

science fiction news

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Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

The Joy Makers

by James Gunn

THIS is an uncomfortably apposite novel. It pictures a world of the future entirely dedicated to the pleasure principle, and a great deal of its impact comes from the fact that this future is not a long step from this present. *Pace* Mr Pilgrim (in a recent *SF News*), one does not need to be an anarchist to realize that we pay a very high price in conformity for the material comfort of our own society, and that the idea of 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number' can involve an extremely subtle and therefore extremely dangerous form of dictatorship. Hedonism has gained an air of distinction and intellectual respectability by being taken under the wing of philosophy: John Stuart Mill, writing about happiness, gives it the significance of an ideal; James Gunn, in *The Joy Makers*, brings it down from the heights of theory and translates it, with implacable clarity, into practical terms. One critic, reviewing the book, delivered the opinion that the twentieth century has little use for Utopias: in fact, it seems to have very little use for anything else; all that it has done to the conception is to detach it from any kind of moral or intellectual excellence and reinterpret it in terms of material comfort. This is the starting-point for *The Joy Makers*.

An individual—a business man—becomes aware of the advertising campaign being carried out by Hedonics Inc. ('Your Happiness is our Business') and discovers that it is rapidly gaining financial as well as psychological control of the country. When he decides to resist the process in a legal battle it is already too late.

Fifty years or so later the world is ruled by the Hedonic Council, and the Hedonist whose particular story is set down believes entirely in his work, in the elimination of hunger and poverty and the terror of death. But he is appalled when he learns that the Council has discovered a means of providing everyone with total happiness—at the expense of free will and individuality. He tries to escape and is rescued from the danger of recapture by a member of a rebel organization which hopes to establish 'true' Hedonism on Venus.

Further in the future the New (Reformed) Hedonism has actually gained the ascendancy on Venus, and when an envoy arrives there from Earth he finds that the rooms in many buildings are sealed. Breaking into one of them he discovers a human being in a womb-like cocoon, and at the same moment experiences a feeling of utter safety and happiness. He is captured by the Council—no longer made up of human beings, but a building, a giant power-house—and subjected to every kind of pleasure until he too is almost lulled into mindlessness. A last flaring of rage enables him to break free, and he finds in anger his weapon against enslavement: 'The Council, that made fantasies for others, is now making fantasies for itself. It has a new law: Be Happy. In obedience to that law it has retreated within its own dream of paradise, forgetful of all else, too preoccupied to notice that it is dying. . . . Happiness must come from inside, or it is deadly. The only road for Man is the hard road, up and out—the road of dissatisfaction, the road of anger.'

'Brilliantly conceived and executed, this novel is a *tour de force* in a genuine extrapolation of a sociological and scientific trend.' *New Worlds Science Fiction*.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s

WANTED AND FOR SALE

MR J. T. O'ROURKE, 67 Balmoral Road, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire, wants to obtain a copy of Bernal's *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*.

MR L. V. Richardson, 217 Park Road, Hockley, Birmingham 18, would like to sell approximately fifty of his collection of SFBC titles.

MR C. F. Williams, 14 Darwin Road, Aberavon, Port Talbot, Glamorgan, would like to sell SFBC titles Nos. 40-52 and 57-85.

MISS J. M. Perrot, Tudor Court, Chobham Road, Camberley, Surrey, would like to sell the following SFBC past titles: Nos. 45, 54, 57, 62, 69 and 70.

MR H. Hodson, 77 Anglesey Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, would like to obtain the following SFBC titles: Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 24.

All the above members should, of course, be contacted direct.

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