basingstoke, was made in March 1987 but was thwarted even as we arrived by an unseasonal snowstorm which reduced us to peering disconsolately at some sheep huddling in the lee of one of the stones before going away again. I have some photographs of the visit: they're very picturesque, but you can't see much.

Our next visit was more successful. It was the last day of September 1988: a glorious early autumn day at the end of a long, late summer, with the leaves just beginning to turn and a hazy sunlight slanting across the fields, creating the kind of atmosphere that brought to mind the poet's line about autumn being "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". Standing on the south-western earth bank of the outer circle, looking across to the enigmatic conical mound of Silbury Hill, one felt again some distant echo of the ancient agricultural rhythms of the neolithic societies that had built these monuments; of a way of life more in tune with the landscape than our present urban experience. Others perhaps felt the same: the weather had brought out a goodly crowd of visitors to walk around the village, take photographs of the stones, and buy up the contents of the gift shops. Not to be outdone, we loaded ourselves with picture postcards of tranquil rural scenes, archaeological guides to barrows and hill-forts in southern England, and home-made quiche from the local restaurant — an establishment decorated, as one might expect from its idealised rural location, with dried flowers in polished copper kettles and stripped pine furniture — but managed not to pay any of the inflated prices being asked for the stuff in the nearby craft shop: pottery and paintings allegedly "inspired" by the stones and their timeless mysteries, and displayed to a backdrop of meandering New Age music, long sequences of tinkling minor chords presumably intended to lull one into a false sense of the materials' worth. Nor did we buy anything at the National Trust shop, an emporium crammed (as all their shops seem to be) with testaments to the cult of the country house: tins printed with pictures of them, pot-pourri sachets supposedly mixed to some old manorial recipe, gardening calendars modelled on the year-books maintained by faithful old retainers, and more heritage nonsense than you could shake a stick at.

The next day, back in Basingstoke, we visited the ruins of Old Basing House, levelled by the victorious Parliamentary forces after a long siege during the Second English Civil War and now little more than a set of foundations and cellars — most of the bricks and stones that formed its upper storeys having been carried off and used to construct the houses in the village below. The brickwork that remained above ground, now tumbled and overgrown, was turned an attractive golden orange colour by the late afternoon sun; and the ticket attendant remarked that she'd never seen it looking this gorgeous. Some sort of Civil War pageant had obviously been under way earlier that day: a flag still flew from a pole by the entrance, and a couple of people in costume were drifting around. Later, as we explored the site of the kitchens and pantries, we were overtaken by a party of other visitors conducted by one of these costumed individuals, who unlocked the grille covering a concealed passage that led out under the bastions and invited us to thereby relive the exciting days of the siege by imagining that we were sallying forth on a night raid to the Parliamentary lines. As serious historians, all three of us declined: we wanted to have a look at the exhibition of Tudor and Civil War objects recovered during recent archaeological excavations, to examine the bulk of the still intact Grange Barn that stood outside the House's grounds to the north, and to study the way in which the landscape around the House had been continuously reshaped by human endeavour — the construction of the bastions, the cutting of the Basingstoke Canal, the embankment of the London to Southampton railway — and thus how it differed from that around Avebury: because while the stones had been gradually broken up over the past few hundred years (or at least until William Stukeley put a stop to the practice in the eighteenth century), the landscape in which they were situated hadn't altered at all.

Earlier this year, on the Saturday before May Day, we visited the Devil's Punchbowl

and the White Horse of Uffington, in the Vale of the White Horse to the east of Swindon, and walked along the Ridgeway Path between the two -- the ancient neolithic track that runs along the crest of the chalk downland from Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire to Avebury, and which is preferred now as it was then because it keeps the walker to the well-drained turf above the springline....although in neolithic times, presumably, the walker would have looked north to a seemingly endless stretch of uncleared forest rather than, as today, over the neat little fields and villages of the Vale. Although in fact on that day we couldn't see much of the Vale at all: haze and mist dominated, and it wasn't until we'd reached Uffington Castle and White Horse Hill that it began to lift.

From the Castle -- an earthwork in which little excavation has been done -- it's difficult to gain any impression of the Horse; so we descended the chalk scarp to Dragon Hill, the flat-topped and obviously human-constructed mound at the foot of the scarp which Judith, citing parallels from Irish myth, learnedly suggested had probably been erected as a ceremonial stage for funeral games in the so-called Manger, the sculpted hollow running off from them both, the whole lot being sacred to the Celtic horse-goddess Epona. Except that the Celts hadn't bothered to write down any of the myths about their deities, so this was really just speculation based on whatever the Romans had misunderstood. But there, on top of Dragon Hill, as though demonstrating that earthiness predominated regardless of the epoch, a couple of gawky adolescents sat giggling at the pictures of half-clad women draped in unlikely poses across the pages of some wank magazine, doubtless ready to fertilise the soil the instant our backs were turned.

A helicopter clattered past above, heading west. We photographed the Horse, and started to climb back, noticing that the helicopter was turning back. Below, on the narrow road up from the Vale, a police car drove slowly down towards a couple of vans, blocking their passage. We stopped and sat while I removed a stone from my shoe; the helicopter, POLICE visible on its side, was now drifting in a slow, wide circle around Dragon Hill. (For several seconds, it was hovering directly above me; and I was so engrossed in watching it that I quite forgot to take a photograph.) As we passed over the brow of the scarp and walked back towards the Ridgeway, it was preparing to land next to the Castle, and more vans seemed to have joined the two stopped on the road below. We paid it all no more attention until, driving along the road that runs along the foot of the scarp so that we could see more of the Horse, we passed yet more of these vehicles -- and realised, with a sense of delighted surprise, that we had come face-to-face with the Peace Convoy, converging on the Horse in their battered old trucks and buses to celebrate the ancient pagan festival of Beltana. Some sort of encampment had been set up below Dragon Hill; dogs loped about and bed-rolls were being spread; and for once they appeared to have completely outfoxed the cops. Not bad for the "medieval brigands" of Margaret Thatcher's fevered imagination: people who have rejected twentieth-century cultural values in favour of a return to an earlier, simpler way of life; people who are making a heroic effort to live literally outside the system, whose way of life is dictated by the rhythms of nature itself, and who are harassed wherever they go presumably because of the threat their good example poses to us hide-bound townies.

Except that this is just a load of hippy bullshit. Drivel about the ancient rhythms of nature and the need to rediscover the virtues of living next to the land is precisely that: drivel. (And probably New Age drivel to boot -- right up there with astral massage, healing with gemstones and all the rest of the pyramidological mumbo-jumbo.) The so-called "timeless mysteries" of the Avebury stones have nothing whatever to do with neolithic people being supposedly better attuned to their environment, and everything to do with the fact that since they were illiterate anything we can say about their monuments is just an educated guess. The White Horse of Uffington may indeed have been sacred to the Celtic goddess Epona -- but to suggest, even by implication (as the Peace Convoy were doing), that we should continue to structure our lives around earth-related festivals is simply ridiculous. Like: cultures evolve, or are eclipsed. Castles get smashed up in civil wars, and have railways built over them. Landscapes change, whether we like it or not. And most of us don't even live in the countryside anyway.

The predominant environment experienced by most people in Britain, today and for the last hundred years, is the city. Some seventy to eighty percent of us live in or around urban conurbations, and depend for our livelihoods upon the work and the wealth generated therein. Attempts to pretend otherwise, and that contemporary society can be restructured around a mainly rural base, are simply attempts to evade contemporary society's complex nature -- to pretend somehow that this complexity not only isn't necessary, but can actually be disposed of without causing anyone any harm or inconvenience. This is bollocks. I prefer writing on a computer to a typewriter, and I couldn't have either if there wasn't something called the international division of labour, the production line, and the marketing system -- all three of which could not survive such a restructuring. Instead, we would doubtless spend our evenings and weekends weaving our own cloth on handlooms illuminated by a biogas generator while other members of our family threw clay pots on our hand-built wheel, painted elegant little watercolours and composed new songs on mandolins and bodhrans of our own manufacture. Or so the exponents of this new way of life would say, claiming how much more creative we'd feel when liberated from the drudgery of the nine-to-five office routine. The reality is that we'd spend most of our leisure time asleep, too exhausted to do anything creative because we'd be worn out from the effort of labouring in the fields all day, the inconvenient facts about which have had to be omitted from the idyllic alternative futures on offer in order to prevent us laughing out loud at the absurdity of them all.

But simply pouring scorn on the exponents of this new rural idyll evades precise identification of the real culprit, one that is merely being appropriated as a foundation for their ideas. This is, in short, the "English rural myth": the belief that the countryside lies at the heart of our identity as a people, and that its forests and streams and hedgerows, its villages and farms, its sense of community, provide some sort of clue to our national character. As an ideology, this myth manages to combine the practical with the romantic by suggesting -- in some unexpressed and un-historical way -- that the ever-present desire of so many people to escape the pressures of city life, even if only for a weekend, by visiting the countryside is in some sense a rediscovery of their roots, and that they return from their canalside ramble or moorland hike not just psychically refreshed but also re-united with the spirit of their forebears. Surprisingly, this is not a point that Marion Shoard pursues in her admirably documented study of the fight for access to the countryside, *This Land Is Our Land*, and its omission is thereby all the more remarkable. Instead, we get the usual line that people who toil in the city all week pursuing bits of paper across an air-conditioned desk welcome the chance to escape to a "simpler", more "natural" environment in which the sound of birdsong and the sigh of the wind in the treetops replaces the clicking of computer keyboards.

And, actually, they do, and I'd better own up here and say that apart from an interest in history this is one of the reasons why I too like visiting the countryside: because working in an office all day *is* stressful, and to stroll the Ridgeway Path on a sunny Saturday *is* relaxing; and I think more people should do it. In fact, more people are doing it: walking in the countryside is now the most popular outdoor recreation, indulged in by 19 percent of the population (well ahead of the 2.7 percent who support football and golf), and membership of the Ramblers Association, currently around 60,000, has been steadily increasing over the past few years. And because more people are visiting the countryside, they are more often coming into conflict with those who actually live and work there.

I'm going to grip my wrists very hard and try not to indulge in a lengthy rant about the environmental damage that intensive modern agricultural techniques have done to the countryside -- the hedgerows ripped up, the trees cut down, the SSSIs and AONBs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) ploughed under, the soils degraded by chemicals, the innumerable species of plants and insects extinguished....and so on. Those interested in the raw statistics can read *The Theft Of The Countryside*, another of Marion Shoard's investigations of contemporary land use, and one of a small but growing number of books that to some degree question (in this case from an environmental standpoint) what farmers are up to. (Richard Body's *Farming In The Clouds* is also very good.) Farmers are

understandably rather resentful of all this -- there they are, labouring away to produce cheap food for all the family, and along come these middle-class townies telling them what a mess they're making. (Although Richard Body is a Tory MP for a rural constituency, and on the party's record someone who might be thought to support farmers regardless!) Nor does it help matters that the townies are generally right.

In their defence, farmers can of course point to the fact -- as alluded to earlier -- that the countryside has always been subject to change; that the landscape about us is not natural, but shaped by thousands of years of human pressures. Once, long ago, the British Isles were once covered with trees; now they're covered with fields and moorland. The Highland Clearances following the 1745 rebellion didn't remove only the crofters, it also levelled the forests that stood there to make room for the new owners' sheep. Many of the hedgerows that biologists and conservationists now seek to protect are the product of the comparatively recent enclosure of old common land and mediaeval open field systems. Coppicing and pollarding are things you do to trees deliberately, to make them grow poles -- once much in demand as lances and quarterstaves, but also (less aggressively) fenceposts and firewood. The Norfolk Broads aren't natural waterways, but turbaries cut in the Middle Ages. And so on -- the virtue of W. G. Hoskins's *The Making Of The English Landscape* and Oliver Rackham's *The History Of The Countryside* is their recognition that these changes are not to be lamented but analysed: given a historical context and shown as inevitable rather than held up as a sad fall from some former state of grace. All that's happened since the Second World War is that the process of change (like technological development) has speeded up: what once took a generation or more now takes only a few years. Hence, possibly, some of the conflicts between ramblers and farmers. We visit the countryside because we feel the pull of the English rural myth -- but when we get there we find that the timeless rhythms and such that we came to experience are being destroyed. Our national character is perceived to be under threat, and we react accordingly. And farmers in turn seem to have a tendency to respond by confusing concern for the environmental effects of modern agriculture with pursuit of the sort of rural idyll referred to earlier, pretending that a desire to preserve the heath fritillary butterfly is identical to a desire to live in a teepee and eat industrial quantities of brown rice. Interfering townies are loony conservationists are the Peace Convoy; this proves things.

"People seem to wish to conserve the countryside as they remember it through the rose-tinted vision of childhood and adolescence," wrote a Welsh farmer named I. B. Gambold in *The Guardian* for 8 July 1989. "But their grandparents would have remembered things differently, and their parents before them also." Two days earlier, another, older farmer named Tony Harman had contributed just such a reminiscence to the same newspaper: "While the arable fields were yellow, the meadows were white with big dog daisies, and later dark yellow with buttercups, or sometimes both together: patches of white and patches of yellow. In among them, if you looked, were little purple orchids. The arable fields, almost as soon as the charlock flowers had fallen off, suddenly became bright scarlet with poppies. There are still fields with poppies, but not many.... All these things one noticed while walking, because the pace of life was slower. They stick in my mind especially on the occasions when I was walking cows home from the farm sales: once in July, all the way from Lee Common, with an enormous variety of hedges on the way. You couldn't drive a cow from Lee Common now: too much traffic about, too many suburban houses with their gates open and angry men in the gardens who would roar at your cow if she looked at them, and would send her speeding on her way at a pace you couldn't keep up with."

Apparently this particular farmer was the star of a TV series called *Seventy Summers*, which appears to have been devoted to this sort of nostalgia. Doubtless he'd read Fred Kitchen's *Brother To The Ox: The Autobiography Of A Farm Labourer*, which is full of such bucolic meanderings -- a "warm, humorous and unsentimental" book, according to the blurb, which manages to avoid saying anything much about the actual physical hardships of having to get up at some godawful hour of the morning to harness the ploughing teams, or working seven days a week every week of the year, and sometimes not having enough to eat because there wasn't any work available. It was republished a few years ago in Penguin paperback as part of their "Country Library": a uniform

series about the wonders of rural life before the coming of the milking machine and the mechanical hedge-flail, each with a sepia-tinted photograph of an Old Country Activity on its front cover. Another title was George Bourne's *Change In The Village*, a chronicle of life in an obscure corner of Surrey around the turn of the century, full of chummy, happy characters who....but you can probably guess the rest. I'm surprised someone hasn't yet bought theme park rights to them both.

But I thought Britain already was a theme park, answers the archetypal Rich American Tourist. Well, almost, I reply; but first you have to stop selling us Trident nuclear missiles so that we can finally give up our dreams of glory and learn to appreciate our true place in the world. We might even tug our forelocks for you as we stick out our hands and demand a tip in an incomprehensible Mummerset accent. "God bless you missus, I be splining these pluckets, see? With me crantling hook, like....got to get your pluckets splined afore Lukeaside or they shrivel up quicker than a cream split on the devil's bum, as we say around here."

That in fact was another quote from an article in *The Guardian*, this time by someone skilled in laying dry stone walls, relating how he was invited to participate in the "Merrie England industry" by "a young entrepreneur hoping to make a living next summer by organising guided walks for holidaymakers, the gimmick being that during these walks the clients would encounter a craftsman doing something picturesque and traditional". My giggles were probably no louder than his. Truly, this is the heritage industry gone beserk.

"Heritage" is a term of relatively recent provenance, and seems to have become accepted as a sort of catch-all replacement for "history". But (despite the constant renaming of museums as "heritage centres") history and heritage are not identical: whereas one seeks to analyse past events -- to explain not merely what happened, but why -- the other deals primarily in nostalgia, and although seeking the active participation of its audience at the same time attempts to exclude their questions. While history demands that the past be mapped against the present in order to explain and even to reform it, heritage wants no more than an acceptance of a particular view of that past. And the term "heritage" of course comes freighted with many of the ideological elisions I mentioned earlier; that, together with the English rural idyll that it incorporates, it defines what made us. And thus, similar to people's expectations of what the countryside ought to look like, seduces us into believing that the past ought to be static too: that history has come to a stop, and that the present is an aberration that needs rapid correction.

This is part of the thesis of Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry: Britain In A Climate Of Decline*, which is perhaps the most critical of many recent works on the subject, and one which (if only because it's more of an extended essay than a proper book) is certainly the clearest. Hewison claims, essentially, that an excessive concentration on the past is unhealthy because it represents a retreat from the challenges of the present, and in particular of coping with the changes the present brings. (Particularly the social and political changes necessary to recognise that we're no longer a world power and ought to behave accordingly.) In short, it denies change -- and thus has to repudiate the future by attempting to make the past seem more attractive. The easiest way to do this is by sanitising the past, taking out all the dirt and squalor and brutality and concentrating on colour, romance, chivalry and honest artisans plying their traditional crafts while kindly squires look on. One obvious example of this is the groups of people who dress up as mediaeval knights and squires and entertain the tourists with mock jousts and tournaments on summer holiday weekends; some of their recreations may be very faithful to the historical model, but by omitting peasants, disease and poverty it presents only a partial picture. But the worst example, in terms of the knowing falsehoods it seeks to present as objective truths, is undoubtedly the National Trust's fetishisation of the country house: its focus, often to the detriment of its other properties and activities, on one particular example of rural living, and its attempt to build it into a historical paradigm full of resonance for the present. And to a certain extent the National Trust has succeeded: why else would magazines like *Country Living* and *Traditional Homes* now clog the shelves of the newsagents, offering a glimpse into a

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world whose pedigree is manufactured and whose social role is non-existent?

It doesn't take a genius to point out how false this sort of thing really is. At the same time, though, one ought to admit how one-sided and incomplete the presentation of much genuine history is too. Walk around the centre of any provincial British city and you'll be confronted with evidence of its past almost wherever you look -- its castles, cathedrals and guildhalls, its museums and universities and not a few examples of Victorian engineering. But not much in the way of ordinary dwelling houses. There's always the Shambles in York, of course, and Godbegot House in Winchester, and....er, well, there ought to be a few more somewhere, what?

Echo answers: but the Shambles and Godbegot House were erected by petty bourgeois artisans and shopkeepers, and they weren't representative of the common people's houses at all. The common people's houses were made of mud and wood, and fell down a long time ago -- and because entropy has removed them from the scene, history of necessity tends to concentrate on the stone and brick buildings that have remained (which look more glamorous, and attract more tourists), and thus on the doings of the kings and bishops who inhabited them rather than the peasant farmers and market traders on whose backs they stood. And as well as their buildings -- often conceived as displays of power and wealth in addition to any administrative function they had -- the kings and bishops had a skill the peasant farmers and market traders did not: literacy. The written records they left constitute not merely a chronicle of their age but a justification of their position: and as such the perspective they offer is inherently biased. A king may whinge about a parliament's failure to pass a tax bill on time; but he's unlikely to say much about the grievances that have given rise to the delay. Yet his perspective wins by default, simply because there isn't much else.

Until recently. Anyone who's spent a fair amount of time poking about in museums will surely have noticed that over the past decade or thereabouts there's been a slow but perceptible move away from presenting objects as objects, with a typed label telling the viewer what they are and where they were found, and towards an attempt to display them against the social and economic context of which they were part. The closer you get to the present, the easier this is -- because our knowledge becomes more comprehensive -- but the result is a species of social history that (unlike the dreary litany of names and dates and places that's bored many a schoolchild) does show something of the life of the "common people". One gallery in (for example) Nottingham Castle museum, focusing on the history of the city, is to a large extent built around just this; and in the Brewhouse Yard museum at the foot of the castle rock the focus is exclusively upon the town dwellers, through their furniture, clothes and everyday activities. The result is a view from the bottom up rather than the top down, of people as active participants rather than a faceless mass dragged around by charismatic leaders. But an inherent drawback to this approach is that because it is based on artefacts rather than written records it is more speculative, and certainly more diffuse: the written record conveys a definite statement of (somebody's) fact, whereas with furniture and clothes you have to proceed by inference. The written record, because it is so much more definite, inevitably possesses a greater authority. And if it's written by a king or a parliament -- or even a captain of industry -- then it cannot be questioned at all.

Over the past few years we've been pursuing an intermittent correspondence with our MP, Peter Brooke (formerly Chair of the Conservative Party and now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland), over nuclear weapons and the government's nuclear disarmament policies. Fairly predictably -- for a member of the current establishment -- he cleaves to the line that the INF Treaty removing ground-launched nuclear missiles of 500-1500 kilometre ranges from Europe is a product of "NATO firmness": that by standing together against Soviet attempts to divide them, and by negotiating from a position of strength, the Western powers were able to force the concessions required to achieve a successful and verifiable agreement. Our response is twofold: firstly that whatever else may be said about his diplomacy Mikhail Gorbachev has his own reasons for pursuing nuclear disarmament, and that they owe little if anything to what NATO does or says; and secondly that to claim the INF Treaty as solely the work of NATO governments ignores entirely the mass popular protest against nuclear

weapons that characterised the early and middle 1980s, and which eventually made it impossible for them not to respond constructively to the Soviet initiatives. In short, his version of history views events from the top down, while ours concentrates on the pressure exerted from below. He's willing to concede part of our point of view; but I'm quite unwilling to concede his, simply because of its implicit claim that only leaders are capable of action, and that the role of everyone else is to wait passively for them to deliver. In a year which celebrates the two hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, this supposition strikes me as quite bizarre -- although one has to admit that in the case of INF the written record could support either interpretation.

Thus the question at which much of this has been aiming -- whose history are we talking about here; who is it written by, and for whom?

E. P. Thompson's *The Making Of The English Working Class* and Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* are quite clear about their perspective: change, when it comes, is change enforced from below, sometimes violently, and that while certain individuals might be perceived (then or later) as the leaders of certain movements they are so only by virtue of their ability to articulate the pre-existing concerns of a broad popular mass....and that in some cases there are no leaders at all, but rather a number of diverse groupings that share their goals, some of their strategies for achieving them, and little else. The perspective adopted by (among others) G. R. Elton and Hugh Trevor-Roper assumes, by contrast, that leaders are everything, and that without kings, generals and parliaments to initiate and guide nothing would ever happen at all. And under the national curriculum enshrined in the new Education Act, to be enforced from the centre by the Department of Education, this latter view is likely to prevail -- because the masses, after all, have this terrible habit of disagreeing about what constitutes history, and asking awkward questions about the ideas that ought to be given prominence. Enforcement from the centre removes these difficulties by ensuring a common perspective on what it means to be British; and under its beneficent goad future generations of students will no doubt come to share the same belief in our rural heritage, in the countryside as encapsulating the soul of our nation. The questionable elision that I've been guilty of perpetrating during parts of this essay will thus come to be established as an irrefutable fact: that England is one and the same as Britain -- and the different cultures of Wales and Scotland will thus be subordinated to it, rendering their histories not merely common but absolutely identical.

Remarks that this is a strangely Stalinist doctrine to find emanating from a bunch of right-wing free-market ideologues are absolutely correct. One could point out that there's not much difference between the authoritarianism of the two extremes, but flippant though that sounds it is nevertheless an attempt on the part of the current establishment to enforce -- through statute and Act of Parliament -- its particular view of the past. Thus the Great Reform Act of 1832, which swept away the "rotten boroughs" of mediaeval times and commenced the century-long process of extending the electoral franchise will be presented as a magnanimous concession by Parliament to changes in national population distribution rather than as one forced out of it by a restive citizenry. The Glorious Revolution and the Bill of Rights of 1688 will be presented -- as indeed the government is already presenting it -- as a victory for Parliamentary sovereignty over arbitrary royal whim rather than a compact by two elites to share power between them and thereby prevent anyone else from gaining any. And so on -- alternative interpretations will be excluded from common discourse, and so rendered not just illegitimate but actually subversive. At its most extreme (and given long enough), other points of view could be eliminated altogether; and at the very least asking challenging questions will become very difficult -- because why ask questions when there is but one truth, and that has been revealed to you by no less than the government?

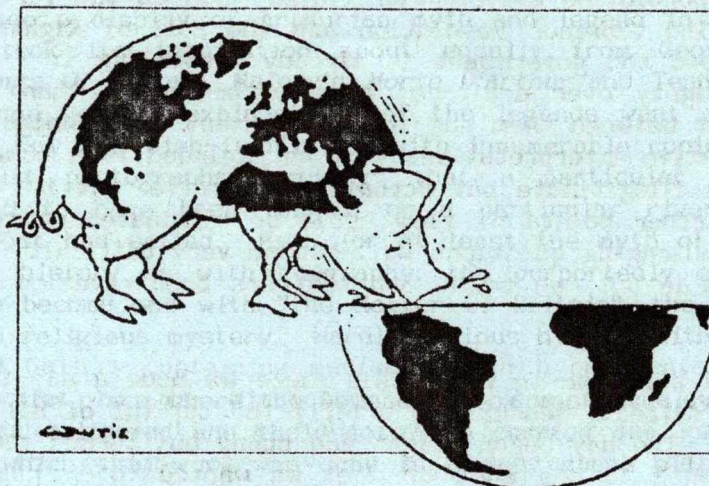
The weekend before I sat down to write this piece we made a day trip to Winchester, once the capital of Alfred's Wessex and briefly the capital of all England following the Norman Conquest. The day began bright and sunny but turned cool and overcast by evening; yet we managed to see most of what we wanted to -- the Norman Cathedral

with its Triforium Gallery containing mediaeval church ornaments and the magnificent illuminated manuscript of the Winchester Bible; the small but interesting local history museum with a selection of Celtic and Saxon grave goods and some Roman pavement mosaics; the remains of Wolvesey Bishop's Palace; the Deanery and Cheyney Court; the Buttercross in the Old High Street and the house where Jane Austen died. We did not, unfortunately, get time to see the Round Table in the Great Hall -- a table reputedly constructed for the visit to the city by Henry VIII and Emperor Charles V in 1522, but serving a dual purpose in linking the usurper Tudor line that Henry represented to the mythical royal lineage of the past and thus presenting his kingship as a direct descendant of Arthur's. And we passed up without a second thought the Crusader display in a building opposite the Victorian Guildhall (a superb Gothic construction derived partly from mediaeval German architecture and partly from the Romantic imagination of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood), which promised us some "advanced technology much of which has never before been seen in Britain" and seemed to consist mostly of waxworks tableaux of surplice-clad knights hacking each other about to a taped background of inchoate shouting and clashing steel. Hardly serious history; and certainly not very informative about the Crusades themselves.

We did, however, see a display of Arthurian myth and legend in the basement of the Guildhall, which took its inspiration about equally from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History Of The Kings Of Britain*, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls Of The King*, and after some general explanations of the legends went charging off into an amazing amount of New Age wish-fulfilment, with innumerable copiously-annotated maps and romantically-lit photographs "proving" that a particular location was where Excalibur was said to have been forged, or a particular river the one up which Arthur's funeral boat had sailed. Myth (or at least the myth of *Artorius Rex*) fused not so much with history as with geography: the purportedly changeless and time-limned countryside become one with "The Matter Of Britain", the rural idyll elevated to the status of a religious mystery. Hardly serious history either.

Winchester is also the place where the Domesday Book was actually compiled: where the county returns were delivered and their collation carried out. All that now remains of the palace in which this work was done is a grey stone pillar incorporated into the wall of a building in a passage that leads through to the Cathedral Close; but the Book itself lives on as a village-by-village record of the state of England in 1086 -- one of the greatest of all historical documents, from which it is possible to derive a picture of the kind of life that mediaeval peasants must have led. Three years ago, its nine hundredth anniversary was celebrated by several national exhibitions, a television series, and the compilation of a modern equivalent for future generations. And by the preparation of a limited-edition facsimile of the original, county by county. For a fee of only £185, you can now apply for one of these numbered, slipcased copies, complete with a column-by-column translation and a collection of introductory essays on Domesday England.

Thus is our past transformed: reduced from a history awaiting analysis and argument to set of yuppie souvenirs from the heritage industry.



TWO THOUSAND WORDS

A SHORT, GRITTY HISTORY OF A SMALL, SEEDY ROCK VENUE

GWYNETH JONES

At twelve o'clock there was someone in a coma, vomiting into the toilet floor. I sat and watched her for a while but her boyfriend seemed a capable type for a skinhead, he said his Dad was a psychiatric nurse, so I left them to it. Outside, noise as confusing as darkness made me grope, mentally and physically. What to do? The Test Tube Babies, those famous lads from Eastbourne, could be glimpsed through grappling bodies: an occasional low-level flash of Peter (and the ---), his dreadful head like an egg pasted with iron filings. Rather short for a punk singer, I thought. I announced the coma, vaguely, as I was leaving. Dinah glanced at me over a mouthful of pound notes, her beautiful gold green eyes disapproving -- "You've got to have a good sense of *humour* ---"

There ought to be a grisly brown postcard tacked up in the lobby saying *You don't have to be crazy to work here you just have to stand near the door: Xtreams is a small world that descends once a week, twice a week, three times a week, on a seedy pub called The New Regent, near Brighton seafront. Dinah and Johnni, brother and sister, play rock matriarch and mastermind: occasionally reversing roles as Johnni becomes motherly over his ailing ticket stubs or Dinah speaks, with a suddenly sharpened eye, of the telephone bill. The help is anyone vaguely known to either who doesn't move out of the way, or did not long ago when it all began. There is no money in it for anyone, except possibly the brewery -- only cheap beer and glory. And the fascination of the audience in all its warring tribes, and the stunning, exciting, devastating noise that sometimes breaks into strange lyrical or intellectual wanderings; what might be, or never will be, or couldn't possibly be on Top Of The Pops because it's gone before it gets there. What is at Xtreams, at its peaks, at the Xtreams level, can't survive: has to be reached and left behind: designers' sketches at their moment of value before descending to the shredder or the chain store.*

But back to the facts. Rock music could hardly exist without places like this, or rather beings: Xtreams is not a place, it's more like a sort of apparition. How does it happen? What happens is that Johnni Clarke, having nothing better to do, was acting as a sort of PA -- whatever that may mean -- for the late Piranhas (recently reborn). Noddy worked in Attrix record shop downstairs and had some spare money. Johnni found The New Regent, took its measurements, sent round to the agents details of stage, capacity, sound system and so it started on September the third 1981. Xtreams pays a fee plus a percentage of the take after the profits have passed a guaranteed minimum -- the percentage clause is usually included, though it's rarely relevant: it gives a touch of dignity to the artistes. Most expensive group: The Fall, £300. Out of the take, after the performers' fees, comes whatever arrangement is current with the management of the pub: tickets, handouts, posters, phone bills, promotion to agents and, on a good night, something for the help: the regular roadie sometimes gets money, sometimes cheap beer, sometimes nothing. A small loss is normal. Biggest loss: £600 putting on Cabaret Voltaire at a bigger venue: insufficient market research. Handful of puzzled swine wandered about, scratching their leather armpits bemusedly as pearls of sound and vision floated by, high overhead.) Worst experience: when Top Rank double-crossed them over Mari Wilson and The Imaginations (as was). Johnni had fixed for Mari W to come to Brighton a second time, she'd already been a sensation at Xtreams. He took the idea to Top Rank, convinced he could fill their fine big palais over the road. Who she? they said. Go away little man, and think of someone decent before you try the big time. Two weeks later MARI WILSON played the Top Rank. Dinah was shocked: "I'm naive, I suppose..." You live and learn.

Johnni had no taste in music. He was the business mind. Appearing rarely at other small rock venues he could be seen in the gloom at the back: a small figure under a weighty carapace of overcoats, looking depressed and counting heads; doing the competition's accounts for them with a tiny portion of his massive brain. It isn't the money, *it can't be*. J. Clarke has a lot of impressive paper in his murky past, a

first in Maths: statistics, accounting; he's a classic drop-out. He must know he has as much chance of making his fortune as a rock entrepreneur as he has of winning the pools. And he doesn't do them. It isn't the money, it's the fantasy. There's nothing more purely unreal than the wheeling and dealing of sitting around in seaside capps having cups of tea -- *important* cups of tea with valuable connections -- a plastic carrier bag of handouts leaning against his leg. He loves chatting people up. He loves appearing an all right sort of bloke to the bar manager, who despises the audience, convincing the kids he's on their side really; placating the boys in the band, telling us in front he's "he's had to be *really nasty*" to them: giving stick and patting heads he zooms to and fro, glowing with the romance of it all. Oddly enough, before this began he was one of the most unreachable unemployed: catatonic in fact. I think he's a Thatcherite.

At the beginning Dinah was the socialite. We would go dancing with her at Sherry's laser disco: flickering robotics in the vast plush and gilt thirties dance hall -- "Listen to the voice of Buddha/the gearstick penetrates your thigh/she's lost control again/It means nothing to me". An ecstatic dancer, Vienna used to make her eyes unfocus -- "I don't know what to do" -- when he sings that. Johnni's Xtreams was her tame venue, she used to rush up and down to London and order what she wanted. "Book 'em", said Dinah. Mari Wilson. Fad Gadget. Aztec Camera. Pale Fountains. Boys' Own. (I remember: a Biggles type in jodhpurs, old cocaine and New York friends of Dinah's. They were good; what happened to them?) Blancmange, Sex Gang Children and the glorious Birthday Party. Nick Cave screaming, I am a figure of *fun*, cascades of sweat flying from his hair; count the bruises afterwards. Xtreams is so small anyone can join in the grappling *agape*, risking nothing more serious than cracked ribs...

Later on, she started taking an interest in the business side because being the only person in reach in gainful employment it was her money -- increasingly -- up front. Scenes of thrift in the chaotic bedroom where Dinah creates her last-minute effects: thoughtfully changing her earrings while the car engine grumbles in the street -- old friends sit earnestly sticking new squares of computer print-out over last week's unsold attractions (it's a work perk). Sad to see the tickets getting thicker. Posters and handouts designed or commissioned to Dinah's impeccable taste became collector's items, but Xtreams often seemed about to disappear. Saddest lesson: lyrical, experimental is the line that produces the rare winners, for the world beyond the little venue, but on a regular basis it loses, loses, loses. There was a time when Xtreams would try anything. Once there was Nico, late of The Velvet Underground: a stout woman in draperies, rocking to and fro and intoning dirges over a strange thing that looked like a commode (it was her harmonium). Rather plump, for a heroin addict, we murmured. Brighton was having a mini surge of psychedelia at the time: the young people stood and stared in respectful disbelief. The Androids Of Mu reduced Xtreams to six people and a dog. Decent Assault brought bicycles on stage and handed out leaflets about not a new religion. The support was regularly the best music of the night, local bands: This Colour, The Razzors, Through A Glass Darkly; playing for canned beer and the chance to be on stage. The Jungle (most of) moved into Dinah and Johnni's house in fashionable, seedy Elm Grove, and played in loincloths, painted all over with blue spots like Hindu cows (it was Burnese nudity time). Nice to dance to, The Jungle. There was a Battle of the Bands: Johnni's attempt to join forces with the older generation of Brighton music, the aging hippies -- not an unqualified success. Biggest problem: emptiness -- Johnni sitting by the door, surveying the dank, dark open spaces. "I've decided I'm not going to get upset. It's good when there isn't a crowd. I can relax and enjoy myself..."

After a year-and-a-half Xtreams is still going. Things are different: Johnni has discovered that the way to make numbers is to book the Punks. Their fans follow them, from Aberdeen and Birmingham and Newport, even to Brighton seafront in the wind and the rain. Discharge, Carnage, Exploited: it can be rough. Discharge thought so: the singer kept breaking off screaming anarchy to plead with the front row: "It would be *appreciated* if you would kindly get off the stage --" What an idiot. What does he think his boots are for? Someone has smeared little streaks of shit on the wall of the ladies toilet, the one nearest the wall. I sit there sometimes (it's

these foreign summer students of course) and wonder what did she do afterwards? Seems ridiculous to wash your hands. Perhaps she used a bit of toilet paper. Strangely enough, there is often a roll behind the pipe. And the bolts on the cubicles are replaced regularly -- touches of refinement. "Sex and violence, sex and violence, sex and violence, sex --" The Vibrators were good. Noise, not music but it can be superb noise, fast and shuddering. Dinah sits by the door, taking tickets and talking to her friends: the main group comes on and she vanishes; bores her way expertly to the front row and dances: a natural athlete, her muscles going like pistons; never too little, never too much: no back flips. There isn't enough room anyway. She has been called Brighton's most glamorous grannie by the fanzines, she doesn't care. I think Dinah would knock anyone down who called a friend of hers a feminist, but she does hate men. She loves boys, white-faced ones with violent hair and pretty eyes: she protects them from Johnni and the manager. They do sometimes get into trouble: I remember a nasty blond in a peaked Nazi cap, weaving around on his mate's shoulders, hanging on to Neil Arthur's microphone: Mr Arthur at first indulgent and then getting angry as he realised it was not friendly. Blond was removed with violence: he was a real creep, no sense of occasion. Dinah came back and wandered in the wreckage: "He's lost his hat. He's upset -- has anyone seen a hat?" On punk nights the code is different, but it's the skinheads that cause the trouble anyway. Even Dinah doesn't defend *them* -- she counts them as men.

Black leather, chaos of sound, unwelcome -- to me -- incursions of the oi oi: young men getting physical with each other the only way they dare, can't knock it but it's so *boring* -- a kind of Punk *Crossroads*. The boys from Eastbourne will sell tickets, you can't argue with that. Meanwhile Xtreams is not dead, it has escaped; it has a floating life as an indefinite entity called J & D Enterprises, living -- at the moment -- on Xtreams's past eclecticism and occupying the second rank of venues, the obvious step up. Birthday Party surging among the nightclub tables at Coasters; Fad Gadget climaxing smarily on the baroque balconies of Sherry's. Birthday Party not quite the same now. Fad Gadget -- it seemed a long time to wait, this time, before he got to the Ladyshave and started scattering pubic hair over the front row; cheaper than burning your guitar... But recently they had a tropical set at Sherry's, with a fine aspiring bunch of coconuts: Animal Nightlife, who made music -- not only music: *made money*...

Memories of Johnni parking us outside Virgin Records on Queens Road on a Saturday afternoon, with a pile of handouts: telling us we could give these ones to "middle of the road types". But where, I wondered, is the middle of *Johnni's* road. It was Flock of Seagulls. They were boring, I don't think they'll be coming back.

Editorial note: alert readers will have realised by now that the above was written some time ago. An enquiry of Gwyneth as to when, and whether Xtreams was still alive, produced the following update:

Xtreams died about Easter 1983. The occasion was that of a King Kurt gig in which the baked beans flew inordinately fast, flour bags were burst over the front row, and a hole was punched through a wall by a Kurthead boot. However, relations with the bar manager had been deteriorating for a while: the team's judgement was that he was just waiting for the next harmless little incident... The New Regent closed down soon afterwards and was redeveloped as a games arcade, one more victim of the cheap and vulgar prosperity that has reshaped our exquisitely seedy seafront in the past ten years.

Johnni still does the occasional promotion, but mainly lives on the rent from his roomers in the house Where It All Began. He shows no sign of returning to actuarising for a living. Dinah is still programming down among the viruses at Brighton Poly. (She doesn't like to talk about it.) She doesn't gig a lot because she's moonlighting a course in homeopathy, so has no time and anyway discovered that nightclubs are almost as bad for you as hot drinks or red meat.

Lyell, The Jungle, Drummond, wrote one of the best tracks on The Long Tall Texans's

latest record. And he did our decorating, too -- but don't tell You Know Who.

And there we will leave them, playing happily in the sunshine. It sort of tells the story of the decade, in a way, doesn't it. From Punk Dance Craze to Popular Capitalism and the Enterprise Culture...

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



A POEM

(Dedicated to Attila the Stockbroker, *il miglior ranto*)

PETER DARBY

Thatcherites to the right of me,
 Nobody to the left of me,
 The last flight to sanity
 Is airport bound and grounded.
 Though there's nothing to the left of me,
 I still shift uneasily;
 Though there's nothing to the left of me,
 I still feel surrounded.

In Colchester the Communists
 Have mutated into dogmatists,
 Sniping at revisionists
 If they show their heads;
 And there are quaint domestic scenes
 Of children told to eat their greens,
 Remember to resent the blacks
 And always fear the Reds.

Utopia we cannot build
 No matter how strong we're willed.
 Perfection is a movement
 but we can't give up the fight
 For then we'd sacrifice the choices
 Of those who don't yet have voices;
 The children who've known just the dark
 Of this pernicious ten-year night.

I'm no Existentialist;
 My philosophy's moved on from this.
 I'll sound my own clarion call:
 DECONSTRUCT THE RIGHT!

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FLIGHT

LEIGH EDMONDS

We here at Orrite Ornithopter Production Systems are not your usual bunch of anthropoid aluminium benders who make up ninety-five percent of the aviation industry. Here at OOPS we are deep-thinking, sensitive souls who are concerned about the socio-economic environment in which we work and care passionately about the deep-rooted social and political factors which shape the very fabric of society. We are also environmentally aware, but think it might be going too far to accept our Marketing Division's suggestion that the relatively high crash rate of our product might be used to our advantage to show how biodegradable our machines are.

In the search for those eternal truths upon which our society, and indeed our whole way of life, is based, we at OOPS have recently been reading widely in areas which might not be considered part of the aviation literature. The piles of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* in the Marketing Division are vitally relevant to an understanding of the human psyche, so they tell us. Meanwhile, the senior executives of OOPS have been reading widely and deeply in the realms of literature, metaphysics, westerns and philosophy. From this latter field we have found that there are some questions which touch at the very roots of our understanding of reality and why it is that aeroplanes fly.

No longer are we content to simply conduct so-called scientific research into fluid dynamics, fibre optic control systems, exotic structural materials and all that. These simple matters we leave to those who only use the analytic side of their brains. We have become involved in the search for eternal truths, as they relate to the modern technology of flight, in the hope of finding a market niche.

It has become clear, through our readings and symposia (held at exotic and remote tropical locations) that the various methods of aerial locomotion which are used by society in its quest for dominance over the environment are but a reflection of its even greater intellectual struggle to understand the environment. What I am about to reveal to you is a clear demonstration of the generally unrealised power of the human intellect to lay bare the very basis of our existence and show the facade of everyday life as no more than a front of seeming simplicity which disguises the deep truths of the human condition.

There are, so OOPS has discovered, various modes of thought which reflect, to a startling degree, the various methods of aeronautical locomotion. This discovery has ripped the philosophical pundits of OOPS into two opposing camps: those who believe that the various forms of aerial locomotion have come into existence because of a deep human need to represent the basic modes of philosophical thought in concrete form, and those who say that modern modes of thought have been shaped to mimic the basic modes of travel through the air via a complex process of intellectual replication of social influences. While this argument is deep and complex, we will leave it aside in this paper and simply document for you the basic categories. It will then be for you to decide which side you are on.

The first and most basic form of aerial transport is the balloon, which these days is generally a large bag filled with hot air. This replicates (or reflects) to a very high degree the everyday discourse of human society: that is, lots of people talking about things they hardly understand in the hope that the sheer volume of their discourse will convince people of their opinions. The most outstanding examples of the hot air balloon in modern society are the parliaments, which are often described as nothing more than pointless debating or hot air societies. The interesting thing about parliaments is that, like hot air balloons, they derive their ability to fly from the volume of hot air they generate but lack the ability to go anywhere. Once a hot air balloon is up, it just floats in the breeze, the people it carries along having almost no control over where they will end up. And so it is with parliaments, which are directed by forces which have little to do with what is said in them. Currents of political power, popularity with the electorate and media coverage waft

parliaments about in the same way that winds direct the flight of balloons. And what happens when the talking stops and the air cools down?

A sub-set of the balloon is one filled with a gas that is lighter than normal air and sealed to keep it in, and thus keep the balloon aloft. This might, with a little imagination, be likened to the condition of governments in socialist states which keep themselves afloat through a series of ideological concepts which have been handed to them by their great fathers, Marx, Lenin, Mao, and so on. These balloons stay afloat only so long as the gas of ideology can be contained, but if the balloon develops a leak all sorts of terrible things can happen, and the gas itself might even go up in flames.

Moving along, we come to philosophies which to a greater or lesser extent actually try to get somewhere and use machinery rather than the natural properties of gases to do it.

The most problematic of all is the glider or soaring aeroplane, which can travel great distances but is always at the whim of the elements. These machines may be likened to contemporary Australian Liberal or British Conservative thought. The philosophical machines of liberal thought appear to glide effortlessly through the air, going this way and then that in search of rising currents of hot air (often generated by academics in universities) which will give them lift and keep them up. They can cruise around endlessly without any objective, and indeed an objective is the last thing they seek because if the currents of thought are against them they simply won't be able to get there.

The powered aeroplane is simply an extension of the glider; you just add a motive force. The same exists for your basic mode of liberal thought. Just as a glider can be turned into a great lumbering cargo aeroplane or an airliner capable of carrying hundreds of people, so simple liberal thought can be turned into rampant capitalism, nationalism or imperialism (or all three) just by attaching large enough theoretical engines. These theoretical engines might include the mystically powered "will of God", or such interesting steam-driven devices as "laissez-faire", or the more recent invention of the internal combustion Keynesian economic engine, or the most modern and up-to-date engines which can sometimes look the same (or quite different, depending on where you are standing), Monetarism and Social Democracy.

The noteworthy thing about these heavier-than-air aeroplanes is that if you put a man, or a group of men, up the front with a set of controls they can actually direct the whole mechanism where they want it to go, or where they think they want it to go. And so the aeroplane mimics, or is it the model for (take your pick), modern social life. These great lumbering social mechanisms perform the most prodigious feats of intellectual locomotion that have become so commonplace nobody seems to notice them any more. And interestingly, as these machines rumble their way through the philosophical skies, more and more people are being herded into the economy class down the back while those up the front in first class are having a good time talking to the crews about ways of keeping these aeroplanes in the air. Of course, there are problems with maintenance and hijacking, but so far these seem minor.

And now we are free to move into the realms of higher philosophies which are common currency only in a few selected fields.

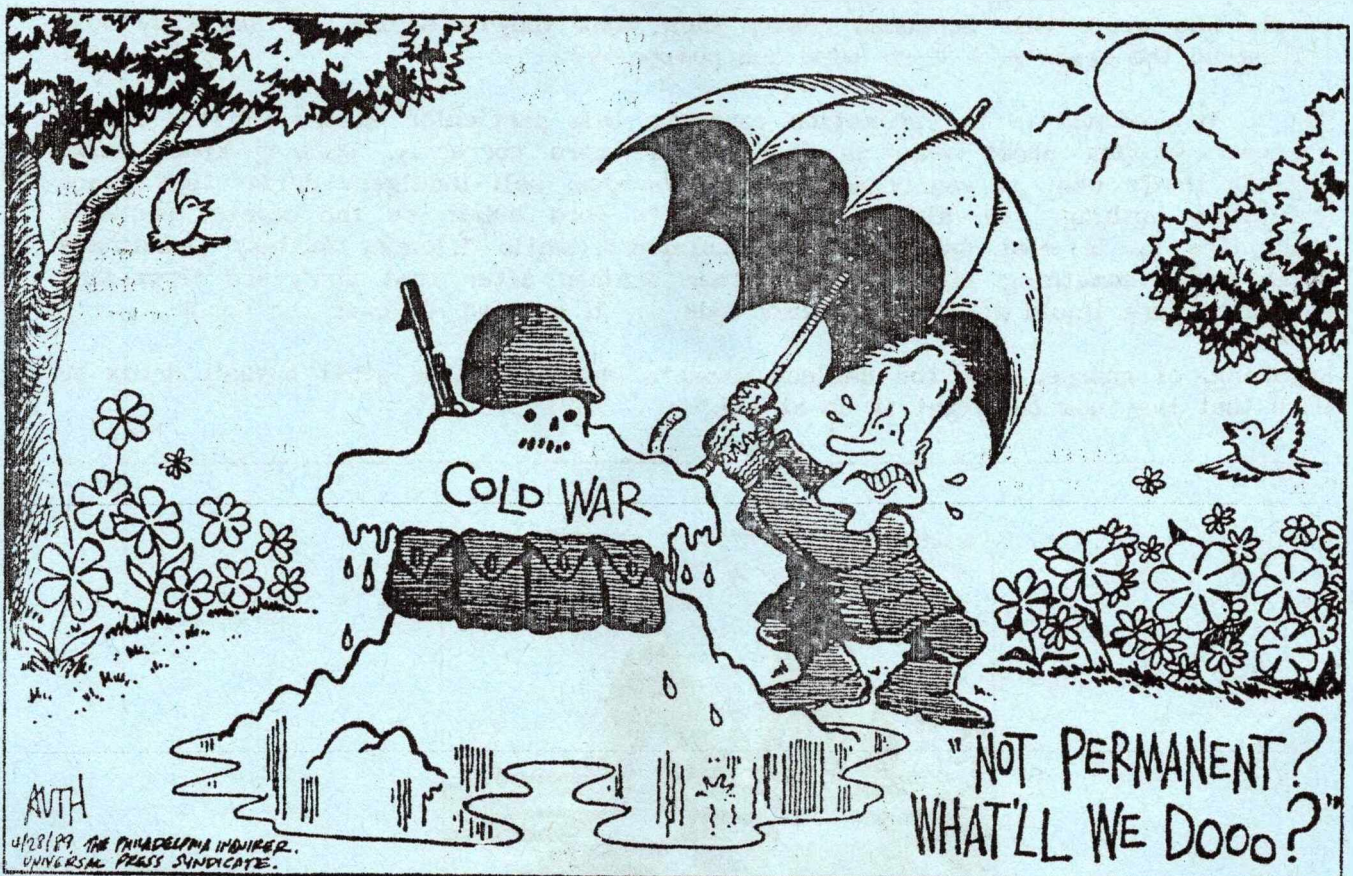
First is the intellectual equivalent of the helicopter, a machine whose ability to fly seems to defy all rational logic. Yet, equally unbelievably, there are groups of philosophers hiding away in universities and institutes in places like France who have invented the intellectual equivalent of the helicopter. These intellectual mechanics create theoretical explanations for the world which seem to have little connection with it. Using motors such as Marxism or Existentialism, philosophers set these theoretical machines in motion like the whirring of helicopter rotor blades. Around and around they go, faster and faster, with various schools of thought following each other and in turn being followed. The whole contraption gradually gets up its own momentum and takes in more engines and rotor blades (Structuralism,

Post-Structuralism, Semiotics and so on), and before you know it the whole thing is going so fast that you can't even follow it any more and, even more amazing, the thing, complete with engines, pilots and passengers, starts to lift into the air, flying as if by magic. The trouble with these devices is that they are often very difficult to control and also not good for very much. You see helicopters (theoretical or otherwise) quite often buzzing around in the sky, but all they are doing is looking down and somehow trying to describe what it's like down there without really being attached to it. Larger helicopters can carry elite shock troops which can land anywhere and attempt to capture bits and pieces of intellectual property. However, the machines themselves are difficult to maintain and expensive to run, so it is no surprise that people still look at them and wonder how it is that they can fly at all. You might also have noticed that they are inordinately noisy.

Finally -- and I know you've been waiting for this -- we come to the ornithopter. This flying machine represents, in a concrete form, the most pure and useful of philosophical methods, the dialectic. The dialectic is a method of reaching logical conclusions by reasoning, using argument and counter-argument. This system ensures that eventually philosophical discourse will arrive at the truth. And so it is with ornithopters: they move forward by flapping their wings, up and down, just like argument and counter-argument. So it is that eventually the ornithopter will reach its goal.

Unfortunately there are as many ups and down in dialectical discourse as there are in ornithopter flight -- but we need not dwell on them here. All the same, it is interesting to note that if ornithopters mimic the flight of birds then it is perhaps only fitting that the best of human thought should also follow the birds.

There will no doubt be pedants who want to know where rockets and spaceflight fit into this theoretical framework. We at OOPS have to inform them that, just as rockets defy gravity, so do their theoretical counterparts defy logic.



A SHORT RANT, WITH EXAMPLES

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Our part of Pimlico abounds in restaurants -- within a minute's walk you can find a Greek, a French, two Indians, a Vietnamese, two Italians, and an English. *An English*, you murmur, what on Earth can that be? A bit like a wine bar in some respects, but specialising in cider from various parts of the country and wines made from things like elderflowers.

On each table, however, sits a promotion card from an English winery in Devon, extolling the virtues of their grape-based products. "Siegerrebe," it states, "is an offspring of the Gerwurztraminer, the well-known classic Alsatian and German wine variety." So far so bland; but then a hint of ad-speak starts to creep in: "The grapes ripen by mid-September and are always harvested fully ripe needing no added sugar, and we are able to create a medium dry wine with a bouquet like fresh peaches, a rich spicy honeyed muscat flavour, and a smooth gentle finish, a wine our customers find highly attractive."

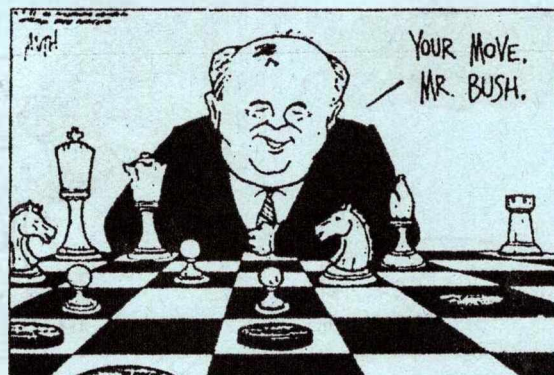
I'm sure they do; but what can they make of the Special Private Reserve Chardonnay? "Ripening by mid-October, after a gentle milling and pressing, the wine is fermented and matured in lightly toasted new French Limousin oak casks, and late bottled when ready after a mellowing malolactic fermentation in June each year. The wine has the magnificent flowery buttery Chardonnay nose, is a wine of considerable depth, backbone and elegance, with a glorious smokey back flavour that can only be attained by contact with oak."

Some taste, obviously -- compared to which the riesling "has a fresh lemony bouquet, an elegant racey acidity, with that arresting thread of pure liquid gold running through the middle flavour, and a fine finish with a good length on the palate."

This sort of stuff makes it sound less like a wine than a horse race. And what does it all mean, exactly? "Arresting thread of pure liquid gold", "a good length on the palate", "flowery buttery Chardonnay nose", "glorious smokey back flavour" -- do the people who write this nonsense really know what they're saying, or are they just filling up the space with their wind and pomposity?

Nor is it confined to the promotion card for this particular winery -- it's common wherever writing about wine is found. Or, more correctly, *wanking* about wine, because that's what it really amounts to: verbose, self-indulgent drivel that means absolutely nothing. Or almost nothing -- "a good length on the palate" probably translates as "a most satisfactory ejaculation", while "flowery buttery Chardonnay nose" means something like "I felt rather drained after that one", and "arresting thread of pure liquid gold" is probably code for "I spurted all over the menu".

Assuming, of course, that the useless wankers who write this stuff haven't drunk so much that they now can't get it up at all.



Edited by JUDITH HANNA and JOSEPH NICHOLAS

You'll probably know that our preference is for short letter columns that tend toward the pithy quote rather than the meaty dissertation; but we've lately been garnering a large number of longer responses which cry out to be quoted in full. This issue's letter column is therefore about twice its usual size; and many who'd otherwise have seen their words in print have had to be consigned to the WAHFs lest it be as large again. Maybe next time, people...

ON THE MALL OF MEMORIALS

Alexis Gilliland
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"On The Mall Of Memorials touched on a number of issues. The prototypical war memorial, such as the Marine Memorial across the river, is a large heroic bronze statue expressing large heroic sentiments. It is placed to catch the eye, and serves both the needs of the state and those of the veterans it honours and the families of the dead.

"Normally, after a war ends, memorials go up like mushrooms after rain, to start the so-called healing process. The Vietnam Memorial was not built for more than ten years after the war ended, largely because opposition to the war had become so intense there were no official sponsoring groups. Eventually the Vietnam Veterans group raised funds. The design, by Mai Lin, then an architecture student, was at the extreme edge of modernist design and controversial from the moment it won the competition. The little group of statues, ordered before the wall was built, represent an attempt to have the conventional war memorial, but the focus remains on the wall, and rightly so.

"So what they wound up with was the most popular monument in the city, right in the centre of things, and it can't be seen because it's literally out of sight, just like the war that it memorialises. One of the things coming out in all the memoirs and histories of the period is that the US Government never had any plan. It was just one quick fix after another, yielding a 'policy' that was the sum of all those temporary expedients. Kennedy might have pulled out; after the Bay of Pigs he didn't trust the military, his domestic programmes were going badly, and he knew he couldn't afford an unpopular war. But Johnson? He went with the generals."

Steve Stiles
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Maryland 21133
USA

"I have yet to see the Vietnam Memorial, and I suspect it will be some years before I can bring myself to do so. Part of it is a fear that I'll see some names I know, part of it is the anger and shame that I felt all during the war. Before Vietnam there had been a whole spate of movies showing the futility of war, and then in my teenage naivety I imagined that this demonstrated a popular maturity. Over the last few years, I've been amazed to see one of my friends mutate from a hippy and NASA fan into a Vietnam buff who will devour anything and everything on that war. We aren't close any more. I've only seen one Vietnam movie, *Good Morning Vietnam*, and I was dragged to that under protest. Robin Williams's black friend was a dead ringer for one of my own friends in the service, Preston Lay. Preston had enlisted to learn a trade and had wound up in 'Nam in '64 as a helicopter mechanic. He became 'radicalised' when he was forced to witness Vietnamese prisoners being thrown from an airborne copter. Three years later, as a civilian, he wound up spending nine months in jail before going on trial on trumped-up charges as part of a black 'murder ring' (supposedly going to shoot white cops in Harlem and thus spark a backlash). The case fell apart when it came out that the man who had come up with the plan was a police agent. Meanwhile Preston's brother had been forced to drop out of college and his father had to sell all his property to meet the horrendous bail and court costs. The other defendants, casual friends of Preston's, had been part of a group engaged in photographing police taking bribes from narcotics pushers.

"My own orders for Vietnam were miraculously changed at the last moment by a Sergeant Bilko type who needed an illustrator at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Fort Eustis was largely a processing centre for troops being sent to Vietnam. One evening while

I was there, in '66, several of the clerks rushed into the barracks with the news that they had just processed some men bound for Vietnam whose job classification was tactical nuclear weapons technicians. It cast a pall over the barracks for that evening — that cold tickling sensation that runs up and down one's spine."

Ian Bambro
Ivy Cottage
Ivy Road
Gosforth
Newcastle-on-Tyne
NE3 1DB

"There is always an ambiguity about cenotaphs, war graves and the like. One can hardly object to people commemorating their dead, but what starts off as a monument expressing a statement 'These men died and we remember them here' goes through a series of shifts -- 'These men died and we honour them here', 'These men died for their country and we honour them here', 'These men died for their country and that is a Good Thing', and ultimately (I'm sure you're ahead of me here) 'These men died because the then government of their country decided it was expedient and anyone who does likewise will be treated as a hero to encourage the others'. This isn't special to America -- you don't have to read much of Wilfred Owen or Robert Graves to become sickened by the wilful hypocrisy of the expression 'Glorious Dead'. You will recall the way that all criticism of the Falklands atrocity was rejected with cries of 'This is an insult to those who bravely perished'.

"It is somewhat encouraging, as you suggest, that the US public may have got the message that their boys were not having a lovely war. I wonder how long the queues of volunteers would have been if World War One had been televised every night. But what you say about the present 'marketing' of Vietnam is depressing. This seems to be a classic case of history being written, or rather filmed, by the victors. You may object that the US was not the victor, but at least they have the resources to perform this kind of 'rehabilitation'.

"Where I remain to be convinced, and I think this is a much larger issue, is that the sort of expansionism or drive to domination which underlies what you describe is purely an American phenomenon or a product of a particular kind of capitalism. It would be nice to think the problem was that simple, but it seems to me that historically a wide variety of individuals and nations with different social, economic and cultural backgrounds have all behaved in the same self-seeking fashion -- in other words, that the strong, given half a chance, will screw the weak every time. To be sure, there are exceptions, especially at the individual level, but all of this leads me to think that it is not enough to single out particular examples of militarism because it plays into the hands of the 'destroy the enemy and all will be well' school of thought."

Don Fitch
3908 Frijo
Covina
California 91722
USA

"I suppose the Second World War was the last justified war in which the US was engaged, and I served in our last war to be popularly (if somewhat grudgingly) accepted: the Korean War. And maybe it was justified, after all: the people of South Korea do seem to be somewhat better off, economically, than those in North Korea. It's marginal, though, and quite likely wasn't worth the cost. We were, I guess, the last generation (or so I hope) of young Americans to go off to war without (for the most part) Asking Questions. We had a lot of trust -- largely a residue from World War Two, I suppose -- that the government wouldn't tell us to go off and fight unless it was Really Necessary, and in A Good Cause. Fewer people, though not few enough, have such illusions today.

"Meanwhile, on such patriotic holidays as Memorial Day, Flag Day, and the Fourth of July, there will be several Indian pow-wows in the LA area (and in many other cities, and on the Northern and Southern Plains, from Oklahoma to the Dakotas), and the singers will do a set of four Veterans' Honouring Songs. Usually only veterans will dance on these, but sometimes a whole family will come out, led by a woman holding a folded American flag on which rests the photograph of a young man in uniform. Some years ago, the Drum was singing the Lakota Korean Veterans' Song, and though I'm not an Indian and hence don't participate, I was standing and sort of dancing in place on the edge of the arena when two of the dancers came up to me and one quietly asked 'You a veteran?' I told him my outfit, that I'd been on the line for about seven months, and a few more details. He gestured me forward with his eagle-wing fan (not an invitation to be lightly refused), and they flanked me as we danced around the arena for the remainder of the song. I think I came to understand

some things, then -- the dancers are accepting the honour and respect being given them by the standing spectators, and are themselves honouring the courage of their fallen comrades. There is little or no concern with the war itself, only with the individual bravery of the people who fought in it. Indeed, someone who fought on the opposite side would be similarly honoured."

THE FRONT LINE IS HOME

Amy Thomson
4014 Latona Ave NE
Seattle
Washington 98105
USA

"The latest excitement round here was getting assaulted last January. I came into my house after it got too dark to prune my front hedges, and there was this strange man in my kitchen. I told the man to get the fuck out of my house, but instead of running out the kitchen door he came for me. I hit him over the head with the plastic watering can I was carrying, and the next thing I knew he was on top of me explaining that he was bigger than I was, stronger than I was, and he could really hurt me if he wanted to. This seemed eminently reasonable to me at the time. My big relief was that I knew it wasn't Ted Bundy, who was getting fried the next day. He told me to take off my shoes and socks, but all he did was tie me up with my knee socks and my shoelaces. These were not any ordinary laces, these were my super cool, hyper-fannish shoelaces that I bought at a DUFF auction, with the Made in Australia logo on them. Then he wanted to know where my money was. I told him where my stash of Canadian money was but he said, 'Don't you have any American money?' He was nervous about my seeing his face, so I told him where my kitchen towels were and suggested that he blindfold me. They didn't work, so he went wandering about the house looking for something to blindfold me with. He eventually found something and tied it around my head. Then he wanted to know where I had any money, so I told him where my piggy bank was (actually, it's a flowered cat bank). He came and got it and put it down next to me, then wanted to know if I was expecting anyone home soon and I told him that my boyfriend usually came home about 5.30. I didn't have the foggiest idea what time it was.

"The burglar went into the back of the house, and just then (conveniently on cue) Ray came home. I heard him come in the door and I said 'Ray, is that you?' He saw me hogtied on the floor and said 'What the fuck...' and dropped the books he was carrying. Ray ran past me and I levitated out of my bonds. We both ran like hell out of the house. He went across the street to phone the cops and I went next door. I pounded on the next door neighbour's house, screaming at the top of my lungs. I was so wired I ran right inside. They were both in the living room, naked as jay birds. They wrapped themselves up in sheets and called the police. The police came very quickly, but the guy was already long gone. After the cops left, I went out and drank three straight shots of scotch (Glenmorangie, very good in an emergency, and also useful for flavouring chocolate chip cookies). I then staggered out to the living room where Ray was calling out for Chinese food. I flopped down on the couch and said I'm going to have hysterics now, and proceeded to have hysterics for the next two hours. In the middle of this the phone rang. I picked up the phone and said 'Hello?' just as a still small voice inside me said 'Don't pick up the phone now'. It was my mother, calling to see how things were going. I was totally incoherent, and drunk off my ass, but I did my best. Finally Ray took the phone away. I went back to the couch and had hysterics some more.

"Actually, I got off very lightly. He only got my wallet, which had only about 20 or 30 dollars in it, and Ray's battered old electronic watch. The burglar assaulted three other women before he was caught. In one case he gashed the woman's forehead and broke some of her teeth; in another he shot the woman in the face, but she wasn't seriously injured. Finally, in mid-April, they caught the son-of-a-bitch. I picked him out of a line-up by identifying his voice. Turns out he was on parole after serving 8 years of a 900 year (honest!) sentence. Even if he wriggles out of all the other charges, he's violated his parole and will be back in jail for a very long time.

"I'm a bit divided on how I feel about this guy now he's safely in custody. On one hand I'm glad he's going to be locked up where he can't threaten any more women, but on the other I feel a strange kind of pity. He's been in jail since he was 16 (he's 24 now), and in all likelihood is going to be in jail for at least another 10 years. Judging from his behaviour during the crimes he committed, he's not very bright. When (and if) the son-of-a-bitch gets out, he's not going to be any more

employable than he is now. Jails here are overcrowded, with very poor rehabilitation programmes. Parole is given too early and often just to clear out the jails. His life is probably going to be spent in and out of jail. We'll be damned lucky if he doesn't kill someone someday. His life is a fucking waste. And I don't have the foggiest idea who's to blame. Is it Ronald Reagan for cutting social programmes? Is it the education system, for not preparing this guy properly for society? Is it his parents? Is it racism? Is it the spiral of hopelessness caused by black poverty? Is it society, and by association myself, who is to blame for not caring enough? Or is he just a mean son-of-a-bitch who deserves to be locked up for the rest of his life? None of the questions seem entirely right."

Luke McGuff
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Minneapolis
Minnesota 55403
USA

"A friend recently attended the pro-choice rally in Washington DC. (*Editorial note: this was before July's Supreme Court decision on abortion.*) She said that one of the profound experiences she had was realising that she, who always thought she had odd ideas and was completely out of the mainstream, was surrounded by more than 600,000 people who agreed with her on

at least one thing: that a woman should be able to control her own biology, and that a wide range of support and educational services (and availability and access to these services) helps keep the choices informed. One of the side-effects of this trip to Washington DC was that she got six of us to attend the state rally in mid-May.

"At first I was a little depressed. Why be one more person in the crowd? What more could I do than clap and wave an abandoned sign in the air? Then I realised that was part of the process; that I was supposed to feel like doing more than standing on a hillside on a very pleasant day.

"Although I've never paid much attention to pro-choice arguments before, it seemed to me that they've changed qualitatively and quantitatively. Many of the speakers talked about their families, and how much they love their children. They admitted to the physical and psychological pain of an abortion. But they also pointed out that so-called pro-lifers oppose the education and access necessary to lessen unwanted pregnancies; that they continually erode the access to health care of the poor by imposing conditions on the funding of abortion services. This makes safe abortions a matter of upper class privilege, and increases the number of women dying from illegal, unsafe abortions. (One of the most telling signs at the rally was 'Emergency Doctors For Choice'. I would have liked to see a couple more of those.) Many of the speeches also pointed out that being pro-choice does not mean being pro-abortion. The Mayor of St Paul said explicitly that he opposed abortion, but would not force a choice on a woman and that this choice should be available to all.

"The afternoon wore on, and we went over to see the anti-choice counter-demonstrators. They had the single most insulting and anti-life display: a twelve-foot cross spattered with red paint, with dolls nailed to its arms and top. But they were very quiet, and kept to themselves, set off in a little pen made of two sawhorses with a yellow plastic strip and a sign saying *Caution Police Line Do Not Cross* strung between them. There were a number of women wearing T-shirts that said *Rally Marshal* on the back who were trying to keep the counter-demonstrators surrounded by pro-choice people. To that end, I picked up a sign someone else had put down.

"What really bugged me, though, was that a couple of men thought they were being clever trying to knock down the counter-demonstrators' signs and break their barricade. I wound up telling them to lay off, and put the sign back up. I mean, if you believe in freedom of choice then you believe in the freedom of people to hold the wrong views, right? And the counter-demonstrators were not at all disruptive; all they had to do was just stand there and be, and anyone intelligent could see who was pro-life and who wasn't.

"There was at least one counter-counter-demonstrator with a sign that said *Oppose Religious Fetus Freaks*. Was he any less of a fetus freak than the people with a cross? Also, if there were a punk rock band called *Religious Fetus Freaks* and one of their stage decorations was a cross with paint-splattered dolls nailed to it, they couldn't get a gig anywhere. And if Rifle Sport (my favourite gallery) had a show by an artist whose media were paint-splattered dolls, nails and two-by-fours, the show would be closed down before opening night had ended! So why was the counter-demonstrators' anti-life symbol tolerated as a political statement when it

would have been suppressed had it been used in the name of art or creativity?

"There was some attempt at debating with them, although it was really quite useless. The rally marshals occasionally tried to still the arguments, but they went on regardless. It was at this point that I realised that the purpose of the rally was not to change anyone's mind but to reaffirm your own beliefs. The coming together of 5000-to-7000 people helped to ease some of the intimidation felt by those who hold pro-choice views. Now perhaps more of us will be willing to speak out at dinner parties, or other social gatherings."

Cy Chauvin
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Detroit
Michigan 48213
USA

"I must admit that I am slightly suspicious of all the media concentration on international and national news, while avoiding any real coverage of local politics and local politicians. Yet it is in local politics that individuals can make the biggest difference, rather than suffering from the alienation of the national elections. We are all encouraged to vote, but not much

beyond that — yet voting is only the tip of the iceberg in the election process.

"A friend of mine had a very curious political experience: she was called up and asked to run in her local state representative district. This was because she had the most common Polish name (Lewandowski) in her district, and since it was now the Poles' turn to win the Democratic nomination (they alternated with the blacks) they expected an easy win. No Republican candidate ever won in her working class district. She didn't win the nomination: according to those in the political machine she talked to, the blacks didn't 'honour' their agreement. But it certainly gives you some insight into the bizarre process of local elections where, based on no information, people just choose familiar names. My friend was actually rather relieved she didn't win."

Local government in the USA may have the ability to "make a difference" at which you hint, but here in Britain ten years of Thatcherism have seen it systematically emasculated, its functions stripped away and either taken over by central government or given to private contractors and the little power left to it severely curtailed. It's claimed that the ultimate goal of the most ideological members of the government is to transform local authorities into private corporations operating according to their profit margin rather than the need for their services, but although this is undoubtedly as bizarre an idea as the poll tax and the privatisation of the water industry (we're looking forward to the inevitable first prosecution of someone for stealing water, and wondering if a jury will ever convict), it's probably too bizarre to be credible — if only because it's difficult to see how anyone could make a profit from (say) looking after the mentally ill. So the government simply piles on the restrictions, the latest proposal being to bar anyone employed in any branch of local government and earning more than £13,000 a year from standing as a candidate in local elections — which, given that local government is one of the country's largest employers, and that over half of its employees earn more than £13,000 a year, could exclude from political activity between half a million and a million people. Most of them are more likely to campaign for the Labour Party than the Tories; to suggest that this proposal is made with a naked partisan advantage in mind is therefore not at all far-fetched — especially as putative Tory candidates, with independent, non-local government-derived incomes as barristers or businessmen, would be unaffected by it. The European Court of Human Rights will undoubtedly be hearing more about this infringement of civil liberties...and undoubtedly ruling against the British government for the twenty-third (or will it be the twenty-fourth?) time.

COSY DOMESTICITY

Hazel Ashworth
16 Rockville Drive
Embsay, Skipton
Yorkshire
BD23 6NX

"The *Guardian* food page is just like *The Sunday Times's* (yes, I do get it — sorry) obsession with pages of descriptions and glossy photographs of food from Italy, China, London and everywhere else. And also ravings about wonderful places to stay around Britain at quite reasonable prices of £n000 per night. It not only irritates me, I find the emphasis quite

obscene when it's bang next door to an article on the plight of some God-forsaken section of the community (which it always is). We have bouts of Buying The Sunday

Papers, then Go Off them.

"Felt a nice warm glow of recognition when you started talking about your nice roomy freezer; I've got one of those. Two ice-trays in the drawer with peas and two or three fish squashed on the top, and that's your lot. At least it stops you from having to make complicated decisions. Also one might become spotty and overweight if one's freezer were deep enough to hold those creamy chocolate gateau things in the glossy photographs..."

"Is all that stuff about Joseph getting up really true? If it is, I think he should be photographed doing some of these things and inserted in the centre pages of all fanzines for the next twelve months. The rest of us need to know that somewhere in this world there is a man who doesn't mind getting out of bed first. I am truly impressed!"

Milt Stevens
7234 Capps Avenue
Reseda
California 91335
USA

"It must be nice to get up in the middle of the day. I get up at 4.45am on workdays. At least, evidence suggests I get up at that time. I've never actually been present to observe the phenomenon myself. I usually wake up about 7.10am while I'm reading *The L.A. Times* bridge column at work. The earliest I ever had to get up was 3.45am to get to work at 5.00am. It was so early the whores were still out on the street and would wave to me as I drove by. That's one sure way of telling you're getting up too early."

Sue Thomason
111 Albemarle Rd
York YO2 1EP

"How can you make domestic trivia so rivetingly interesting? But I suppose trivia are interesting, particularly the revealing little details which sum up whole lifestyles, the details that don't normally get analysed in 'serious conversations' and so remain the last tangled outposts of untested assumptions, lurking like Amazonian Indians in the rainforest of consciousness. (Why do we keep wanting to build roads and dams over our minds, and turn them into hamburger?)"

IN THE MIDST OF FARMING

David Bell
Church Farm
North Kelsey
Lincoln LN7 6EQ

"As a farmer I find a lot of the fuss about food and health a bit too manufactured. I suppose what it comes down to is the balance between possible harmful effects of pesticides (and some are nasty) and the possible harmful effects of the pests. Taking just one example, without the routine use of some pesticides there could be a repeat of the potato blight epidemic that did so much to depopulate Ireland in the 1840s. I suspect the move to organic growing would be dependent on others using pesticides which slow the spread of pests. Similarly, intensive farming ought to be disease-free because there is complete control of what goes into the system — but it looks as though the pressure to reduce prices and thus costs has led some producers to follow some suspect practices.

"There is a lot of pressure on the farming industry to grow food for as little cost as possible. The prices we are getting, even in a year when grain yields have again been dramatically lower than the average, have fallen again. At the same time some of the fixed costs, the same whatever the crop yields, are rising. Organic farming may have lower variable costs but is not clear that the prices paid are enough to show a profit. Also, the income from my farm depends on decisions taken in autumn 1987. We can't react as fast as politicians and consumer pressure groups.

"End of lesson. Yes, the big transnational companies have altogether too much economic influence. There are dangers to the environment. But Ms Pimlico is wrong to assume that there is one single clear-cut choice. Try to look past the first emotional, almost mystical response.

"By the way, this country cannot grow enough crops to feed itself without ecologically hazardous intensive agriculture. There are times when I think the cities want thinning out but starvation is a rather extreme and cruel method."

Does Ms Pimlico assume "a single clearcut choice"? Ms Pimlico grew up on an Australian farm and knows very well the conflict between the economic pressure on farmers, who have to produce enough to keep paying off the overdraft, and their keen awareness of the damage the monocultural and chemical methods needed to keep up

production do to the soil, water system, and wildlife. The UK's farm production seesaws somewhere between (on one hand) butter lakes and barley mountains, and (on the other) proposals that the European Community's Common Agricultural Policy should provide grants for less intensive production to preserve environmentally sensitive areas from damage and from adding to the surplus. Ms Pimlico tends to agree that cities are not sustainable ecosystems and need thinning out: but exporting convicts and adventurers to the colonies is no longer an option.

MISCELLANY

Robert Lichtman "As Transport 2000 supporters, you're sure to find the enclosed
P.O. Box 30 American view (*Editorial note: a cutting from the 16 May Press*
Glen Ellen Democrat) of the latest (at this writing) 'wildcat' London
California 95442 transport strike of interest. What was most shocking about it
USA to me was the revelation of how little the blokes who drive the
 Underground trains actually make. \$295 a week is rather less
than what I get (before taxes), and I'm not responsible for driving thousands of
people around and attempting to keep them safe and get them to their destinations on
time. And after 1 July, when I pass through yet another fiscal year and step
increase where I work, I'll be making (a little) more than the \$400 a week they're
seeking. Bus drivers in Santa Rosa make more than that, and they have extremely easy
working conditions compared to a tube driver. Maggie is probably as proud of these
repressive wages as George over here is in his threat to veto the \$4.55 an hour
minimum wage. Sod them both!"

Nick Lowe "God will punish you for pubbing a list of your fave listening
52C Mansfield Road hits! No matter how well done or tasteful the contents, this is
Gospel Oak still *naff naff naff*, absolutely the most depressing kind of fan
London NW3 2HT article there is, leaving you invariably wondering how someone
 so true-thinking in all other departments can run their life to
such a blah soundtrack. Such material has no place in the *world's finest fanzine!*
And how can it be that your feet are still tapping to the evil rhythms of the white
colonialist oppressors? I enclose a brief introductory course in correct listening,
and serve you right."

This "brief introductory course" was a tape of various Latino, Caribbean and African music tracks; pretty good world beat stuff, especially the Nicaraguan number instructing the companeros how to field-strip their Belgian FAL rifles so they can kill more of the contra bandits. But we must point out that some of the stuff on Joseph's list was by Irish and other Celts, and that although they may be white when it comes to colonialism they have been and in some cases still are as much oppressed in their homelands as they are oppressors elsewhere.

Mike Gunderloy also sent a tape out of the blue, of Throwing Muses's demo album that got them their recording contract; Jerry Kaufman sent along a tape of two albums by the Minneapolis band Boiled In Lead; and Colin Greenland kicked in with tapes of The Cocteau Twins and Wolfgang Press. Our grateful thanks to all!

Chris Bailey "I've heard of maybe just on half the acts on Joseph's list and
23 Clevedon Road I've heard only two of the specific albums. Am I ignorant? Or
Penge is the list trying to impress? I know that I'm ignorant. I
London SE20 7QQ have a good working knowledge of chart rock and pop over an
 embarrassing number of years but wouldn't claim much more than
that. Still, only two tracks. Is your list perhaps elitist? Does it neglect the
common man -- where are the anthems of the proletariat, where are Bananarama and
The Bangles? Southern hemisphere connection dutifully maintained but where are
Jason and Kylie?"

"Mind you, I've never seen a music list yet that isn't in some sense elitist. Takes me back to Lower Sixth when prestige was being the owner of an album that nobody else had. The crap I've bought just to appear cool -- I won't go into details.

"The obvious answer is that there is just too much music for most people to be able to claim a thorough knowledge, and hence my ignorance of your particular corner. As an illustration, I think that I have a fairly broad musical knowledge, but the

breadth means that the knowledge is superficial. I can croon along to most chart hits of the past (cough) years, have a fair knowledge of classical music (but no opera, please -- life is too short), used to be able to cope with traditional jazz and swingtime, was briefly addicted to the soundtracks of Hollywood musicals, went to a folk club for a couple of years a long time ago, and at present tune in to Charlie Gilliat on Sunday evenings to be reprimanded for my lack of knowledge of the scene in Mali. 'World music' I'm meant to take on board now, and I was already at full stretch.

"As I said, too much. In that case, why do we like to finger-wag those who haven't heard the same as we have? Because it's fun to share, I guess, and that can't be bad. Oddly, I was never aware of much implicit elitism with science fiction listers, harvesters of esoteric knowledge if ever there were. Without being well-read, I'd always heard of the authors in people's lists, had often read many of the stories or novels, and there didn't seem to be much anxiety about big names being included in the top ten."

And on the evening of the Sunday on which this letter was typed up, we went to see the Scots folk sextet Capercaillie at the South Bank. The bozouki player made Joseph jealous because his pony tail was about twice as long, and curly to boot; otherwise they were terrific. Who cares that you can't actually understand Gaelic when they perform with such drive and skill? Interesting though world music is, folk definitely has the edge as far as this household is concerned!

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Special thanks go to *Elise Krueger*, who in response to the appeal in the previous issue's colophon sent a copy of *The Satanic Verses*, signed by various fans at Minicon; and to *Iain Banks*, who sent a T-shirt of comment (the last of a batch he'd made up some time before he'd heard of this fanzine) reading: "FTT -- Carnal Knowledge of the Conservative Party". We shall wear it with pride. The book, that is, not the shirt....

Letters came from *Andy Andrushak* ("I have a CD of the 'Psychologically Ultimate Seashore', which is nothing but the sound of the ocean surf on a beach -- and thanks to the repeat function on the CD player it will go on for hours and hours"), *Sheryl Birkhead*, *Harry Bond* (who seems to think Joseph is "on record" as reading all the daily papers, every day -- we cannot imagine the source of that bizarre and unlikely idea), *Geogre Bondar*, *Richard Brandt* ("The Church got a lot of airplay over here with 'Under The Milky Way'; I don't follow the singles charts any more, but it got onto the soundtrack of *Miami Vice*, the cachet of pop respectability"), *Peter Cohen*, *Peter Darby*, *Jim Darroch*, *Alan Dorey* (naming ten albums he'd add to my list -- among them Gerry Rafferty, Edie Brickell & The New Bohemians, Michelle Shocked and The Men They Couldn't Hang -- and revealing himself as "a closet folkie"), *Tommy Ferguson*, *John Foyster*, *Bruce Gillespie*, *Mike Glicksohn* ("Today's paper quoted Dan Quayle as saying that he was sad, on his recent trip to Latin America, that he hadn't studied Latin in school so he could talk to the people"), *Colin Greenland*, *Teddy Harvia*, *Lucy Huntzinger*, *Stewart Jackson*, *Heidi Lyshol*, *Mark Manning*, and *Eric Mayer* (asking "how could you have left *Folk Roots* poll winner Richard Thompson off your record list?" and urging "slash and burn bankers, not rain forests", which is fine by us).

Other communications were received from *Mark McCann* (wanting to know why Joseph's list omitted Van Morrison & The Chieftains' *Irish Heartbeat*, "which must have been the most influential album of 1988: witness The Waterboys *Fisherman's Blues*, Hothouse Flowers's *CarrickFergus* and even Simple Minds's *Belfast Child*"), *Kev McVeigh*, *Jeanne Mealy*, *Dave Mooring*, *Darroll Pardoe* (who mentioned that his local SPCK bookshop had "featured *The Satanic Verses* in its window display all through the fuss" and said that having read the first few pages he found it "turgid"), *David Redd* (admitting defeat over "the exact difference between 'political' and 'politically aware' despite Joseph's careful explanation lovingly hand-crafted in tiny tiny letters on a postcard last November"), *Yvonne Rousseau*, *Robert Runte*, *Andy Sawyer*, *Alison Scott*, *Paul Skelton*, *Alan Sullivan* (suggesting that ideologically motivated shopping is "at least an alternative to blowing people up as a protest"), *Martyn Taylor*, *Lesley Ward* (naming some of the groups she'd include in her Top 15: "The Pixies, The Shamen, The Cardiacs, Let's Active, and The Sun And The Moon" -- we've heard of only the first), and *Kate Yule*; and late letters on FTT 5 from *Lucy Sussex* and *Harry Warner*.