

both frighteningly odd and at the same time not worth taking seriously. The professional comedian deliberately adopts this social role and is paid large sums of money by audiences who enjoy the reassurance of checking their group normality against his assumed abnormality.

The response of teenagers to their idols is relevant here. As an audience, then enjoy themselves, not by screaming with laughter, but screaming with screams. They not only scream, they also grip their own and one another's bodies, they writhe, they moan, they cover their faces and they pull at their hair. These are all the classic signs of intense pain or fear, but they have become deliberately stylised. Their thresholds have been artificially lowered. They are no longer cries for help, but signals to one another in the audience that they are capable of feeling an emotional response to the sexual idols which is so powerful that, like all stimuli of unbearably high intensity, they pass into the realm of pure pain. If a teenage girl found herself suddenly alone in the presence of one of her idols, it would never occur to her to scream at him. The screams were not meant for him, they were meant for the other girls in the audience. In this way young girls can reassure one another of their developing emotional responsiveness.

Before leaving the subject of tears and laughter there is one further mystery to be cleared up. Some mothers suffer agony from incessantly crying babies during the first three months of life. Nothing the parents do seems to stem the flood. They usually conclude that there is something radically, physically wrong with the infants and try to treat them accordingly. They are right, of course, there is something physically wrong; but it is probably effect rather than cause. The vital clue comes with the fact that this so-called 'colic' crying ceases, as if by magic, around the third or fourth month of life. It vanishes at just the point where the baby is beginning to be able to identify its mother as a known individual. A comparison of the parental behaviour of mothers with cry-babies and those with quieter infants gives the answer. The former are tentative, nervous and anxious in their dealings with their 105