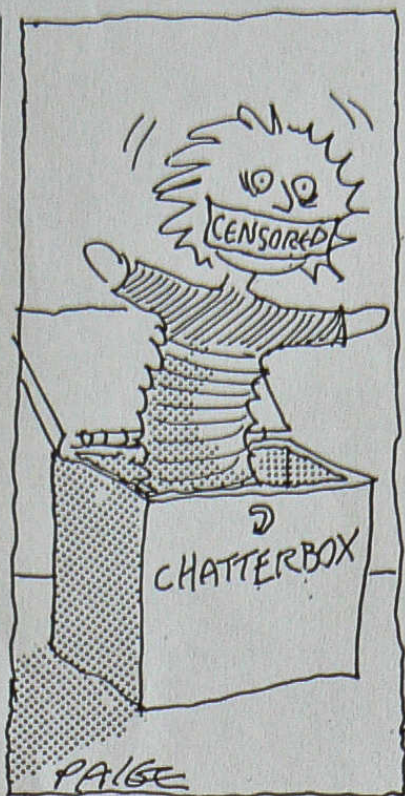


# LETTERS



Thatcher said on *Panorama* that ordinary people were much more in tune with her policies on security and censorship than were those who made up the chattering classes.

When critical and informed opinion is mocked even in a lead-in to an article, then another of the checks restraining government from tyrannical action seems in jeopardy. Quite frankly, if there had *not* been a welter of speculation about whether Mr Kinnock has the vision and intellectual capacity to go on leading Labour, after the events of the past month, I would have been worried.

Tom Gallagher  
Bradford

## Unhappy portrait

I have rarely seen as many mistakes in one short piece as there are in Amanda Sebestyen's twittish attack on *Modern Painters* (Print, NSS, 17 June).

For example, Sebestyen says I have argued "that only the English have really *understood* Picasso". I would like to ask her, where? I don't believe this (or anything like it). My editorial on "Picasso in England" was based on the unoriginal argument that the English were especially slow in coming to terms with this great painter; in fact, only a handful of artists, here, understood what he was about.

Sebestyen also accuses me of trying to turn cubism into "a new

form of Victorian uplift". In fact, I was concerned to refute the view that cubism is the visual equivalent of Einstein's physics or of dialectical materialism. But, once again, my position is hardly as quirky as Sebestyen makes out. No informed students of cubism—except perhaps dear old John Berger—believe there is such a connection any more.

But Sebestyen manages to get almost *nothing* right. She is so carried away with her comparison of myself to F R Leavis and *Modern Painters* to *Scrutiny* that she argues that my magazine is already stuffed with the writings of "followers" who in issue two have moved upfront from the back of the journal to write "longer and worse" than last time.

This is sheer fantasy. None of the writers who contributed to the first review section is writing in the front of issue two. And just *who* among the cast of feature writers in this issue could possibly be described as a down-beat "Fullerite" follower? Patrick Heron? Richard Wollheim? Leon Krier? Elaine Feinstein? Howard Jacobson? Waldemar Januszczak?

And just what is Sebestyen trying to imply when she writes that our reviewers have descended into "a ruck of seconded *Spectator* and *Literary Review* types"? Among our reviewers, Harriet Waugh has written for both journals, and Tanya Harrod contributes regularly to the former. There were 21 other reviewers in issue two who to the best of my knowledge rarely, if ever, contribute to either publication.

Finally, I resent Sebestyen's argument that *Modern Painters* is a journal of the right. This is not true. Some of those who write for us are of the right; others of the left. If we stand for anything, it is for the defence of the fine arts, the critical imagination and the aesthetic dimension. These are prerogatives of neither side of the political spectrum.

Peter Fuller  
Editor  
*Modern Painters*

## Spiv culture

I do hope you will rise above the gee whiz school of journalistic examination of "black culture" and, by implication, popular music generally, as typified by Cynthia Rose's uncritical piece "Thriving by night" (NSS, 17 June).