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Posted on 03 June 2018 By Peter Currell Brown

Trip tastic Quite bonkers, dated and overlong but some amazing descriptions of factory life Not an easy read and maybe impossible for those unfamiliar with psychedelics and or factories. Possibly the highlight is that it paid for the author to leave the drudgery of factory life. Pinquean Smallcreep has worked in the factory for 16 years doing the same repetitive task every day making a certain type of slot to fit in a certain type of pulley At the beginning of the book he has decided to set off through the factory to find out what the pulley is used for Sometimes depressing, sometimes funny and always surreal like a nightmare set in an industrial hell, Smallcreep meets various other workers from the lowliest sewage maintenance man to the managers at the top His encounters, examining human relationships and the value of human life, are bizarre and at their best, very funny and insightful but I found some of them unintelligible and overly drawn out. When Factory Worker Pinquean Smallcreep, Who Has Slotted A Certain Type Of Slot Into A Certain Type Of Pulley For Many Years, Packs His Sandwiches And Sets Out On A Journey To Investigate What It Is He Is Producing, His Discoveries Become Increasingly Bizarre And Disturbing All I knew about this novel something of a cult, I gather, in the 60s and 70s was that it had inspired an album of the same title by Genesis bassist Mike Rutherford Well, I like early Genesis, and I m always up for joining a cult, so I was delighted to find it for 50p on my favourite second hand market stall a few weeks ago. It is a book very much of its period, The central plot conceit involves a factory worker, the eponymous Smallcreep, setting off through his workplace on a

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journey of exploration to find the purpose of his labours, which he believes lies with the mysterious and distant General Parts Store Along the way he witnesses and participates in a series of surreal adventures which lead him to question the nature of work, of society, and of being human particularly of being human, male, and living in an industrial society One can't help but be reminded of Kafka in places, with the labyrinthine bureaucracy of Austro-Hungarian Prague replaced as a backdrop by a ramshackle 1960s British engineering plant There are some genuinely inspired and vivid moments of description, particularly of the material fabric of the factory itself, and moments of surreal business which recall stage directions in a Beckett play Overall, the structure and theme resembles nothing so much as an urban Gulliver's Travels, and I fear that this is where Peter Currell Brown's project comes unstuck he is simply nowhere near as good a satirist as Swift.OK, so not many people are, but as I said at the top of this review, this is clearly a book of its period, and its targets the uniformity of factory life, the wage slavery of industrial workers, class, and the supposedly malign influence of mass media are commonplaces among the betes noires of 60s radicalism, and one has to have a particular take on the nature of the above issues in the first place to fully appreciate their treatment here It's a brave attempt, though, and entertaining in places just not particularly original in content or enlightening in impact. Smallcreep's Day is an odd mix of Gulliver's Travels, Monty Python, and a British flavored Robert Coover The events of this short book take place in a single day almost entirely within the walls of an enormous factory where the protagonist is employed as slotter Day after day he feeds a piece of metal into a machine that carves a slot into it He is aware that his finished piece is made into a pulley, but he has no idea what the finished machine looks like or what it does On this particular day he has his wife pack him a lunch so that he might journey through the factory in search of the whole to which his part contributes.The metaphor is obvious enough, but Currell Brown invests each episode with deadpan humor, political invective, and an avalanche of mostly compelling imagery and thoughts on the human condition Smallcreep is that stock English character so familiar to watchers of British television, the upright man who is so bound by convention and

In the Night Garden

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Little, Big

Graceling

Bridge of Birds

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Dark Lord of Derkholm

The Folk Keeper

The Wood Wife

The Golem and the Jinni

propriety that he cannot appropriately react to the outrageous actions of those around him One of the recurring lines in the book is Smallcreep's assertion that I've always thought that there was a rational explanation for everything, which he tends to say after something completely surreal has transpired. Initially, you wonder whether or not you are reading a post-apocalyptic novel because the factory seems strangely empty when he first leaves his familiar sector of it Then abruptly Smallcreep finds himself in a room full of people behaving as if they are in a Samuel Beckett play In every circumstance, no matter how outrageous, Smallcreep ends up going with the flow of the crowd His efforts to assert his own will are largely confined to an interior monologue that leads to no independent action on his part Instead, he finds himself having sex with a prostitute, delivering a baby, unable to stop a suicide, being accused of sexual perversion, joining a union negotiation team, moving a lot of dead bodies, and wading through sewage At every turn he is harangued by characters representing all parts of the political spectrum and his responses are inevitably mild attempts to uphold the status quo and appeal to rationality. Currell Brown is a former factory worker, turned potter, and his in-depth knowledge of machinery and factory culture is plainly evident in Smallcreep's Day, which is packed with details about lathes, grinders, drills, and the dull routine of industrial employment He makes a good case for the factory as a microcosm of modern society, but it is a very dystopian case and Currell Brown's debt to Orwell is large This kind of dour perspective on politics dates back at least to Francis Bacon and Jonathan Swift, so Currell Brown's tone is familiar and yet his voice is his own The novel was published in 1965, so the author's attitude toward West Indians now sounds rather racist and his depiction of the role of women in men's lives is quite sexist But Smallcreep is a small-minded man in the manner of satire, the names of all the people in the book reflect their character and so Currell Brown's representation of his attitudes might still be just as accurate today. The juxtaposition of the quotidian and the surreal is maintained in exquisite balance throughout the novel Just when you think the whole thing will slide into supernatural chaos, Currell Brown pulls you and Smallcreep back into the realm of the credible But the threats to normality and order

Solstice Wood

Uprooted

Seventh Son

crop up constantly and in startlingly grotesque form. Many elements of the plot are left entirely unexplained and in the end Currell Brown's message is not a hopeful one. Slightly dated in that I think modern readers might want of narrative journey but overall, what an imagination! *Alice Through Looking Glass* for adults. I interviewed Peter Brown for my community radio programme Art Lot Slot www.stroudfm.co.uk wow, what a man! *Smallcreep* was an international best seller he wrote that, and then nothing else I'd certainly recommend this one. Calls to mind elements of *Modern Times*, *After Hours*, and, of course, *Alice in Wonderland*. Sure to be unlike anything you've read before, this surreal novel from '65 and the only one from the author traces the bizarre adventures and discoveries of a lone factory worker over the course of a single day. With the sole hope of learning about what exactly he is working to produce in his corner of the building, he travels miles and meets a variety of strange, scary, and hilarious individuals. It likely won't have you laughing out loud, but the satire is on point, and the sheer unpredictability of the adventure makes it worth recommending. Drawn to it because it inspired the excellent first solo album by Mike Rutherford of Genesis. And like *Smallcreep's* journey through the surrealistic factory, it was an arduous read for me. But the apocalyptic spirited climax made the journey worthwhile. More interesting to have read it in light of the events in our world and certainly my own country in the past year or so. Certain passages had immediate relevance to our cultural and political realities today and the increasing blind nationalism and fear based dehumanization we see in our public and private interactions and discourse. A worthwhile read as a creative warning wake up call for us all. The story in its entirety is not a little depressing, yet interspersed with moments in which the reader is allowed a chuckle due to the witty observations by the main character, Pinquean Smallcreep. The writing is mostly brilliant, yet penetrated by bland and mundane descriptions here and there. I would say that it is a book of great contrasts, which suits the topic it tackles, and it is certainly a story that impinges itself on the reader's mind and leaves behind a sour taste and an urgent will to action but what to do I do not wish to go into detail at all, since this would only take away from the book, but I would stress two points. First, that if you decide to read this book, read it all the way through.

and preferably with few intermissions Smallcreep needs to be followed, and the ending nails the story and the reader on the head Secondly, you will take from the story to a large extent perhaps than with other novels what you put into it, in the sense that you need to position yourself within the setting of the novel and extend Smallcreep s ordeal beyond its literal significance, to see it as a metaphor for society and politics at large It is then that the book, in my opinion, reaches the height of its power. kind of enjoyed bits This is a mix of Alice in Wonderland, Dante s Inferno and Thw Wizard of Oz, all set in a massive 60s factory where Smallcreep tries to find the Spare parts department but is lost amongst the massive machinery, sewage and fire He meets various people along the way, and there is broad satire about Unions, suicide, sex, politics and religion It s OK It brought back factory life for me I was brought up on a council estate attached to a massive factory like this on, and all my family worked there, our lives centred on it, not only work, but sport, drinking social club and Christmas dos, I did shift work for a year before going to Uni, and worked through various other stretches of time too, summer holidays, post Uni when I couldn t get a job etc with it s grinders and polishers and cranes and characters But towards the end from about halfway even I wondered why I was reading it.

