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Interview

30-38 minutes

Colin Wilson interviewed at Tetherdown on 11th September, 2007

Driving through the narrow winding roads towards Gorran Haven, where cars have to politely stop to let each other through and the view on either side is blocked by gigantic Cornish hedges, is like navigating an Elizabethan maze. We are being driven by Colin's charming wife Joy, to the home they have lived in since the Fifties.

Joy gives us, via a quick detour, a mini tour of the little village where they live. A beautiful blue sea and a little golden beach – complete with surfers and sunbathers – opens up unexpectedly from one winding corner. It's very Mediterranean and the little whitewashed houses have a southern Spanish feel – you could almost be in Seville. As Colin developed the Proustian theory of 'Faculty X' – the knowledge of other times and other places – this is apt preparation for meeting the man himself.

Arriving at the cottage we are welcomed by two black dogs, and although one is still a puppy, he is still quite large. There is also a parrot called Clovis who has a habit of chewing books. The Wilson's house is absolutely *crammed* with books, records and videos, and we add to it when Colin arrives by handing him copies of Kenneth Grant's poetry volume *Convolulus*, ("I do admire Grant" he remarks, looking at the cover) and Peter Ackroyd's acclaimed Shakespeare biography. The latter is

research for his new book on *The Bard*, due out next year. Colin tells us about the section he has just been working on – unfortunately our iPod is not yet recording, so you'll have to wait for the book. [The Shakespeare book is still unpublished as of 2017 – Ed.] It was fascinating stuff...

“We’ve got to find a different approach than what Lautreamont or Debord would have called the Existential approach”

As the foundation of Colin’s work is based on the phenomenology of Husserl, worked out in the seven volumes of his “Outsider Cycle”, and updated in later books such as *Below The Iceberg*, I begin by asking about his objections to Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ of Husserl. “(Derrida) didn’t deconstruct Husserl, he’s really based on him. The thing is you see... he’s basically a kind of thoroughgoing materialist. You could say on the billiard table of philosophy there are only two pockets – the positive and the negative. In philosophy, all kinds of people who belong to the negative side like David Hume, don’t really believe that the human will serves any purpose whatever. In other words it seems to me that in philosophy you’ve got people who believe that to a large extent, will really matters, and that we human beings have a certain control over our lives, and people who belong to the other side. And basically Derrida is one of these. Most French people do; the French have this tendency to a kind of materialism”. This tendency is well described in one of his best books, *Below The Iceberg*. “Actually, I talked about this in that last part of *The Angry Years*... I talk there about [Bergson](#); and yeah, that’s the most interesting part of the book.” The Epilogue of his AYM memoir remarks that: ” In view of this drift into postmodernism, we can begin to see the period of the Angry

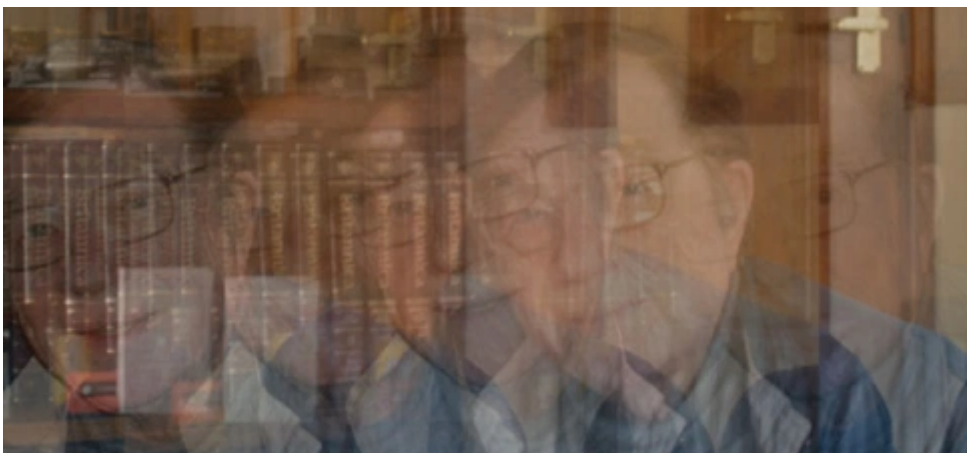
Young Men in a rather more sympathetic light. Osbourne's work may be little more than a surrender to negative emotion, but at least he regrets that 'there are no good, brave causes left'. Tynan's motivation may have been a an obsession with celebrities, but at least he thought that Marxism might be the route to a more serious art. Braine may be naïve about the trappings of success, but at least he always preserved an appealing kind of innocence about them. Larkin's pessimism may be admission of defeat (and a way of guaranteeing it), but at least it produced some excellent poems. Trocchi may have destroyed himself in the hedonistic pursuit of sensation, but he was driven by a positive vision of the evolution of consciousness." Needless to say, this angle was lost on most mainstream reviewers, many of whom thought that Wilson was merely speaking ill of the [mostly] dead. Not so: the AYM era is used as a demonstration of what happens when Rousseau's philosophy of social freedom is put into practice. The cutting social criticism in this last quote is that now culture appears to consist of the former but not the latter: Osbourne's negative emotion, Tynan's obsession with celebrities, Braine's trappings of success, Larkin's pessimism and Trocchi's hedonistic pursuit of sensation. Mix them in a blender and leave them to set and you have this week's postmodern anti-zeitgeist. The belief in "good, brave causes", in Marxism as a route to a more serious art – these are deeply unfashionable "metanarratives". Trocchi's evolution of consciousness is an embarrassment in today's misanthropic chattering culture. As for a few decent poems appearing from the mainstream, have you read any recently?

Yes, undoubtedly, imagination is freedom, a new dimension for human beings. Imagination is the power

of the absurd; it is nothing less than an anti-gravity device that can cause man to rise into the air like an Indian fakir. Everything may be against him; he may, like Blake, be a total failure in every worldly sense, without money, without reputation, his paintings dismissed as untalented, his poems described as the work of a madman; and yet with every 'natural' disadvantage to push him backwards, he defies the laws of physics and moves forwards. (The Sex Diary of Gerard Sorme, Oct. 29th)

I ask Colin about Nietzsche's continued relevancy – any astute reader can see that the likes of Derrida and Foucault made themselves famous by bloating his incredible insights and one-liners into pompous jargon: postmodernism was a faded carbon copy of Nietzsche's philosophy. "His relevance seems to me to be perfectly objective. He seems to me to be the most important philosopher in the world, in the sense that philosophy has got itself into this cul de sac which it did through Hume and through approaching the whole business of the questions of philosophy in the wrong way, as if you can do it scientifically. Descartes really caused the problem, and you know it won't really do; you can't do philosophy that way at all and the result is that the whole thing has gone off the rails." The notion of the rational/scientific method of philosophy was expertly described in Colin's 1966 book *Introduction to the New Existentialism*: "The philosopher says that his aim is to understand the universe, and he does this by peering out through the windows of the senses and asking questions. But he is assuming that there are no questions to be asked about his own mind; he takes it for granted that it is a mirror reflecting reality; so that when

Descartes says 'I', he means 'I' – Rene Descartes, a simple unity, which knows all about itself, and need ask no further questions. It is rather as if a detective is questioning a roomful of suspects, any one of whom might have committed the murder. Unfortunately, the detective was not present the time of the murder, so he has no 'direct evidence' to go on; he dare not make any assumptions about who is innocent or guilty; he must begin by doubting everything that everyone tells him, and simply use his own enquiring mind to add up the various stories, to perceive contradictions, to weigh the evidence. This is the Cartesian picture of the philosopher. Now Husserl has suggested a new and disturbing possibility. Suppose the detective himself is the murderer? – The detective begins by assuring himself that he will make no assumptions about who is guilty, that he will doubt everything; but he has made an assumption – about his own innocence. But philosophers ever since Descartes have been making the same assumption, and philosophy has found itself in the same cul de sac." This notion of rationality as an unquestioned assumption, a prejudice in fact, is central to Wilson's writings, whether they be about philosophy, crime, the occult or fiction.



Around about the same time as the *Outsider* volumes were being written, Marshall McLuhan was describing the same problem from a different angle: the boom of mass media, advertising and communications. In books such as *The Mechanical Bride*, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media*, McLuhan noted, via the influence of Blake, Joyce and Wyndham Lewis, how human societies “became what they beheld” and were now unprepared for the advent of simultaneous “all at onceness” of the [Global Village](#). McLuhan would also point out how the arch rationalist Descartes took the notion of left brain, perspective viewing rationality as reality, with catastrophic results. Colin was unimpressed with McLuhan’s robotic simulation, the recently deceased Jean Baudrillard (“is Baudrillard dead? Good”) but what was his opinion on the Canadian media guru? I was aware Wilson had mentioned him a few times: in a Foucault essay, in his Steiner biography, even in the paperback of *The Serial Killers*; and that McLuhan had mentioned *The Outsider* in his later book *From Cliche to Archetype*, but Colin drew a parallel: “I’m rather saddened by McLuhan in a way. Because when I first went to America in 1960 I was staying with the guy who was actually a priest in Brooklyn who’d been a pupil of McLuhan, and who’d got *Understanding Media* there, and I thought you know, McLuhan is an extremely interesting character, and then of course, quite suddenly after something like just a few years, suddenly everybody was saying ‘oh, McLuhan’s no good’, and there was the usual kind of thing, the same kind of thing that happened to me, the complete change of view of him... and then of course that cunt Jonathan Miller wrote a book about McLuhan (in the Fontana Modern Masters series) which is really just a vicious little attack. So I’ve always felt McLuhan had quite something important to say. I

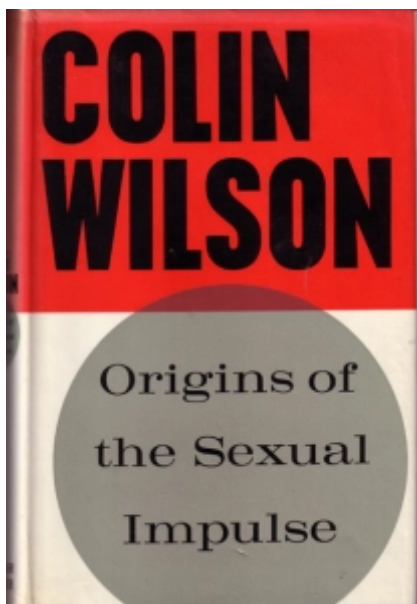
went along to his place in Toronto long after his death just because I happened to be on the campus and wanted to see what kind of place he worked in. So I've always felt very sad about McLuhan because he had some extremely important insights about hot and cold media and the way things work. Somebody said to him why do you think you've had such an impact, and he said 'because I'm just about the only person who knows what the hell is going on' (laughs)."

McLuhan saw the "single vision and Newton's sleep" perception of rational 'typographic man' as completely unprepared for the 'birds eye view' engendered by the new electronic media, a fact lost on Renaissance man Jonathan Miller, but very similar to Wilson's concepts of post-rational perception.

The Outsider is about 'don't be afraid to be an Outsider, stick in there and get on with your work.' And then I've often thought of someone like William Blake who never achieved any kind of recognition in his lifetime. At least I can't complain in that sense.

Colin epitomizes Flaubert's maxim "Be regular and orderly in your life like a bourgeois, so that you may be violent and original in your work." He still has the same schedule of reading and writing in the morning and walking his dogs in the afternoon and relaxing in the evening. The room is loaded with shelf after shelf of books and vinyl – the latter seems to be organised alphabetically as we are sitting surrounded by the 'B' section: Berlioz, Berg and so on. His love of music was documented in *Brandy of the Damned* (1964), although critics at the time were puzzled by someone who could go from existentialism to religion to sexuality to crime in the space of a few books. Soon Wilson would confuse them even further with a massive book on the

occult. “My problem you see is that I’m interested in too many things. This is the problem as far as the critics are concerned. They can’t understand anybody who would write a book about music, write books about philosophy, write books about crime; these things seem to them to have nothing in common, whereas to me it’s absolutely plain. There’s a very close connection between them all.” (Driving us back in his Land Rover later he mentions this again, and that Dostoyevsky was concerned about both crime and mysticism). “Well, this has been the cause in a way, that I’ve always found it so difficult making any headway. *The Outsider* was a tremendous success, and then once it became apparent how many different things I was interested in, the critics wanted to find a reason of saying ‘oh well Wilson anyway, you know you can forget him’. And I found myself, you know, I’d produce some book I knew to be important and good, and then it got exactly the same murderous reception from these bastards. And when that autobiography of mine (*Dreaming to Some Purpose*) was coming out three years ago, I thought this is my best book, they won’t be able to ignore this, but the fuckers did. And not merely ignore it, some of them actually shat on it (laughs).” (Roll up, Adam Mars-Jones, Humphrey Carpenter...) “But I just had to get used to this fact that my work tended to get attacked, but then I thought this really is logical because *The Outsider* is about ‘don’t be afraid to be an Outsider, stick in there and get on with your work.’ And then I’ve often thought of someone like William Blake who never achieved any kind of recognition in his lifetime. At least I can’t complain in that sense.”



Obviously, you have a large following, despite critical sniping, whereas Blake had virtually nobody apart from his wife. (There's an interesting comment in *The Outsider* about how such a soulmate could have saved Nietzsche's sanity...) "Yeah! Yes, I'm always rather astonished when people write to me and say we've read a lot of your books, because when you're working alone you don't tend to get the feedback." So have you noticed more feedback recently? "Well, I don't know, my own feeling is that sooner or later there should be some kind of a breakthrough. But I'm not really sure that would be terribly good (laughs). You see the real problem with all human beings is a natural laziness, and once things are going well you tend to rest on your oars. So I've got so used to swimming against the current that when *The Outsider* came out and suddenly I was famous and everybody was saying 'my God, what a great genius', I thought oh dear, I don't like this at all."

The backlash after *The Outsider* was ferocious: his second book, *Religion and the Rebel*, was panned. Colin once described it as the most panned book of the Twentieth Century, itself no mean feat. Subsequent books, such as his first novel *Ritual in the Dark* – quoted by cult band The Fall on their *Hex Enduction Hour* album some twenty-two years later – writings on

phenomenology like *Beyond The Outsider* and *Introduction to the New Existentialism*, and the pioneering (and later, much imitated) *Encyclopedia of Murder* were derided or ignored. It wasn't until publication of *The Occult* in 1971 when critics such as Philip Toynbee and Cyril Connolly were "virtually apologising" for previous attacks. Since then he has often been referenced by 'underground' figures [1]. But on the rare occasions when the mainstream encounters him, it's a fairly depressing shopworn script written by people who have barely investigated his work. Younger writers would probably be crushed by even one or two bad reviews, that Wilson has endured nearly fifty years of misunderstanding and downright hostility is remarkable testament to his vision. He talks about the reception of other books. "There's an interesting book which is coming out called *The Secret History of the World*, a strange sort of book by a chap called Jonathan Black, who's actually a publisher. And what he claims in this book is basically that there is an esoteric tradition, and initiates know about this tradition and many belong to it, and one of the main points is that you mustn't talk about it; it's something that has to be kept to yourself. Well, of course I can quite see that when this book is out, it's going to be murderously attacked, they're going to say 'what a lot of superstitious rubbish!' But actually it's quite right, he's fundamentally right. What he's doing is is completely anti – Derrida, and anti this whole postmodernism trend."

How is it anti-postmodernism?

"Simply, what he's asserting is basically in a way what I've been asserting: that the world does have a meaning. That for example it couldn't be more opposed to someone like Dawkins with his book, 'God doesn't exist' etc. Not that I would say that God *does* exist, but simply Dawkins seems to be saying something totally

meaningless. He's missing the point really (although) he's quite interesting scientifically speaking, but yes, he goes into this business, and he's like a man laying around him with a sword on the empty air, not actually hitting anything at all. Mind you, there is probably something to be said for *The God Delusion* as the problem of the United States and the Bible Belt (laughs), but I think for any kind of sensible people what is so important is to have this kind of basic feeling that on the whole, things do have a meaning, and provided you assume they have a meaning then they tend to go right. If you don't then they tend to go wrong." Don't you think that your writing on crime is a mirror held up to a pessimistic culture? It's pointing out the difference between the reality of nihilism in action, and a kind of of lazy pessimistic indulgence, a wallowing, like you see in the work of Beckett. "Ian Brady was completely like that. This extremely negative point of view. When I first got to know Brady – I never met him because they wouldn't let me go to the hospital – when I first met him through correspondence, I thought, I don't understand it, he's so intelligent, that how come? That he wanted to commit crimes and all the rest of it and didn't seem to see this relation between that and spending his life behind bars. And then, I gradually began to realise that the real trouble was a curious lack of self discipline; it was a kind of spoiltness, like a child losing his temper when he can't have what he wants, and you know, kicking the nearest object. And this is Brady very much, he just has that sort of rather nasty streak. I used to have a cousin like that, my cousin John, although the poor chap's dead now, but erm, he just had that very spoilt streak, and he was very nice to play with when you were a kid because he was quite talented and interesting, and this kind of thing, but always he would suddenly turn nasty, and you'd think "I'll never talk to

that bugger again.” And because he was so charming and had this sort of ability, you always did; but that kind of spoiltness in him was made him so annoying. And this again and again I find is the basis of the criminal mentality, they’ve got this odd kind of spoiltness.”

Do you think it’s a lack of empathy?

“Absolutely, yeah. They don’t really believe that anyone exists except themselves.”

Like solipsism?

“Well, unfortunately this is natural to human beings, because we are basically stuck behind our eyes. As Eliot says we each think of the key, each in his prison. So, there’s no way of getting out of that. Somebody wrote to Bertrand Russell once and said “Well I’m a solipsist and I can’t understand why everybody isn’t” (!). But you’re bound to be a solipsist to a large extent, it just can’t be helped. But, nevertheless, if you like people and you know, you like trying to get on as best you can and so on, you find that automatically you try to live in a certain way, sort of being as helpful as you can and that kind of thing, which tends to work out and realise gradually that this does work. So, Brady apparently... I thought he’s so intelligent, a good thing to do would be get him to write a book. And so finally I persuaded him to write a book, and he did this book which was called *The Gates of Janus*, and I wrote a long introduction to it and found a publisher for him, an American publisher and then Ashworth Hospital, the hospital where Brady is, heard that he was going to publish a book and wrote to me and said they wanted to see the manuscript, in case he attacked them in it, which they deserved, they’re a lousy lot. So I sent it along and said, yeah, sure, you know, there’s nothing here, he doesn’t mention you. And they said oh yes well, you in your introduction have said... and then

they specified these one or two things that they wanted me to take out. And I argued that all of these things were perfectly true, for example one of the things about Ashworth hospital is that they'd allowed the daughter of one of the guards, who was only about ten years old, to spend quite a lot of time on the wards with these murderous nuts. And they said Ah, that's not true, but it was true, and various other things were true of the same sort. Anyway, finally, because the publisher was getting a bit worried about all this, whether they sued him, what I did finally was to put in little kind of notes stuck on the back of the title page, saying please disregard so and so, etc. And it was fairly clear from my ironic tone that I was saying that they're bloody liars. Anyway when Brady finally got his own copy of the book and found this in it, he hit the ceiling. His lawyer said he screamed abuse and obscenities for two hours non stop [laughs]. And this is typical, I'd done all this to help him, and what's more, I hadn't accepted any money at all, the publisher gave him \$5000, which I think he gave to his mother or something of the sort. But anyway, this is just a typical example of Brady's incredible spoiltness." A lack of logic, as well? "Total lack of logic. Because what he says if you... he admits that he killed children and so on, and says 'well society is so filthy and rotten, that I don't regard it as really a crime.'" Brady tried to intellectualise his crimes, quoted Nietzsche and de Sade, yet he murdered innocent working class children; it's a classic example of what Sartre would call magical thinking. Even though it had nothing about Brady's own crimes – he wrote about other serial killers – when the book was published it still caused something of a tabloid storm in the U.K.

“Well it caused a storm simply because he is the first murderer to ever publish a book. But of course he didn’t try to justify himself, he was talking about other cases, and talking about them quite perceptively. I still think he came closer to the identity of the Cleveland Torso Killer than anybody else had done.”

The Gates of Janus was seen by too many as muck raking, even by the same liberal people who would defend Marcus Harvey’s calculatedly “controversial” painting of Myra Hindley six years before. Perhaps the reality was less comfortable than the pose; it should have been a portrait of Rose West.

In his book, *Serial Killer Investigations*, Colin mentions that he wrote another introduction to a set of fictional writings composed by ex-cop turned serial killer Gerard Schaefer entitled *Killer Fiction*: “I have never read the entire book and do not intend to. There is a dreary sameness about the stories, an obsession with trying to provoke nausea and disgust.” (p.93). Sound familiar? Martin Amis? Ian McEwan? The latest ‘shocking’ [yawn] writer? Studying murder jolts us out of our amnesia because it is **real**: but no amount of literary shock tactics, no matter how beautifully crafted, no matter how hyped in *The Observer*, can have the same effect. “All of these things that interest me like crime and so on, interest me for that reason. That once you start to read about some particularly nasty crime, it does have this kind of shock effect on the emotions, which make you aware of it as a reality.” The conversation turns to authors and artists who tried to shock the bourgeois out of their slumber and ended up frustrated and in a rut, creatively.

In both *The Craft of the Novel* and *The Angry Years*, Wilson reveals that he is not impressed with William S. Burroughs’ literary output. This isn’t unusual as Burroughs is a love or hate writer. I ask him if he was aware that Burroughs was an [admirer](#)

of Wilson's Lovecraftian pastiche *The Mind Parasites*; he wasn't – and he was surprised, but "Tim Leary was an admirer of *The Mind Parasites*; I didn't know Burroughs was." (Ken Kesey also liked the book). You can't tell from his fiction (or can you?) but books such as *The Job* and *The Third Mind* – even the title gives a clue – are in essence following the same patterns as Wilson's ideas about perception. But his lengthy descriptions of sadistic erotica fail to convince Wilson. He writes: "To speak of murder is by no means irrelevant in the context of Burroughs. Sadistic sexual killers often lay out the victim's body in a display that is designed to create shock. *The Naked Lunch* is as close as it is possible to come on the page to displaying a mutilated corpse..." (*The Angry Years*, p.95).

"Actually somebody rang me and said Bill Burroughs is in London and we're giving a party for him, and would you come along? And I said, honestly I can't see any point, because I don't like his work; I hate his work! And you know, I hate *The Naked Lunch* and various other things of that sort. It seems to me to be such extremely unpleasant vicious stuff (laughs) that I can't say oh well, you know it's art and take it for granted. I mean, of course Kerouac actually more or less wrote the book, *The Naked Lunch*, or rather he put together a lot of notes that Bill Burroughs had written when he was in terrible state. And he and Allen Ginsberg 'made' *The Naked Lunch*, put it together. But it seems to me, you know there are certain things you shouldn't do. And there's a particular type of sadistic pornography that one should just not do. It's just a bad thing to do because it can actually have a bad effect on people who will then go and do it. You know, people like Ian Brady, for example". In his *Serial Killer Investigations*, Wilson points out that the grim 'project' of Leonard Lake – collecting victims to be abused and brutally

murdered – and documented on video – was inspired by John Fowles novel *The Collector*, “in which a mentally disturbed lepidopterist chloroforms and kidnaps Miranda, a pretty art student, and keeps her captive in a farmhouse – Fowles admitted that it was based on his own ‘Bluebeard’ fantasies of imprisoning one of his students.” (p.252). Lake not only named some of his snuff vids’ ‘M’ for Miranda, he not only had a plaque above a secret door in his torture chamber labeled ‘Operation Miranda’, he even lived in a remote village of the same name in Northern California. So this is not a case of a criminal shifting the blame, neither is it a simple matter of ‘blaming’ Fowles for Lake’s actions, it is a more complex relationship between the imagination and the real world, between fantasy and power which Wilson opines started in 1740 with the invention of the genuinely popular novel.

He offers up some rather more aesthetic examples. (I find Lake much more socially revealing than Fowles) “The French poet Apollinaire, who’s actually a very good Surrealistic poet, wrote two pornographic novels. One’s called *Memoirs of a Young Rakehell* which is actually quite good. But the other on is a rather nasty book called *The Debauched Hospodar* and it’s a book which ends with the nasty sadistic murder of a Japanese child. And you kind of feel that certain people are bringing trouble on themselves by doing that: they think they can’t get dirty and the mud will wash off, but it doesn’t. I’m pretty well convinced that what we do actually does have a fairly immediate effect on us”.

“I said in *The Craft of the Novel* what pretty much can’t be done. There was a guy called Juan Butler whom I mention in there...”
This throws me a bit as I have a question about this hyper-

obscure author already prepared; it is nearly impossible to find anything about him, even on the web. “He’s dead, he died in a mental hospital.” Was he quite well known in the Seventies? “No. He sent me this novel of his called *The Garbageman*, which I found so horrific.... there’s a scene in it in which the hero takes a girl to some remote seat on the hilltop and then sadistically kills her, and I thought this won’t really do (laughs), this is taking shock effect too far!” This is discussed in the relevant section of *The Craft of the Novel*, where Wilson opines that it is indeed a dead end: what could one do next, film it in Technicolor? Put on the stage? Do it for real? “Yes, quite (laughs). He sent me another of his books which I’ve still got around here (*Cabbagetown Diary*?) and then finally he did a third book called *Canadian Healing Oil* in which he made an attempt to retrace his steps, and to get out of this rather nasty *cul de sac* of violence he got himself into. But it didn’t work and he went nuts, and died in a mental home. But one or two other people have done this same kind of thing, going a little too far into violence, and I think they find themselves stuck in sticky swamp and can’t get out of it.”

Is this the main theme of your book *The Misfits*, where one of the ‘case studies’ of creative sexual deviants is the author of *Les Chants de Maldoror*?

“Yeah, that’s right, Lautreamont did this kind of thing, went into this notion of you know, where there’s a baby murdered in it and the rest of it. It’s beautifully written, it has superb style, but it’s incredibly nasty and of course he tried to do the same thing, after Maldoror, (he) made an attempt to write some poetry in which, as it were, he was good instead of wicked (laughs) and it didn’t really work, and of course he died very young.”

So this problem of ‘criminality’, of selfishness, leaves forensic

traces even on the arts and sciences as well as society and Wilson is adept at seeing the pattern. “We’ve got to find a different way of doing philosophy. Do you know the work of Debord?”

The Situationist?

“The Situationist International, yeah. He did the same thing, or did his best as it were to live his Existentialism. But he just drank and drank and drank until he ended up the size of an elephant (laughs) and then committed suicide. It can’t be done, there’s something about this whole problem. We’ve got to find a different approach than what Lautreamont or Debord would have called the Existential approach. And I came to the conclusion when I was fairly young that the answer has got to lie in Thomas Mann’s recognition that the artist has got to be the respectable bourgeois. That the only way to save yourself is to completely live in a bourgeois manner, so to speak. Some guy who once came here said to me that he asked a writer who lives around Mevagissey called Derek Savage – D. S. Savage, ‘what sort of place does Colin Wilson live in?’ and Derek replied ‘oh absolutely, completely bourgeois’ (laughs) But you know I don’t mind that in the least.”

[1] Wilson has made recordings with fan Julian Cope’s offshoot project, *The Sons of T. C. Lethbridge* – weirdly, Cope came to interview Colin six years to the day that we did, only to be absorbed in the events of 9/11. There is a recording with In The Nursery, *Anatomy of a Poet*. Alex Paterson of The Orb once picked C.W. as his ‘all time hero’ in a music magazine, using Colin’s voice (from *The Essential* CD) on track one, *O.O.B.E.* on the *UFOrb* CD. Throbbing Gristle technicians Genesis P-Orridge and Chris Carter have mentioned him as an influence, once

using a sample of his voice at their ‘psychic rallies’. The other Chris Carter, creator of *The X-Files*, was apparently obsessed by C.W.’s pulp output as a teen. Nic Roeg, master director of *Performance*, *Walkabout*, *Don’t Look Now*, and *The Man Who Fell To Earth* wanted to direct *The Killer* (he subsequently went on to put a shot of Amanda Donahoe reading *A Criminal History of Mankind* in his *Castaway*). The star of one of Roeg’s movies, David Bowie, was a big fan, as was Peter Hammill, who had songs such as *Faculty X* and *The Black Room*. Mark E. Smith, who ‘is’ The Fall, was also a fan of Wilson’s fiction. Even one of the Marx Brothers got in on the act. Scarcely believable, but Colonel Gaddafi’s favourite book is *The Outsider*. “I feel a bit guilty about that, because somebody on the *Evening Standard* rang me up and I knew various people on the *Evening Standard* so I trusted the bastard, and he said ‘what do you think, when you hear that Colonel Gaddafi is an admirer of yours?’ And I said it’s not something I particularly want to talk about, it’s a bit like being admired by Adolf Hitler. I said for Christ’s sake don’t say that. And the cunt went and printed it. So I’ve no doubt that Gadaffi must be feeling a bit irritable with me!”