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THE AESTHETICS OF THE UNDERWORLD: THE WESTERN DRUG PROBLEM

One of the longest-running and most talked about issues of the last two decades is the so-called 'drug problem.' From outside the drug subuniverse, the hallucinogenic sixties were seen as a technicoloured nightmare; the seventies were a sweaty (but sombrely hued) heroin-addicted agony; the eighties, it seems, are to be the era of Yuppie designer drugs that grip you in a fatal embrace.

From a semiotic point of view, the portrayed effects of drugs on the user signify something more than the actual effects they have. The most obvious sense in which this is true is a medical one. For example, on Geoffrey Robertson's *Hypothetical* ('What's Your Poison?' 30 September 1987), a representative of the Merseyside council in England and an Australian pharmacologist claimed that pure regulated doses of heroin had less effect on one's professional performance than alcohol. This is a far cry from popular perceptions of the drug's effect on the user.

However, it is not medical signification that concerns me here. Rather, I wish to show that 'drugs' signify beyond themselves an aesthetic dimension, not just for the conservative readers of lurid horror drug stories, but also for the young future users of these chemicals. I believe that the primary appeal of drugs to the young is an aesthetic one, in which the aesthetically constituted subject stands in alienated opposition (along with his or her peers) to the authorities and 'straights.' As a consequence of this, the current approach of governments to these issues actually enhances the semiotic appeal of drugs to their future market.

The advent of the AIDS virus has lent a new urgency to this issue. Because of this threat, Australian political leaders and interest groups are showing more than usual interest in drug use. Community concern has demanded a response from the politicians. This response took the form of a widely publicised 'drug offensive.'

However, as Robertson's qualified panelists pointed out, this campaign blamed the victims for the straits in which they found themselves. Like the Aboriginal problem, the migrant problem, and the unemployment problem, the drug problem, I suggest, is first of all a community problem. Second, the drug problem is not a 'drug' problem at all. It is a (bourgeois) identity problem.

The Underworld Text: A Theoretical Framework

One of the best ways in which to consider the aesthetics of the underworld 'text' is by using the theory of reception aesthetics proposed by the West German scholar, Hans Robert Jauss. Jauss is one of a number of Western writers who drew their key ideas from Marxist writers of this century. In Jauss's case, the dialogue has been particularly productive. In his early writing, he drew upon the works of Lukacs and Goldmann. More recently, he has found substantial areas of agreement between his own ideas and those of Mikhail Bakhtin. He has done this while seeking to remain on the Western side of the ideological iron curtain. However, as Wlad Godzich points out, Jauss's balancing act between left and right has had only limited success, because he has been under attack from both sides since the early seventies (xiii).

The most successful model of the relationship between material events and individual consciousness is the one proposed by Louis Althusser in his essay, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (127-86). In this pathbreaking essay, Althusser effectively overcame the problems embodied in reflective models by providing a model with some interactive capacity. On the other hand, his insistence on the importance (in the 'last instance') of the infrastructure means that he never severed the link between a discourse and the underlying relations of production. More recent theorists have, and the effect of this has been a type of theory that claims to be ideologically transgressive, but in reality simply reinforces existing ideological structures (see Gelder 551-9).

Althusser's study opens the way for a (reconceived) field of discourse analysis which explores the relationship between subjectivity and ideology. Such study lies within the wider theoretical paradigm outlined by Marx, which is the relationship between the relations of production and the superstructure. This field might best be termed 'cultural hermeneutics.'

Jauss's work is relevant to this field of inquiry for two reasons. First, his aesthetic theory is experiential. He has defined his more recent aesthetic theory in terms of the receiver's 'enjoyment of self in the enjoyment of what is other' (32). That is, the receiving subject enjoys the feeling of absorption which the process of aesthetic constitution provides. While Jauss concentrates on literary texts, it is obvious that his observations can also be applied to a range of social texts which elicit a similar response from their 'readers.' This kind of textualising of social institutions or behaviour patterns has already been successfully conducted in Australia in a book called *Myths of Oz*.

The other factor which makes Jauss's theory an ideal starting point for a study of cultural hermeneutics is his continuing interest in the relationship between material events and fictive subjectivity. However,

from a Marxist perspective, he has put the cart before the horse. Instead of looking at fictional consciousness for lessons about society, Jauss's dominant concern is the development of a highly sophisticated theory of 'literary' hermeneutics.

A simple reversal of these priorities places one squarely in the field of cultural hermeneutics, the limits of which are drawn by Althusser's discussion of the superstructure. Central to this field of inquiry is the process of self-constitution within the life-world provided by ideology for the subject's consumption. As we will see later, this issue of self-identity is central to an understanding not only of the drug problem, but also of any community problem which is fuelled by forces of alienation.

Jauss's adaptation of a model proposed by Wolfgang Iser enables us to describe the topography of perception. Both writers argue first of all that the subject perceives a 'real' world. This world of apparent reality is distinguished clearly in the subject's consciousness from a second world which he or she is able to project to the imagination. Finally, both these worlds interact in the consciousness with a fictive world. Jauss uses this model to claim that the sum of society's separate subjective imaginations, its aesthetic experiences, and its apprehended realities constitutes the collective perceived (or lived) world at any given time. Like Althusser, Jauss argues that all three worlds (including the imagination) are 'materially' determined ('La Perfection' 3-21). As a result, his humanist model can be situated and phrased within an Althusserian framework.

Jauss's model proposes a convergence of the three realms in the subject's life-world. As such, it is highly compatible with Althusser's account of ideology. We can now say that the world in which the subject is constituted is a cultural fabrication (situated within ideology) built up of 'realities' (the real), myths (the fictive), and longings (the imaginary). We have already seen that the experiential emphasis of Jauss's theory allows us to apply his techniques of aesthetic analysis to fields of discourse outside 'written texts.' This analysis of the drug subuniverse is totally superstructural: it begins in the social imagination, travels through fictional consciousness, and arrives finally on the ('real') earth from which the young person seeks relief.

Flights of the Imagination: Role Models and Rock

No one questions established values as keenly as the young person who is in the process of being constituted by them. These values 'speak through' the subject in a process of role play. This occurs in three ways. First, the subject internalises the discourse of social norms through a 'passive' process of reception. Second, he or she tests them in a process of production. Finally, he or she attempts to gain responses from peers

in order to know whether or not the role is possible or suitable. This is a process of communication whereby the individual 'tests out' a role by performing it and assessing the 'applause.'

These three highly performative processes are what enable us to treat the underworld as an aesthetic of reception. They are, indeed, Jauss's three categories of aesthetic experience:

> In aesthetic experience, the subject always enjoys more than itself. It experiences itself as it appropriates an experience of the meaning of the world which its own productive activity and the reception of others can disclose, and the assent of third parties can confirm (32).

The pleasures (and sufferings) of production and reception are obvious enough. Reception precedes production (as is the case with language acquisition). The structuralist model of production and reception has led many to assume that reception is a purely passive process. However, Mikhail Bakhtin has argued against this that the act of comprehension can be conceived as a counter-language:

> La comprehension est une forme de *dialogue*; elle est a l'enonciation ce que la replique est a la replique dans le dialogue. Comprendre, c'est opposer a la parole du locateur une *contra-parole*. (Comprehension is a form of *dialogue*; it is to the utterance as the response is to the response in the dialogue. To comprehend is to oppose the speaker's language with a counter-language. (Bakhtine 146)

Because of the amount of information children have to assimilate, they have need of a faculty to link pieces of disparate and contradictory information together. That faculty is the imagination.

The imagination enables them actively to role play models of adult ritual behaviour (from 'shopkeepers' in childhood to rock bands in adolescence). The complaint that the young are not respectful or serious fails to take account of the deadly earnestness with which they go about imitating the received role plays in the productive side of their aesthetic experience of the world. It is true that a school leaver would burp or fart in the middle of a sensitive operatic aria. However, the same individual would be deadly serious about a performance of his or her own.

For example, most people are familiar with the sight of two young men sitting in a revved up car at the traffic lights. A tape player is blaring out the music of AC/DC or Bon Jovi. Both driver and passenger are wearing sunglasses; they each have one arm resting along the door of the car. If we look closely, both appear quite tense. They are looking straight ahead, even as the driver revs up his engine.

The self-consciousness arises from a sense of performance. They are testing out scenes already enacted in the glowing colour of their imagination. The disgust of the elders (and the admiration of either girls or their peers) is called for by this show. Admiration is one of Jauss's modalities of communicative identification between performer and audience. These modalities are quite definite. If a bystander were to burst out laughing, this 'audience error' could result in physical confrontation.

The modality of identification relied upon by the drug dealer is much the same. 'His' behaviour calls for admiration from a small but select audience, and condemnation from the wider community. Similarities like this are explained by the fact that the relations of power are the same in both cases to those of a business office. The car driver and the drug dealer have power because they possess a commodity. Their swaggering behaviour is the ideological correlate of this. In a business house, the commodity is usually cash. Office staff are bullied, cajoled, and threatened by staff reports, promotions, and dismissals.

Just as in a bank there is only one manager for a group of tellers and typists, so there is only one dealer for a large number of users. These subordinates also need a place within social ideology. The most menial employee of a company has an ideological role play that is based on the idea of success, even if the perceived reality rarely meets this horizon of expectations. However, the interesting thing about the junkie/drug user role play is that even in the imagination, it is the drama of an outcast and a loser. There are two sets of reasons for the effectiveness of this drama.

One of them is the capitalist discourse of failure. Some people try *but fail* to speak the language of Alan Bond and John Laws. The fact that they cannot results in their adopting the negative role which is type-cast for them by these media pop stars.

However, this language of defeat is rare (and is usually mixed with a discourse of defiance of some kind). Despite its negative popular connotations, there is a positive side to the user's image. This takes three major forms.

The best understood of these is the masochistic desire to self-destruct. Rather like the Romantics of a century ago who often died young, pretty, and mad, some heroin users live in a self-destructive world of fantasy about the nature of what they are doing. People in this self-dramatising category dice with death for an audience in much the same way as the persistent suicide attempter calls out for the sympathy of those around.

Second, there is the pleasure gained from the sense of adventure involved in obtaining the drug. This includes those young people with a highly developed sense of curiosity. The process of scoring holds these

people's interest long after their curiosity to know what the drug feels like has been satiated. (Those interested only in the physical sensation of the drug will only need to try it once to satisfy their curiosity).

Having obtained the chemical, some users gain pleasure from the process of carefully getting the small quantity of 'gear' into a spoon, dissolving it in water with the help of a flame, drawing it up (sometimes through a filter such as a cigarette butt), holding it up and tapping it to get rid of air bubbles, and slipping it into a carefully prepared vein. This provides a type of alchemical joy for those who studied high school science. More significantly, this routine resembles other pleasurable anticipatory routines such as payday, unwrapping birthday presents, and prayers before meals. The build-up of tension followed by release can also be compared with the pattern of courtship. Indeed, for some, intravenous drugs (and some of the more recent designer drugs such as ecstasy) are a very real substitute for sexual fulfilment. From a sexual point of view, this kind of fulfilment is a masculine one: the 'lonely hunter' is a male figure that tracks down his female quarry for pure self-gratification. Once found, the quest ends, temporarily at least. From an aesthetic point of view, the pleasure gained from the routine arises not from a 'restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself' (Coleridge 289). It could be argued from this that both kinds of pleasure are discursive correlates, that indeed, both are discourse of male desire based on relations of power which posit the man as (active) hunter gatherer and the woman/drug as (passive) home-maker.

Some people in the West would argue that observations like this should be made by psychologists. I have suspended discussion of this obviously relevant subject to this point because of a fundamental question I wish to raise about the humanistic concept of the individual which is embodied in psychological theory. The reasons for this ego-centricity become clear if one looks at the milieu which gave rise to the 'science of the self.'

Most people cite an author figure as 'father' of psychology (again, the sexuality is explicit). That 'seminal name' is Sigmund Freud. However, it is more useful to consider Freud (in either a historical or a contemporary sense) as the name of a historical configuration. Turn of the century Vienna ruled an empire which was about to collapse. This was documented with hindsight in aesthetic terms by Robert Musil in his *Man Without Qualities*. However, the nature of Viennese society is equally well represented in the art of the *Sezessionist* painters like Gustave Klimt, Egon Schiele, and Oskar Kokoschka. Schiele's work in particular is notable for the way in which it strips away the cultural veneer overlaying sick and vulnerable human figures. It is as if those who

were waltzing to Strauss's music in Schonbrunn or Belvedere were aware that the whole illusion could crumble at any time.

That such a society should produce psychology is not surprising in a historical sense. The artists of the time discerned a schism between the world of appearances and another 'inner' world. The sense that Austro-Hungary was a doomed political entity may have been widespread. However, the emblems of empire in Vienna denied this. In such instability of national identity was rooted the instability of the constituted 'Austro-Hungarian' subject.

The historical reason for the rise of the science of the self is not as important, however, as the way in which this 'science' was received (and is still received) around the world. In America, in particular, psychologists are in high demand. Their popularity there reflects (and reinforces) the fact that America is the country which champions notions of individuality and self-reliance above the common good.

More important still is the fact that psychology provides a humanist language of 'selfhood' which legitimises the American way by providing introspective sites of contestation: people do not have to worry about 'social' issues as much as they do about their personal traumas (past and present). This process extends to the television presentation of social issues, such as poverty. Current affairs shows themselves now often use a peculiar and particular case to highlight an issue. This creates what is called 'human interest'. However, the need for this arises because of the ongoing debilitation of an integrative social language in favour of a discourse of the discrete self.

Television in this century plays a similar role to the work of fiction in the nineteenth century. It could be argued that psychology was not only the product of a specific social milieu; but also, it could be claimed that this science of the 'self' has its origins in the wider concept of the self proposed by Romantic novelists in the course of the nineteenth century. Without this concept of the self, psychology would not have been conceivable in anything other than a sociological form. I wish to examine the significance of the concept of unitary selfhood by looking at the German novel of development, the *Bildungsroman.*

Fictive Awareness: The Bildungsroman and the Sense of Self

The *Bildungsroman* is one of the centrepieces of Romantic ideology, and its popularity has not waned since its first major success in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehjahres* (1795). This novel form problematised the 'individual's relation to the world' by showing the young person's struggle for selfhood in the process of growing up. This emphasis on the individual contra the world (instead of the subject created by

the world) placed it at the centre of an ideology which gave rise to such ideas as the great individual and the alienated superior artist.

The *Bildungsroman* constituted the (typically male) unitary subject by providing either an omniscient narrator who drew together the threads of subjectivity into a single narrative entity, or an 'I' whose very existence presumed oneness. The progression of the plot added to this (indeed, the German word, *Bildung*, means 'formation'): it is as if the subject is built up block by block, until, at the end, after a stormy passage from the innocence of childhood to the knowledge of adulthood, the illusion of organicity is attained.

In this novel form, Romantic issues of 'selfhood' were both displayed and contested. Typically, these issues revolved around a journey to emancipation, knowledge, and fulfilment. At its most transgressive, the *Bildungsroman* enabled nineteenth century English women a voice. In Charlotte Bronte's novel, *Jane Eyre*, for example, the central character is female, and the novel's action is devoted to the 'formation' of her character from a difficult childhood to a self-chosen destiny (when she chooses to marry Rochester).

In this century, the humanistic presumptions of the nineteenth century began to be challenged. Writers like Christina Stead and Ralph Ellison subverted the form in different ways. Stead achieved this with a combination of formal subversion (in *The Seven Poor Men of Sydney* and *For Love Alone* there are passages of stylistically unusual narrative, such as Teresa's 'Seven Houses of Love') and a Marxist perspective on her subject matter. Ellison, on the other hand, achieved subversion by displacing the narrative 'I' with an absence. In *Invisible Man*, he problematises the issue of black identity in white society by not naming the 'I' narrating his own tale.

This process of subversion of the subject could not occur last century because of the roots of the Romantic 'I/eye' in the divine. Because the *Bildungsroman* articulated the notion of a discrete subject, this 'self' could be transplanted, ready-made, to other types of novel, to other types of literature, and to other types of art. This led to the pervasiveness of what Jauss has described as an aesthetics of genius, in which the doppelganger author/narrator figure mirrors and displaces the divine.

The collapse of the aesthetics of genius did not result in a total collapse of the alienated artist. Instead, artists were truly isolated from the community and their work was deprivileged as a result of this. Despite this, the *Bildungsroman* (and the accompanying sense of a discrete self) survived. The positive aspect of the collapse of the aesthetics of genius was that the Christian cosmological whole which was displaced in the nineteenth century now collapsed completely. As Jauss

points out, this collapse left art alone to perform the function of unifying the social consciousness (*Aesthetic Experience* 92). The result of this fragmentation of social awareness was that oppressed minorities gained an overt political site of contestation for the first time. As Jauss notes, small subunits of society like this have been called subuniverses by the sociologist, Alfred Schutz (120). The drug community is of course one such subuniverse.

This community, like Ellison's black community and Stead's community of women, does not have 'official' power. Nevertheless, all three communities have a voice. Within the drug subuniverse, there is an artistic subculture which knits its members together.

The most obvious artform which provides a sense of identity for the prospective member of a drug culture is rock music. The psychedelic sixties led a range of groups (most notably, the Beatles) to extol the virtues of mind expanding drugs. By the early seventies, however, that popular explosion ws replaced by the bleaker outlooks of Lou Reed and Iggy Pop. This in turn was succeeded by the even bleaker (but more energetic) music of the Sex Pistols and The Damned.

While Sid Vicious died of a heroin overdose and became a cult figure for that reason, punk rockers were not as interested in heroin (or drugs other than alcohol for that matter) as singers like Lou Reed. His *Rock n' Roll Animal* album (1974) is dominated by a thirteen minute version of the Velvet Underground song, "Heroin." The following sample from the text illustrates the alienated image Reed projected until quite recently:

> When the smack begins to flow
> Then I really don't care anymore
> About all you Jim-Jims in this town
> And everybody putting everybody else down. (Reed)

The sense of disengagement and hurt which this song portrays offers a modality of identification with a new subuniverse, that of the rebellious drug addict.

Songs like "Heroin" also suggest the idea that the user is consciously flirting with death. It does not take much imagination to link this with the outlook in Richard Wagner's opera, *Tristan und Isolde.* There also, the lovers yearn for death. The only difference between the nineteenth century love-death in *Tristan und Isolde* and the modern male protagonist in "Heroin" is Isolde. However, even this difference evaporates if one considers that the 'perfect love' expressed in the *Tristan* music is an act of Wagnerian yearning for divinity, or even Narcissism. Enacted in the drug subuniverse is a profound narrative of tragedy.

Like the hero of Wagner's opera and the hero of the *Bildungsroman*, the hero of the drug 'tragedy' is male. This 'maleness' is seen also in the role models provided by rock music. In a song like 'Golden Brown' by the Stranglers, for example, the perspective is masculine: the drug is defined in terms appropriate to a female sunbather (as the title itself suggests). Indeed, we sometimes hear songs in which the drug is actually personified as a woman (lover and torturer). A good example of this is the Rolling Stones song, "Sister Morphine."

The absence of female role models in popular culture for 'heavy' drugs like heroin might lead one to think that women do not use them. Indeed, one could believe that sleeping pills and tranquillisers were the only drugs attractive to women. However, a quick visit to a drug rehabilitation centre corrects this impression: for some reason, women are almost as prone as men to use heavy drugs. Even if we set aside the prostitution industry, there are sufficient numbers of women using narcotics to mount an argument that they too are able to subvert and use the popular male role models (as well as unforgettable 'heroin(e)' figures like Janis Joplin) to participate in the drug subuniverse.

Some explanation for this comes from the fact that rock music is only one of a number of shared 'texts' that knit together the drug community and provide a point of entry for those attracted to it. The user's world is defined semiotically from within and without. That these lines can be drawn at all suggests a clearly defined discursive field with a language of its own (which is described again or 'translated' from the 'outside,' another discursive field).

Mainstream discourse about heroin is constituted by 'real life' experiences depicted aesthetically by commercial current affairs shows. These shows telescope the anguish of families and friends into a few minutes of photogenic tears and emotional outbursts. The user is shown either as a reformed simpleton or as a ball of sweat and nerves writhing in an appropriately darkened corner. Fictional accounts of drug addiction (such as movies and serials) reinforce this view.

This view from 'outside' helps define the internal subuniverse of drug users (and the sense of difference this line creates attracts young, interested, and disaffected initiates). The major form of narrative within this community involves story telling by the more 'experienced' members. These stories nearly all revolve around drugs. Indeed, a new arrival to such a society would believe that there is more pleasure to be gained from talking about drugs than from actually taking them. Interestingly enough, many of those who go on to become addicts can only get off the drug with the help of organisations like Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.). Groups like this are often successful because those who are in the painful process of becoming 'clean' support each other. Most

meetings of N.A. consist of story telling. It is as if, for some people, the stories are stronger than the drug.

The effect of these stories on the malleable minds of those leaving school should not be underestimated. They provide the outsider with the challenge of acquiring the language of the discourse (the buzz words change all the time). Many of the tellers are talented, committed, and entertaining; many of the tales are witty or poignant. Like all aesthetic fiction, these stories help users to grasp their world and to secure self-certainty. With the power of these tales in mind, it is now possible to examine the 'world' they define, with a view to unravelling the layers of the 'real' embodied in them.

Cultural Reality and the Relations of Power

Language is one of the most important constituents of cultural reality. Subuniverses of all kinds are defined by the language they use. This is true of the subuniverse of drug users and dealers. Heroin, for example, is known by a string of names: H, horse, smack, dope, rocks, powder, shit, skag, and so on. Code words like this perform two chief functions: they identify the initiate, and they define the limits and nature of the subuniverse concerned.

Language is not, of course, all there is to cultural reality (and cultural reality, it should be remembered, is itself superstructural). Few would envy, for example, the cultural reality of actually using a drug. Neither would many deny the sensations of excitement which scoring a drug affords. The different behaviour pattern of the community of drug users from other subuniverses also helps constitute the user's cultural reality. Nevertheless, it is language which knits these differences together by articulating them.

These differences define the drug subuniverse. One such difference is an attitude of extreme cynicism about the ethics of people in high places. This is interesting because it represents an intersection of cultural reality and the relations of power: members of the heroin circle are informed enough to realise that the (cultural) reality which is presented to mainstream society is, in many ways, a sham. The reasons for this knowledge is their proximity to the corruption which goes on in officialdom.

A good example of this is the street proverb that dope is plentiful *after* a major bust, not before it. Then there are the countless tales of frame-ups, of illegal deals, and of pay-offs to police or criminal organisations for services in kind. The Queensland Fitzgerald inquiry revealed to a surprised public what many users have known for years. It is obvious to anyone with a serious interest in the subject that the eradication of a

drug like heroin will occur through a structural shift in fashion rather than a successful police operation.

This returns me to my opening proposition that drugs are attractive to potential users for semiotic rather than physiological reasons. They signify beyond their chemical properties a range of attractions to potential users: heroin, ten years ago signified excitement and rebellion; soon it may signify boredom, poverty and disease. It will then be replaced by something else (such as ecstasy/XTC which might signify harmony and excitement).

To short circuit this process of signification in the case of narcotics, one has only to legalise them. Back in 1977, Gore Vidal spelt out some material reasons for the success of such an approach. Having noted that the drug problem was far greater in America than in England, he observed that the English

> have turned the problem over to the doctors. An addict is required to register with a physician who gives him [note once more the sex of the implied user] at controlled intervals a prescription so he can buy his drug. The addict is content. Best of all, society is safe. The Mafia is out of the game. The police are unbribed, and the addict will not mug an old lady in order to get the money for his next fix. (271)

I would suggest a further half step to almost eliminate the problem. By making the drug available on prescription to any adult who wants to use it, a society kills stone dead the aesthetic appeal of a subuniverse which was enveloped in an aura of excitement and mystique.

Even this does not go to the root of the problem, however. The real problem is the fact that young people are disaffected and anti-social in the first place. This disaffection has its origins in the cult of the individual which I have traced from the early nineteenth century to the present time. Removing the heroin problem simply drives future disaffected youth to other more fashionable openings in the underworld. As such, legalisation is a bandaid solution to a small part of a broad social malaise. Nevertheless, because of AIDS and the particularly harsh realities of heroin addition, I believe that the application of this particular bandaid is worthwhile.

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J. TARWOOD

LIFE AT THE TOP

Lispingly crunching cabbage,
small white rabbits huddle together,
a feed bag curtaining the shed's window mesh.
One black girl stoops sweeping their pebbly shit.
Outside, her fat sister sweats plucking their bluegrass supper.
But the rabbits never toil themselves.
Nicely leisured, they eat and sleep,
fattening from sheer noblesse oblige.
Then after three months, perhaps four,
the sisters crunch thin collar bones
and ker-plunk thick skulls
while the radio choir sings *Marching to Zion.*