

The New Criterion

Manners & morals

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Blood & smashed glass

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On dystopian novels.

One hardly expects to come across frescoes in the South Seas, and so I was surprised one day on entering a breezeblock church on a coral atoll in the vastness of the Pacific to see frescoes on either side of the altar. On the left was a depiction of Hell, on the right of Heaven. The artist was no Michelangelo, but Hell nevertheless was painted with a certain iconographic vigor that made up for deficiencies in draftsmanship. Black devils with tails and scales and hooves and claws, with coal-red eyes glowing with joyous malignity, were poking rather sorry-looking naked sinners in the direction of fiery and sulphurous lakes, which one was intended to understand as eternal, rather like the flame in tombs of the Unknown Warrior. Hell was interesting at least.

By contrast, Heaven was anemic-looking and rather faded. A single man in a white linen suit and a panama hat was strolling, without evident purpose, in what seemed like a Devonshire ...

Anthony Daniels's most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books).

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