

Children of the revolution? The hippy counter-culture, the idea of childhood and the case of Schoolkids Oz

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This essay is part of a larger project, Growing Up Modern: Childhood, Youth and Popular Culture Since 1945. More information about the project, and illustrated versions of all the essays can be found at: <https://davidbuckingham.net/growing-up-modern/>.

On June 23rd 1971, a momentous trial began at London's Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court of England and Wales. In the dock were three young men, Richard Neville, Jim Anderson and Felix Dennis, the editors of *Oz*, an 'underground' magazine. They faced charges relating to issue 28 of the magazine, published in May of the previous year as *Schoolkids Oz*. They were accused of producing an obscene publication and sending it through the mail, for which the maximum penalties were three years and one year respectively; and, more broadly, of 'conspiring... to produce a magazine containing divers lewd, indecent and sexually perverted articles, cartoons, drawings and illustrations with intent thereby to debauch and corrupt the morals of young children and young persons within the Realm and to arouse and implant in their minds lustful and perverted desires...' – an archaic and rarely used charge for which the maximum penalty was life imprisonment, at the discretion of the judge.

The *Oz* Trial was the longest-ever obscenity trial in British legal history, lasting nearly six weeks. Both at the time and subsequently, it assumed almost mythological proportions. Yet while the trial focused in great detail on the parts of *Schoolkids Oz* that were deemed obscene, relatively little attention was paid – either at the time or afterwards – to the publication as a whole. At the invitation of its editors, *Oz* 28 had been produced (at least in part) by schoolchildren; and a good deal of the outrage that it provoked was to do with its affront to traditional notions of what was appropriate for children to see. As such, it raises some interesting questions about the place of 'childhood' – that is, of *ideas* of childhood, rather than the experience of actual children – within the counter-culture of the time. In this essay, I want to explore some of the tensions and contradictions that were at stake in these ideas, firstly in general terms and subsequently in relation to the specific instance of *Schoolkids Oz*.

What was the counter-culture?

The *Oz* Trial has been regarded as a defining moment in the history of the counter-culture in Britain. For Richard Neville and his defenders, the prosecution was not primarily about obscenity at all: rather, as he announced in his opening speech, it was 'a political occasion'. The trial represented an attack on an 'entire community' – that is, on the hippies, or the counter-culture – and, more broadly, on the very idea of freedom itself. For others, looking retrospectively, it was already the beginning of the end – the conclusion of a more expansive, optimistic period, or at least a moment where the counter-culture in Britain moved into a new, darker phase. I'll return to

these arguments towards the end of this essay, but it makes sense to begin by exploring some key terms.

Personally, I was just a few years too young to be an authentic hippy; but even so, it's genuinely difficult to define or account for the counter-culture without the distortions of hindsight. On the one hand, there is a kind of retrospective nostalgia on the part of many of those who participated at the time, as well as a kind of 'retro-chic' promoted (more or less ironically) by recurrent hippy revivals. On the other hand, there is the luxury of condemnation: the word 'hippy' has become so encrusted by decades of contempt (think of the punks' injunctions to 'kill a hippy') that it seems almost indelibly dismissive. While there are now some very useful oral histories of the period, there is bound to be a problem of inaccurate memories: indeed, as the saying goes, if you can remember the 1960s, you weren't really there in the first place.

In this context, Timothy Miller's book *The Hippies and American Values*, first published in 1991, is especially useful. Miller presents an analysis of the hippies in their own words, drawing on an extensive review of the American underground press during the latter half of the 1960s, as well as some related publications by its key exponents. Miller explores hippy pronouncements in relation to the unavoidable trinity of sex, drugs and rock-n-roll (of which more below); yet in the process, he identifies the hippies' broader ethical and political challenge to the mainstream culture. The hippies questioned dominant values of scientific rationality, and the emphasis on technological progress; and they sought to find alternatives to what they regarded as the materialistic, competitive 'work ethic' of capitalism. They proclaimed the need for personal freedom, especially in relation to sexuality, and they sought to recover a more spiritual, but also more natural and pleasurable, approach to everyday life.

These opposing sets of values might be schematically presented as follows:

DOMINANT CULTURE	COUNTER-CULTURE
rationality	intuition
restraint	hedonism
science	mysticism, spirituality
war, aggression	peace and love
industrial	rural/agrarian
technological	natural
synthetic	organic
competitive	communal
materialism	sharing, voluntary poverty
obedience to authority	freedom of choice
hierarchy	equality
work	play

The term 'counter-culture' was first used by the academic Theodore Roszak in his book *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, published in the US in 1969. Roszak and others presumed that there was a fundamental unity in the counter-culture, or at least attempted to write one into being; but in reality there were always different, overlapping *sub-cultures* within the counter-culture. As Miller suggests, the counter-culture was diverse and

inconsistent – and indeed, often contradictory. In particular, he points to a fundamental distinction that was apparent to many commentators at the time, and that is important to the discussion of childhood that follows below: this is the distinction between what might loosely be called the ‘new left’ and the hippies.

To put this (again) quite schematically, the new left was primarily concerned to challenge the dominant political order, while the hippies were more interested in creating alternatives to it, by turning away or ‘dropping out’. Many self-professed hippies were very suspicious of organized groups of any kind – although one might well argue that hippies themselves were highly conformist in their own way. Many hippy commentators saw the new left as violent, old-fashioned and anti-pleasure; while many on the new left saw the hippies as escapist, self-indulgent and infantile. The hippies claimed to be the *real* revolutionaries: they were behaving as though the revolution had already happened, whereas the new left was acutely conscious that it had not. While there were overlaps here – both hippies and new left radicals opposed the Vietnam war, for example, as well as punitive drug laws – there was also a good deal of mutual hostility between them.

The eventual fragmentation of the counter-culture in the early 1970s can partly be understood in terms of an intensification of this fundamental opposition. On the one hand, many of the original hippies turned away from mainstream society in a more fundamental way, by moving out of the city and going ‘back to the land’, forming rural communes. Yet on the other, some new left activists, frustrated by the slow pace of change, took to more violent methods, with the emergence of terrorist groups such as the Weathermen, the Angry Brigade and the Red Army Faction (the so-called Baader-Meinhof Gang). While both groups wanted revolutionary change, there was increasingly little in common between them.

Miller’s account is based almost entirely on US sources (although he does occasionally quote Richard Neville’s influential book *Play Power*, which I’ll discuss below). The situation in the UK was at least somewhat different. The term ‘counter-culture’ was not widely used here. Among the writers and supporters of *Oz* and related publications, the preferred term was ‘the underground’ or ‘the alternative society’ – which perhaps suggests a less oppositional, but nevertheless still broadly political, approach. The term ‘hippy’ was not yet seen as disparaging, although it generally seemed to refer more to matters of cultural style and taste. Despite the enthusiasm for sex, drugs and rock-n-roll, and the apparent proliferation of festivals, communes, ‘arts labs’ and alternative publications, the underground did not provide – or seek to provide – a singular or consistent programme or rationale. Yet here too, we can detect a fundamental tension between the *cultural* and the *political* elements of the counter-culture, between the hippies and the new left – or (as Miller also puts it) between those who were more inwardly or more outwardly focused. This was a tension that frequently surfaced in publications like *Oz*.

The hippies and the idea of childhood

The tension I have identified here was particularly apparent in relation to the idea of childhood – in ways that, as we shall see, had particular implications for *Schoolkids Oz* and its editors’ eventual trial.

According to Peter Braunstein, the counter-culture was part of a broader 'rejuvenation' of society that took place in the 1960s, at least in the United States – a rejuvenation that was apparent not just in culture and consumer goods, but also in politics. With the discovery of the youth market, and the coming of age of the baby boomer generation, young people moved in from the margins to occupy centre stage. Young people's tastes and preferences became the driving force in popular culture; the constraints and conventions of the older generation were dismissed and swept aside. Yet this change was not only about young people themselves: it was also about the idea of 'youthfulness' – youth was a state of mind, not just a matter of one's chronological age. As Braunstein suggests, it was as though the whole country was undergoing an extended late adolescence.

This argument relates to youth, but it can also be applied to childhood. Indeed, the idea of childhood was central to the hippie ethos. Hippiedom valorized a child-like state of mind, a state of wonder and simplicity. The hippies aimed to be at one with nature and the earth, in a kind of primal, pre-technological innocence: they were, after all, the flower children. They sought to live in and for the present, refusing to plan for the future, or to view their lives in terms of career or progress. This ethos was undoubtedly promoted by the use of psychedelic drugs, especially LSD: for many of their advocates (from Aldous Huxley to Timothy Leary), the psychedelic 'trip' involved a return to childhood, and even to infancy. According to William Burroughs, drugs were a means of 'deconditioning' the mind, and throwing off the rigid, one-dimensional constraints of adulthood.

As Jenny Diski argues, the counter-culture enabled the Sixties generation to follow through on Peter Pan's imperative never to grow up: this was, she says, 'the longest gap year in history'. At least in the early years of the counter-culture, there was an abiding fantasy that life could be lived as a kind of permanent free rock festival, without the need to work. One could hang on to childhood, or irresponsibility, forever. Of course, this was largely a middle-class fantasy, which held a particular appeal for the growing numbers of university students. As middle-class parents emerged from post-war austerity, they were keen to indulge their children, not merely by providing copious amounts of consumer goods, but also by allowing (and funding) them to defer their eventual entry into adult life. In this context, 'dropping out' could be conceived as a temporary condition, rather than a permanent excommunication. By contrast, working-class young people lacked this cushion of privilege and security, and could not so easily afford to extend their childhood in this way; and this led to a degree of class tension and resentment within the counter-culture itself.

A central emphasis here was on the idea of *play*. The 1960s was a period of almost full employment, but the development of technology held out the promise of a utopian future, where most work would be done by machines. This allowed adults to imagine a world where they would be free to play – or at least where work itself would become another form of play. Richard Neville's counter-cultural 'manifesto', mentioned above, was the book *Play Power*, published in early 1971, a few months ahead of the Oz Trial. While there are some overtly political 'new left' elements here, Neville's core argument is for a kind of hedonism – a playful pursuit of pleasure. Play in these terms is about the freedom to have fun: it embodies values

that adults (or at least 'straight' adults) have somehow lost in the process of growing up. Play is joyful, spontaneous, innocent, and not constrained by any utilitarian considerations, or by the responsibilities of adulthood. Play is not competitive, unlike most forms of sport. It is essentially anarchic; but it also contains a potentially dangerous, anti-social element – even a vein of savagery – that disrupts and challenges sexual repression and the Protestant work ethic. Play, Neville wrote, 'adorns life, amplifies it, and to that extent is a necessity both for the individual – as a life function – and for the society... as a cultural function'.

The imperative to play was to some extent apparent in changing styles of political protest: the outrageous and unpredictable antics of the 'yippies' in the United States challenged 'serious' ways of doing politics, and were influential internationally (and continue to be so). However, play was also evident in more widespread cultural practices. The fashion styles of the hippies were to some extent about 'dressing up' games, combining outlandish articles that one's parents or grandparents might have worn, but in a playful way. And as Diski argues, drugs were also a kind of 'fascinating, magical toy':

It wasn't coincidental that we took to blowing bubbles through plastic hoops and making morphing patterns in bright colours with oil and heat [in psychedelic 'light shows']. And notice how taking acid dripped on to sugar cubes or blotting paper combined the magical contraption with the favoured, forbidden foodstuffs of our childhoods.

Children's liberation

However, in contrast with this view, one can identify a very different account of childhood within the counter-culture – an account that derives more from the political, 'new left' side than from the cultural, hippy side. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of arguments for 'children's rights' and 'children's liberation', in some ways as a logical extension of other civil rights movements of the time. These approaches particularly informed arguments for what is variously called 'child-centred' or 'progressive' education. These are loose terms, but broadly speaking these approaches challenged the emphasis on adult authority and coercion, and emphasised the educational and developmental significance of play in learning. Of course, these kinds of approaches had a much longer history. In the US, it's possible to look back to the work of the educational philosopher John Dewey, and in Europe to pioneering Romantic educators such as Maria Montessori and Johann Pestalozzi. In the UK, there is also a tradition of progressive education, most notably in schools like Summerhill, led by the charismatic Scottish headteacher A.S. Neill.

In the late 1960s, many of the key ideas and approaches here were drawn from US educational thinkers. As long ago as 1960, Paul Goodman had argued in *Growing Up Absurd* that the 'organised society' – and particularly the education system – was creating a generation of alienated and apathetic young people. Goodman argued that 'childlike' qualities should be more widely valued, and that the idea of childhood could function as 'a resource for the rescue of a corrupt society'. If Goodman's arguments seem to pull in the hippy direction I have described above, those of John Holt are very different. In his books *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn*, and

especially in his manifesto-like *Escape from Childhood: The Needs and Rights of Children* (1974), Holt challenges the ways in which children are kept separate from the adult world, and is scathing about adults' condescending and bullying attempts to direct their activities. Children, he argues, are much more competent than adults give them credit for: they need to learn from their mistakes, rather than being forever 'protected' and controlled by adults. For Holt, childhood amounts to a kind of 'prison', from which children need to escape as soon as they can. Unlike Goodman (and indeed the hippies), Holt challenges sentimental notions of childhood innocence and naturalness – and especially the view of children as 'cute'. Viewing children as embodiments of wisdom and beauty, he argued, was ultimately patronizing – a way of not taking them seriously as people.

Holt was a significant influence on teachers and writers in Britain, most notably his friend Leila Berg. Berg was a publisher and children's author, who became interested in children's rights and informal teaching methods in the 1960s. Aside from producing countless books for children, she also helped to found the activist journal *Children's Rights*. Her key publication addressed to adults is probably the book *Look at Kids*, published as a mass-market Penguin paperback in 1972. Like Holt, Berg argues against adults' tendency to patronize, coerce and oppress children. Here again, children are seen to be more competent than adults generally assume: they are capable of self-regulating, and should be left to explore the world at their own pace, free from adult intervention or manipulation. Berg implicitly represents the child as free and natural, although her focus is very much on the urban environment. However, her account is far from celebratory or sentimental, let alone cute: there is a good deal here about the indignity of poverty, and the violence and suffering children endure at the hands of abusive parents and a repressive welfare system. Berg urges her readers to look at, and learn from, children; but she is also bitterly critical of policies and practices (for example, on the part of schools and urban planners) that constrain their lives.

By the mid-to-late 1960s, for the most part in London, several libertarian 'free schools' were opened, and a wave of campaigns and publications appeared offering critiques of the mainstream education system, and arguing for children to have a greater say. As Patricia Holland recalls, several of these publications included letters from children, and some were produced by school children themselves, with titles like *Braindamage*, *Miscarriage* and *Blackbored*. Meanwhile, the Schools Action Union was formed in London in 1969, to campaign on issues such as selective schooling, the examination system and the use of corporal punishment. As this implies, *Schoolkids Oz* was far from being an isolated phenomenon – or even an original one – in this respect.

These developments did not go unchallenged by the authorities. Members of the Schools Action Union frequently encountered punitive responses from the authorities. Risinghill, a London state secondary school run by the progressive headteacher Michael Duane, was closed down in 1965, at least partly because the staff refused to use corporal punishment (it was subsequently the focus of a book by Leila Berg); although Neill's Summerhill was a private, fee-paying school, and thus free from official interference. Meanwhile, an English translation of *The Little Red Schoolbook*, a book written by two Danish researchers containing criticisms of mainstream education alongside plain-speaking advice about legal rights, drugs and

sex, was successfully prosecuted for obscenity in 1971: the trial overlapped with the Oz Trial, and the defence in both cases was led by the illustrious John Mortimer.

As we shall see, elements of this more political approach to children’s liberation were certainly apparent in *Schoolkids Oz*, even if the publication itself was largely produced by older teenagers. At the trial, key proponents of children’s rights, including Berg and Duane (who were both members of the editorial board of *Children’s Rights* magazine) were invited to appear as expert witnesses for the defence. Berg’s ‘Charter’ of children’s rights – which overlaps with Holt’s manifesto in *Escape from Childhood* – was even cited in court, although it was (quite absurdly) reduced by the prosecution to a recommendation that ‘children should indulge in sexual intercourse all over the streets of London’.

To some extent, these liberationist ideas overlapped with those of the hippies, described above, although it is important to emphasise some of the significant differences between them. While the hippies seem to conceive of childhood as a desirable state to which adults should seek to return, the new left argument sees it as a state of oppression that needs to be overthrown. For the new left, children (like women, blacks and other oppressed groups) are in need of liberation; for the hippies, it is as though they are already liberated. Again, at the risk of oversimplifying, a binary chart might help to clarify this distinction:

HIPPY CHILDHOOD	NEW LEFT CHILDHOOD
Childhood as innocent, natural	Childhood as an oppressed state
Childhood as a distinct, separate phase of life	Challenging distinctions between child and adult
Play as subversive	Play as developmental
Children are already free	Children need to be liberated
Adults should be more child-like	Children should have adult privileges
Adults need to escape into childhood	Children need to escape into adulthood

Of course, in reality these two views of childhood were by no means simply opposed – and in some respects each presumes the other. For instance, they share a notion of ‘liberation’ or ‘escape’, and a wish to challenge conventional notions of adulthood; and to some extent both of them rest on a binary distinction between adult and child, even if this is something that writers like Holt appear keen to dismantle.

Interestingly, Jenny Diski (from whose critical memoir of the sixties I have been quoting) was herself involved in some of the radical children’s liberation movements of the time, working in a London ‘free school’. According to Diski, part of the aim here was to pass on to the next generation of children the counter-cultural idea of childhood as in itself a form of liberation:

The Peter Pan generation were trying to give our younger selves the liberated childhood we had belatedly discovered and were presently acting out, just as our parents had funded us to have a carefree misspent youth that they had lacked... We were a generation that wanted to give the children the childhoods we wished we had had, or thought we wished we had had. (109, 117)

Diski elegantly sums up the paradoxes here, but in my view her account rather underestimates the political dimensions of this children's liberation movement. At least in the UK, there was a class element to this: the children who were the objects of this movement were largely working-class, while many of their teachers were middle-class. It was also, predominantly, an *educational* movement, seeking to engage with mainstream schools, working within the system rather than seeking merely to escape from it. Retrospectively, it might be tempting to see it as a kind of naïve wishful thinking, but that is to underplay the genuine insights and political commitments of those who were involved.

Representing childhood

These contrasting sets of ideas were also apparent in the ways in which childhood was represented within the counter-culture. Before we finally move on to *Oz*, it's worth looking at this a little more broadly.

In the United States, the image of childhood as a state of natural innocence and wonder was a recurring trope in hippy music and iconography. In the early heyday of San Francisco's 'Summer of Love', the flower children basked in a child-like, mystical identification with the universe – albeit one that was partly induced by the chemical intervention of LSD. This was apparent in the psychedelic style of album covers, posters and liquid light shows, with their moving swirls and kaleidoscopes of primary colour; and in the recurring use of mythological and fantastical content, often drawn from fairy tales and children's stories. Images of nature – plants, landscapes, mythological animals – abounded; and nudity was apparent everywhere, not just for its sexual connotations but also because it seemed to imply an Eden-like state of purity and innocence. This idea of a return to childhood and to nature was also evident in musical lyrics. As one leading hippy anthem, Joni Mitchell's 'Woodstock', had it: '*We are stardust, we are golden – And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden*'.

In Britain, this image of childhood was especially evident in the music of the period. A fascinating BBC documentary, 'Psychedelic Britannia', broadcast in 2015, provides ample evidence for this claim. As British pop and rock musicians began to break away from the influence of American rhythm and blues, and came under the influence of psychedelic drugs, a distinctive style began to emerge that (among other things) harked back to a world of childhood fantasy. Some of the early work of Pink Floyd, for example, invokes a pastoral vision of an English arcadia familiar from classic children's books like *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*. While the music itself was definitely electronic, the lyrics – written by one of rock music's most spectacular acid casualties, Syd Barratt – invoked a twee world of fairies, goblins and gnomes. Released in 1967, their second single 'See Emily Play' is perhaps the most poignant expression of this longing for a mythical childhood. Shortly afterwards, as psychedelia exploded into a mass phenomenon, this kind of childhood imagery was everywhere. As the documentary puts it, 'now every band in Britain seemed to be writing songs about toyshops, toffee apples and rainbows'.

With added influences from traditional British folk music, artists such as Donovan (*Sunshine Superman*, *A Gift from a Flower to a Garden*) and the Incredible String Band

(*The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter, Wee Tam and the Big Huge*) mined this vein of childhood mythology in ways that were often distinctly fey. Even mod bands such as the Small Faces (*Itchycoo Park*) and working-class Northern bands like The Move (*Flowers in the Rain, I Can Hear the Grass Grow*) began to adapt their style, albeit briefly. And of course, it was the Beatles who brought much of this child-like imagery to the mass audience. Songs like 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' offered acid-fuelled accounts of a return to childhood innocence and the abandonment of adult repression. The television film and album *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967) and the animated movie *Yellow Submarine* (1969) presented fantasy narratives that owed much to fairy tales and children's literature.

As the BBC documentary suggests, this retreat to the 'secret gardens' of childhood might partly be interpreted as a reaction against the emphasis on modern technology that was a key political theme of the early 1960s ('the white heat of the technological revolution', as Prime Minister Harold Wilson famously put it). Along with the fashion for Edwardian clothing (*Sergeant Pepper* et al.) and *fin de siècle* art and design (Aubrey Beardsley, *art nouveau*), as well as the recovery of late Victorian literature (*Alice In Wonderland* was notably adapted by Jonathan Miller for the BBC in late 1966), it reflects the generalized distrust of modernity that was a key part of the hippy ethic more broadly. The combination of childhood nostalgia and psychedelic drugs offered a perfect retreat, both inwards and backwards. According to Pink Floyd's manager, Peter Jenner (quoted in the documentary), it was a matter of harking back to 'the last bit of English culture they trusted' – and one that would 'set them apart from the adults, the straights and the suits'.

Much of this imagery derives from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – and indeed, even at that time, it was already nostalgic. As Patricia Holland points out, the idea of a golden age of pre-industrial, rural life – of the 'organic community' of the English village – was being invoked by writers and artists at a time when it had already largely died out. Despite the apparent revolutionary zeal of the hippies, the association of childhood with nature – and with related ideas of innocence and purity – was highly traditional, and could well be seen as reactionary.

It's quite striking to contrast this with the imagery of the children's rights movement of the time. Leila Berg's book *Look at Kids*, mentioned above, contains numerous black-and-white photographs, apparently selected by the author, which amount to a kind of 'photo-essay' accompanying the text. This is very much an urban, industrial (and post-industrial) view of childhood, which is a long way from the pastoral idyll of the hippies. Children are often captured in action, working as well as playing. They rarely smile or pose for the camera, although in some cases they look back at the photographer with a challenging glare. The landscape of the child is not a secret garden, but one of bombsites and abandoned buildings. And of course, the use of high-contrast monochrome represents a powerful claim to documentary realism.

These images of the urban child have much in common with those chosen by the anarchist writer Colin Ward for his book *The Child in the City*, published towards the end of the 1970s – although in both books, at least some of the images clearly derive from earlier decades. As Mathew Thomson argues, Ward's images do partly reflect a traditional representation of the child as innocent, free and joyful, albeit in a very different setting; but (like Berg's) they also show how children are losing some of

that freedom, as the pressures of the environment – especially as a consequence of poor urban planning – are beginning to impinge on it.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the imagery of Berg's books written for children themselves is less abrasively realistic. Even so, the drawn illustrations for her *Nippers* series are also of urban settings, and offer a kind of everyday realism that is far from the sanitized, middle-class world of their predecessors *Janet and John* (the British equivalent of *Dick and Jane*) – and indeed from the fey pastoral world of the hippies.

Meanwhile, if the children's rights movement did make use of more traditional childhood imagery, it often did so in subversive ways. Images of Disney characters and Marvel superheroes were appropriated (and often adapted) to illustrate critiques of US politics – or indeed, of US cultural imperialism, as in Dorfman and Mattelart's *How to Read Donald Duck* (1971). The British cartoon hero Dennis the Menace appeared on the cover of Keith Paton's early seventies tract *The Great Brain Robbery* with a speech bubble proclaiming that 'all over the world, the school has an anti-educational effect on society'. And as we shall see in the case of *Schoolkids Oz*, this subversive use of traditional childhood imagery often provoked particular wrath from the authorities.

Remembering hippy childhoods

Of course, it's debatable how far any of these representations corresponded with the reality of children's lives at the time. At the risk of a brief digression here, it's interesting to look across to some of the written memoirs of 'hippy childhoods' that have appeared in the last couple of decades. As I've noted, personal memories are not necessarily any more accurate than other sources – and in this case, there seems to be an uneasy mixture of affectionate nostalgia and condescending irony that is characteristic of how the hippy era is seen more broadly. Even though elements of 'hippiness' have been widely popularized and commodified in recent years, cheap shots and easy laughs at the past often seem hard to resist. Many contemporary writers read their parents' approach to child-rearing through the lens of much more conservative ideas that have become increasingly prevalent in recent years: the hippies may have sought to 'liberate' their children – or indeed to treat them as naturally and inherently free – but they are also accused of being chaotic, inadequate and neglectful parents.

Obviously there is no single 'hippy' approach to child-rearing, but from a reading of various online sources – including some with titles like 'The Curse of the Hippy Parents' – as well as published books like Lisa Michaels' *Split: A Counterculture Childhood* and Chelsea Cain's collection *Wild Child*, it's possible to identify some shared themes in these accounts. On the one hand, there is much fun to be made of the world of inedible wholefoods, bizarre home-made clothing, candle-making and macramé, as well as the nakedness and the dubious personal hygiene of these hippy childhoods. These were children who grew up 'deprived' of sugar, cow's milk, meat and consumer goods, not to mention new clothes. They were often unaware that other children lived in very different ways until they went to school – at which point, they often became acutely conscious of the awkwardness and sense of exclusion that arose from living outside the 'straight' world. These were frequently mobile

childhoods, as families travelled across country going 'back to the land'; but in many cases they were also economically poor childhoods, constrained by the lack of access to basic goods and services. Poverty was a necessity as well as a political choice, and it required resourcefulness and a degree of improvisation. Many of these writers praise their parents for giving them access to diverse experiences, for encouraging them to question authority, and to develop tolerance; but they are also more directly critical of their espousal of 'free love', their excessive drug consumption, the children's premature exposure to sex, and the lack of rules and boundaries.

The story here – in line with Jenny Diski's quote above – is partly one of inter-generational reaction and counter-reaction. The hippies brought up their children in ways that reacted against the values of their own parents; and their children often grew up to reject *them* in turn. Conformity bred non-conformity, which in turn led to a return to conformity, sometimes of an almost obsessive kind. For many of these children, there was nothing they wanted more than to fit in and be 'normal'; many of them craved structure and discipline. Nevertheless, there is a sense among many of these writers of an eventual coming to terms. In line with many childhood memoirs more generally, they look back to a simpler time, a time of sincerity and honesty as well as one of collective values. Hippie child-rearing was occasionally anarchic, and parents often failed to take responsibility for their children, they suggest; but in most cases this was a form of benign neglect – and even of sanctioned immaturity – rather than deliberate abuse.

Ultimately, the struggles of these parents and their children do not seem so vastly different from those of many others. It's no big surprise to find that parents' attempts to shape their children in their own image are often less than successful. The hippies might have wanted to see their children as equals, able to make their own choices, or even as political comrades. But the outward appearance of a more open, permissive approach to child-rearing is not necessarily all it seems, and it does not necessarily lead to inter-generational understanding, let alone family harmony. If parents' apparent desire to return to childhood may have been little more than superficial, their attempts to liberate their children were even more fraught with difficulty.

Richard Neville, Oz and the underground in Britain

As I have suggested, the counter-culture in the UK during the late 1960s was rather different from its manifestations across the Atlantic. The authorities' punitive response to the growth of drug-taking may have politicized some, but the lack of a cause like the war in Vietnam or the civil rights movement meant that young people in the UK were without an obvious focus for political opposition. By comparison with the US, the counter-culture in the UK appeared more inwardly directed, and more concerned with providing cultural alternatives than confronting established political authority. Meanwhile, Britain's new left radicals were still much more interested in 'old fashioned' forms of class politics than their counterparts in the US.

More obviously, the counter-cultural scene in the UK was much smaller and more localized. It was also perceived by many potential recruits as quite elitist and

hierarchical. As Jonathon Green's oral history of the period shows, there was a kind of 'star system' in the underground, which overlapped with that of the mainstream cultural elite. This was a small, largely metropolitan world, focused particularly on the West End and on declining areas of west London (Ladbroke Grove, Notting Hill) that have since been reclaimed by the wealthy upper classes. While the underground spawned its own alternative economy of bookshops, venues and publications, the numbers of people who earned their living in this alternative world were relatively few in number. As Jenny Diski points out in her memoir, the majority of young people in Britain remained largely untouched by it.

Richard Neville was one of a small contingent of Australians who arrived in the UK in the mid-sixties and quickly came to occupy key roles in this alternative aristocracy. While still a student, Neville had established the magazine *Oz* in his native Sydney in 1963: it was a scurrilous, satirical publication, whose provocative approach had already resulted in a prosecution for obscenity. Neville began producing a British version of *Oz* shortly after arriving in London. While the first issues were still primarily satirical, *Oz* quickly aligned itself with the hippy counter-culture. It was rather less serious and less overtly political than its rival *IT* (*International Times*), and it became notorious for its psychedelic approach to the use of colour and design (even its producers would accept that it was sometimes unreadable): if *IT* was the community newspaper, *Oz* was like the irreverent colour supplement of the underground press.

Neville was undoubtedly charismatic and charming, but he was also ambitious and self-seeking. He was a skilled 'delegator', who would generate ideas and then leave others to follow them through – as indeed was the case with *Schoolkids Oz*, which was largely edited by Jim Anderson and Felix Dennis while Neville took a holiday in Ibiza. Critics saw him as an entrepreneur, who regarded the underground largely as a kind of business opportunity, or at least a route to fame. According to David Widgery, a socialist activist who acted as an adviser at the *Oz* Trial, Neville was 'much less radical' than many others on the scene: he was merely 'an adept social climber' whose primary interest was in attending dinner parties with the fashionable cultural elite. Others quoted in Jonathon Green's oral history of the time are equally sceptical: Neville's book *Play Power* is dismissed as 'a brazen attempt to become a "leader"', and as a book that pandered to the fascinated middle classes outside the underground.

These impressions are largely reinforced by Neville's autobiography *Hippie Hippie Shake*, published in 1995. Neville comes across as dynamic and creative, but also as arrogant, opportunistic and almost unprincipled. Although he occasionally strikes a political pose, his primary focus (as *Play Power* also attests) is on a kind of hedonistic individualism. Far from being warm and egalitarian, he appears competitive and egotistical. His strategy with *Oz* of 'seeing how far you could go' seems much less like a tactic to provoke political change than a means of attention seeking.

From a contemporary perspective, the sexism of Neville and his male cohorts is also quite jaw-dropping, yet he barely seems to acknowledge it, even in retrospect. Women are consistently referred to as 'girls' or 'chicks', and even as 'dolly birds', and are mostly described in terms of their appearance and sex appeal. With the exception of the Amazonian fellow-Australian Germaine Greer (who apparently

refused to read the book), they remain in the background, rolling the joints and making the tea, doing the typing and running the office, but rarely acting as writers or editors. On this account, it is hardly surprising that several of the women involved in *Oz* (such as Marsha Rowe and Louise Ferrier) went on to form the collective that produced the militantly feminist magazine *Spare Rib*.

Reading *Schoolkids Oz*

Unlike many radical publications, *Oz* lacked a strong editorial 'line'. At least on the face of it, the editors were keen to create a dialogue between the writers and the readership: the columns were often full of critical letters from readers, condemning the magazine for being insufficiently revolutionary. The magazine typically paid its contributors little if anything, but one of the editors' familiar strategies was to invite outsiders to generate material for themed issues. *Oz* 28, the schoolkids' issue, was one of these. Perhaps aware that many of the ideologues of the counter-culture were far from youthful, and claiming that they themselves were getting rather long in the tooth, the editors decided to hand over the issue to a group of schoolchildren. As they put it in the advertisement soliciting contributions, they wished to encourage some 'injections of youthful vigour in our ageing veins'.

The young people who responded were, by and large, older teenagers: most were between sixteen and eighteen, and hardly 'kids' or 'children'. In the short profiles on the 'contributors' page of *Oz* 28, several describe themselves as 'anarchists', although most of them also provide their astrological star signs, and several say they are interested in 'mysticism', as well as various forms of drugs. However, many of these descriptions are quite ironic and self-deprecating; and many of the pictures show them dressed (presumably ironically) in school uniform. (It's notable that, here too, most of the young women are described – or describe themselves – in terms of their physical appearance, while none of the young men do so.) Of course, this was not intended to be a representative group: it was a self-selecting sample of junior *Oz* readers who already knew the kinds of things they might be expected to say and do. As one of them, Charles Shaar Murray, later recalled (in Jonathon Green's interviews), the whole experience felt 'terribly glamorous'; and the editors themselves seemed 'sophisticated and bohemian', not to mention quite intimidating.

In the issue's editorial, the editors suggest that these young people were rather less radical than the 'crowd of revolutionary high-school bomb throwers' they had hoped for: disappointingly, some of them even seemed to enjoy school, and many were keen to avoid 'upsetting' their teachers. As if to compensate, the editors included an extract from *The High School Revolutionaries* by Tom Lindsay, an account of the more confrontational strategies of the High School Student Union in the United States – claiming (with not much evidence) that this reflected 'to a greater or lesser extent exactly what most of the school children we worked with were thinking about'. According to Neville's autobiography, most of the teenage contributors had said at the start that they did not want to write about politics or sex – and it was evidence to this effect that later enabled the prosecutor to put the blame on the adult editors.

The first two pages of the magazine are a large image of the contributors and the editors, posed like a parody of a school class photograph. Several are wearing

uniform, and one sports a dunce's cap. Neville is front and centre, with his legs wide apart, wielding a cane and making a clenched-fist salute – despite the fact that, as I have noted, he was barely involved in the actual editing. The editorial presents the editing process as a matter of collective anarchy: 'we all had a fantastic month doing it, milling around weekend after weekend in true communal style...' It was apparently 'the sort of fun school can be and only too rarely is'. In fact, several key decisions were taken by the editors, Anderson and Dennis – most notably the wraparound cover, which attracted considerable attention at the trial. This used (apparently without permission) an illustration by the French artist Raymond Bertrand, featuring a group of identical naked black lesbians gyrating and fondling each other: one appears to be inserting a dildo, while another may have a rat's tail protruding from her vagina – although a photograph of one of the contributors is strategically placed over what is probably an image of cunnilingus. (In his autobiography, Neville says that he questioned the wisdom of the other editors' last-minute decision to use this cover image, but it was too late.)

In fact, about one third of the content of the issue's 48 pages – including some of the material that attracted most attention at the trial – was not produced by the 'schoolkids' at all. Given that the magazine was assembled by Anderson and Dennis, it is doubtful whether the teenagers even saw the complete text before it was published. Aside from the cover, there are several pages of readers' letters, reviews of books and albums, and a page of sensible advice on drugs and sex by Oz's regular correspondent on these matters, 'Dr. Hippocrates'. There is also a two-page advertisement for a 'Back Issue Bonanza', and numerous 'small ads', including ads for the sex magazine *Suck* (featuring a graphic description of fellatio) and for various sex aids, as well as numerous 'contact' ads, several from gay readers. At a time when homosexuality was still stigmatized (despite having been legalized, at least for 'consenting adults' over 21, a couple of years previously), the contact ads provided an important service, as well as being a key part of the business model of the underground press.

Most of those I have spoken to who recall the Oz Trial can remember only one particular set of images. Alongside the text on pages 13 and 14, there is a cartoon strip produced by one of the schoolkids, Vivian Berger (who was later called as a prosecution witness at the trial, where he was described as an 'accomplice'). Berger had taken six frames from a much longer cartoon, 'Eggs Ackley Among the Vulture Demonesses', by the famous American underground comics artist R. Crumb, which had been published earlier that year. Onto the head of the main character, he has cut-and-pasted the head of Rupert Bear, a long-established British cartoon character; and underneath he has inserted some lines of text from a Rupert book. In this form, the cartoon shows Rupert attempting to have sex with Crumb's character Gipsy Granny: finding that her hymen is blocking the way for his massively oversized penis, he eventually manages to gain entry by taking a long run-and-jump. According to Berger's testimony at the trial, his aim was partly to shock the older generation, but he also enjoyed the cartoon because it 'made fun of sex': it was, he said, a portrayal of obscenity, rather than being obscene in itself – a view that was backed up by the artist Feliks Topolski, who appeared as an expert witness. The shock and the humour clearly derive from his incongruous and subversive use of the image of the innocent Rupert – a sentimental icon of childhood that, for some older members of the trial jury, must have seemed almost sacred.

Yet beyond Rupert Bear, there was a great deal of other content that is now largely forgotten, and was certainly never discussed at the trial. On pages 6, 8 and 9 is a long story headed 'The Return of King Kong: Guerrilla Babes Wipeout'. It describes the authors' attempts to stage a series of 'guerrilla theatre' performances in several London schools, or at least in their playgrounds – some of which seem to have been invited, although most were not. The performance aims to raise questions about issues such as school discipline and the failures of the examination system, but it frequently provokes an aggressive response from teachers and (in several instances) from the police. In one case, there is a near-riot, and the 'guerrillas' are taken to a remand centre. The story is accompanied by a cartoon of students hurling abuse at their headteacher, who is attempting to expel the intruders.

Subsequent pages cover 'School Atrocities', especially relating to the arbitrary use of punishment. Corporal punishment (the use of the cane) was still legal at the time, and there are several horror stories about teachers' vindictive and sadistic behaviour. These accounts are illustrated with cartoons, of which one features a teacher masturbating as he fondles the backside of a vomiting student, while another shows three teachers apparently caning each other (one seemingly inserting the cane into another's anus). One contributor describes how his headteacher prevented him from establishing an 'arts lab' in his city; another argues that the disciplinary response to cannabis is leading students to take more dangerous drugs that can be obtained in chemists' shops; others call for proper sex education, and for greater sexual freedom in general. Meanwhile, 'Xam blues' provides a cogent critique of school examinations. As well as claiming that the system is arbitrary and unfair, the author argues that examinations provide an inadequate measure of understanding, and are a poor predictor of future success.

However, not all of this material is negative. One contributor writes positively about how his school has allowed him more freedom of choice (for example, in constructing his own timetable) in the sixth form. One article entitled 'Babes in Arms' provides a critique of the Combined Cadet Force, a form of military training (or, as the writer puts it, 'playing soldiers') that was effectively compulsory in some schools; although another, despite the title 'British Hitler Jugens' [sic], claims that the cadets are really 'good fun'.

Much of this material would not have seemed out of place in the 'alternative' magazines produced by school students at the time, mentioned above. The stories clearly relate to the concerns of the Schools Action Union – although interestingly one *Oz* contributor describes how she became disillusioned with the SAU when none of her friends were prepared to pursue their grievances to the point of directly confronting the school authorities. While some of the material might be described as juvenile – a cartoon of a person on a toilet suffering from diarrhea while complaining about school meals – much of it is cogently written and thoughtful. A fair amount of the writing is ironic or parodic in tone; and to some extent it is self-parodic as well. There is a sense that these young people are *performing* as 'schoolkids', an identity that most of them will shortly be leaving behind.

Alongside this material focused on schools, there is some additional political and cultural content that appears to have been produced by the 'schoolkid' contributors.

One double page spread describes the impending environmental apocalypse; another superimposes a quotation from Richard Nixon over images of the four students massacred by the US National Guard at Kent State University. While some of the reviews are written by regular *Oz* contributors, they also feature some extended pieces by the 'schoolkids' – including a couple of music reviews by Peter Popham, who went on to become a journalist on *The Independent*, and an insightful critique of the growing commercialism and conformism of the 'progressive' rock music scene by Charles Shaar Murray, who later became one of Britain's leading music journalists.

Despite all this, it's hard to dispel a suspicion that these young people have to some extent been manipulated. As I have noted, it was the adult editors who seem to have made the final decisions; and in some respects, they are holding up these 'schoolkids' almost as specimens for their adult readers. In some cases, this is somewhat disturbing. For instance, in the midst of the 'King Kong' story is a full-page image of one of the contributors, a fifteen-year-old girl called Berti. She poses on her knees, in a mini-skirt, smiling at the camera; and the image is headed 'Jail Bait of the Month'. On one level, this might be seen as a kind of parody of soft pornography, yet it also raises difficult questions about who it is for. 'Jail bait' clearly implies older men having sex with girls below the age of consent, and being prosecuted for doing so. With what we know today about the prevalence of paedophiles in the popular culture during this period, this is certainly troubling; although it might be more reasonable to see it as merely another instance of the unthinking sexism of the male-dominated counter-culture of the time. Yet either way, the idea that *Oz's* view of sex was about 'liberation' is profoundly questionable.

Like the magazine more broadly, *Schoolkids Oz* does not speak with a singular voice. There are different viewpoints and experiences represented, and some of the material does seem to reflect the authentic concerns of schoolchildren. Yet ultimately, this is an adult text, produced for an adult readership: it is almost as if the children's contributions are in quotation marks. It might be going too far, but one could argue that in some ways *Schoolkids Oz* acts as a kind of ventriloquist, conscripting young people's voices for a rather ill-defined political project. Both in the magazine, and especially in the trial that followed, ideas of childhood and childishness are being invoked for a wide range of purposes – to promote subversion and rebellion, but also to sanction forms of sexism and elitism that were characteristic of the counter-culture more broadly.

Oz goes to trial

The offices of *Oz* were raided by the police in June 1970, a few weeks after the schoolkids issue was published – although this was by no means for the first time. As they removed files, artwork and papers, along with the last remaining copies of issue 28, the officer in charge announced to the editors 'my mission is to put you out of business'. According to Neville's autobiography, Dennis was convinced that they would 'get away with it', but Neville was not so sure. In the event, it was a full year before the case arrived at the Central Criminal Court.

Even though he had played very little part in the production of *Schoolkids Oz*, the trial represented a golden opportunity for Neville to strut his stuff on the national media

stage. Unlike the other defendants, he chose to defend himself, thereby enjoying maximum time to make his case – and maximum publicity. In line with the tactics adopted by the ‘yippies’ in the United States, most notably at the trial of the Chicago 7 earlier that year, the proceedings were turned into a kind of carnival. ‘Friends of Oz’ were invited to join a high-profile public campaign, which included daily demonstrations outside the High Court. The editors had prepared an extensive press kit; special T-shirts in five different designs were sold, and stickers (including some featuring the priapic Rupert) were plastered over the London tubes; there were numerous benefit concerts, and John Lennon and Yoko Ono released a single to raise support. Neville and his fellow editors frequently turned up for proceedings in fancy dress – wearing schoolgirl uniforms, or in drag – to pose for press photographers; while Neville had his portrait painted by the artist David Hockney. Their expert witnesses included some well-known celebrities, including the comedian Marty Feldman and the disc jockey John Peel. The trial was a media circus, in which Neville was without doubt the star performer.

While some of the content of the magazine was intended to provoke and outrage polite society, and while some of it might be accused of being exploitative, *Schoolkids Oz* is not ‘pornography’ – if that implies an intention to sexually arouse the reader (although the cover might be somewhat of an exception here). Much of the sexually explicit content is presented in a parodic, humorous way, and some of it seems intended to produce disgust rather than arousal. Legally, the charge of obscenity required any given publication to be assessed ‘as a whole’; but this was very far from what took place in the case of *Schoolkids Oz*.

The reasons for the prosecution may well have been primarily political, as Neville and others alleged – and as such, it might have seemed easier for the police to secure a conviction under obscenity law than in any other way. Yet if the primary concern was about obscenity, there were plenty of more obvious targets. However, police spokesmen at the time were inclined to exonerate mainstream pornography, arguing that this was something that had existed for centuries. One explanation for the police strategy emerged only several years later. Detective Chief Inspector George Fenwick, head of the Metropolitan Police ‘dirty squad’, was later prosecuted for corruption, and given ten years imprisonment; while the overall commander of the Serious Crimes Squad, Wallace Virgo, was sent down for twelve years. Home Office papers revealed many years later showed that the police were in the pay of the genuine pornography industry, based in London’s Soho: when they came under pressure to crack down (not least from religious campaign groups like the Festival of Light), prosecuting *Oz* seemed to serve as a convenient distraction or decoy.

The *Oz* Trial did undoubtedly expose the hypocrisy, ignorance and prejudice of the ‘establishment’ in Britain at the time, not least in relation to sexual matters. While the prosecutor, Brian Leary, was clearly somewhat of a showman, and used whatever arguments he could in order to discredit the defence witnesses, the interventions of the judge, Justice Michael Argyle, are often quite extraordinary, and at times truly laughable. This was not, by any account, the British legal system’s finest hour.

Reading the transcripts of the trial today is like journeying back to a very different time. Leary’s primary tactic was to focus almost exclusively on what he called the

'dirty' parts of the magazine, repeating and paraphrasing them with a kind of prurient relish in order to provoke the jury. The magazine's satirical and parodic intentions – which were apparent even in the mock 'hard sell' of its 'Back Issue Bonanza' – were persistently ignored or misread. The implicit assumption throughout the prosecution was that sex was a filthy business, which should be kept behind closed doors and in the marital bedroom, and should not be spoken about in public – especially not in front of children. Certain sexual practices – including legal ones such as homosexuality and oral sex – were tacitly (and sometimes overtly) seen to be deviant or perverted; although the prosecutor and the judge frequently appeared to be ignorant of what such practices actually involved. Several of the expert witnesses called for the defence were questioned about their own sexual activities, and in some cases how they would talk about such matters with their own children. Their expertise was systematically denigrated: Judge Argyle's rudeness and contempt towards some very illustrious expert witnesses was quite remarkable, and was condemned by the Lord Chief Justice at the eventual appeal.

Much of the allegedly obscene content that became the focus of the prosecution case (the cover, the *Suck* ad, and the contact ads) had not been created by the 'schoolkids' in the first place; but their presence in a 'schoolkids issue' significantly increased their potential to offend. As the defence lawyers pointed out, *Schoolkids Oz* was not primarily produced for schoolchildren, but by them. Evidence presented on behalf of the publishing company (Oz Publications Ink Limited) included testimony from newsagents showing that the magazine was hardly ever sold to children. Much of the content that was cited by the prosecution was very obviously not aimed at them. As for the charge that it might 'debauch and corrupt the morals' of young people, or 'arouse and implant in their minds lustful and perverted desires', there was no evidence presented at all. Expert witnesses who worked directly with young people, including the psychologists Dr. Lionel Haward and Dr. Michael Argyle, argued that it was unlikely to do so, and in some cases might well have the opposite effect. However, as is often the case in such debates, the evidence of the text itself (that is, the parts of *Oz* that were repeatedly read out or held up in court) was implicitly seen as sufficient evidence of its effects.

If the trial was, as Neville argued, a political occasion, the actual politics of *Oz* – and specifically the liberationist arguments of the *Schoolkids* issue – were almost entirely absent from the discussion. Some of the expert witnesses called for the defence – most notably Leila Berg and Michael Duane – could potentially have addressed these issues; but even here, the questioning by the prosecution was bound to focus on matters of obscenity, and sexual conduct more generally. Throughout all this, there was very little attention paid to the 'schoolkids' themselves. While Vivian Berger, who created the Rupert cartoon, was called by the prosecution as an 'accomplice', the others were absent from the deliberations. Both Duane and Berg argued that the prosecution itself could well have been much more damaging and destructive for the young people involved than the magazine might have been, but this argument was ignored. Inevitably, most of the defence witnesses were brought in explicitly to address the central charges – although even high-profile academics such as Professors Ronald Dworkin, Richard Wollheim and Hans Eysenck failed to generate the informed, critical discussion of obscenity law that was undoubtedly needed. While it made sense to focus on the actual charges at hand, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that an opportunity was missed here.

Neville and his co-editors were initially found guilty, although they were cleared of the charge of conspiracy, and sentenced to terms of between nine and fifteen months; Neville and Anderson were told they would be deported back to Australia when they had served their sentences. Symbolically, their long hair was shorn once they had been sent down to Wormwood Scrubs prison. Their treatment after the trial helped to galvanise the opposition. Against Judge Argyle's wishes, the three were granted bail pending an appeal; and when the case came back to court, the convictions were quickly quashed, largely on the grounds that the judge had misdirected the jury in his closing statement, especially as regards the definition of obscenity.

At least briefly, the trial helped to construct the editors – and Neville in particular – as high-profile martyrs for the underground. The circulation of *Oz* rose for some months following the trial, although it declined quite quickly thereafter. Anderson seemed traumatized by the trial, and eventually retreated to California; Dennis refocused his energies on his business interests, perhaps in response to the judge's estimation that he was 'very much less intelligent' than the others – he eventually became a massively successful publishing magnate, with a multi-million-pound empire. Neville, for his part, seemed to lose interest in *Oz*: a couple of years later, with a plummeting circulation, the magazine was closed, by which time he had already returned to Australia.

Neville later claimed that he was uneasy about having to justify the magazine in political terms or on 'high moral grounds', but little of that uncertainty was evident at the time. In his opening speech, he presented the trial as a wider attack on the 'alternative society', on young people, and on freedom of speech; and in later statements, he remained keen to 'spin' the trial as a massively significant event in the history of the counter-culture. In an interview for Jonathon Green's oral history, he states that it was 'the great climax of the underground movement'; and in his autobiography he claims that

Within days of the sentence, the case catapulted from being 'the longest obscenity trial in British history' into one symbolizing the clash of generations, the limits of freedom, the highs and lows of the counter-culture. (344)

This may be true in some respects, but it vastly overstates the significance of the trial: *Oz* did not represent the whole of the counter-culture, and Neville was not its spokesman (even if he attempted to promote himself as such). Ultimately, the trial was not primarily about politics, but about sex; and in this respect, it was merely one moment in a much longer history of changing attitudes and lifestyles. At the same time, Neville's assertions also obscure some of the more interesting aspects of *Schoolkids Oz* itself – and especially the involvement of the young people who produced it. *Oz 28* was a victim of its own notoriety – a notoriety that was undoubtedly encouraged and promoted by Neville in particular. Yet in becoming a *cause célèbre*, much of its political significance was marginalized.

Conclusion

In recent years, several critics have argued that, far from subverting dominant social and political values, the counter-culture actually prepared the ground for neo-liberalism. On this account, the counter-culture was not simply a failed revolution, but one whose effects were quite the opposite of those it believed it was promoting. For example, Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter in their provocative book *The Rebel Sell*, and Jenny Diski in her memoir *The Sixties* detect a continuity between the hippy ethic of 'doing your own thing' and the rampant individualism that arguably took hold in the 1980s. According to Diski, Margaret Thatcher's famous dictum that 'there is no such thing as society' was merely an extension of the hippy ethic of individual liberation. While she rejects the idea that the hippies were primarily *responsible* for the greed and self-interest of Thatcherism, Diski does suggest that they were 'unwittingly... sweeping the path for the radical Right, preparing, with the best of good intentions, the road to hell for paving'.

As I have suggested, the implication that the counter-culture was a singular, unified phenomenon is wide of the mark – and indeed, I would say the same about 'neoliberalism'. As well as 'doing your own thing', the counter-culture also placed a strong and consistent emphasis on communal values, on sharing rather than accumulating possessions – of which the communes and co-operatives that flourished during the 1970s (and in some cases still survive) were the most obvious manifestation. While it was undoubtedly elitist in some respects, the counter-culture was also overtly opposed to competitiveness and hierarchy. While there is much in the hippy ethic that can justifiably be satirized, I think it would be unfair to dismiss these values as merely rhetorical or superficial.

Of course, the revolutionary claims of the counter-culture may have been vastly inflated, and many were just plain wrong. Fifty years on, it is hard to swallow some of the quasi-religious arguments about the spiritual benefits of drug-taking; and the spurious assertions about sexual liberation were correctly dismissed by second-wave feminism back in the 1970s and 1980s. The idea that rock music in itself offers some far-reaching challenge to dominant values seems entirely ludicrous, not least in light of the rampant commercialism that was apparent even at the time. Yet it's too easy to say that this was simply a failed revolution. If sex, drugs and rock-n-roll may not have fulfilled the political promise that was claimed for them, other aspects of the hippy ethic have entered the mainstream in ways that have undeniably made a difference. Modern environmentalism has its roots in the counter-culture; ideas of community and of personal (and even spiritual) well-being have become much more mainstream; attitudes towards gender and sexuality have changed significantly, partly as a result of the counter-culture, and partly in reaction to it.

Yet what about childhood? While some elements of the children's liberation movement (promoted, albeit somewhat indirectly, in *Schoolkids Oz*) had disappeared by the end of the 1970s, others have since been institutionalized. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into force in 1990, has been accepted by almost every country in the world (with the notable exception of the United States); and arguments about children's rights have been enormously influential in the provision of children's welfare services, although rather less so in

education. Calls for children's participation, and for children's voices to be heard – while not necessarily unproblematic – are now entirely mainstream.

In some respects, *Schoolkids Oz* and the controversy it provoked appears like a relic from a forgotten time. Yet even though so much has changed, in other respects it still speaks to us, not least in relation to children's rights. If the concern about sexual explicitness seems almost prehistoric, the critique of the school system is still remarkably pertinent – and in some respects, even more so than it was at the time.

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The full text of *Schoolkids Oz* can be found on flashbak.com, or in a slightly more readable form in the online archive of the University of Woolongong:
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/ozlondon/>

Extensive extracts from transcripts of the trial can be found in Palmer's book (above) – although the lack of an index is very frustrating!

Additional online sources on the Oz Trial include:

<http://flashbak.com/the-schoolkids-oz-dirty-books-and-the-downfall-of-the-dirty-squad-56477/>

<http://pers-www.wlv.ac.uk/~fa1871/rupage.html>

On Leila Berg: <https://www.leilaberg.com/>

Online articles and debates on hippie parenting:

http://www.salon.com/2001/08/22/hippie_parents/

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A radio documentary on *The Little Red Schoolbook*:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00c1d1k>

The TV documentary on psychedelic music in Britain:

Psychedelic Britannia BBC4, produced and directed by Sam Bridger, transmitted 23.10.2015

Evidence of the longevity of hippy culture, as well as some useful archival material and commentary, can be found at Worldwide Hippies:

<http://www.worldwidehippies.com/>