

STANLEY REYNOLDS

Police States

Ark for the Uncalled

Vladimir Maximov
Quartet £9.95

Kruger's Alp

Christopher Hope
William Heinemann £8.95

Vail

Trevor Hoyle
John Calder £4.95

John Calder seems to be publishing some very good books as paperback originals – Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Recollections of the Golden Triangle*, for example, recently came out in paperback – and this unfortunately means that they are often not reviewed along with the other new fiction. It will be a shame if Trevor Hoyle's *Vail*, a nightmare vision of Britain as a police state, goes unnoticed for this is a rough but energetic attempt at real political satire. It is set in the not too distant future, at least Jimmy Tarbuck is still around, also Jimmy Young and Bob Monkhouse – that tells us something when they are the survivors – and the PM has the first name Keith. But there are horrendous changes.

Europe is called Urop, the North of England is a savage wasteland, you need one pass to live in London and another pass to work, the useless population includes millions known as *sumbwl*s and there are police informers known as *gwich* — *Vail*, like Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, has a language all its own. The novel is what you call an uneven work. I suspect it was dashed off in a white heat after Hoyle, a Northern, visited London on a day trip and thought he had a vision of post-Thatcher Britain. The haste is a shame because the broad jokes and downright silliness that keep cropping up destroy the nightmare realism Trevor Hoyle has created. These crude jokes make you think of some nervous stand-up club comic who is not too sure of his audience. It is a natural sort of mistake for satirical writers to make and it seems odd that some editor at Calder did not spot these flaws and ask Trevor Hoyle to correct them. It is, nevertheless, an effortless read and highly recommended.