

Received 18.11.1966  
Wed 17th

Dear Ken

Just returned from my travels; I hope this TTT has not been waiting here long.

I think this one is a corker and I was up to six in the morning finishing it. The high-noon narrative tempo works very well and more than once you pull a surprise at exactly the moment when the reader thinks he is ahead of you.

If you took out the S&M [sex and mush] this might even go down well with the highbrows. It actually raises the problem of free will in a popular and timely way. But as he stands your main character is wholly predetermined. He is re-assured to learn he is not caught in the genetic trap; but his reassurance depends on having a better environment. I should suggest a line of dialogue to Ferrari like. "Even if according to you what I do is not entirely fixed by my genes, what I do seems to be determined by my genes plus my good upbringing. What I need to believe is that what i do is determined by me!  
[he remains gloomy]

Then later when he fucks the maid and achieves his sense of identity it could go something like this.

"You are not him are you? "

"No I am not him." He smiled. "I chose not to be"

It would not be quite enough to know that he is not a fated killer. He would need to believe he had used his opportunities rather than been merely shaped by them. Even if determinism is true we cannot believe it is true .

Next Wednesday I shall re-read with a pen in hand but I did not notice any outstanding cliches. At one point you confuse the BEAST OF BOLSOVER with the beast of Baltimore, no doubt revealing your subconscious bigotry against a superior tribe, to which I belong, known as Old Labour.

I rather think the rape should be more of a set-piece description. The difficulty, per haps insuperable, would be to horrify decent men without turning on the serial rapists.

Of course, long-lost twins is such an inherently comic device that you have a lot of disbelief to overcome. Ira Levin used the basic idea but, good writer tho he is, I found it hard not to giggle at the idea of Adolf Hitlers populating the globe. But I think the giggling was not due to all the cloned hitlers so much as the childishly great-man view of history that was presupposed.

I know that you are uneducable on the subject of S&M so I simply ignore those bits. I may be less enthusiastic about the rest of it on second reading but quite likely I shall not have much to add. As I remember it Ferrari breaks the news that Steve has a twin in an unbelievably off-hand way, but that may be a false memory.