Oliver Bock*

Decadent Artwork in the Sixties Counterculture Magazines *International Times* and *Oz*

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Abstract: Leading magazines of 1960s counterculture in Britain made use of decadent aesthetics, yet the significance of this *fin-de-siècle* form of an artistic and ideological alternative for the counterculture of the Sixties has often been passed over in accounts of the aftermaths of Decadence. The paper examines the allusion to and the usage and assimilation of principles of decadent visual design as well as the visible incorporation of Beardsley-like style elements in selected pieces of artwork published in the magazines *International Times* (*IT*) and *Oz*. Discussing possible functions of these references to Decadence in the context of the 1960s, the article demonstrates the continuing countercultural significance of Decadence as a challenge to mainstream culture.

Keywords: sixties; counterculture; visual design; decadent visual aesthetics; appropriation; commercialisation

1 Introduction

This piece seeks to highlight and discuss the presence of Decadent aesthetics in selected artwork published in two major countercultural magazines of the 1960s, *International Times* (or *IT*, as it was forced to abbreviate itself shortly after its initial appearance) and *Oz*. Following the US-American example of underground publications in the tradition of earlier alternative cultural movements such as the Beats (see Marwick 1998, pp. 489–90), the British counterculture of the 1960s, hardly a unified and organised scene, used magazines as an identity-forming "major repository of counter-cultural views and visions" (Nelson 1989, p. 46). Arguably the most important ones appearing in London were *IT* and *Oz*, which began publication in October 1966 and February 1967 respectively. Although both addressed the same audience, their design and approach to topics of countercultural interest differed

***Corresponding author: Dr. Oliver Bock**, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, MLU Halle-Wittenberg, Adam-Kuckhoff-Str. 35, 06108 Halle (Saale), Germany, E-mail: oliver.bock@anglistik.uni-halle.de

somewhat, leading Elizabeth Nelson to perceive Oz as an outlet of "joyful creativity" (1989, p. 53) where visual material was "part of the total experience" (1989, p. 56) and *I*T as "more serious" (1989, p. 55). Pearce Marchbank, a contemporary graphic designer observed: "*IT* was content, whereas *OZ* was form" (Brennan 2017, p. 324), and Peter Stansill of *IT*'s editorial staff maintained in retrospect that *Oz* was "not so much a competitor, more a colour supplement" (2006, p. 74). Both magazines soared in circulation figures rather quickly (not to be confused with success in economic terms) and reached 40–50,000 copies for each issue by the end of the decade (Nelson 1989, p. 135).[1] Given this mass appeal and status within their cultural community, it appears worthwhile to investigate an aspect of their aesthetics that has been largely passed over so far, namely their relation to *fin-de-siècle* decadence.

Of course, opponents of the emerging counterculture of the Sixties denounced it in its entirety as a decadent and dangerous result of the general move towards permissiveness and liberalisation in British society (see Sandbrook 2007, pp. 580–93). This utter rejection was just one more iteration in a series of moral panics over post-war youth cultures (see Harris 2005, p. 9 and Hannon 2016, p. 45). However, beside this crude and polemic association of counterculture and decadence, a more nuanced examination reveals remarkable yet often unnoticed parallels between the artistic avantgarde of the turn of the century and the self-proclaimed avantgarde that challenged normal mainstream culture and its social fabric during the 1960s. The following introductory paragraphs will explain the motivation, rooted in those unobserved parallels, for the present article.

At the beginning of her essay "Spaces of the Demimonde/Subcultures of Decadence: 1890–1990," Emily Apter quotes from Paul Morand's *1900 A.D.* on the "worship of sex, of the skin, of the hair" (1999, p. 142) – stereotypical elements of the Hippie and 1960s counterculture in general if ever there were any – yet she bypasses the decade of the 1960s in the remainder of her article. Likewise, Alice Condé in her survey "Decadence and Popular Culture" introduces "a subculture of almost nihilistic hedonism encompassing sexual licence, self-obsession, and fascination with degeneration" (2019, p. 380) as essential indicators of the presence of decadent principles in later cultural stages. Yet she ignores the 1960s, although the just-quoted characteristics were routinely levelled against the counterculture by its detractors and formed a core of mainstream society's indictment of this form of alternative youth culture. Furthermore, when discussing the aesthetics of transgression in contrast to conformity, Condé considers the "appeal of rebellion-as-spectacle" (2019, p. 386), and

1 In the light of such figures the present author refrains from referring to these publications and the culture that they were associated with as 'underground,' although established scholarship often uses it synonymously with 'counterculture.'

again, the 1960s, despite the decade's reputation as a period of protest and rebellion, are not part of her treatment of decadence in subsequent phases of popular culture.

While Condé considers rebellion and protest in relation to decadence primarily as an aesthetic transgression, Neville Morley's treatment of decadence in a political-ideological dimension has to concede, on the one hand, that it would be "clearly a waste of time to look for a single coherent political theory or position" (2022, p. 674). Yet, on the other hand, Morley identifies decadence with a political praxis of "detachment while employing a repertoire of poses, gestures, and general demeanor intended to provoke" (2022, p. 675). A detailed examination of artwork exhibiting decadent features in the following sections will demonstrate how important provocation was as an aesthetic principle with a political dimension. David Weir and Jane Desmarais characterise the ideological value of decadent culture as variable and depending, to some extent, on the ideology of the prevailing mainstream culture (2022, p. 8). With that basic dynamic in mind, which translates into fixed decadent political convictions being a rather abstract "resistance to convention and conformity" (Weir and Desmarais 2022, p. 13), it becomes clear that the wide spectrum of political issues within Sixties counterculture is not incompatible with legacy decadence insofar as political and provocative action was directed against the societal consensus and mainstream. This embraces topics like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and anti-war protests, the struggle for individual freedom within the emerging permissive society but also, more slowly, the liberation of marginalised groups in society.

Further praxeological parallels between *fin-de-siècle* decadence and 1960s counterculture become obvious in the light of Kristin Mahoney's appraisal of humour in decadence, emphasising "detachment, irony, derision, and laughter" as enablers of "resistance to troubling forms of earnestness, such as nationalism [and] moralism" (2018, p. 639). Humour, irony, mockery, and a general sense of flippancy, all evincing an "alternative, ludic ideology" comprising a "politics of joke and play" (Brennan 2013, p. 595, p. 596), will also become obvious in the artwork material discussed below. Furthermore, it is significant to note that Richard Neville, founding editor of *Oz*, eventually published his book-length manifesto of countercultural principles under the title *Play Power* (1970), thereby also emphasising the ludic element.

In the preceding paragraphs, the neglect of relations between decadence and 1960s counterculture was primarily observed in scholarly discourse about the *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon and its afterlife. Decadence and its influence do not fare much better, though, in scholarship focused on the countercultural phenomena of the Sixties. Jonathon Green locates the ancestry of 1960s counterculture in the unconventionality of the Romantics and the Bloomsbury group, and it is remarkable and, in light of much current research, surprising that the *fin-de-siècle* decadents

are passed over (Green 1998, pp. 118–9). Barry Miles' seminal account of London's post WWII countercultural scene (2010) does not consider decadence as one of its ancestors. Likewise, major accounts of the countercultural press, such as Nigel Fountain's *Underground* (1988) or Elizabeth Nelson's *The British Counter-Culture, 1966–73* (1989) do not consider decadence as an artistic movement or its aesthetic principles as formative for their subject. And yet, the terminology that is used to describe psychedelic art of the Sixties betrays a considerable affinity to the visual canon of decadent art. Jonathan Harris observes in psychedelic designs an "attenuated sinuosity of pattern and ornament, a chromatic overkill of acute contrasts and overexposures, synaesthesias of one kind or another" (2005, p. 15) and a dominance of "flowers and organic shapes" sometimes compounded with "something sickly and green-meaning-corruption about them: an over-grownness or monstrous hybridity" (2005, p. 16). In a similar vein, Glenn O'Brien emphasises psychedelic art's "delight in the blow-up, in the expanded view, in the hypertrophic view" (2005, p. 358). Again, it is remarkable that these features of counterculturally motivated visual artistry and design are not discussed in their relation to the canon of decadent visual principles. It is striking that the terms just quoted here, describing central features of psychedelic art, such as the depiction of hybridity, unnatural enlargement, flowing sinuosity, and almost fractal self-similarity in details, can also be considered major characteristics of decadent art and Art Noveau.[2] Apart from artistic merit and aesthetic principles, another parallel between both cultural phenomena is that, just as *IT* and *Oz* appealed eventually to a mass audience (see circulation figures above) while claiming an avantgarde status, *The Yellow Book* had followed a similar marketing strategy (see Condé 2022, p. 97).

The following sections will explore, rather than exhaustively survey, visual material from *IT* and *Oz* against the background of a relationship of influence and appropriation between decadence and Sixties counterculture. Beside pointing out aesthetic parallels, this relationship will become plain in the functions that the artworks in question fulfil within the magazines' contexts. These functions provide the structure for the following discussion, which proceeds from considering the relation between decadence and Sixties counterculture as one of commercialisation and appropriation, to the harnessing of the provocative potential of decadent aesthetics, and moves on to considerations of the expression of countercultural tenets and issues through the use of decadent visual elements by countercultural artists and magazine producers. It will, thus, become plain that the resurfacing of decadent artistic principles in visual art of the 1960s is more than just another instance of a

2 Recently though, David Hopkins pointed out in his article "*Oz* Magazine and British Counterculture: A Case Study in the Reception of Surrealism" (2002) that *Oz* also incorporated surrealist aesthetics into its visual countercultural makeup.

superficial Victorian revival that was observable in different branches of popular culture of the time, such as music (e.g. the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album or the Kinks' album *Arthur* or their nostalgic song "Village Green Preservation Society"), visual design (e.g. the floral Arts & Crafts designs) or fashion with its turn towards uniforms and exuberant facial hairstyles of the nineteenth century (see Sandbrook 2007, p. 439, p. 447–50).

2 Commercialisation, Appropriation, Provocation

In a very simple move of appropriation of and association with decadent art, countercultural publications and designs re-used some well-known and easily recognisable decadent artwork. Foremost in that respect is the work of Aubrey Beardsley, whose œuvre received much attention in 1966 because of a major exhibition at the V&A "that had launched the sixties 'Beardsley craze'" (Miles 2010, p. 227). In 1967, when *IT* suffered the first in a row of raids by the Obscene Publications Squad, this act of persecution was embedded in an authoritative campaign that aimed at "a range of artists and publications [the Dirty Squad] deemed to have either subversive content or radical leanings" (Bleakley 2019, p. 20) rather than at the producers and vendors of pornography in London's Soho. Some "most amusing raids" (Miles 2010, p. 226) around London's independent galleries, countercultural bookshops, and editorial offices targeted the provocative works of Aubrey Beardsley.

His popularity is reflected in advertising material from *IT* and *Oz* either because Beardsley's own artwork was advertised or because variations of and allusions to his visual style were used as a cachet in ad designs. *Oz* 4 of June 1967 (p. 5) carried a full-page ad for JLTY, a company selling posters by mail order (Figure 1).[3] It offers, among others, Beardsley's "Peacock Train" and "Stomach Dance" illustrations right next to three posters, clearly inspired by Beardsley's style of flowing forms and sensuality, designed by Dutch artist Marijke Koger, whose motifs and titles encourage customers to "Love Life," "Book a Trip," and "Love Bob Dylan." Artists and countercultural institutions were similarly revered in a Beardsley-inspired style by posters of the graphic design duo Hapshash and the Coloured Coat (Michael English and Nigel Waymouth). *IT* 20 (27 Oct. 1967, p. 13) ran a half-page ad of their distributor E.C.A.L. – Effective Communications Arts Ltd, part of the *IT* and *Oz* publishing orbit (see Green 1988, pp. 155–7) – advertising posters that fused psychedelic distortion and curling with Beardsley's flowing bodily forms and promoted music performance acts such as Arthur Brown, Soft Machine, or Jimi Hendrix, but also visualised some important

3 All referenced material from *Oz* is available in full colour scans at the University of Wollongong Archives online: https://archivesonline.uow.edu.au/nodes/view/3495/.

Figure 1: *Oz* 4, p. 5 (detail), JTLY poster ad; reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

coordinates on London's countercultural map, the UFO club and the Saville Theatre (Figure 2).[4] One of the posters, for Tomorrow's debut single "My White Bicycle," showed a surreal collage of a white bird and three female figures. It was also used as a standalone ad in the magazine together with a note informing *IT*'s readers that the band's record label had rejected the design because of the depicted nudity.

Early issues of *IT* repeatedly ran an ad for Indica Books that borrows heavily from Beardsley's style. It shows a nude female figure reclining on flowers and foliage, while from the background a snake slithers towards the centre of the picture, proffering an apple that can easily be associated with what the ad promises Indica's

4 All referenced material from *IT* is available in full colour scans at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/search?query=creator:"International+Times" under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 license.

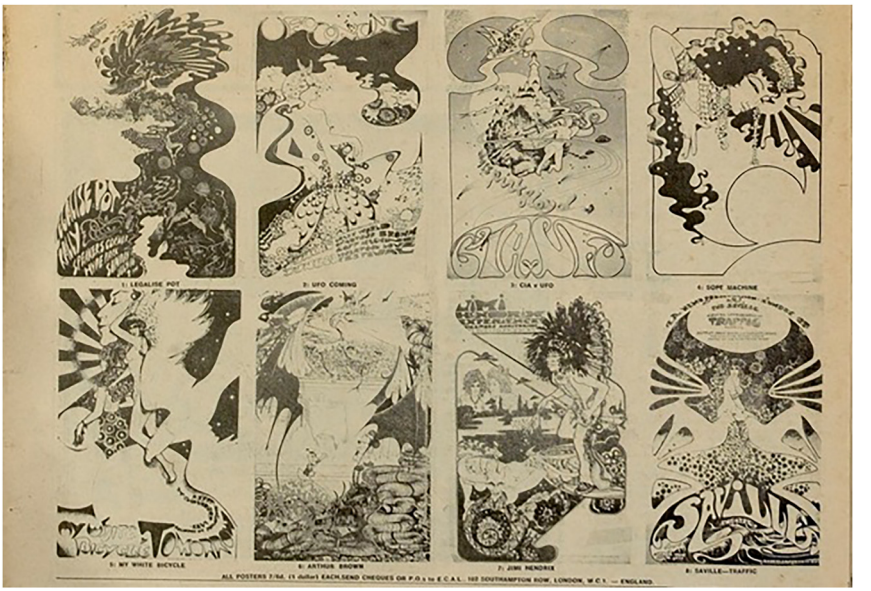


Figure 2: *IT* 20, p. 13 (detail), E.CA.L. poster ad; reproduced under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license from https://archive.org/details/InternationalTimes1967/IT_1967-10-27_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-20/.

customers in its oval frame: poetry, fiction, experiments, love, information, and *IT* (Figure 3). Finally, Beardsley's original work carries enough attention-grabbing potential itself to be useful for commercial purposes. Thus, *OZ* 8 (Jan. 1968, p. 12) reproduces Beardsley's design for the contents page of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* for their

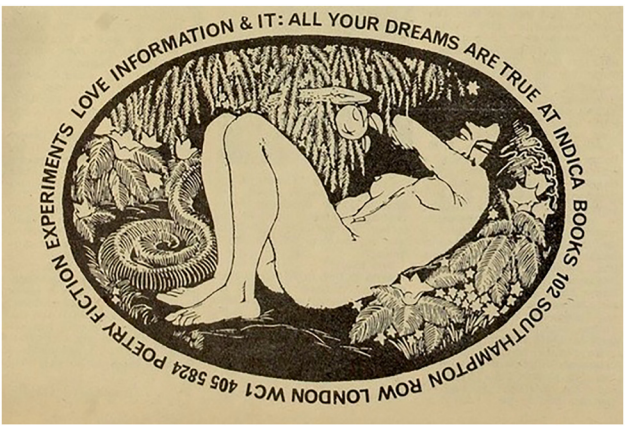


Figure 3: *IT* 15, p. 9, Indica ad; reproduced under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license from https://archive.org/details/InternationalTimes1967/IT_1967-06-16_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-15/.

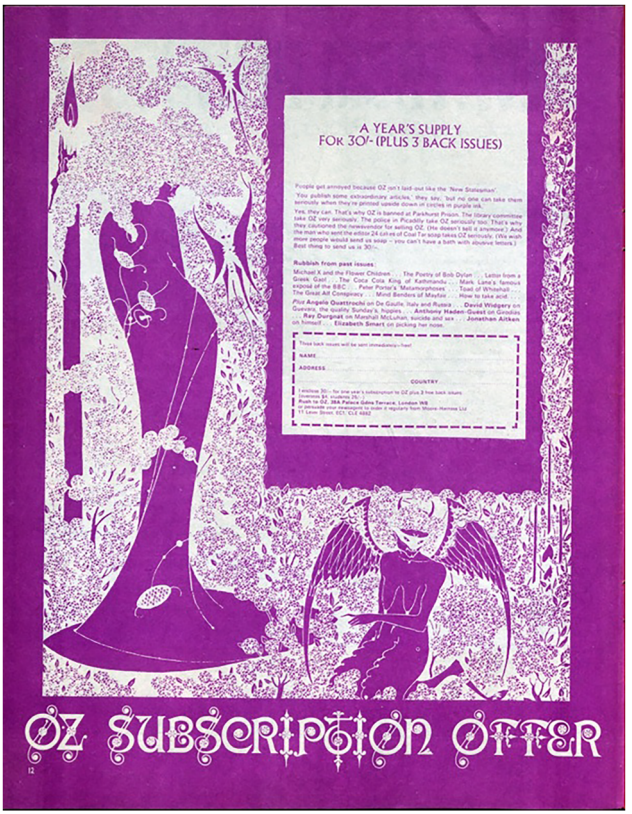


Figure 4: *Oz* 8, p. 12, Oz subscription ad; reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

own subscription offer (30 shillings for a year's run), the only changes made being the substitution of a purple dayglo colour for Beardsley's monochrome palette and the insertion of the subscription terms and details in place of the original table of contents (Figure 4).

One of the socially most contentious elements of Sixties counterculture was its attitude towards sexuality. Editors of *IT* and *Oz* faced criminal prosecution numerous times. These were on the grounds of obscenity, culminating, for each of the magazines, in the obscure yet dangerous charge of "conspiracy to corrupt public morals and conspiracy to outrage public decency" (Green 1998, p. 352).[5] The front and back cover of *Oz* 4 formed a gatefold poster depicting a couple in an equilibrated free-

5 For an extensive account of Richard Neville's conflicts with the law as the founding and leading editor of *Oz*, particularly over the *Oz* Schoolkids Issue of April 1970, see the later chapters in his recollection *Hippie Hippie Shake* (1995).

floating embrace. It has become known as the "Tantric Lovers" poster and was designed by the already mentioned Hapshash and the Coloured Coat duo (Figure 5). Here, elements of decadence are present not so much in the artistic execution but in

Figure 5: *Oz* 4, front and back cover, "Tantric Lovers"; reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

the expression of central *fin-de-siècle* decadent tenets, quoted above, that appealed so much to artists of the 1960s counterculture: the worship of sex, of hair undulating wildly, and of skin. The latter unfolds a particular provocative potential in the face of mainstream culture, since the two lovers present a contrast of white and dark skin. This is compounded with a psychedelic background of peacock's eyes, fractal geometry, and an uncoiling snake, referring to the Tantric Kundalini power, at the bottom of picture. Elements of decadent aesthetics, such as the flowing hair or the peacock, are updated with the Sixties' turn to Eastern mysticism which it treated as a source of liberating thought and practice.

Eastern mysticism is also at the core of a full-page psychedelic illustration that John Thompson contributed to *Oz* 36 (July 1971, p. 42). It is dominated by a large design that amalgamates Tantric and Ayurvedic principles of Nadi energy channels with a Hindu mantra and the presence of Shiva and Shakti deities within a lateral cross section of a human head. At the bottom of the page this principle of lateral presentation is repeated in three smaller human heads that incorporate decadent visual elements, contributing to a style of "eclectic borrowings and restorations" (Harris 2005, p. 11) which was also typical for psychedelic art (Figure 6). These three human heads, presented side by side, combine a visual reference to nineteenth-century phrenological diagrams with a schematised, mechanical outline of human anatomy that is thwarted by the chaotic presence of Beardsley-like female and androgynous figures overlayed with geometrical forms that create an impression of multiple levels of meaning present in each of the heads. The repetition of the same basic lateral design with differences and recombinations of its basic elements also refers to the design of acid blotter art (see Owen and Dickson 1999, pp. 16–9) and thereby points to the psychedelic component of exploring the mind's inner workings through drugs. Thus, the employment of decadent elements of visual style is here tied directly to countercultural practices. This appropriation will be further explored in the following section.

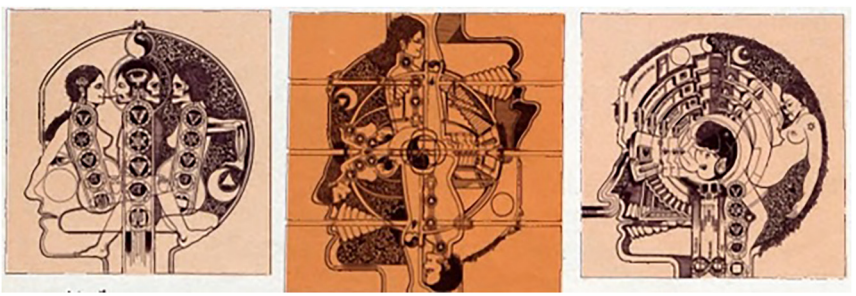
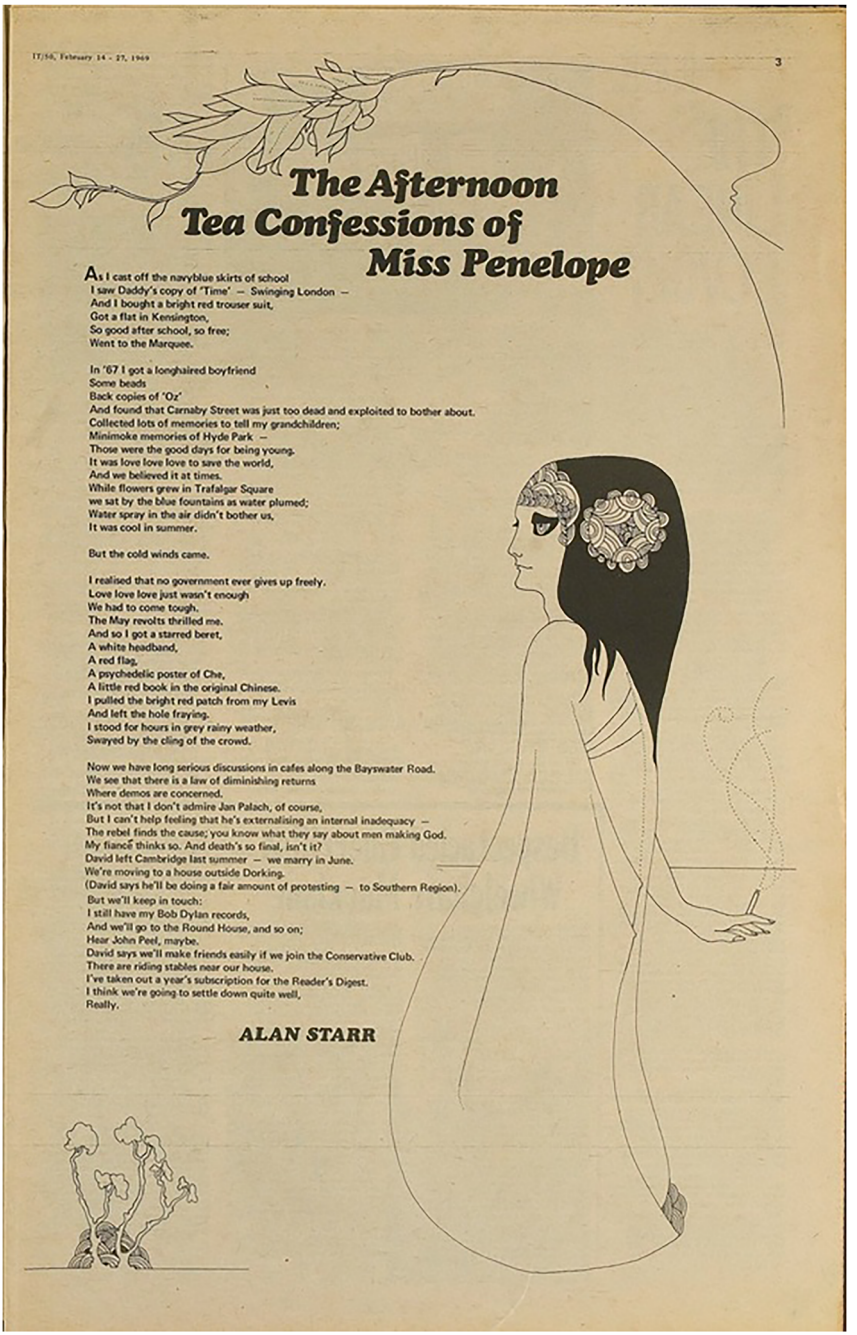


Figure 6: *Oz* 36, p. 42 (detail), lateral heads by John Thompson; reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

3 Expressing Countercultural Tenets and Issues

The presence of decadent aesthetics in *IT* and *Oz* is often most interesting and surprising when the artwork in question is used in combination with other content elements on the magazine page that have countercultural relevance. *IT* 50 of 14 Feb. 1969 (p. 3) carried a poem called "The Afternoon Tea Confessions of Miss Penelope" by Alan Starr. In this monologic poem, the speaker traces her progress from a young bourgeois schoolgirl to, first, a flower power hippie, and then a counterculturally, politically active young woman, decked out in both phases with the necessary credentials: "a longhaired boyfriend / Some beads / Back copies of 'Oz'" and at the second stage with "a starred beret, / A white headband, / A red flag, / A psychedelic poster of Che, / A little red book in the original Chinese." Now she is about to change her course of life again with the prospect of marriage and a move from London to Dorking. The poem is accompanied by the silhouette drawing of a female figure which combines Beardsley-like features – a flowing dress that masks the body's outline, a mass of jet-black hair, eye accentuated sharply by dark make-up, a headscarf with a psychedelic ornamental pattern, and the proverbial "flower in her hair" – with a paradox pose (Figure 7). The figure's body is oriented to the right edge of the page, whereas the head faces in the opposite direction, much as Miss Penelope of the poem does, when she tries to reconcile her hip recent past with the future ahead, promising her countercultural tea companions "we'll keep in touch: / I still have my Bob Dylan records, And we'll go to the Round House, and so on; / Hear John Peel, maybe." Throughout, the poem offers an ironic perspective on Sixties counterculture, where the opposition to the mainstream was often performed through alternative consumption choices and the cultural and social standards remained solidly middle-class (see Green 1998, pp. 125–6). This is also reflected in the poem's ending, when the speaker envisions her future with riding stables near the house, a husband who thinks about the Conservative Club for making friends, and – ultimate irony in a countercultural magazine – "a year's subscription for the Reader's Digest." All of which leads her to conclude: "I think we're going to settle down quite well, / Really." Extended to the appropriation or assimilation of decadent aesthetics in artefacts of the counterculture, one could be left to wonder whether this is also a calculated move rather than the expression of an artistic and ideological affinity.

In its basic meaning, decadence draws attention to and celebrates decay in an image of downfall (see Weir and Desmarais 2022, p. 1) and it is interesting that the magazines sometimes use decadent aesthetics for content material that touches upon central issues of counterculture, such as the "Tea Confessions," where the commitment and seriousness of practitioners was brought into question. *Oz* 3 (May 1967) reprints "The Social History of the Hippies," an article by the American



IT/50, February 14 - 27, 1969 3

The Afternoon Tea Confessions of Miss Penelope

As I cast off the navyblue skirts of school
I saw Daddy's copy of 'Time' — Swinging London —
And I bought a bright red trouser suit,
Got a flat in Kensington,
So good after school, so free;
Went to the Marquee.

In '67 I got a longhaired boyfriend
Some beads
Back copies of 'Oz'
And found that Carnaby Street was just too dead and exploited to bother about.
Collected lots of memories to tell my grandchildren;
Minimoke memories of Hyde Park —
Those were the good days for being young.
It was love love love to save the world,
And we believed it at times.
While flowers grew in Trafalgar Square
we sat by the blue fountains as water plumed;
Water spray in the air didn't bother us,
It was cool in summer.

But the cold winds came.

I realised that no government ever gives up freely.
Love love love just wasn't enough
We had to come tough.
The May revolts thrilled me.
And so I got a starred beret,
A white headband,
A red flag,
A psychedelic poster of Che,
A little red book in the original Chinese.
I pulled the bright red patch from my Levis
And left the hole fraying.
I stood for hours in grey rainy weather,
Swayed by the cling of the crowd.

Now we have long serious discussions in cafes along the Bayswater Road.
We see that there is a law of diminishing returns
Where demos are concerned.
It's not that I don't admire Jan Palach, of course,
But I can't help feeling that he's externalising an internal inadequacy —
The rebel finds the cause; you know what they say about men making God.
My fiancé thinks so. And death's so final, isn't it?
David left Cambridge last summer — we marry in June.
We're moving to a house outside Dorking.
(David says he'll be doing a fair amount of protesting — to Southern Region).
But we'll keep in touch:
I still have my Bob Dylan records,
And we'll go to the Round House, and so on;
Hear John Peel, maybe.
David says we'll make friends easily if we join the Conservative Club.
There are riding stables near our house.
I've taken out a year's subscription for the Reader's Digest.
I think we're going to settle down quite well,
Really.

ALAN STARR

Figure 7: *IT* 50, p. 3; reproduced under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license from https://archive.org/details/InternationalTimes1969/IT_1969-02-14_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-50/.8.

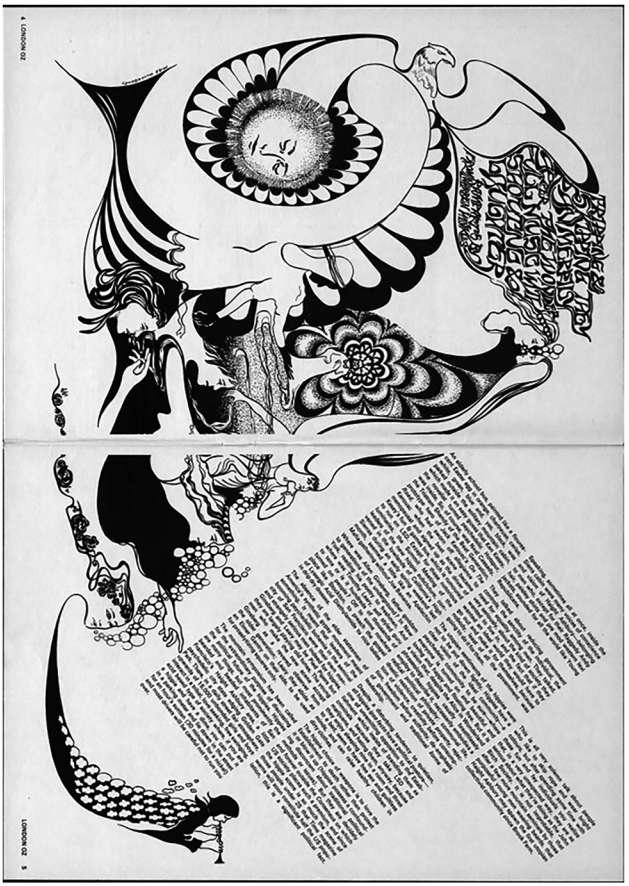


Figure 8: *Oz* 3, pp. 4–5; reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

journalist Warren Hinkle for the San Francisco-based journal *Ramparts*, with some editorial choices concerning the presentation of text. *OZ* leaves out the title. In its stead a design by the artist Mike McInnerney is used that combines psychedelic and decadent aesthetics. The picture shows a piper figure leading a procession of ethereal followers whose flowing hair and smoke exhalations curl up into a guru-like figure, whose multi-layered halo morphs into a pair of bubble-blowing lovers and a caption that quotes from the "Pied Piper of Hamelin": "Tripping & skipping they ran merrily after the wonderfull [sic] music with shouting & laughter" (Figure 8). Tripping, which hardly needs an explanation in the drug-infused Sixties countercultural context, skipping, in the sense of foregoing conventions maybe, and indulging in music, were formative elements of the full-blown alternative lifestyle. And yet, the reference to

the legend of the Piper also points to the ruination of the piper's followers, who were led from their community and never returned.

Hinkle's text is an exploration of the west coast hippie culture around Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters and the Diggers, an alternative drop-out community. It focuses on prophet-like agents within the community, such as Kesey, Timothy Leary, and Emmet Grogan, and the quandary of being caught between a genuine hippie ethic and a commercialised and ultimately asocial hedonistic variation of a counterculture. Hinkle ends with a pessimistic note about hippies, their impact on society, and an unwanted alternative: "The hippies have shown that it can be pleasant to drop out of the arduous task of attempting to steer a difficult, unrewarding society. But when that is done, you leave the driving to the Hell's Angels." This realisation is accompanied by an illustration, which fills the remaining space in the piece's final column and once again fuses a contemporary observation with an adaptation of decadent aesthetics. It shows two simplistic scruffy figures, whose smoke curls into a Beardsley-like sedentary, bare-breasted female figure, its voluptuous hair, and two peacocks: a decadent pipe dream, a vision created in passive consumption that can be understood as a visual commentary on Hinkle's scepticism (Figure 9).

The association of smoke curling into phantastic and decadent figures is a regular feature of visual design used in *IT* and *Oz* and two further examples will suffice here. An interview with Frank Zappa in *IT* 10 (13 March 1967, p. 5) is framed by a double portrait of the musician. Both are profile images, one a photograph and the other one a recognisable drawn rendition of it which has Zappa's facial features rising out of the smoke of a smouldering joint, expanding into fractal and floral geometric patterns that outline the silhouette of the head (Figure 10). It is apparent that the volatile nature of smoke, its mutability and evanescence, was an element that connected psychedelic and decadent visual aesthetics. Countercultural capriciousness being written or sketched in smoke of course offers its own aesthetic comment on the playfulness and the transitory character of the counterculture. This self-ironic comment is also evident in another use of billowing smoke on a page of *Oz.* Issue eight of January 1968 offer a full-page multi-dayglo-coloured collage on page 5. The upper half is dominated by a wild story about the accidental death of an inventor of a machine for de-wrinkling prunes, cut from the *Daily Mirror*, whereas the lower half reproduces a piece of writing by Ann Benson from the *LA Free Press*. It takes up Penn Jones' conspiracy theory around the assassination of John F. Kennedy and names 20 persons who were allegedly implicated in the shooting and subsequently died or disappeared. The framed two-columned text is set against a background artwork that shows two

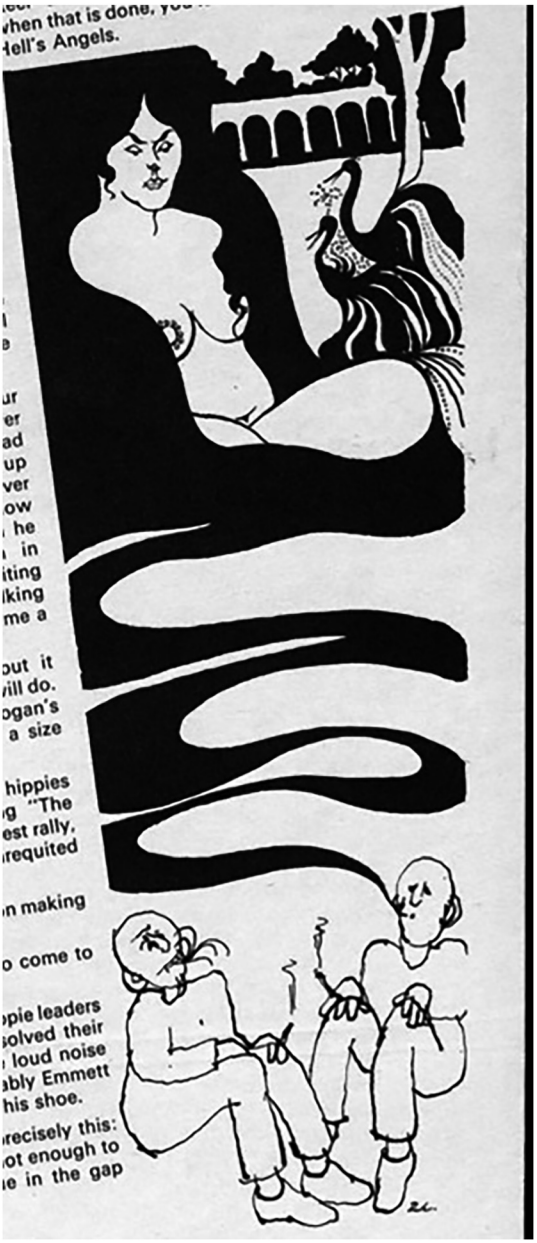


Figure 9: *Oz* 3, p. 9 (detail); reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

Figure 10: *IT* 10, p. 5 (detail); reproduced under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license from https://archive.org/details/InternationalTimes1967/IT_1967-03-13_B-IT-Volume-1_Iss-10/.

female figures rising out of the smoke of a lit pipe (Figure 11). Once more, a wafting image of ephemeral illusion is used to illustrate textual content. Here, the hypertrophic proliferation of conspiracy and distrust of the establishment is reflected and maybe also criticised in the artwork.

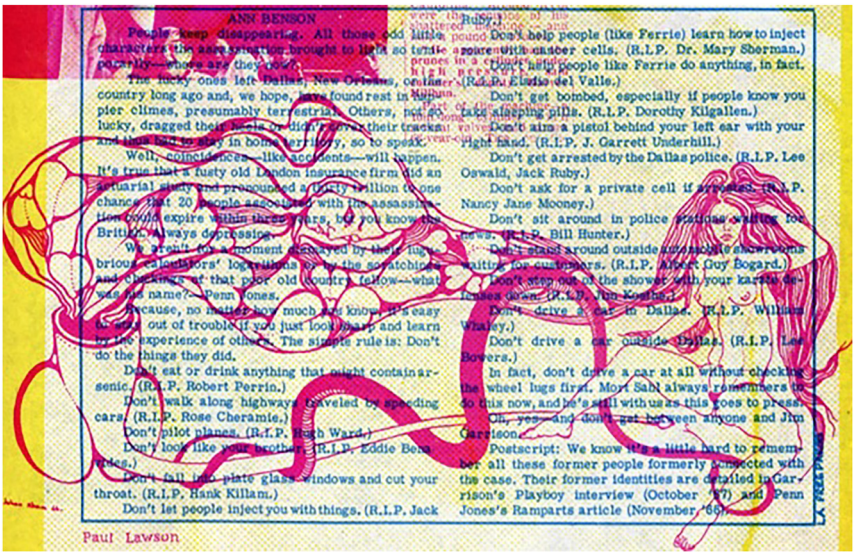


Figure 11: *Oz* 8, p. 5 (detail); reproduced with permission of copyright owner.

4 Conclusion

It has become clear that the presence of decadent aesthetics and ideological tenets can be associated with a number of purposes in the English countercultural press of the 1960s. Deliberately exhibiting an assimilation of decadent and art nouveau visual vocabulary establishes a relation or can lay claim to a descendance. The Sixties counterculture embraced central decadent characteristics, such as the opposition to a dominating mainstream or the significance of the naked human body. Editors of the magazines *IT* and *Oz* and visual artists who developed the particular psychedelic design mobilised decadent elements of visual style for commercial purposes as well as for expressing perspectives, including ironic commentary, on their own countercultural scene.

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