

ONE SATISFIED CUSTOMER

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The success of a regular publication can be judged by the eagerness with which one awaits its delivery and reads its contents.

Journal No.11 maintained its high score on my pleasure scale. The masochist in me insists that I ration myself to a couple of articles a day. Only the sadist in me would try and deny me that pleasure. Eventually I throw discipline to the winds and read it again - at one sitting.

The Journal's basic ingredients are by now familiar. Reminiscences by members or well-known people offer personal views which, not unnaturally, are cast in HW's favour but they do redress the balance of attacks from more prejudiced and vicious quarters. Pieces by HW, some presumably not otherwise available, are reminders of his enormous output. The tradition of research now established as a regular feature continues in articles such as *Beachcomber* and *Broncho Bill*. Then there is the reporting of the Society's activities, which serves as a pleasant reminder to those who took part and a useful briefing to those who did not. Literary criticism figures prominently: thankfully and realistically, not all flattering. David Hoyle's blockbuster *Why I think HW is still worth reading* deserves several readings, but of course, I will not be starting on that until the day after tomorrow Congratulations then to our editor whose final mix should please most members.

However, he appears to be a worried man, at times desperately so. He is disappointed and concerned at the lack of reaction and response to the material published in the Journals. All is peace and quiet in the 'Letters' column, and that is not a good sign. However, a brief look at previous issues does not justify such a gloomy view.

I was surprised that Colin Wilson's candid critique of HW's writing in issue No.2 did not provoke a defence. The Society was in its infancy then, so this might explain the silence. Diana Mosley's modest, matter-of-fact memoir in No.3, barely ruffled the political pool. It did show that emotional matters could be tackled calmly. But in No.4 David Hoyle unceremoniously heaved in his Jewish/fascist brick *In the Monkey House*. This not only made waves, it almost emptied the pool. Some of those drenched had letters published in No.5, including one from Richard Russell.

Issue No.7 was subdued. The BBC Omnibus programme, 'Writers on the Right', had reopened old wounds. Ronald Walker's report and the Society's letter of complaint revealed the pain and the indignation. Richard Russell popped up twice in No.8, first in a letter which he chided (gently but fairly) the Society for over reaction to the 'Omnibus' affair, and then in an article in which he challenges us to choose our list of books that could represent the literary heritage of HW. He showed no hesitation in dumping half the *Chronicle* in the dustbin. (I began to warm to Mr. Russell). Bryan Wake, still damp from No. 4, responded to

David Hoyle, whilst our Secretary wrote a lukewarm review of Nigel Jones' *The War Walk*. Mr. Jones came back in No.9 with a letter in which he contested that review and then in a separate piece sensitively examined *HW and the Generation of 1914*. Another letter from a member endorsed Mr. Wake's sentiments with enthusiasm and dismissed Richard Russell's politics with disdain. In No.10 a member chose his heritage books and Mr. Robins stepped in with his version of the BUF. And finally, in No.11, Russell's challenge was taken up and *The Chronicle* rescued from the dustbin.

So a fair amount of heat has been generated. But why has there not been more response from us rank and file members? Laziness is one answer. Another reason, ironically, is the high standard of expertise and writing in the Journals. Members are probably frightened to death by the likes of David Hoyle and Dr. Wheatley Blench. It takes courage to enter the arena in such fast company. So we sit back and enjoy ourselves while the academics dazzle us with their literary fireworks and sink each other with their critical flak.

But there remains plenty of topics to puzzle and disturb us. Regrettably the Mosley business will rumble on for years. It will be a long time before the public are capable of a balanced view, and then the passion, the misunderstanding, the anger, will have disappeared and it will not matter any more.

Frankly it is difficult to see what all the fuss is about. Readers who approach HW via the country and animal books may be unprepared for the shocks and disappointments of the *Chronicle*. Having lived with the Maddison saga as it unfolded over the years, the Mosley episodes come as no surprise - in fact they seem almost inevitable. Many eminent people embraced that political message. The trouble with HW was that he did not know when to drop it. Instead he bared his soul permanently on paper, and then was unable, or unwilling (as far as one knows) to admit that he had been unwise, or misguided, or tactless, or whatever the correct words are. Typical, headstrong, stiff-necked stuff. Of course HW did not condone the concentration camps or any of the other excesses. Anybody who implies otherwise is a fool, and maybe a Jewish fool at that.

But whatever judgements are passed on HW and his work, readers will have their own favourites. They will go on reading and listening and making up their minds and being inspired, enchanted, exasperated, and beguiled by the world of Henry Williamson. And others will continue to discover the same delights - and that is what it is all about.

Oh yes, occasionally they will write for the Journal