

The Education of Green Lantern: Culture and Ideology

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Comic books and comic strips are worthy and exciting areas of research. The primary reason is that neither comic books nor comic strips now are just a medium to entertain children and adolescents, but are manifestations of popular culture. They are purveyors of ideology.

One example is the superhero comic book character who has embraced the United States' capitalist economy and its democratic political system and ideals, with Superman as a prime example. Another is the playboy comic book character of which Batman is the leading example. Playboy comic characters demonstrate that wealth does not blind the well-born to America's most pressing societal problems. Critics and supporters of the Batman character offer a number of interpretations (Pearson and Uricchio 18-32; Starr 33-46; Wertham, *Seduction of*; Wertham, "Comic Books" 24-29).

Both superhero and playboy comic characters of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s contest evil forces that uniformed police seem powerless against. They also support, without exception, the socio-economic order; the successful ones have a distinct personality, and are both the lonely outlaw and the staunch defender of justice and order.

There are unquestionably relationships between comics, ideology, and the surrounding culture. This article addresses a medium—the comic book—that has had little airtime in current debates on popular culture. It focuses on the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic series. Created by Dennis O'Neil, it is steeped in ideology. The series is a product of the culture of the 1960s,

dramatizes social and political issues, and is a medium for engaging in social protest. Most important, it ushers in "the age of relevance in comic books" (Potter 140). The latter attracted the attention of the New Left, a group that sought to put a new and more humane face on those institutions considered the engines of the modern welfare state (Starr 298; Mills 101-14).

Denny O'Neil's comic book scripts question the belief that justice, law, and order are exclusively the domain of the state (Collins 34; Breines; Wood). In fact, Collins, Breines, and Wood argue convincingly that government consistently has not been a defender of justice. Born on May 3, 1939, in St. Louis, Missouri, O'Neil graduated from St. Louis University. He taught in the public schools for a number of years before assuming the position of district news editor of the *Southeast Missourian*, a regional newspaper. O'Neil's next job was that of writer and editor of D.C. Comics, and editor of Marvel Comics. He also was the principal writer of the highly acclaimed television series *Logan's Run*, which aired on CBS TV during the 1977-1978 season (Locher 414).

O'Neil's accomplishments as news editor and TV writer are many, but perhaps his major achievement has been in transforming the comic book from primarily an entertainment medium into a social protest organ. This feat elevated him into the ranks of Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, creators of the pace-setting Spider-Man comic series (Mondello 232-38).

The *Green Lantern/Green Arrow's* scriptwriter notes, "[I brought] a journalist's curiosity and

social concerns to comic books. It wouldn't have happened if I had just been a comic book writer" (Pearson and Uricchio 31). He covered topics such as drug and substance abuse, bigotry, drug pushers, religious sects and cults, feminism, poverty, environmental destruction, pollution, racism, sexism, overpopulation, the environment, corrupt politicians, the mistreatment of the Native American, exploitative businesses, and unfair labor practices.

A self-proclaimed activist by the early 1960s, O'Neil characterized himself as follows:

I was peripherally involved in those issues, a non-distinction I shared with millions of liberal, vaguely well meaning people of middle-class origin. I signed petitions. I went on marches. I argued against war and supported Martin Luther King, Jr. I subscribed to *Ramparts* and the *Catholic Worker*. I lived in the East Village [New York] and consorted with some of the headline makers—David Miller, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Dorothy Day, Paul Knassner—and, I would have insisted, shared their aspirations. (O'Neil, "Introduction")

In sum, he incorporated a number of his beliefs, feelings, and perspectives into the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic book series.

O'Neil used New Left jargon in describing his characters. He said of Green Lantern:

[He] was, in effect, a cop, a crypto fascist; he took orders; he committed violence at the behest of commanders whose authority he did not question. If you showed him a law being broken, his instinct would be to strike at the lawbreaker without ever asking any whys. Wasn't his the mind that sent American troops into Korea and Vietnam? (Goulart 219)

Liberalism, the kind associated with Lantern and other well-intentioned liberals, comes under scrutiny in the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic series.

Neal Adams's artwork, too, bears noting. *The Encyclopedia of American Comics* credits Jack Kirby with breathing new life into

comic characters. Adams borrowed from Kirby, who

changed the comic books and gave them a vocabulary of their own. He discovered that he was telling stories in a medium that was different than the newspaper strip. He broke up the pages in new ways, for example, introducing innovative splash panels that stretched across two pages. And he made sure they moved, since he felt he was competing with movies. (Goulart 219; refer also to Adams; Groth 38-55)

Kirby and Adams are among the leading contributors to making the comic book a part of popular culture.

Green Lantern, a hero with a super-powered ring and a magic lantern, debuted in July 1940, in the comic book *All American* (Benton 28). Mythology is very much a part of this comic character. Created by artist Martin Nodell and writer Bill Finger, Green Lantern received his superhuman powers from a meteor that struck earth while a group of people in China attended an evening prayer service. From the meteor flowed a liquid metal that gave off a green light. A message also came from the liquid metal and the green light: "Three times shall I flame Green. First to Bring Death. Second to Bring Life. Third to Bring Power."

Chang, a lamp maker, forged a lamp from the cooled metal. Believing that he was an evil man, the villagers attacked Chang and they were killed by the green light. The first of the three vaticinations—death—comes to pass. Legend has it that the lamp passes from hand to hand until, one day, it appears in America, landing outside of a hospital for the insane. A patient there finds the lamp and makes it into a train lantern. The mysterious green light again glows, curing the old man, thus fulfilling the second prophecy—life.

The lantern ultimately falls into the hands of engineer Alan Scott, who is bathed by the green light. A voice commands him to make a ring from a part of the lantern. He obeys the command. Scott discovers that the ring's power enables him to move at great speed, and bullets, knives, and

metals cannot harm him. The ring does not, however, protect him from being felled by wood. The third prophecy is fulfilled. Scott is endowed with superhuman powers.

More Fun introduced Green Arrow and Speedy to the comic book-reading public in 1941. The success of the Batman and Robin comic book series seems to have inspired editor-writer Monty Weisinger and artist George Papp to create the Green Arrow character, a modern-day Robin Hood. His sidekick is a young boy named Speedy. The comic duo, like Batman and Robin, are given secret identities. Green Arrow is millionaire playboy Oliver Queen, and his orphan becomes Roy Harper (Goulart 167). Green Arrow hunts down crooks using, according to Ron Goulart, “an impossible array of gimmicky arrows (net-arrows, flare-arrows, drill arrows, gas-arrows) and whatever else was needed to the emergency at hand” (Goulart 157).

Green Lantern’s and Green Arrow’s life spans were short. Neither possessed a personality that attracted a wide readership. The *Green Lantern* comic book ceased publication in 1949. Lantern reappeared during the 1950s as a member of the Justice Society, an organization that promotes justice, decency, and fair play. Further altered in 1959, the character, this time, “got his power-ring from an alien, was deputized to guard a ‘sector of space’ by the superhuman Guardians of the Universe, and was in real life Hal Jordan, jet test pilot (Goulart 160). This transformation reflects America’s growing role in world affairs.

Later attempts to revive Green Lantern included teaming him up with alien members of the Green Lantern Corps, a group of superheroes who fight invaders from the dimension of Qward—where evil is law—and he leads an amnesiac double life in the far future (Goulart 160). These changes do not endear him to a large following, but they identify him with a set of widely accepted American values: justice, right, and obeying the law to the letter.

The Green Lantern Corps was given this charge:

You, who have given this power, must use it to end evil! The light of the Green Lantern

must be shed over the dark, evil things . . . for the dark evil things cannot stand the light! Power shall be yours, if you have faith in yourself. Lose that faith and you lose the energetic power of the Green Lantern, for will power is the flame of the Green Lantern. (Benton 32)

One wonders if Finger borrowed from the Bible the concept that evil cannot stand the light. Green Lantern’s new identities, however, do not endear him to the comic book audience.

The same can be said of Green Arrow. Julius Schwartz’s introduction of a new version of the Justice League in America (JLA), with Green Arrow as a member, did not increase readership. Neither did proclaiming that the JLA is for America and Democracy, and its members are avowed foes of crime and the enemies of evil (Goulart 209).

Several conclusions can be drawn about mainstream comic books and comic characters between 1938 and 1959. They echo the belief that people’s voices can be heard and their concerns expressed through representative government. Democracy is by far the superior political system. Capitalism has improved life of people in general. Finally, they echo the view that American values and beliefs are decidedly superior to those associated with communism, socialism, and fascism.

The reality of the situation as America entered the decade of the 1960s and the messages contained in comics differed markedly. Bob Dylan pointed out that “The Times They [were] A’Changing.” Why so this change? The cultural hegemony that had dominated America began to erode. People’s ideas on the concept of reality underwent a profound change. Youth in particular neither internalized nor supported norms that had, for decades, enabled the dominant class to impose its value system on society. More and more, out-groups and minorities believed that a ruling elite of white, middle-aged males controlled American society.

Emerging group-centered cultures offered the young, minorities, and out-groups an alternative. The result was that increasingly, out-groups,

minorities, and alienated individuals offered their own perspectives on society. A counterculture, one largely forged by alienated young whites, gives rise to a new Green Lantern. In 1966, Hal's girlfriend/boss rejects him, and he gives up his test pilot career, rambling around the country doing various odd jobs (Goulart 167). O'Neil and artist Neal Adams further alter the Green Arrow character, "depriving him of his fortune and making him a defender of the poor, by redrawing him as a hip rebel. [Now separated from his sidekick, Speedy, Green Arrow is paired with the superheroine Black Canary as lover and partner]" (Goulart 157).

O'Neil, Adams, and editor Julius Schwartz teamed up to revitalize Green Lantern (Goulart 157). The new Green Lantern co-stars in a comic book in which social issues are dramatized. These issues become the basis for a series of action-adventure stories. In describing this teaming of Green Lantern and Green Arrow, O'Neil wrote,

Julie and I agreed on one major alteration in format before we began. We'd give our hero a co-star. Green Lantern was a cop—the best cop anyone could imagine, a paradigm of tough-yet-compassionate incorruptibility, but a cop nonetheless, as such, a representative of the establishment. We needed someone to represent the other side. Green Arrow was the logical choice. In other titles, he'd been given a spiffy new costume and had lost his dilettante-rich-guy status, and despite his having been around since 1940, he'd never acquired much personality. He was a "tabula rasa." Okay, we'd fix that. We'd make him a life-loving anarchist who would provide a non-establishment viewpoint, able to enter into dialogue with the more staid Green Lantern. ("Green Thoughts" I:3)

O'Neil employed the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic book series to disseminate New Left ideology, and to impart this ideology to comic book readers.

The *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic book was not a smashing success in terms of longevity and sales. But as a throwback to earlier comic characters, the two were given distinct personal-

ities. Green Lantern is depicted as a frail man with many of the imperfections indigenous to humanity, and the quintessential liberal. In contrast, Green Arrow is the street smart, short-tempered activist who denounces society's "new" and old evils, and one who sets about to publicize and expose both. He sides with the downtrodden and the dispossessed, but he cannot be characterized as a liberal do-gooder.

Assumptions associated with traditional American liberalism are rigorously examined in this publication. Several come to mind. First, as Barbara H. and Gerald Chasin note,

Liberals assume, among other things, that there are no irreconcilable interests, no basic antagonisms in society. In the United States, for example, all people of good will, whatever their economic interests, can work together to build the good society. Institutions such as the religious, educational, and the most important, the political, are basically neutral, serving everyone, not advancing the interests of a given group by their practices. (7-8)

In general, counterculture spokesmen and the New Left argued that the representative government did not promote the interests of out-groups. The New Left beckoned people to join the uphill and ongoing struggle of changing American society.

Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Noam Chomsky, and David Hawkes's views on the drift of modern society were of considerable import to the New Left in particular and to the counterculture in general. Marcuse criticizes modern society for not availing what he called "inner freedom" to the individual, which he sees "as the private space in which man may become and remain himself" (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* 10). Negative forces in advanced capitalist countries prevent the radicalization of the working classes because they contribute to a socially engineered arrest of consciousness. Moreover, these forces contribute to "the development and satisfaction of needs which perpetuate servitude of the exploited (Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* 15). In sum, Marcuse rejects the liberal view that the major American institutions are neutral.

Chomsky's writings, like those of Marcuse, offer new and provocative perspectives on the role of ideology in contemporary society. He points out that an overriding strand in the ideology of the new emerging elite (the meritocratic elite) is a concern for order, "for maintaining the status quo, which is now seen to be quite favorable and essentially just" (Chomsky 33). Troubling to him is the fact that the skeletal structure of a new society excludes the common man, and that power rests in the research corporation, the industrial laboratories, the experimental stations, and the universities (Chomsky 26). Fromm argues in *The Revolution of Hope* that "the system man does not function properly if only [an individual's] material needs are satisfied, thus guaranteeing his physiological survival, but not those needs and facilities which are specifically human—love, tenderness, reason, joy, etc." (133). Hawkes examines the role and power of ideology in a society, concluding, "What we perceive as the real world is created for us, or constructed, by the signifying system we use to represent it" (4).

The *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic series calls for a reordering of America's political affairs, while simultaneously urging a reform of the consciousness of its citizens. It also stresses the point that it is through conflict that groups develop political consciousness and become all the more aware of their positions in society. Most important, the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* scripts argue persuasively that individuals are likely to form groups once they realize they have a common oppressor, and when they identify their oppressors. O'Neil, in script after script, reminds Americans that life in a technological society is "a totally new kind of human society in which science and technology dictate the dominant form of thought and increasingly shape almost every aspect of everyday life" (Mészáros 4).

This perspective is tested as Green Lantern and Green Arrow travel throughout America. They see an America that is evil. O'Neil urges *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic book readers and other Americans to join in the move to decentralize the institutional order, "and [to] melt its

cold rationality by reintegrating work and community life" (Starr 298).

Green Lantern is portrayed as a naïve liberal. As O'Neil notes,

For years he has been a proud man! He has worn the power ring of the Guardians, and used it well, and never doubted the righteousness of his cause . . . In the next dozen seconds, an event will occur which will signal the end of his grandeur and the beginning of a long torment . . . There will be no happy ending for this is not a happy tale . . . Nor a simple one. But what you are about to witness is, perhaps, inevitable—His name, of course, is GREEN LANTERN and often he has vowed that NO EVIL SHALL ESCAPE MY SIGHT! He has been fooling himself. It begins with a mission of charity in the sky above STAR CITY. (O'Neil and Adams I:1-2)

The Green Lantern character is the classic example of how it is possible for people to "ignore the social and political realities that have separated blacks from whites . . . the upholders of the established order from the poor and powerless, precisely because they would not, or could not, look below the surface and distinguish between form and substance" (Sherman 160). O'Neil condemns individuals who are guided by a "set of beliefs and/or aims (including interests, preferences, desires, etc.) that functions to promote and secure privileges for certain individuals or groups over other individuals or groups" (Hogan 28).

Green Lantern's liberal responses to situations are in stark contrast to the counterculture ideologies that influence Green Arrow's thinking. The series begins with Green Lantern flying over the Star City in search of Green Arrow ("How Many Times Can a Man" I:1-2). The two have not seen each other for some time. Green Lantern happens upon a group of young men who appear to be supporting one of their group members roughing up an older man. Green Lantern deems the behavior as showing disrespect for the dominant culture's views of law and order. He will teach the group a much-needed lesson. The

elderly man represents those who use the state to oppress the downtrodden.

Green Lantern and Green Arrow meet at the spot where the elderly man is being attacked. Using his power ring, Green Lantern fashions an iron cage that he uses to ship the youthful attacker to the nearest police precinct, with an admonition that he will soon follow to press charges. But first, Green Lantern inquires about the older man's condition. He assures Lantern that he is fine and thanks Lantern for intervening. The elderly man refers to Lantern as "[my] kind of guy."

Green Lantern believes that his own intervention is nothing more than doing his duty. He is surprised when a hail of garbage, bottles, and tin cans thrown by people from windows and the rooftop comes his way. Lantern concludes that the group is acting like animals, and he is about to land a solid punch against the face of one of the young men when he hears a familiar voice saying, "Touch him first Green Lantern, and you'll have to touch me second . . . and I'll touch back! Believe it, chum! Back off! Go chase a mad scientist or something" ("How Many Times" 4). Surprised by Arrow's reaction, Lantern asks, "You defending these anarchists? Can't you see they're breaking the law?" (4). Green Arrow responds, "Yeah I can see . . . Lots of things! Like that you've no business here. I was almost tempted to throw a can at you myself!" (4).

Realizing that Lantern does not know the full story, Green Arrow takes him on a tour of the building. He sees firsthand conditions under which some people are forced to live. Lantern meets an eighty-year-old woman, the grandmother of the youth whom he sent off to the police precinct in an iron cage. The youth is this old woman's sole supporter. Green Arrow explains to Lantern that the old man he is defending is a slumlord who has not spent one cent in years on repairing the building. But the slumlord now plans to evict the tenants so that a parking lot can be built, leaving the tenants with no place to live. Pointedly, Green Arrow reminds Lantern that he has spent time policing the universe rather than eliminating the evils in Star City.

This remark angers Lantern, who says to Green Arrow, "Easy . . . you've no cause to yell at me! I have a job . . . I do it" ("How Many Times" 5). To this, Arrow says, "I've heard that line before . . . at the Nazi war Trials" (5). Green Lantern's lack of involvement in earth's problems is brought into even sharper focus. An elderly black tenant says to him,

I've been readin' about you. . . . How you work for the Blue Skins . . . and how on a planet somewhere you helped the orange skins . . . and you've done considerable for the purple skins! Only there's skins you never bother with! The black skins! I want to know . . . how come, answer me that Mr. Green Lantern! (6)

The elderly black tenant's remarks force Green Lantern to think about the ugly faces of racism, poverty, and oppression in American society. He responds to the black man, saying, "I can't" (6). Green Lantern searches his own soul. Back in his hotel room, he recounts the vow he made: "No evil shall escape my sight." He sees evil all around him disguised in familiar everyday persons and places. Self-liberation occurs, but he is unable to shed his liberalism.

Lantern visits Jubal Slade, the slum landlord. He is unsuccessful in convincing him not to evict the tenants. "Hey, hey," Slade says, ". . . I mean you really break me up, Lantern! You and your bleeding heart. You gotta be kidding! I mean, I got the law on my side. I can do anything with that property. You expect me to pass up a fat profit 'cause a lot of worthless old geeks are gonna get rained on?" ("How Many Times" 8).

Slade orders his henchmen to evict Green Lantern from his penthouse. In turn, Lantern uses brute strength rather than moral suasion to settle a score, much to the dismay of the galactic Guardians. A telepathic image of a Guardian materializes and lectures Lantern that Slade has not committed a crime. Lantern is ordered to report immediately to OA—home of the Guardians. The galactic Guardians represent established authority.

Lantern cannot ignore the order from the Guardians. Within a matter of minutes, he is

standing in front of the Guardian Council. Its members admonish him for his emotional attack on his brother earthling. Lantern's punishment is a trip into deep space, where he will divert a group of stray meteors from Titan, one of Saturn's satellites. He is ordered to remain on station there until he is recalled. The Guardians represent the new reality of domination that Marcuse writes about in *One Dimensional Man*.

Lantern knows that the Guardians have sent him on a useless mission and wonders why. At the same time, he is haunted by the remarks of the black man. Following a period of deep thought, he says, "Nuts! I've had the 'Blue Skins' high and mighty order giving . . . I'm going where I'm needed" ("How Many Times" 12).

He returns to earth. Meanwhile, the street-smart Green Arrow pays Slade a visit and demands a \$25,000 payment. Slade thinks it is a bluff until Arrow pins him against the wall with four arrows from his bow. Only then does Slade promise to deliver the cash that same night to an abandoned store at 909 Grammercy. Slade realizes that Arrow is aware of his underworld connections and arranges for his boys to kill the street-smart crime fighter. Arrow suspects that Slade is up to something, so he places several dummies resembling himself and a tape recorder in the abandoned store. Slade's henchmen open fire upon spotting one of the dummies. A stray bullet destroys the tape recorder that Arrow had set up to tape the conversation of the hit men, which will be used as evidence against Slade.

Green Arrow and Green Lantern meet. Arrow says to him, "You appealed to Slade's humanity . . . I tried his greed and we both failed! Some heroes we are, huh? If there were only some way to connect the gun-men with their boss" ("How Many Times" 17). Green Lantern proposes a way to entrap Slade. He disguises himself as one of the gunmen and pays a call on Slade. Green Arrow and the district attorney accompany Lantern to Slade's penthouse, but remain out of sight. Slade says, "You? . . . Idiot! I told you never to come here . . . why didn't you phone like I told you?" ("How Many Times" 18). In disguise, Lantern explains that the police had harassed

them and they needed a place to hide out temporarily. Slade remarks to Lantern, "I paid you to kill him . . . remember" ("How Many Times" 18). Green Lantern sheds his camouflage. Jeremy Tine, the district attorney, and Green Arrow step into the room. Green Lantern uses his ring to snatch a grenade from Slade's hand. Slade is subdued and placed under arrest.

A telepathic image informs Lantern that he has disobeyed the order to remain on station as the Blue Skins had decreed. Lantern offers an apology, but Arrow lectures him:

You call yourself a hero! Chum . . . you don't even qualify as a man! You're no more than a puppet . . . and the Guardians pull your strings. Listen . . . forget about chasing around the galaxy! . . . and remember America . . . it's a good country . . . beautiful . . . fertile . . . and terribly sick! There are children dying . . . honest people cowering in fear . . . disillusioned kids ripping up campuses . . . on the streets of Memphis a good black man died . . . and in Los Angeles, a good white man fell . . . something is wrong! Something is killing us all . . . ! Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls. ("How Many Times" 21)

Green Arrow admonishes the Guardian leader, saying, "And you. . . sitting on your mudball, preening like a smug tomcat . . . how dare you presume to meddle in the affairs of humanity when human beings are no more than statistics to you and your crew! (22). The Guardians ask, "Arrow, how would you advise us?" "That's easy," Arrow responds. "Come off your perch! Touch . . . taste . . . laugh . . . and cry! Learn where we're at . . . and why!" (22). The Guardians exhibit a kind of naïve liberalism that Arrow disdains, and they are the new reality of domination. They ponder his remarks nonetheless.

Following one week of debate and intense discussion, the galactic immortals choose one of their numbers to leave OA, disguised as an earth mortal. His mission is to join Lantern and Arrow on a search through cities and villages and the majesty of the wilderness of America for a special kind of truth . . . searching for self.

O'Neil's narrative tests an orthodox Marxist theory: "Impoverishment does not necessarily provide the soil for revolution. But a highly developed consciousness and imagination may generate among the oppressed values of supporting a vital need for radical change in advanced material conditions" (Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* 15).

Laborers in the town of Desolation strike against Slapper Soames, a mine owner. Traveling in a old pickup truck, Lantern, Arrow, and the Guardian arrive in the town of Desolation and are fired upon by the angry miners who mistake them for Slapper's hired killers. Using the power ring and a bow and arrow, Lantern and Arrow disarm the attackers. Jacob, the leader of the angry mine workers, explains to Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and the galactic Guardian that one of the local boys named Johnny Walder taught himself to play on the guitar. "His lyrics are 'bout us an' our troubles . . . and suddenly we found some self-respect . . . an' a whole lotta discontent with the way we been treated" ("Journey to Desolation" 5).

Johnny is hauled before a kangaroo court. Soames sentences him to be hanged. Jacob plans to lead an attack on Soames's headquarters. Green Arrow offers his help to the angry mineworkers, but Green Lantern disagrees, saying to Arrow, "this is none of our business. . . if [Slapper] Soames is really in charge . . ." (7) Green Lantern asks for the Guardian's advice, which he readily gives: the situation requires further study. The Guardian's advice is the voice of classical liberalism.

Green Arrow gives thought to the problem. Upon reflection, he concludes that the fortress is too formidable for a successful attack. Jacob disagrees and urges the men on. In a secluded spot, Lantern touches the power ring to the green lantern as he repeats the vow "in brightest day, in the blackest night, no evil shall escape my sight! Let those who worship evil's might, beware my power—Green Lantern's light" (11). All the while, his mind is troubled by these thoughts: "I used to speak that oath with pride . . . with conviction. But now . . . I'm not convinced of

anything. The world isn't the black-and-white place I thought it to be—once, I might have fought for Soames! But Green Arrow has made me think that authority isn't always right—and I don't know what is right" (11).

Lantern's indecisiveness interferes with the ring's powers. The beam fails to reach the gun that one of Soames's goons aims at him. Once recharged, however, the ring does the job. To his dismay, Lantern learns from a telepathic contact with OA that the Guardians have reduced his ring's potency. Therefore, it no longer protects him from mortal injury because he is on an unauthorized leave of absence from his regular duties. For the first time, Green Lantern concludes that this ring has played mother hen to him, that something has been missing from his life, something called self-reliance.

The forces of evil are too strong for Green Arrow, Green Lantern, and a group of oppressed workers to overcome. Lantern is temporarily rendered powerless by the gas fumes from canisters being shot at the angry mine workers. Green Arrow is captured. The galactic Guardian hears the cries of a child separated from her parents by the "war." He embraces the frightened child and experiences a strange feeling—an emotion—of what it is to be human. The three conclude that they are in the midst of a war, which is the ugliest . . . dirtiest of mankind's many follies. Only now does the Guardian experience an "inner freedom," the private space in which man may become and remain himself.

Meanwhile, Soames decides to move up the hanging by a few hours. Green Arrow recovers from a blow to the head and takes on the group of thugs. A blow to his back again disables the comic hero.

The moment of truth arrives. Jacob is one of Soames's men hired to stir up the mineworkers. Green Lantern arrives just in time and uses his power ring to melt the gun with which Jacob is about to shoot Green Arrow. Soames and his men are defeated, arrested, brought to trial, and convicted of their crimes.

This episode can be viewed in two ways. On a positive note, justice has come to Desolation and

the miners are the clear winners. On a negative note, left behind are the grieving friends and family members who have “nothing to look forward to except more poverty and ignorance. ‘You call that winning,’” is Green Arrow’s assessment of the situation (“Journey to Desolation” 23).

The next episode involves Green Lantern, Green Arrow, the galactic Guardian, Black Canary, four members of the Demons Motorcycle Club, and an American Indian. The location is Washington State, in the shadow of Mount Rainier. Four greasy beasts, all members of a biker group, demand that Black Canary hand over her motor bike. She has mastered the ancient arts of judo and jiu-jitsu as perhaps no other mortal has done. The four hardened criminals are no match for her until one of them mounts the bike and runs her down with it. She is left for dead along a roadside.

Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and the galactic Guardian arrive in a tiny hamlet and stop at a restaurant. They witness four goons roughing up an American Indian. The four goons challenge the superheroes and the galactic Guardian. Outmatched, one of the gang members attempts to escape on the bike that, the two crimefighters recognize, belongs to the Black Canary.

Green Arrow apologizes to the American Indian for the fighting in his restaurant. The Native American responds: “Think nothing of it palefaces, you people have been walking all over us for 400 years—why get remorse at this late date?” (“A Kind of Loving, A War of Death” I:11). Arrow pleads to the American Indian to be more specific, which he does. “Uh-huh . . . Lots of gripes! The blue-eyes swiped our land, broke treaties, herded us like animals into reservations . . . now the big-bellies in the capitol are talking about taking away our fishing rights,” is the Native American’s response (11). There is no loud outcry from a majority of Native Americans in the area. A salient message is found in the Indian’s remark: Authority of the state can be cooperatively self-imposed most of the time without domination. Fromm’s observation that “Man’s development requires his capacity to transcend

the narrow prison of his ego, his greed, his selfishness, his separation from his fellow man, and, hence, his basic loneliness,” is applied aptly to this episode (*The Revolution of Hope* 135).

Green Lantern is unable to divorce himself from the liberalism of a 1930s and 1940s vintage that has guided white Americans who advocated reforming the system. He says to the Guardian, “I guess you have to learn . . . the things I’m ashamed of about my race” (“A Kind of Loving” 11). Green Arrow’s primary interest is in locating the whereabouts of Black Canary, not in apologizing about the “sins” of his race. An objective understanding of American Indian/white relations, Arrow insists, comes not from guilt but grows out of personal experience. His immediate concern is locating Black Canary.

Lantern and Arrow leave the galactic Guardian overnight and set off to find Black Canary. The search is short. They stumble upon a cult led by Joshua. He explains that Black Canary is now a member of the family, which he describes as a band of the enlightened whose mission is to bring truth to these troubled times. Lantern asks Black Canary what bill of goods has Joshua sold her. She responds, “Joshua is the prophet of universal tranquility! I believe him . . . I believe in him” (13).

Arrow concludes that Black Canary is under Joshua’s spell. Green Lantern, true to form, tells Green Arrow that he has to accept the reality of the situation: Black Canary rejected his help because she no longer digs him. Arrow strikes a blow across Lantern’s face and the two walk away from each other:

We have trained . . . practiced . . . worked well . . . for tonight! Within the hour, we strike our first blow. We destroy our enemies. Such has been the course of this nation that the white man and the non-white man are enemies. It is a pity that we must kill! But we have no choice—those of white ancestry and the others can no longer share the same land. To survive, we must make corpses of the Red Man . . . the Black Man . . . the Yellow Man. (17)

Joshua’s followers discover Green Arrow’s presence. They open fire on him. He is injured,

but not mortally so. Green Lantern, too, appears on the scene, and uses his power ring to disarm the raging “family,” and thinks to himself, “I should’ve learned by now to trust Green Arrow’s hunches. It’s obvious that somehow Joshua has gotten control of their minds” (19). This incident’s importance is the fact that irrational views on race are deeply imbedded in the American psyche.

Meanwhile, Joshua’s ability to control his followers’ minds is tested. He fails in this instance. Black Canary rejects Joshua’s command that she shoot Green Lantern. She becomes herself once more and remembers that she has traveled far and wide in search of her former lover, Green Arrow. She, too, wants to observe firsthand a beautiful and troubled America. Arrow’s observations are both striking and poignant:

Maybe when we get you straightened out, we’ll learn something . . . maybe we’ll finally know how maniacs like Joshua can come to be . . . how they can seize the hearts of decent people and fill them with the poison of hate . . . of bigotry. (24)

This episode exposes how unscrupulous individuals can corrupt religion.

O’Neil also looks at man’s assaults on the environment. Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Black Canary, and the galactic Guardian find themselves somewhere in the northwestern part of America. They are involved in a traffic accident on a bridge and are hurled into a large body of water. A man on a passing ship rescues the four. Once on board, they discover that it is laden with drums of poison waste that is a by-product of making plastic. Recently the government has labeled the process an environmental hazard. The ship’s boiler explodes, and Green Lantern is seriously injured by the blast. His powers weakened from being on the planet Earth prevent the Guardian from both saving the ship and transporting Lantern to where he can receive medical treatment. He does the human thing. The Guardian uses his powers to send Lantern to a hospital.

His superiors condemn his actions. O’Neil’s script questions whether “[t]hose whose claim to

power is based on knowledge [science] and technique will be more benign to [those groups without the resources to challenge the political process] than those whose claim is based on wealth or aristocratic origin” (Bell 27).

The Guardian is ordered back to OA to stand trial. Green Lantern and Green Arrow accompany the Guardian, and Arrow defends his actions, to no avail. His superiors punish him for willingly jeopardizing the health of the Earth to save the life of a single earthling. This action is an example of a “process whereby the ruling class imposes a consensus, in its dominion in the realm of ideas, largely by peaceful means” (Rudé 17).

The Guardian’s handling of the problem may have imperiled the survival of the whole planet, a court decides. For displaying a human quality, the Guardian is stripped of his immortality and has to live out the remainder of his life in exile. The four are placed in a bubble and begin the return trip to planet Earth. Along the way, they stop off at an ancient, nearly forgotten civilization from which the immortal Guardians of OA evolved more than ten billion years ago.

This planet is Maltus. An angry mob greets the four and calls for Black Canary’s life. Lantern uses his power ring to protect himself and the three from the unruly crowd of billions of creatures. Green Arrow sets about to learn why the crowd is calling for Black Canary’s life. This time, the now-mortal Guardian, rather than Green Lantern, reminds Arrow that they are not obligated whatsoever to find out what “evil” has befallen Maltus.

Has the Guardian also become a naïve liberal on the order of Lantern? Arrow proceeds to the planet’s historical vault, where he learns from the keeper of the vault that anger abounds because the planet is overpopulated, and uncovers how it came to be that way. Years ago, the planet Maltus passed through a cloud of cosmic dust, but initially it did not appear to have any harmful effects on the people. After seventy solar cycles, women could no longer bear children. There came a savior, Mother Juna. She collected specimens of flesh and drops of blood from the citizens, cultivated them in her laboratory, and “from

each she created baby Maltusians. They grew to a full adulthood in mere days” (“Death Be My Destiny” 9).

The three superhero comic book characters defeat Mother Juna and her army of “super men.” They watch from within the bubble as the crowd destroys her laboratory. Lantern urges the galactic Guardian to consider returning to OA so he can appeal his sentence. Instead, the Guardian accepts his mortality and decides to remain on Maltus and perform good deeds for the remainder of his life (22). Lantern, Arrow, and the Black Canary bid the galactic Guardian farewell and continue the return journey to Star City.

Self-liberation and alienation are next examined as Lantern and Arrow continue their journey. Ben Agger credits Marcuse with writing the following: “self-liberation is a choice that people can make rationally only when they have been liberated from the tyranny of one-dimensional” (170). Speedy, Green Arrow’s sidekick, appears to be one-dimensional. He also fits Fromm’s description of modern man, who “has become isolated, powerless, and an instrument of purposes outside himself, alienated from himself and others” (*Escape* 270). Speedy’s disappearance troubles Green Arrow.

Green Lantern and Green Arrow encounter a rapid succession of events, all having to do with interpersonal relationships in one way or another. One night while on a walk, a group of young men accost Green Arrow and demand money from him. He resists. One of the youths shoots Arrow in the shoulder with an arrow. Green Arrow seeks treatment at a hospital emergency room, but a nurse on duty tells him to return in the morning because everyone is busy. Green Arrow contacts Green Lantern. The two discover that the wound was caused by Arrow’s own arrow. Learning how the arrow came in the possession of the street thugs may shed light on Speedy’s disappearance.

Arrow asks Lantern to join him in the search for his ward. They enter a tenement house. One youth stands at the door of an apartment begging a Mr. Browden for drugs. “What’s wrong with him?” Green Lantern asks (“Snowbirds Don’t

Fly” 9). Green Arrow explains that the youth is withdrawing, cold turkey, but Lantern does not get the message. “Lantern, you can be dumb. The boy’s a snowbird . . . he’s on dope. Apparently Browden is a salesman . . . a blasted pusher! And that’s as low as anybody can sink!” says Arrow (9). The drug pusher is no match for the two. Lantern uses his power ring to transport Browden to the nearest police precinct.

In another part of Star City, three youths try but are unsuccessful in buying heroin because they have no money. They pass the time explaining why they use drugs. The Oriental explains: “My pop’s recollection! All day long he answers to Chink . . . Slant. At night he pretends he’s killing his bosses . . . instead of kissing their feet. Me. I’ve found another escape” (11). The black youth offers his explanation: “OOOO . . . you comin’ on strong. So you get insulted, Hey? Chink’s nothing compared to the names I’m called . . . Nigger is for openers. Then they get real poetic. But it ain’t the names they call you, it’s what’s behind their eyes, Baby. This is my reason for shootin’ . . . It makes life more bearable . . . and it gets me through the day” (11). The black youth asks Green Arrow’s ward, Speedy, why he uses drugs.

Green Lantern and Green Arrow drop in before Speedy answers the black youth. Arrow says to his ward, “Speedy! I can’t say I’m surprised to find you in this hole. Naw, when you vanished, I knew you had to be on the trail of baddies. I figured you were playing undercover agent!” (12-13).

It is one of the few times that Arrow’s street smarts fail him. Both the black youth and the Oriental are taken into custody. Lantern pleads with Arrow not to be so judgmental toward the two junkies.

The two comic superheroes learn from the drug users that Browden meets his suppliers at an airfield, and they proceed there with the two junkies in tow. Speedy is left behind. Green Lantern uses his power ring to melt the guns after Browden’s hired men open fire on them. The Oriental youth strikes Green Lantern on the head with a pipe wrench, and he is knocked cold. The other men overpower Arrow.

The drug pushers inject heroin into Lantern and Arrow's veins and then call the police, making it appear that the two are the drug pushers. Speedy had followed the crime fighters to the airfield, arriving in time to discover the fate that has befallen them. He momentarily diverts the police by informing them that a group of dope-fiends are tearing up an office in the hangar. The heroin has Lantern and Arrow under its spell. Speedy says to Lantern, "If you don't use your power ring to fly us away, we'll all be rotting in jail. I faked out the police . . . but they won't remain faked. I bet you can't make the ring work?" (18). Lantern's self-will enables him to use the ring's power to whisk himself, Arrow, and Speedy away from the airfield. He learns that self-will is a power unto itself.

The three return to Green Arrow's tenement apartment. Once the effects of the heroin wear off, Arrow says, "Lantern, chum, we dumped it! We lost the baddies . . . we lost the evidence . . . we were suckered by slimy junkies. Boy oh boy . . . a dandy pair of crime fighters we are! If Speedy hadn't deduced where those punks were taking us, and followed . . . the law would have heaved us into the clink—and swallowed the key!" (21). Lantern's liberalism once more is aired. He says, "I still don't understand . . . why people want to poison themselves with heroin . . . pills . . . the whole sick-bag" (21).

Speedy speaks indirectly about the impersonality of modern society: "Say a young cat has someone he respects—looks up to . . . an older man! And say the older man leaves . . . chases around the country . . . get involves with others and ignores his young friend! Then the guy might need a substitute for friendship. He might seek it in—junk!" (21).

Arrow does not decipher Speedy's statement immediately. He strikes Speedy about the face, orders him to leave the apartment, and goes on a search for the drug dealers. Only later does Hal Jordan (Green Lantern) suspect that all is not well with Speedy. He is unable to sleep and recalls how Speedy spoke about the elderly man who ignored his young friend. Lantern touches his ring on the green lantern to recharge it, and flies to

Arrow's apartment. He does not find Speedy and Green Arrow. Lantern searches an attic in Chinatown, where he discovers that Speedy is a drug addict.

In the meantime, the Oriental youth, having injected himself in the arm with heroin, dies from an overdose. One week later, Arrow and Lantern attend the Oriental youth's funeral. Speedy informs Arrow that he has beat the habit. Arrow says to Speedy, "Good boy." In reply, Speedy says, "Don't give me that 'Good Boy Bull.' I only made it with some help from my friends, Hal and Dinah, when you turned your back on me!" He lands a blow on Arrow's face.

The crime fighter is perplexed by Speedy's violent outburst and asks for an explanation. Speedy answers,

I'm sharing a very small piece of pain I've just gone through these past few days. The kind of pain thousands of kids are going through every day because an uncaring and unthinking society turns its back on them. Drugs are a symptom . . . and you . . . like the rest of society . . . attack the symptom . . . not the disease! But the symptom is worse than most—it maims . . . it pains . . . it dims you! It drives you to the edge of insanity and over . . . and one day ends your trip on a slab in the morgue . . . with a tag around your toe. ("They Say It'll Kill Me" 24-25)

This experience has transformed him into a grown man. Green Arrow watches with teary eyes as Speedy bids him a final farewell. Speedy has experienced self-liberation.

Domination, false consciousness, and one-dimensional thinking are pervasive themes throughout the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic series. O'Neil uses the environmental crisis to illustrate how false consciousness blinds Green Lantern and other well-meaning Americans into thinking that America's technological genius can protect the environment. He also shows the one-dimensional thinking of Carol Ferris and the plant workers who defend the testing of an engine known to pollute the air. Ben Agger writes, "one-dimensional thinking is a direct example of social amnesia for it suggests that the present is

grounded neither in the past nor future but is an 'eternal present'"(138).

Issue No. 87 entitled "And Through Him Save a World" confronts the environmental issue head-on. Somewhere in the Midwest, a man who calls himself Isaac is out to stop the production of an engine being tested by a company owned by Ferris, Lantern's girlfriend. The company is about to declare bankruptcy. Developing an airplane engine that burns cheap fuel seems to be the only way to restore the company's profitability. Green Lantern reminds Ferris that testing the engine will spew poisonous fumes into the air. Despite this acknowledgment, he sides with Ferris, believing that technology is capable of solving a potentially harmful environmental problem.

O'Neil's script focuses on Isaac, an environmentalist. He enters the company's headquarters disguised as a painter and covers the office walls with a liquid—a mixture of industrial waste and sewer refuse. Lantern sees Isaac's actions as a transgression of the law. Green Arrow says to Green Lantern, "AGGGG, Brother, you make the average wet blanket look like a desert! You're ticked off because Isaac happened to hit the Ferris outfit . . . the outfit owned by your girlfriend Carol! Or is it your pious law and order number again?" (3).

Lantern invites Arrow to travel with him and Carol to plant site. Arrow accepts the offer. The trip, he explains, will afford him a time in the country to arrow practice, something he has not done lately because he has not fully recovered from a shoulder wound suffered earlier. Green Arrow begins target shooting soon after arriving at the plant site. A guard from the plant sets an attack dog on him. The attack dog is on Isaac's scent. Green Arrow shows the guard his identification card.

Arrow is about to resume target practice when, from behind him, he hears footsteps. It is Isaac. They engage in conversation. Isaac notices that the crime fighter favors his right arm. Green Arrow's arm feels better immediately after Isaac applies a dressing made from wild herbs.

Arrow wants to know what drove Isaac into the antipollution camp. It began, Isaac explains,

after he developed chest pains. His doctor reminded him that both his parents died of a lung disease aggravated by industrial pollution. This fact led him to strike back at the polluters.

Meanwhile, a drainage rig in the plant begins to collapse. Lantern uses his power ring to shore up the collapsing rig, and saves Ferris and a plant foreman from harm. He inspects the area, finding small trenches having been dug around the rig's supports. The plant foreman accuses Isaac of having engaged in sabotage. Lantern, the law and order defender, sets out to find Isaac and punish him.

Green Lantern arrives in the area where Arrow and Isaac are, at the point when Arrow agrees to join the crusade. Lantern accuses Isaac of engaging in sabotage at the Ferris plant, and proceeds to attack him. Green Arrow shoots an arrow filled with gas that puts Lantern to sleep.

He expects praise from Isaac and is surprised when the environmentalist says, "You're as bad as the rest . . . releasing foulness into our precious atmosphere. You pretend to your fellowmen—but your actions reveal you to be a liar" (15). Isaac vanishes into the forest. Guards from the plant arrive and arrest Arrow and Lantern, mistakenly believing that they are Isaac's accomplices. Taken into the grounds of the plant, all are surprised when they see that Isaac has strung himself up on the tail of a plane as a way to stop the engine from being tested. Green Arrow yells at the workers, "I know it might mean your jobs, but this plant, the whole project is capable of killing people who need clean air to live, asthmatics and people with lung diseases. Take him down, talk to him! Maybe you can work out a compromise, a deal" (21).

The word compromise is not in Isaac's vocabulary: "Never! No deals! How can I compromise with death? Shall we have half-death—shall we have half disease—shall we pollute half the population—shall we have one child die instead of two? No, Green Arrow, you too are guilty," Isaac retorts (21).

Green Arrow responds to Isaac's charge: "Me," Arrow asks, "what about you? You almost killed a couple of people today because of your attitude! Did you tell these people that . . . you

pompous . . . ” (22). Green Lantern, upset with Arrow for disclosing that Isaac had engaged in sabotage, lands a fist across his face.

The angry workers overpower both crime fighters. They string up Lantern and Arrow to the plane’s tail section alongside Isaac. This scene brings back memories of Christ on the cross with two men, one an unrepentant sinner, the other who acknowledges his sins to Christ and is forgiven. Lantern is helpless because one of the security guards took his power ring. Ferris returns the ring to him the following morning. It takes Arrow hours to free himself from the plane’s tail section.

The police arrive on the scene the following morning, too late to save Isaac’s life. Green Lantern informs his girlfriend, Carol Ferris, that Isaac died as the sun was rising, to which she responds, “I suppose progress must always claim victims!” (24). In a fit of anger, Green Lantern uses his ring to destroy the aircraft. The plant foreman says to Lantern, “What’s the idea . . . ? That was a nine million dollar aircraft?” (25). For once in his life, conforming to societal norms is of no concern to Green Lantern. He tells the foreman to send the bill to him.

More challenges await Lantern. O’Neil exposes the many faces of racism in American society. Racism, as Nathan Glazer defines it, “means an attitude of superiority, disdain, or prejudice toward another person because he is of another race, and a philosophy or ideology that justifies such attitudes on the basis of the inferiority—genetic, cultural, moral, or intellectual—of a race” (69). In Issue 78, entitled “Earthquake: Beware My Power,” a deadly earthquake strikes southern California. Guy Gardner sustains multiple injuries during the rescue attempt of a little girl dangling from the edge of an overpass. Doctors conclude he will be laid up for six or more months.

Lantern has already made plans for Gardner to fill in for him while he gets his life together. A telepathic image of one of the immortal galactic Guardians appears, informing Green Lantern that the Guardians have chosen his substitute. Lantern agrees with the decision until he learns that his

substitute is a black man. A telepathic image tells Lantern in no uncertain terms that John Stewart, the black man, has all the due qualifications, and furthermore, he and the other galactic Guardians are not interested in his petty bigotry. Lantern defers to his superiors. This episode brings into sharp focus the fact “that there is such a deeply ingrained prejudice in whites, leading to discrimination against blacks and other minorities, that it can be assumed prejudice is the operative cause in any case of differential treatment, rather than concern about qualification” (Glazer 68).

The black man’s response to the Guardians’ decision is: “Considering jobs aren’t exactly plentiful for black architects in the land of the free these days, and I haven’t worked in weeks—so time’s not a problem” (7). Stewart’s field training begins immediately. Green Lantern uses his power ring to suit up the black man. The new recruit makes light of the Green Lantern costume, commenting that “these aren’t any threads James Brown would wear . . . but they beat my usual Salvation Army Special” (7).

After having been airborne for several minutes, the two fly directly over an airport where an important personage’s plane is about to land. People surge toward the plane. A fuel truck, hitting an oil slick, careens toward the crowd. In his first act as a member of the galactic Guardians, Stewart uses his power ring to form a fork to stop the runaway truck. The fork punctures the tank, spewing oil on those deboarding the plane. Senator Jeremiah Clutcher’s face is covered with the thick, black oil. He promises to punish the guilty person responsible for puncturing the trunk’s tank. Upon seeing the senator in black face, Stewart asks him if he has seen him before someplace picking cotton.

Green Lantern believes that Stewart’s remark to the senator is disrespectful, and tells him so. In reply, Stewart says, “Listen whitey, that windbag wants to be president! He’s a racist . . . and he figures on climbing to the White House on the backs of my people” (9).

Lantern assigns Stewart to guard the senator as punishment for his disrespect. The crowd

awaits the senator's campaign speech. He says: "Understand, I've nothing against Darkies! But it's scientific fact their brains are smaller than normal! Because of their limited intelligence they can't appreciate the finer things" (10).

Shots ring out. A black man is seen firing a pistol that is aimed at the senator. Green Lantern subdues the alleged assassin. Stewart quickly moves to the parking lot and sees a white man armed with a machine gun that he aims at a policeman. He uses his power ring to disarm the white man. An assassination attempt on the senator's life is presumably thwarted.

Stewart's investigation reveals that the senator planned the affair. It would appear that he had survived an assassination attempt. Blacks would be blamed for the foiled incident. The senator is arrested and placed behind bars, thus ending his chances of being elected president of the United States. O'Neil's presentation gives credence to the argument that racism is pervasive in American society. Why else would such a large crowd have come to the airport to cheer on a senator known for his disparaging comments about blacks? This episode, if anything, leads one to conclude that racism lurks behind the most seemingly respectable façades.

Conclusion

The issues covered in O'Neil's scripts are what propelled the student generation of the 1960s and the early 1970s into the forefront of change and even at times rebellion. O'Neil set about to use the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* comic book series as a tool for educating Americans, young and old, about social problems. It also was a vehicle for chastizing liberals who still thought that good intentions, sympathetic understanding, and a strict enforcement of the law would solve society's most pressing problems.

O'Neil made the stories believable by portraying the lead characters as weak and human, stripping them of their infallibility. Both Green Lantern and Green Arrow were quick to admit

that society's most pressing problems were unsolvable, or at least quick and easy solutions were not in the offering. O'Neil's insightful perspectives on societal ills attracted the attention of radicals, disgruntled liberals, revolutionaries, and members of the emerging New Left.

The education of Green Lantern, the liberal, seemed to be the real subject of the series, judging from the number of episodes in which his liberal views come to the fore. The series' scriptwriters count on the reader to feel superior to Green Lantern. Readers are expected to see through his hopeless blundering efforts to set things straight (which usually ends by making them worse), and to side with those who know that liberals—unless they were educated—are "part of the problem, not part of the solution." In the final analysis, O'Neil's intent, I would argue, was not only to expose social ills unfamiliar to comic book readers, but also to satirize the inadequate response of those who were encountering them for the first time.

O'Neil was convinced that American society stood at the crossroads of radical change versus reform. He came down on the side of radical change. Suffice it to say Green Lantern is the symbol of an antiquated liberal reform. Green Arrow is the spokesman of the radical change. These changes called for by the New Left, O'Neil believed, were the ones most likely to put America on the right track.

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