new worlds

SPECIAL ISSUE featuring Ballard · Dean · Disch · Jacobs · Jones · Moorcock · Sallis · AND MORE

Five Shillings or One Dollar

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

new worlds

Number 183

Contents

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LEAD-IN

THE PAST FEW months, since, in fact, we were banned by Smiths and questions were asked about us in the House of Commons, have been rather difficult months, with schedules disrupted and rumours of the magazine's closure circulating widely. The magazine is not going to fold, particularly if we continue to receive subscriptions, and whatever our difficulties we feel a duty to keep it running, one way or another. Our problems have chiefly been lack of financial backing and poor distribution, and these problems seem gradually to have been overcome. Gradually this magazine has become identified with a certain kind of fiction, which has loosely been described as "imaginative". It is essentially fantasy, using imagery derived chiefly from the present and the future; it is fantasy that, in its essence, goes back to Sterne rather than to Swift. It is rarely didactic in its approach (we prefer to put our specific information and speculation in our fact departments); it comes to you with one chief aim: to entertain, but to entertain you as *prose fiction* and to the full extent of its writers' imaginative gifts. Therefore it must often seek different means of expression, means which will discipline the imagination but which will not distort the particular vision of its authors.

AT THE PRESENT moment there seems to be altogether too much journalism disguised as fiction being published; fiction that appears to be competing with films and television which are so much better equipped to give you either straightforward documentaries or good documentary drama like *Cathy Come Home* or *The War Game*.

The sort of genre science fiction which appears in magazines like GALAXY, IF, and THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, is not generally submitted to us in a sufficiently well-written or imaginative form to be worth offering our readers; also those readers who like that kind of fantasy are amply supplied by the straightforward science fiction magazines. What we hope is to offer you a radical alternative to all the existing kinds of fiction and as well, to offer you articles and criticism of a sort rarely found elsewhere. We believe that this approach to fiction is fresher, perhaps, than that of the French "new wave", and that interest in it, among writers and readers, is steadily growing. It is, we suppose, essentially revolutionary in its aims and is principally to do with the development of a new literary form rather than the infusion of new subject matter into existing forms (*à la* **John Barth**).

Sallis: Bubbles—see page 15

We feel that our attempts are becoming increasingly successful; NEW WORLDS is already identified in the public mind with this relatively new tendency in fiction which has attracted a great variety of authors with a wider variety of styles and who are predominantly writing in English. Perhaps their shared interest is in particular kinds of subject matter and ways of handling it. Certainly few of them are merely interested in stylistic experiment for

its own sake, as **James Sallis** points out in his review this month.

Langdon Jones is one of these writers and he offers a piece of comic fiction this month. Jones is an

Dean: Toppers and Boots—*see page* 32

ex-associate editor of NEW WORLDS and is currently producing an anthology of original speculative fantasy to be published next year by Hutchinsons. Jones has recently completed a reconstruction of the original manuscript of **Mervyn Peake's** *Titus Alone* which Peake finished when he was ill and was unable to supervise the somewhat random cutting of the manuscript after it had been submitted to his publisher. Jones says that the original is an infinitely better piece of work. It is his reconstructed

Moorcock: Behold the Man

version which will probably be published in 1970.

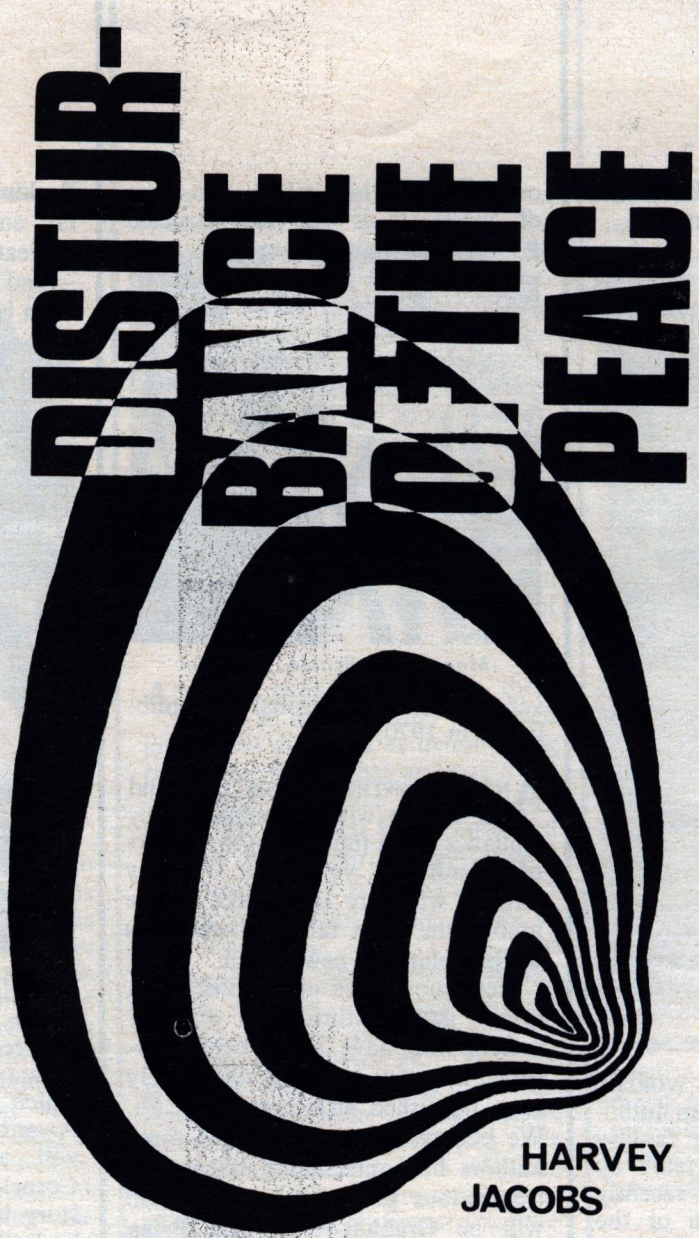
ANOTHER ANTHOLOGY OF this kind of fiction will be published by Gollancz some time next year; a sort of "manifesto" volume of work by writers who are considered to be among the most talented producers of this relatively new fiction.

Next month we are publishing a special issue featuring the work of writers who have never been published in NEW WORLDS and rarely been published elsewhere, if at all. We believe that every one of these authors has outstanding talent and tremendous potential; among them will be **Graham Charnock, Brian Vickers** and **M. J. Harrison.** They represent a few of the many talented young English writers who are beginning to emerge, some of whom have already appeared in NEW WORLDS, like **Graham Hall, Christopher Priest, Leo Zorin, Peter Tate, Michael Butterworth, Bob Parkinson** and **Bob Marsden.** The last couple of years have produced a great flowering of talent in Britain —and the next couple of years look even better.

Jones: Reconstructed Version

The following month, **Michael Moorcock** (whose last story in NEW WORLDS was *Behold the Man* (166), which won the SFWA "Nebula" Award for best novella this year) will appear with a new Jerry Cornelius story. There will be a new story by **Brian Aldiss,** more fiction by both new and well-known contributors, as well as a perceptive article on Warhol's films by **Andrew Lugg. J. G. Ballard** and **Dr. Christopher Evans** also hope to have pieces ready for this issue.

DISTURBANCE OF THE PEACE



HARVEY JACOBS

TODAY IS Friday.

The E Train to Manhattan is jammed with workers heading towards their jobs. Above them, fans with thick, black blades turn slowly. A sudden drain on the electricity has broken their motion. They circle with exasperating rhythm. A thick heat rises out of the sharp, grinding sounds of the Express. The steel wheels against steel tracks give off shrieks of friction. The train enters the tunnel underneath the East River.

Floyd Copman has no seat. He is standing wedged against a girl who reads the *Daily News*. Their bodies enjoy a city intimacy. He feels her breasts and hips against him.

Sounds change as pressure builds against Floyd Copman's ear. He opens his mouth slightly. Mouth open, gulping air, Floyd Copman thinks now of a recent visit to the new vaults his bank is building in the heart of a mountain a hundred miles from New York. With other clerks from his branch he was led on a tour through huge man-made caves. He walked through rooms of stone. He followed his guide along cool corridors. Thick steel doors parted for him.

A little snap inside his ear brings sound back into focus. The train stops. Floyd Copman is thrown forward. Noise drains from the tunnel. The fans labour.

From somewhere in the car a remark is made about the transit system. No feeling of communion springs up between the travellers. It is simply too hot. The train waits.

Floyd Copman thinks of the planning and engineering that went into the construction of the bank's mountain vaults. He has been told exactly how many tons of rock were blasted and removed, etc., etc., but his memory is not exact on the details. He marvels at the project. Treasure Mountain is the name the vaults will have. The name is catchy and appropriate.

A gush of air and the hum of current from under the train indicate that movement is imminent. Floyd Copman braces for the jolt. But the delay continues. Lights dim and flicker.

Floyd Copman's thoughts are complicated by the memory of a late-night radio broadcast. In an interview with a successful writer of science fiction, Floyd Copman heard that life on other planets will take forms beyond human imagination, that earthly ideas of size and shape are inadequate, that a new understanding and a new tolerance will be necessary when the time comes to cope and communicate with these creatures.

As the train waits under the river, Floyd Copman speculates on the nature of extra-terrestrial life. Suspended in the heat, his mind fashions a battle. Strange shapes advance on Treasure Mountain. Floyd Copman's fantasy follows two roads.

One road has no ending. The guards in the mountain find their bullets useless. The attacking enemy ravages the mountain and its catacombs room by room, sucking defenders, jewels, stock certificates, microfilm records and priceless miscellany into pulsating bags of savage stomach acid.

The second road is happier. The guards of the mountain discover, accidentally, that they can think their enemies dead. Thought waves bloat the slime-flesh of the invaders and they pop, collapse and dry. The mountain is saved, though there is much cleaning up afterwards.

Now the train creeps. The girl pressing against Floyd Copman asks the time. Her question suspends the war of the worlds. Floyd Copman gives her an answer, correct to the minute. She tells him that she will be late for work.

GO BACK TO Monday.

The old man had been in the bank for hours, standing and watching the transaction of business. He stood like a dirty statue. Two guards came up behind him. They took his arms and dragged him towards the door.

The old man fell backwards to resist them with his weight. The guards cleverly linked hands and pulled him along. He hissed and spat.

With the help of the janitor the guards forced him through the revolving door.

Those in line at the tellers' windows watched with disgust. When the guards had the old man outside he sat on the sidewalk. They raised him and walked him down the avenue.

Later Floyd Copman was told that they had taken him for three blocks, across streets and around corners. They reasoned he would not find his way back.

When the guards returned to the bank, those clients who had witnessed the incident were serviced and gone. Floyd Copman saw Mr. Munrose, the Vice-President-In-Charge, take a tour of the premises. He knew that the executive decision to oust the old man had been carefully calculated. There is always the danger of repercussion in a public place.

Mr. Munrose appeared satisfied. There were no stains or echoes. His decision had been absolutely necessary.

Floyd Copman shared his superior's satisfaction. The city is full of grotesques, he thought. Bad enough that they come out at night to eat from garbage cans and spread filth. Not in broad daylight. Not in a place of business. Especially not in a bank which trades on an image of strength and dignity. The guards had done an efficient, humane job.

At two on Monday afternoon the old man returned. Someone brought him in a taxi. He walked in quietly, as before, and took up his position across from the tellers. Everyone had been alerted to expect him.

And along with the news of his return came the whispered message that this very old man was the father of ———.

Floyd Copman was amazed at the circumstances. It was more than fantastic. The father of ———. That ——— should have such a father!

Of course, the old man was harmless. He bothered nobody and said nothing. Until the guards came he stood watching the bills pass over marble counters and listening to the coins. He was certainly harmless. He was safe as a child.

The father of ———. Then why wasn't he in an institution? It was certainly not a question of funds. Not if ——— was involved. If there were any danger, the smallest trace, he would be put away. Nothing else made sense.

His look was frightening. But who could condemn him for the disease of senility?

Better dressed, who would notice him there?

What a burden for ———. Was the condition hereditary? Would ——— end up standing with an idiot grin watching the movement of bills and the flash of coins?

No, of course not.

Floyd Copman found deep sympathy for them both. This was not the kind of thing you read in the papers. This was a toilet secret, floating, ignored.

Imagine that ——— had courage enough to telephone *himself*. It took courage, no question. Others, with much less at stake, would insist on a Home.

The father of ——— stood in the shadow of a marble column. Floyd Copman knew that now the old man would be a constant visitor. He would come every day.

A guard stood near him, not ten feet away. It was one of the guards who had banished him. The old man was tranquil. His mind, Floyd Copman thought, must

be a dry sponge. If he cannot remember so recent an enemy as the guard, his brain must be rotten to its centre.

At ten to three Mr. Munrose toured again. Floyd Copman saw that his cheeks were red. He had been whipped, and for no reason. He had been forbidden to clean his own house.

At one minute to three, the guards gave the closing signal. As the bank emptied, the old man went too, with no protest. Floyd Copman saw a wet stain spread on his trouser leg.

The old man wet his pants. But was that a ragged action? The rancid ladies who came each day to sit alone with their safe deposit boxes probably did worse in the cubicles downstairs in the vault.

The old man only stood watching money change hands. Where is the cause for retribution in that? Who would say to ———, "Come and get your father. He made wee wee on the floor."

All that happened on Monday.

NOW THE TRAIN passes a bank of bare lights hung in the tunnel. Floyd Copman can see repairmen pressed against the tunnel's sides to let the train pass. The obstruction is finally navigated. The train picks up speed. The speed brings a breeze. The fans whirl to blurs.

At Lexington Avenue the crowd thins. Floyd Copman continues downtown.

At Times Square there is a seat. Floyd Copman rushes for it. Relaxing, he feels much better. The man next to him gets up to exit at 34th Street and drops a *Herald Tribune* behind him. Floyd Copman quickly picks up the paper, folded inside out.

The first story he reads is about a strange new virus causing epidemic in Pakistan. Floyd Copman remembers how Asian Flu crept from page twenty to page five and then to the front page. A team of American scientists has been dispatched, the story says. Last winter Floyd Copman caught Asian Flu but he had been vaccinated and developed a mild case.

Why is it, he wonders, that a bug which kills in Asia merely gives New Yorkers wet eyes and stuffed noses? Still, some died of the Asian Flu even in the Five Boroughs, and some will die of the virus from Pakistan. But not before the cold months.

Floyd Copman turns to the financial page. His eyes wander columns of numbers. He becomes absorbed in the language of plus and minus. Defence issues are up. Oils are down. Polaroid is researching a new film. The price of drugs is under investigation. Leisure industries are booming. Bowling and boating attract new millions. So it goes until the train reaches West 4th Street.

There Floyd Copman leaves the train and walks towards the 3rd Street staircase. It is 9.10. Floyd Copman's lateness is the fault of the subway. He walks quickly.

No familiar faces greet him in the crowd at the base of the stairs. The population of the subway changes with minutes. He is of the 8.30 people, except in cases of unavoidable delay. The 9 o'clock people are strangers.

As he climbs the metal steps he sees a fellow clerk, a perpetual latecomer. The clerk, hurrying ahead, is folding a newspaper as he walks, making it smaller and less obvious. Floyd Copman's own paper, a gift of the subway, is folded under his arm.

Near the top of the steps Floyd Copman sees, scrawled on a billboard, the hand-written phrase *An Onion And You.*

He has seen the message before, in fact for several months. By now he is more annoyed than curious. Many times in his life Floyd Copman has been tempted by advertisements which read *Soon It Will Be Here.* After a matter of days, the IT has been revealed.

But *An Onion And You* has remained a mystery through the spring and half the summer—far too long. And now Floyd Copman wonders if it really relates to a movie or product or anything worthwhile. He is suspicious that the scrawl is only the work of a lunatic filling public walls with some private complaint.

The air covers Floyd Copman like a wool blanket. The avenue swelters. Dust from the crater where the bank is constructing its annex has been tracked on to the pavement. Sand granules flick against his eyes.

He sees that wooden planking has replaced the sidewalk near the excavation. A gangplank now leads to the door of the bank. The feel of wood boards under Floyd Copman's shoes is peculiar. He hears his own footsteps.

Beneath him is a pit. He can see wires and pipes uprooted. Floyd Copman marvels that the whole island of Manhattan is a shell. Looking into the opened earth is like observing surgery. He notices a pool of brown water in the temporary canyon. There is always water. He wonders at its origin. There has been no rain.

A bulldozer is moving in the excavation. On its iron mouth is the name LORRAINE. The trademark strikes him funny. He remembers the elephants in Central Park Zoo with delicate lady names and the female walrus at the Aquarium showing huge organs to the crowd through a glass-walled tank.

The foundation for the annex is coming along. A scale model of the new building is displayed in the bank's lobby. It will be of steel and glass. Everything will be in the open. Even the vault will be visible from the street.

The model looks pleasing but insubstantial. Like modern furniture, everything seems poised on insect legs. Of course, the structure will be solid enough. Leave it to the bank.

Floyd Copman is pushed from behind. He turns. It is the old man shoving past him. They are side by side on the planking. The old man is breathing hard, wheezing air. His face is a brutal red. He is of Floyd Copman's height. Their faces are inches apart. Floyd Copman presses against the railing to let him go by. He pushes through the revolving door. As the door takes him, he smiles. Floyd Copman sees him smiling as he is whirled inside.

"Mr. ——— is full of oats today," the guard says to Floyd Copman. The guard laughs. Floyd Copman grins back at him.

The guard is at least sixty. He wears a blue uniform with a black leather gunbelt around his middle. Floyd

Copman and his associates often joke about his usefulness in a holdup. Floyd Copman has said that if it came to that, the robbers would lay him belly down and empty the place while he tried to turn himself over. And what of the old man in a robbery? What would happen to him? Nothing, probably. He would stand peeing while the robbers worked.

THE BANK IS already active. Floyd Copman wants to go to the men's room to wash up and brush construction dust from his suit. But he goes right to his cage, slips his nameplate into place and opens his window.

His first customer hands him a cheque. The customer is known to him. He cashes the cheque. The next customer makes a small deposit. Floyd Copman's business day has begun.

The morning moves smoothly. Floyd Copman notices that the old man has taken up a different position, directly across from his cage. This does not surprise him. Quite the contrary. Floyd Copman has expected this to happen.

A customer asks for $500 in small bills. Floyd Copman counts out the sum. The old man is watching, blinking as Floyd Copman handles the crisp bills. The old man locks his hands across his stomach, leans forward, and waits. Floyd Copman's agile hands make the new bills crackle. With the noise, the old man's lips jerk into a spasm smile. His body actually sways.

Floyd Copman and the old man have watched each other all week. Floyd Copman realises the bounty of pleasure he controls. He knows that the old man loves his hands.

Floyd Copman performs brilliantly. He manipulates the bills and coins like a magician. He snaps new bills, stacks the old, moves silver and copper against cool brown marble. Really, it is a game. Floyd Copman has lost all feelings of malice towards the father of ———. Really, it is hide and seek.

Floyd Copman shows the money, makes the money sing. Floyd Copman conceals the money, the money is silent. If Floyd Copman chooses, six or seven customers will conduct their business at the window and the old man will never see so much as a penny, or hear the slightest whisper of paper. Or, if Floyd Copman wishes, his generosity makes the old man shuffle his feet with happiness.

During stretches of deprivation, Floyd Copman sees the old man dry. The fluids seems to evaporate from him. Still he does not abandon Floyd Copman's cage. He stays. He waits. And Floyd Copman rewards him with a sudden *thok thok* as the pads of his fingers rub violently at banded groups of bills and the birthday jingle of nickels, dimes and quarters rises like a bell song. Then the old man drips saliva through his lips and sucks it back again with his tongue. Like those fountains that use their own water.

So silly. Fantastic, this game they play. But it makes the day fly. Floyd Copman is surprised when his noon relief comes. As he leaves his cage he notices the look of grey fear on the old man's bulging face. He smiles to say, "Don't worry. I'll be back."

Floyd Copman sees that his luncheon companions, Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd, are already waiting for him. He waves towards the men's room. They signal him to hurry. Floyd Copman hurries into the bathroom.

Inside, Floyd Copman sees Mr. Munrose standing at the sink. Mr. Munrose is washing his dental plate under cold water. The vice-president looks around at Floyd Copman.

"Caught with my choppers down," he says. His voice pushes out over bare gums. His upper lip is a hanging flap.

Floyd Copman is embarrassed. He turns to the white urinal. He hears a wet suction sound, then the click of teeth. The vice-president comes up beside Floyd Copman and together they stand, facing the wall.

"Hang on to your teeth," his superior says. "Take care of your teeth. You have no idea how important they are."

"Yes," Floyd Copman says.

Floyd Copman is trying to relax the muscles below his stomach. He is waiting for his bladder to function. He feels ridiculously shy. Mr. Munrose is already flushing. As he zips up his fly the vice-president sighs.

"What a week. This is one weekend I'm looking forward to," says Mr. Munrose.

Floyd Copman still stands at the urinal. Mr. Munrose is washing his hands.

"How's the missus," says the vice-president.

"Getting along fine," Floyd Copman says.

"It's your first, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"She's getting close, isn't she?"

"Eighth month."

"Wonderful. Wonderful," says Mr. Munrose.

Left alone, Floyd Copman empties his bladder, washes, combs, swishes water in his mouth, dries his hands, and goes to meet his lunch buddies. Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd are waiting outside. Floyd Copman is nearly across the bank floor when he realises that the old man is moving after him. He walks faster. He does not wish an encounter. But it seems inevitable. The old man, moving at an angle, will cut him off. The guard is facing in another direction, unaware of Floyd Copman's situation.

Floyd Copman rushes for the door. The old man hurries too. Floyd Copman sees the confusion in his eyes. A foot from the door they are together for an instant. The old man puts his head forward, taking a deep inward breath.

Floyd Copman is through the door now. His friends, who have been watching, hail him. He turns back to see if he is followed. No. The old man has stayed in the bank. The revolving door is still.

FLOYD COPMAN AND his friends go down the gangplank and across the street.

Marvin Ash is laughing loudly. He leans towards Floyd Copman and pretends to smell him. Jack Boyd is laughing too.

"That's what he was doing," Marvin Ash says. "You

know, that's what he was doing. He must think you're some kind of hydrant."

Floyd Copman joins their laughter. He knows that Marvin Ash is correct. The old man was smelling him. He feels a wave of nausea. No question. The old man was smelling for the odour of money, the green algae smell of bills, the pungent metal smell of coins.

"Floyd found a friend," Marvin Ash says. "An influential associate. Floyd, you've got it made. Tell him to ask his sonny about making you President."

"I'll send you a postcard from Washington."

"It takes all kinds," Jack Boyd says. "Onward and upward."

The three men walk up Sixth Avenue to Eighth Street. They feel the heat filling their lungs.

A young girl goes by pulling a shopping cart. She is wearing shorts and a light cotton blouse. Her feet are strapped into sandals. Her hair is loose and long, pitch black, a river of ink. Her breasts hang low in the blouse. They look free and fleshy. Their nipples make little pimples in the fabric. Her waist is held tight by a wide leather belt with a large silver buckle. She holds her trunk and head very straight. Her bare legs are too short for her top. They move too quickly and cover too little ground to carry off the image of tranquillity. The shorts hug her thighs and outline a soft rise under her belt and the tight triangle between her legs. Her face is damp with perspiration, pale in the sharp sun.

"Melon for dessert," Jack Boyd says.

"Too much ass for summer," Marvin Ash says.

"I personally like it," says Jack Boyd.

"Too much tit for weather like this. Give me an Emily in the summer. Cool. Small. Nice boobies. Short hair on her head. Emily in an air-conditioned hotel room someplace where nobody knows you or gives a damn about who's who and a bottle of ice-cold martinis."

"I like that one," Jack Boyd says. "Do me something."

"Your trouble is you like everything," says Marvin Ash. "The rest of humanity divides up. Tit men. Ass men. You are a tit-ass man. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're not even married a year."

"I can't help it if I'm a lecher. Besides, you were my teacher. Really, Floyd, I was a virgin when I first came here. This man corrupted me."

"Say that again," Marvin Ash says. "I can still teach you plenty."

"When I'm your age I hope I know as much," Jack Boyd says. "Floyd, here comes the story of how he got it on the BMT Subway or how the girl came to sell him a subscription to the *Saturday Evening Post*."

"Talk to yourself," Marvin Ash says. "I can still tell the difference between a hot sloppy oven and a nice breezy summer nosh."

"So go. Emily holds it on a platter every day. You've been talking for a year, you phoney baloney."

"It's not so easy," says Marvin Ash, deeply serious. "Where? Where can I take her? A good hotel wouldn't rent to us. She's too dark. A flea bag is dangerous. The house cops shake you down. The thing to do is rent a furnished room for a week or two."

"So rent. Rent, big daddy. Floyd and I will chip in. Ask her today."

"She'd say yes," Marvin Ash says. "She's got a tremendous case of the hots for me. She practically asked me up to her place. But I don't want no knife in my gizzard. Who knows what she lives with?"

"Floyd," says Jack Boyd, "be my witness. I'm calling his bluff."

"Listen, I'm married fifteen years. I've got two wonderful children. I've got to be careful."

"Be careful. I'll stand in the corridor throwing body blocks."

"Be nice, don't fight," Floyd Copman says. "It's too hot for sex."

"Not by me. This heat brings out my seminal fluid," Jack Boyd says.

"He's still a boy," says Marvin Ash. "A young consumer in his acquisitive years. All his pores are open. Let him rave, Floyd."

Floyd Copman, wilted with heat, usually enjoys the banter between Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd. Marvin Ash, like an old rhino, snorts and grumps in the jungle, belching and farting over ancient outrages, too careful to risk a charge in any direction.

Jack Boyd, an antelope, dances around him, spits liberally in his eye, jumps back and forth like a flame. The two exist together. They follow the same path.

Jack Boyd is closer in age to Floyd Copman so that Floyd Copman feels an easier kinship with him. Both joined the bank in the same year, both married in the same season. But they are not tight friends. Their only social contact is at lunch, Marvin Ash, already in his forties, already beyond certain hopeful optimism, acting as a fulcrum for their relationship.

Their noontime conversation is remarkably similar day after day. Floyd Copman finds this entertaining and undemanding. He enjoys listening. Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd enjoy an audience. But today, Floyd Copman is out of things. The incident at the bank has left him disturbed. Besides, when the talk turns to women, he thinks immediately of his wife. He sees her alone in their apartment, uncomfortable in the heat, very pregnant, waiting out her time. Since the beginning of summer, Floyd Copman has felt a suspension of desire. He feels heavy himself, too clumsy for movement.

Inside the Howard Johnsons, refrigerated air bathes over them. Floyd Copman's shirt sticks to his back. He waits uncomfortably for a table. The restaurant is noisy and crowded. Jack Boyd tugs at his arm and nods in the direction of the counter. Marvin Ash is there talking with a tiny waitress in yellow and green. She smiles while he talks and waves an ice-cream scoop at him. Marvin Ash points to the scoop, then to the girl's thin chest. The girl laughs and goes to serve a customer.

The head waiter gestures. The men follow him to a table. They wait while the table is cleaned, sponged and set. The leather seat feels cool to Floyd Copman, chilling him through his wet jacket. He is seated opposite Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd. He notices that Marvin Ash's seersucker has a crumpled look. His shirt is wet

in patches. His tie, a blue dotted swiss, is hanging loose. Marvin Ash wears his clothes hard. In contrast, Jack Boyd's palm beach, starched shirt and striped tie look fresh and neat. His slender build and thin face add to his crisp aspect.

A new girl comes to take their orders. She is all business. There is no joking with her. Each orders the daily special, fillet of sole, with potatoes and vegetables. Floyd Copman remembers that Marvin Ash usually eats the same amount of food as himself. Yet Marvin Ash is fat. He must eat great quantities between meals, or at home.

The waitress brings tomato juice for each of them. Jack Boyd raises his red glass.

"To Marvin Ash," he says, "and to Mama Queen. Salud."

"To Mr. ———," says Marvin Ash. "The happy moron. May he and Floyd enjoy a long and happy relationship. Floyd, you do smell delightful today."

Floyd Copman drinks his juice, then excuses himself. He has forgotten if he washed his hands back at the bank. He goes to the lounge, scrubs himself, and dries by wringing his hands under ultra-violet rays. When he returns to the dining room, his food is waiting. Marvin Ash and Jack Boyd are eating their fish while they study a booklet prospectus for a mutual fund.

"I see your point," Marvin Ash is saying as Floyd Copman settles into his seat. "But I maintain that this is no time to enter the market. If you ask me, this is a time to retrench."

"I can't agree with you," Jack Boyd says. "It seems more sensible to build a portfolio with a long view. I believe in dollar averaging. I'm not that much of a speculator, Marvin, but the trends have held up over the last twenty years."

"I'm not out to change your mind, Jack. Nothing I say is going to change your mind. And the half-hour I spend on the Wall Street Journal doesn't make me Bernard Baruch. But to my way of thinking, when elevator boys and Mr. Shmendrik's secretary run to buy stock, that's the time to bye bye baby."

"A sensibly planned portfolio. . . ."

Floyd Copman slowly chews his fish, feeling for bones. He listens intently. He owns a few shares of AT&T and has considered investing a portion of his savings but he has not reached a final decision.

"Tri Continental, or the other closed end funds, have a certain merit," Marvin Ash says, "but just because the widows and orphans buy them doesn't mean that the wise boys won't. . . ."

Marvin Ash is speaking well, with conviction. Jack Boyd is making a good case too. Floyd Copman feels a satisfying sense of unity with them. He thinks of the long columns of numbers on the financial pages, where fractions determine fortunes.

"I've sent for a book on warrants," Jack Boyd says. "The leverage is fantastic. Not that razzle dazzle manipulation is for me. But a certain amount of risk capital. . . ."

"You'll break your back on warrants. If you want to play in those leagues, go with commodities. Last year, a cousin of mine. . . ."

The discussion continues through lunch. The men order coffee, smoke cigarettes, and get up to leave. On

the way out, Floyd Copman notices that Marvin Ash does not turn to wave at his waitress. She is standing at the counter, her wide-nosed, thick-lipped, black-eyed face watching as they pay their checks. Marvin Ash is still holding the prospectus as they venture into the street. The heat storms over them as they walk towards the bank.

THE SKY IS WHITE. A sharp line of shadows divides the avenue. They walk into the sun. Floyd Copman sees pedestrians on the outer rim of the sidewalk as burning black shapes eclipsing light. He focuses on the pavement. Its glare is easier on his eyes than the silhouettes that populate the sun-drenched avenue.

Floyd Copman has a sudden urge to tell his friends about his curious game with the father of ———. They can watch. He will have two allies for the rest of the day.

"No," Marvin Ash says, from a profound part of himself, as if predicting a death. "I do not like the stock market in its current state."

Somehow his pronouncement is terribly final. Floyd Copman decides to keep silent.

They reach the wooden platform and mount the boards. The tat-tat-tat-tat of a drill hammers their ears. Floyd Copman sees the bulldozer crawl towards a pile of debris.

The three fellows separate with a wave and a wink. Each heads for his own window. Floyd Copman walks smartly across the marble floor.

On the way to his cage, Floyd Copman passes Mr. Munrose's office. Its cool walnut door is closed. Outside the door, on an island of blue carpeting, is the domain of Miss Vlachek, whom Floyd Copman has heard called The Business Nun. In her small kingdom, Miss Vlachek searches her desk. She is looking for some document. The carpet island hardly contains her search. The concave face of the secretary, arched like a hangnail moon, communicates Mr. Munrose's moods. The crescent is troubled. Floyd Copman wants to know if any more calls have come from ———. But Miss Vlachek is in no mood for office gossip.

Refreshed by the lunch break, Floyd Copman finds himself anticipating the afternoon. He is eager to resume his game of hide and seek. He has deliberately avoided the old man's eyes, but he knows their play has already begun.

Floyd Copman enters his cage. His relief is a trainee, a city cherub with pink, puffy cheeks and oily hair.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Copman," the trainee says. "I'm glad you're back. Mucous face has me shook up. I'm absconding to Brazil."

"What's your problem?"

"Mr. ——— and me do not get along. Not that I don't respect elder statesmen. But mucous face keeps looking at this window. I think he thinks this is the zoo. I think he wants to feed me peanuts."

"I don't like that mucous face expression."

"You're right, Mr. Copman. It is pretty pathetic. I'm sorry."

"Was he here all the time?"

"He didn't take a lunch hour, if that's what you mean. I think he lives off air. He stands around dribbling, which is one sight that gives me the heaves."

"He's a sick person."

"I'm sick too, Mr. Copman. I have no appetite. I'm going out someplace to throw up. I don't envy you putting up with that all day. I don't see why Mr. Munrose can't have him thrown out no matter who he is."

"I'll tell Mr. Munrose you said so."

"He's all yours now."

The trainee goes and Floyd Copman takes over his station. He tidies up his implements. In just an hour the trainee has managed to upset things. After five minutes Floyd Copman suddenly raises his eyes. They crash into the old man like headlights. Amazingly, Floyd Copman can see the result of his stare. His play partner is covered with a purple blush, as if blood seeped through his arteries and veins and spilled under his skin. The slit of mouth opens, panting wet sucking sounds. A woman writing in her chequebook gathers her papers and moves to another table.

The very fact of recognition startles Floyd Copman. It is brought home to him that the old man has a mind or at least the shreds of a brain. Floyd Copman has considered him as a totally sensual creature, fat, bone, saliva, gelatin eyes. His game has had the quality of teasing a worm with a stick, of prodding a sunfish on the beach. Now he sees that the old man has the capability of remembering shapes.

As Floyd Copman services a customer, he conjures an image of a room filled with burned wires and blown tubes. He imagines his image behind the old man's eyes. His imaginings have a moist, live feeling. He feels his picture drawn into grey quicksand pools.

This quality of mind makes the old man less predictable. Floyd Copman questions his wisdom in encouraging the affair. The joke has gone out of it. Floyd Copman sees that it is a serious matter.

Floyd Copman remembers being followed home by a cretin of a night creature who chewed on a handkerchief. It happened after a meeting of his lodge. The creature fastened to him as he waited on a subway platform. It watched and followed him. It entered the same car. It left at the same station. Outside, Floyd Copman saw no one following, but he sensed pursuit. Even in the halls of his apartment house he felt quick shadows. Locked in his own apartment, he woke his wife to tell her the story. Sleep weary, she took his hand and put it on her belly. She was hot with blanket heat. In the morning she remembered nothing of the incident, so he told her again over breakfast.

The next customer asks Floyd Copman to check his balance. Floyd Copman explains that there is a charge for this service. The depositor agrees to pay the charge. Floyd Copman goes to the records in search of the proper coded card. He telephones for information.

This bit of business interrupts his thoughts. The intrusion is disturbing. His thoughts have been leading somewhere and he would like to discover their destination. But the task at hand must be served. Floyd Copman secures the balance figure, writes it on a slip of paper, and returns to his window. The customer takes the slip, is satisfied, and leaves the window.

Floyd Copman sees that the father of ——— is stand-

ing quietly. He has learned that each disappearance will be followed by a return. Floyd Copman senses that this grain of sophistication will complicate his game. The old man laughs.

THE DAY GOES ON. Floyd Copman does his work. In the last hours the bank grows busy again. More customers come and wait in line. Floyd Copman, on the verge of the weekend, has his work cut out for him. There is much to do before three. He works fast. Customer after customer comes. The guard makes sure each teller's line is supplied. New bills crackle. The change maker punches out a flow of coins. Floyd Copman moves in a continuous, energetic rhythm. He does his work step by step, steadily, easily. He is absorbed in his efforts, carried along. Looking up quickly, he sees that the old man is submerged in his hands. Floyd Copman finds things to do, new important things. He opens and closes the metal drawers of a cabinet. He stacks a roll of half-dollars against the marble tray. He sharpens a pencil in an electric grinder.

Floyd Copman builds an emotion. He does this beautifully. He pulls the old man after him. With each customer Floyd Copman shifts his weight, moves differently. He sees that the old man is in a sweat, a boil. Like a toy train Floyd Copman pulls his baggage along. The train churns harder, higher, into a land of mountains. Floyd Copman's fingers dance. The money comes and goes, flying, singing.

While he works, Floyd Copman thinks again of the night when he was pursued by the handkerchief chewer. Suppose this old man follows him home. At lunch time he tried. Why not in the afternoon? Why not for the weekend? It is a risky business. Floyd Copman knows that.

The toy train moves in spurts, pushing wind. It moves along a ledge, through thin air. The guard passes his window. He winks and gestures towards the old man. Even the guard senses their game. And Mr. Munrose must know. He must, by now. Everyone knows.

What can Mr. Munrose think of all this? Mr. Copman, you seem to have an inside track, so to speak. Understand our gratitude. But under no circumstances risk your own well being. We cannot condone any action that would result in harm. We will support your decision, confident that you will be guided by wisdom, prudence, caution. But reconsider. Reconsider.

The toy train splits a flock of birds. Ahead is another peak, a mountain hollowed to its gut. Its insides are bloated with stored gold. It shines like a light bulb. The toy train heads for its heart. And with the train the old man comes, his spit turning to steam on the molten rails.

The clock is moving towards three. Floyd Copman bands a package of tens. He accepts a large deposit. He empties a sealed bag. He counts and recounts and writes and stamps. He verifies. He phones. He directs.

The toy train roars strain. The old man has moved forward, only a step, pulled by Floyd Copman's marvellous hands. The guard approaches. The old man steps back. Slowly the toy train inches up the final shining mountain.

Floyd Copman is tired. But he moves. He keeps moving. Now the window is empty. There are no more faces. Floyd Copman clutches a handful of money. The old man leans. Floyd Copman has a single bill in his hand. He snaps it between thumb and forefinger. The old man moans. The toy train touches the mountain top. It hovers. It splits. Floyd Copman moistens his lips. He licks his cheek. He takes the bill slowly in his mouth and chews it into a ball. He does this, then pretends to chew and swallow.

And the old man screams violent outrage. He screams and screams. He charges the bars. He smashes his face on the bars. Floyd Copman sees the face pushing steel, pushing through.

FLOYD COPMAN, feeling dizzy and sick, walks with Marvin Ash to the Independent Subway. Mr. Munrose has detailed Marvin Ash to ride home with him. Floyd Copman has declined the offer of a taxi. He feels capable of taking the train.

"There's no need for you to ride all the way out, Marvin."

"I can't let you go alone."

"I'm fine. I would certainly tell you if I felt I couldn't get home alone. Look, honestly, Marvin, forget it."

"You went out like a light. I would have dropped dead."

"I didn't know what hit me. That face. My god."

"Jesus, Floyd. At least you missed seeing him when they took him away. It had to happen."

"Did they call the son?"

"Of course. Immediately."

"He'll get the treatment he needs. They won't let him go roaming."

"I should hope not."

At the subway entrance Floyd Copman puts his hand on Marvin Ash's arm.

"Go home, Marvin. I'm okay. I appreciate your walking with me, but I'm in good shape now."

"You're absolutely sure you feel up to it?"

"Yes. Absolutely."

"Because I'd be glad. . . ."

"No. Go home."

"I already called the wife."

"Thanks, Marvin," Floyd Copman says sincerely. "I'm back to myself. It was a jolt. I never fainted before."

"Go home. Fix yourself a cool drink. Sit around in your underwear. Let your wife bring the pipe and slippers."

"That's what I'll do. Thanks again, Marvin."

"Rest. You need it. Take care."

"You take care too. Thanks again."

"Take it easy."

Floyd Copman goes down into the subway. The station is not yet crowded but the heat is impossible. It burns his throat. Floyd Copman takes off his jacket and stands on the platform safely back from the track. His eyes are not yet focusing normally. After the glare of the street, the subway dark contributes to his sense of unbalance.

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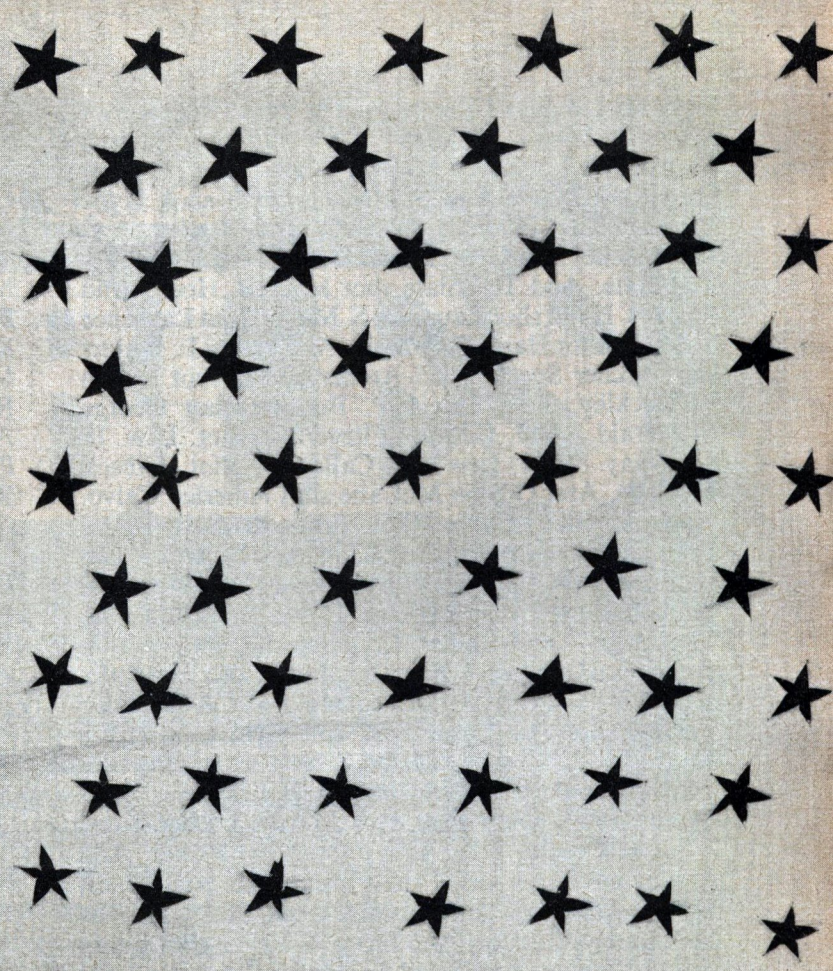


J G Ballard:

The Generations of America

THESE ARE THE generations of America.

Sirhan Sirhan shot Robert F. Kennedy. And Ethel M. Kennedy shot Judith Birnbaum. And Judith Birnbaum shot Elizabeth Bochnak. And Elizabeth Bochnak shot Andrew Witwer. And Andrew Witwer shot John Burlingham. And John Burlingham shot Edward R. Darlington. And Edward R. Darlington shot Valerie Gerry. And Valerie Gerry shot Olga Giddy. And Olga Giddy shot Rita Goldstein. And Rita Goldstein shot Bob Monterola. And Bob Monterola shot Barbara H. Nicolosi. And Barbara H. Nicolosi shot Geraldine Carro. And Geraldine Carro shot Jeanne Voltz. And Jeanne Voltz shot Joseph P. Steiner. And Joseph P. Steiner shot Donald Van Dyke. And Donald Van Dyke shot Anne M. Schumacher. And Anne M. Schumacher shot Ralph K. Smith. And Ralph K. Smith shot Laurence J. Whitmore. And Laurence J. Whitmore shot Virginia B. Adams. And Virginia B. Adams shot Lynn Young. And Lynn Young shot Lucille Beachy. And Lucille Beachy shot John J. Concannon. And John J. Concannon shot Ainslie Dinwiddie. And Ainslie Dinwiddie shot Dianne Zimmerman. And Dianne Zimmerman shot Gerson Zelman. And Gerson Zelman shot Paula C. Dubroff. And Paula C. Dubroff shot Ebbe Ebbeson. And Ebbe Ebbeson shot Constance Wiley. And Constance Wiley shot Milton Unger. And Milton Unger shot Kenneth Sarvis. And Kenneth Sarvis shot Ruth Ross. And Ruth Ross shot August Muggenthaler. And August Muggenthaler shot Phyllis Malamud. And Phyllis Malamud shot Josh Eppinger III. And Josh Eppinger III shot Kermit Lanser. And Kermit Lanser shot Lester Bernstein. And Lester Bernstein shot Frank Trippett. And Frank Trippett shot Wade Greene. And Wade Greene shot Kenneth Auchincloss. And Kenneth Auchincloss shot Bruce Porter. And Bruce Porter shot John Lake. And John Lake shot John Mitchell. And John Mitchell shot Kenneth L. Woodward. And Kenneth L. Woodward shot Lee Smith. And Lee Smith shot Arthur Cooper. And Arthur Cooper shot Arthur Higbee. And Arthur Higbee shot Anne M. Schlesinger. And Anne M. Schlesinger shot Jonathan B. Peel. And Jonathan B. Peel shot Ruth Wertham. And Ruth Wertham shot David L. Shirey. And David L. Shirey shot Saul Melvin. And Saul Melvin shot Penelope Eakins. And Penelope Eakins shot Mary K. Doris. And Mary K.

Doris shot Melvyn Gussow. And Melvyn Gussow shot Roger De Borger. And Roger De Borger shot Edward Cumberbatch. And Edward Cumberbatch shot Shirlee Hoffman. And Shirlee Hoffman shot Jayne Brumley. And Jayne Brumley shot Joel Blocker. And Joel Blocker shot George Gaal. And George Gaal shot Ted Slate. And Ted Slate shot Mary B. Hood. And Mary B. Hood shot Laurence S. Martz. And Laurence S. Martz shot Harry F. Waters. And Harry F. Waters shot Archer Speers. And Archer Speers shot Kelvin P. Buckley. And Kelvin P. Buckley shot George Fitzgerald. And George Fitzgerald shot Lew L. Callaway. And Lew L. Callaway shot Gibson McCabe. And Gibson McCabe shot Americo Calvo. And Americo Calvo shot Francois Sully. And Francois Sully shot Edward Klein. And Edward Klein shot Edward Weintal. And Edward Weintal shot Arleigh Burke. And Arleigh Burke shot James C. Thompson. And James C. Thomson shot Alison Knowles. And Alison Knowles shot Walter Hinchup. And Walter Hinchup shot Pedlar Forrest. And Pedlar Forrest shot Jim Gym. And Jim Gym shot James McBride. And James McBride shot Cyrus Partovi. And Cyrus Partovi shot Lewis P. Bohler.

And James Earl Ray shot Martin Luther King. And Coretta King shot Jacqueline Fisher. And Jacqueline Fisher shot Ernest Brennecke. And Ernest Brennecke shot Peggy Bomba. And Peggy Bomba shot Barry A. Erlich. And Barry A. Erlich shot James E. Huddleston. And James E. Huddleston shot Jerry Miller. And Jerry Miller shot Robert Nordvall. And Robert Nordvall shot William E. Harris. And William E. Harris shot Marguerite Sekots. And Marguerite Sekots shot Vernard Foley. And Vernard Foley shot Dale C. Kisteler. And Dale C. Kisteler shot Bruce Sperber. And Bruce Sperber shot Kay Flaherty. And Kay Flaherty shot Sol Babitz. And Sol Babitz shot Richard M. Clurman. And Richard M. Clurman shot Frederick Gruin. And Frederick Gruin shot Edward Jackson. And Edward Jackson shot Judson Gooding. And Judson Gooding shot Rosemarie Zadikov. And Rosemarie Zadikov shot Donald Neff. And Donald Neff shot Joseph J. Kane. And Joseph J. Kane shot Mark Sullivan. And Mark Sullivan shot Barry Hillenbrand. And Barry Hillenbrand shot Linda Young. And Linda Young shot Nina Wilson. And Nina Wilson shot Jack Meyes. And Jack Meyers shot Arlie W. Schardt. And Arlie W. Schardt shot Roger M. Williams. And Roger M. Williams shot Marcia Gauger. And Marcia Gauger shot Nancy Williams. And Nancy Williams shot Susanne W. Washburn. And Susanne W. Washburn shot Timothy Tyler. And Timothy Tyler shot David C. Lee. And David C. Lee shot James E. Broadhead. And James E. Broadhead shot Robert S. Anson. And Robert S. Anson shot Robert Parker. And Robert Parker shot Donald Birmingham. And Donald Birmingham shot John Steele. And John Steele shot Fortunata Vanderschmidt. And Fortunata Vanderschmidt shot Stephanie Trimble. And Stephanie Trimble shot Hugh Sidey. And Hugh Sidey shot Edwin W. Goodpaster. And Edwin W. Goodpaster shot Bonnie Angelo. And Bonnie Angelo shot Walter Bennett. And Walter Bennett shot Martha Reingold. And Martha Reingold shot Lane Fortinberry. And Lane Fortinberry shot Jess Cook. And Jess Cook shot Kenneth Danforth. And Kenneth Danforth shot Marshall Berges. And Marshall Berges shot Samuel R. Iker. And Samuel R. Iker shot John F. Stacks. And John F. Stacks shot Paul R. Hathaway. And Paul R. Hathaway shot Raissa Silverman. And Raissa Silverman shot Patricia Gordon. And Patricia Gordon shot Greta Davis. And Greta Davis shot Harriet Bachman. And Harriet Bachman shot Charles B. Wheat. And Charles B. Wheat shot William Bender. And William Bender shot Alan Washburn. And Alan Washburn shot Julie Adams. And Julie Adams shot Susan Saner. And Susan Saner shot Richard Burgheim. And Richard Burgheim shot Larry Still. And Larry Still shot Alten L. Clingen. And Alten L. Clingen shot Jerry Kirshenbaum.

And Lee Harvey Oswald shot John F. Kennedy. And Jacqueline Kennedy shot Mark S. Goodman. And Mark S. Goodman shot Beverley Davis. And Beverley Davis shot James Willwerth. And James Willwerth shot John J. Austin. And John J. Austin shot Nancy Jalet. And Nancy Jalet shot Leah Shanks. And Leah Shanks shot Christopher Porterfield. And Christopher Porterfield shot Edward Hughes. And Edward Hughes shot Madeleine Berry. And Madeleine Berry shot Hilary Newman. And Hilary Newman shot James A. Linen. And James A. Linen shot James Keogh. And James Keogh shot Putney Westerfield. And Putney Westerfield shot Oliver S. Moore. And Oliver S. Moore shot James Wilde. And James Wilde shot John T. Elson. And John T. Elson shot Rosemary Funger. And Rosemary Funger shot Piri Halasz. And Piri Halasz shot William Mader. And William Mader shot John Larsen. And John Larsen shot Joy Howden. And Joy Howden shot Andria Hourwich. And Andria Hourwich shot Betty Sukyer. And Betty Sukyer shot Ingrid Krosch. And Ingrid Krosch shot John Koffend. And John Koffend shot Rodney Sheppard. And Rodney Sheppard shot Ruth Brine. And Ruth Brine shot Judy Mitnick. And Judy Mitnick shot Paul Hathaway. And Paul Hathaway shot Manon Gaulin. And Manon Gaulin shot Katherine Prager. And Katherine Prager shot Marie Gibbons. And Marie Gibbons shot James E. Broadhead. And James E. Broadhead shot Philip Stacks. And Philip Stacks shot Peter Babcox. And Peter Babcox shot Christopher T. Cory. And Christopher T. Cory shot Erwin Edleman. And Erwin Edleman shot William Forbis. And William Forbis shot Ingrid Carroll..

JAMES SALLIS:

BUBBLES

DAVID, where are you now?

I've searched for you down in the cove, by the little sandstone temple that the Greek built when his daughter married, where a wild cat lives, all butter and ginger; in the Soho pubs and Hampstead house parties; down by the docks where the air smells of banana, oil floats out on the water like Ophelia's gowns, and spiders crept across the top of my black shoes that stood like open graves on the whitewashed boards.

Once, I asked after you at the small cafe on the bridge by Paddington Station and a man in the corner, overhearing, paused with a forkful of soft dry cheese in front of his mouth (his forefinger nicotine-stained halfway down between the joints) and spoke across the room through already-parted lips: "Kilroy, you say? Ah yes, he was here. Remember him well; almost like my own son, he was. Yes, he was here"—then delivered the fork and chewed: a mouthful of crumbling custard. On the brown table beside him sat his teeth, pound notes clenched between them, a pink moneyclip in the morning sun.

("Love, hate, indifference," you used to say in your flamboyant way, "they can work wonders, miracles. If you have belief." And—flamboyantly, extravagantly—I believed. In you. And now have only this, all this guilt, that bangs away inside me.)

Outside the cafe now, four men point in four directions and step backwards until they come together. A delivery boy in white pedals along the bridge and stops before me, returning undelivered another of the cables

by which I have tried to reach you:

Yesterday the cows came
home stop. Bailey expected
later today stop. Where
are you stop.

On the opposite wall of the bridge someone has spray-painted *Kilroy the saviour*. "Is it true, sir?" the delivery boy asks. "Can he really do all they say he can?" I go over and scrape the white letters off into an envelope, marking it *near Paddington Station, 4 Jan, 6 a.m.* Does this mean he has left the city? A lorry comes by, killing the delivery boy, who has tried to follow me across the street.

And so I go walking down Westbourne Grove where teddy bears hang by their ears on the clotheslines, where marzipan elephants lounge in the palms of children and American Indians camp in the dustbins, their salty, teepee smoke spiraling up between the Queen Anne houses. Leaning against one of the spear fences, a flop-hatted old man blows his nose into a tiny rag of flannel then holds it out away from his eyes, looking to see what he's brought up, like a fisher, from the deeps. "Hey, got a sixpence?"—and his huge nostrils hang there in front of my face like two black holes in the morning. As always, walking—its regularity, the rhythm of it—brings me to another kind of rhythm; I always end up singing or, in busier parts of the city, humming quietly to myself. So now as I walk (hopefully toward you) over the gobbets of paint and the heel-spores of crushed orange chalk, past the walls and fences painted with six-foot flowers and diminutive Chinese dragons, past the bake-shops with their pastel facades, I'm singing softly to myself *Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.*

WHO WOULD HAVE thought it. When we squatted together in piles of dust behind the books upstairs, sharing the last disposable yellow paper robe (luckily a 44, so it fitted us perfectly) and nibbling at the cake of vanilla seaweed we found in a drawer when we took the flat? That you should leave, and months later the realisation of what had happened would come so suddenly upon me, and with such force, that I would sit for days without moving or speaking, until friends came at last and carried me away. That finally, obsessed with the depth of my guilt and loss, I should come searching for you, asking everywhere, sending these messages out ahead of me (cables, phonecalls, bits of paper thrown out the window to passers-by), out from my tiny room in Clapham Common, and following these signs across all of London: chalk on brick walls, letters sprayed from cans, empty chocolate wrappers which could be yours....

On the street in front of a fish shop two children are killing one another with wooden swords while all the silver-bubble fisheyes watch them calmly and dogs sit across the street quietly looking on. Farther down, where wind has rattled windows, a burglar alarm clangs. In this amazing new stillness a young man enters a nearby dentist's office ("Half a pint, sir? Three bob, please; just put this over your face") and emerges giggling. The window is filled with old dental tools, toppling in lines off the velvet-covered shelves and looking like instruments for exquisite torture: the relics of orbicular inquisitions.

In Notting Hill Gate (I wonder if you remember this) the buildings catch the wind and lay it like a ribbon down along the pavement; it swirls about my ankles, clinging, resilient, as I tramp through. Three one-man bands glare at one another from the corners of an intersection, waiting for the light. The flowerseller's black Alsatian is wearing a chain of daisies at its neck; it can catch pennies on its tongue. Remembering the old man's nostrils on Westbourne Grove, I make for the tube station—then bump bump bump (down the funny stairs from the tipitittitop). One wall is covered with telephone numbers; vast 69's scratched into the cement with belt-buckles or penknives; a poem in red shoe polish:

During the raids
the lost plane
reported
the war over
the pilot missing

On the other, in a tiny elegant script, is penciled: *When Kilroy returns.* I stop and with people staring over my shoulder scrape the minute grey flakes off into an envelope.

THE THIRD LEVEL is deserted. I stand alone by the track, hearing the far-off rumble of trains and the dim, flat voices that float after me, tangling together, down the corridors behind. I turn to look down the rails and when I turn back, a cleaning machine is rushing toward me, its tiny mechanical arm erect out in front like a bull's horn. Quickly I step back against the wall, into the leering two-dimensional arms of a Chinese prostitute. *"Look out! Mind!"* the little machine shouts—penny-sized speaker rattling, distorting under the load—then pulls to a stop just past me and comes slowly backwards.

"Who," it asks (the arm quivering), "are you," (the arm stabbing out toward me). "I" (bending back on itself to point, dead centre, at itself from above) "am The Machine. *Look out for The Machine*!" A pause. "I'll get you, you know; going to take your place, replace you, do away with your sort." (The arm stabs out again, almost to my knee.) "And about time, too. So *look out*! I'm giving you fair warning now!"

It starts away; then stops, purrs a moment and returns, the little treads lugging sadly backwards.

"What are you doing here!" it demands. "Let me see your passport! Would you like your shoes shined. They need it. I have some nice red polish."

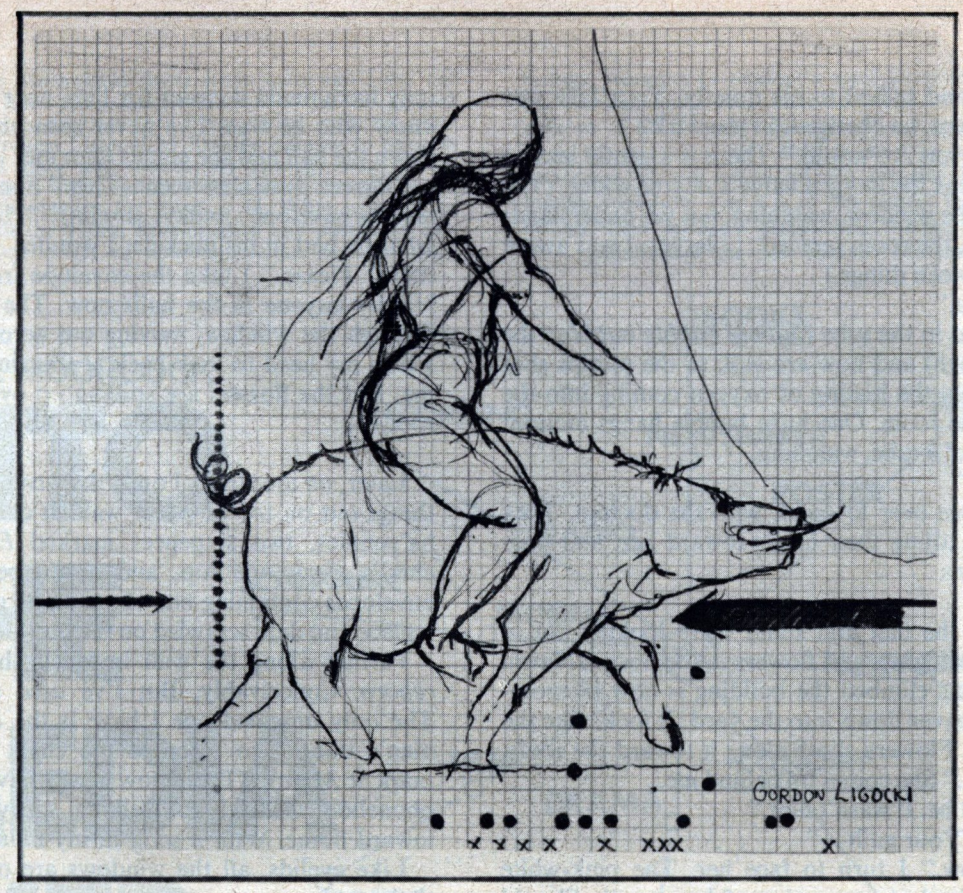
I back away from the arm.

"Kilroy," I say quickly. "Have you seen him; has he been here?"

"Kilroy! You know Kilroy! Yes, he was here!" The little machine pauses, waving its arm thoughtfully. "*He* listened to me. We used to sit here for hours, talking over philosophical problems—mostly ethics, I remember. That was before he went away." The arm droops. "A good man. Sometimes, thinking about a man like that, it almost makes me want to forgive you for everything. Almost." The arm suddenly springs back to life, full of excitement. "Do you know where he is!"

"I'm afraid not. I'm trying to find him."

The arm wilts again. "The only one who ever had enough sense, enough compassion, to listen. *He* knew I



was right. . . ."

"When I do, I'll let you know, and tell him that you asked after him." I turn and start back up the corridors, but the little machine shoots around in front of me.

"Just a moment," it says. "I'm supposed to give you a riddle, you know, before I can let you go." It sits for several minutes, the tiny arm flopping and waving, in deep thought. "But I can't think of one just now. Would you like to hear me clap my hand. I suppose it's all right for you to pass, since you know Kilroy. But I should have something done about those shoes if I were you."

I walk up the tunnel. Behind me the little cleaner shouts: "You don't have much time left, you know. *Watch out for The Machines*!"—and goes zooming away down the concrete beside the tracks. The last syllable had blurred, rattling like a cough; apparently the speaker had finally been too much strained, and the diaphragm had cracked.

I climb back up past all the posters of girls in yellow swimwear and the ticket machines into the crowds. It's five now, and the streets are full of dogs. As I walk past a row of phonebooths outside a Wimpy Bar, one of the phones rings. I beat the others there and pick it up:

"Yes?"

"We've found him." Outside, it's raining; this booth contains me perfectly, with the water breaking on the grey glass, destroying the world outside.

"Where?"

"There's been an accident. Mercy Hospital. He's asking for you. Hurry." The rain is washing cigarette butts up under the door and into the booth. On a minicab sign someone has written on the cab's window: *He slept here.* Not bothering this time to collect the sign, I ring for a cab.

AT THE HOSPITAL I'm greeted by a nurse in layers of diaphanous white that slide over one another, with pink somewhere underneath. She's painted black rims around her eyes, and has a pink-white mouth.

"This way, hurry. He's been asking for you. It may be all that's keeping him alive, making him hold on."

We go down white tile halls where everyone else walks near the walls; the centre is new and clean. Then into a room full of soft murmurs and liquid sounds. Five surgeons squat in one corner talking together quietly. A nurse kneels by the bedside crying. Outside the window four young girls stand still and straight, and sing.

He lies on the bed under a clear plastic tent, with the sheets pulled up to his chin. All around him the air is filled with tubes and small, pumping engines. Fluids run bubbling through the tubes; go slowly down, and more quickly up, along them. It's as though his blood system, lymph system—all the delicate soft machinery of his body—has been brought out into the world, redirected through glass and plastic. He is larger than the rest of us. (I remember the long months I lay still and dazed, recovering from the loss of your leaving. Perhaps it was here that I lay. My guilt sustains me.)

When the nurse folds back a flap in the tent he opens his eyes, and I hear the soughing of the pumps more distinctly.

"You . . . came." When he speaks, the fluids run faster in the tubes, gurgling in time with his voice. Bubbles forming, bursting, passing slowly, like fisheyes, along the tubes.

"I . . . told them . . . you would." His eyes are grey, pupil and iris barely distinguishable from the rest. It occurs to me now that he can see nothing; I could be anyone; it wouldn't matter. (And how you smiled and

brought coffee and talked to me quietly. Your face was always so different, so changed, in the dark.)

"I . . . knew you . . . would." There is a gentle hissing as the nurse opens the oxygen valve a degree wider. (The way I stood at the window, watching, not yet understanding. Afterwards, the room seemed . . . larger. I was aware of the space between things.)

"Bless . . . you."

Fluids jumped in the tube (*bubble bubble bubble*: the rhythm of a laugh) and now are still, as the pumps shut off. There is only the hissing of oxygen coming into the tent, out into the room. One huge bubble hangs motionless at the bend of a tube, watching.

"Is he dead?"

The nurse goes over to speak with the doctors. They listen carefully, tilting their heads toward her, and nod. The nurse returns:

"Yes."

So I go into the hall and stand there looking out at the polished green grass and flowers in the hospital lawn. A vine which has climbed the building is now blossoming, scattering leaves down into the yard. It looks like the veins in a hand. Flowers climb along it toward the roofs.

"I'm sorry . . ." She comes up behind me.

"You needn't be. It wasn't him."

"Then who? Your guilt—"

"I don't know." I turn to face her. The pink-white lipstick is smudged at one corner of her mouth. Should I tell her? How much she resembles his wife; that this may have made it easier for him, near the end? "I don't know who he was. I've never seen him before." I start down the hall and she comes after me.

"Please. Just a moment. This." She holds out a large manila envelope: bulky, jangling. "His personal effects, what he had in his pockets. I wonder . . . could you take them? Please." I take the envelope from her and leave. Hardly anyone in the halls now. The sun is slanting in through the window, moving out across the tiles. When I turn my head to look back at the vine, it almost blinds me. But the flowers are spilling up over the edge of the roof.

Later, on the street, I open the envelope and spread the things out on top of a low wall. It contains: thirty-nine ha'pennies, two sixpences marked *EM* in red ink, a child's gyroscope top, and a number of small white envelopes containing bits of paint and graphite, each with a place and date scrawled on the outside.

Farther along the wall in black chalk: *We shall be reborn.* Conceivably. But I've used all my envelopes. The only unsealed one I have is the one with the dead man's things—so I scrape the chalk off into that and mark it *Mercy.* (Tomorrow I will have to return to the phonebooth.) And go walking softly down the street toward home. With a song in my mouth.

Like eyelids, all the windows are open, rolled up on their cords.

And night blooms over the heads of the buildings.

Disturbance of the Peace continued from page 12

He remembers waking on Mr. Munrose's leather couch. The father of ——— will not roost in the bank anymore. Suppose he had continued to return day after day and moved into the new building when it was complete. Floyd Copman imagines a little icon of the old man placed inside the scale model of glass and steel.

The train sound fills the station, then the train itself, showering sparks. Floyd Copman enters the car. The doors glide shut.

There are several seats. Floyd Copman chooses one facing in the train's direction. The train rocks his body.

Floyd Copman wonders where they will take the old man. To the vaults, he thinks. What a watchdog he would make. What an alarm. To a hospital. Print George Washington on lettuce leaves and feed him salads for his remaining years. The father of ———.

At Lexington Avenue a crowd of shoppers pushes into the car. Soon all the seats are occupied. A man stands in front of Floyd Copman reading the afternoon paper. Floyd Copman scans the headlines and thinks of the world's pain.

The train is in the tunnel under the East River. It loses speed. Floyd Copman remembers that there is construction. The train waits. Floyd Copman thinks of the train under tons of water. Not water, mud. He knows that this tunnel is probably the safest place in case of atomic attack.

He sees the old man's face. The taste of money fills his mouth. Glossy. Oily. The bill was filthy with germs. Who knows how long it was in circulation? They will find the wet bill on the floor. The cleaning woman will find it. No.

Floyd Copman reaches into his pocket. He has the bill. Yes. He remembered to pocket the bill. It was a cruel thing, a cruel game. A private stupid game.

The train is moving. Floyd Copman thinks of his wife. He thinks of the baby kicking inside her. He remembers a ridiculous story Marvin Ash told about a woman whose baby cried inside her in a movie theatre. Impossible. It was nice of Marvin Ash to volunteer to come home with him. Of course, Mr. Munrose insisted.

Floyd Copman thinks it is hard for his wife to be carrying in summer. Better in autumn or winter. The train rushes into Queens Plaza. There is an exchange of passengers.

Floyd Copman thinks of his wife in the apartment alone. He wonders if he will tell her the story. Why say anything?

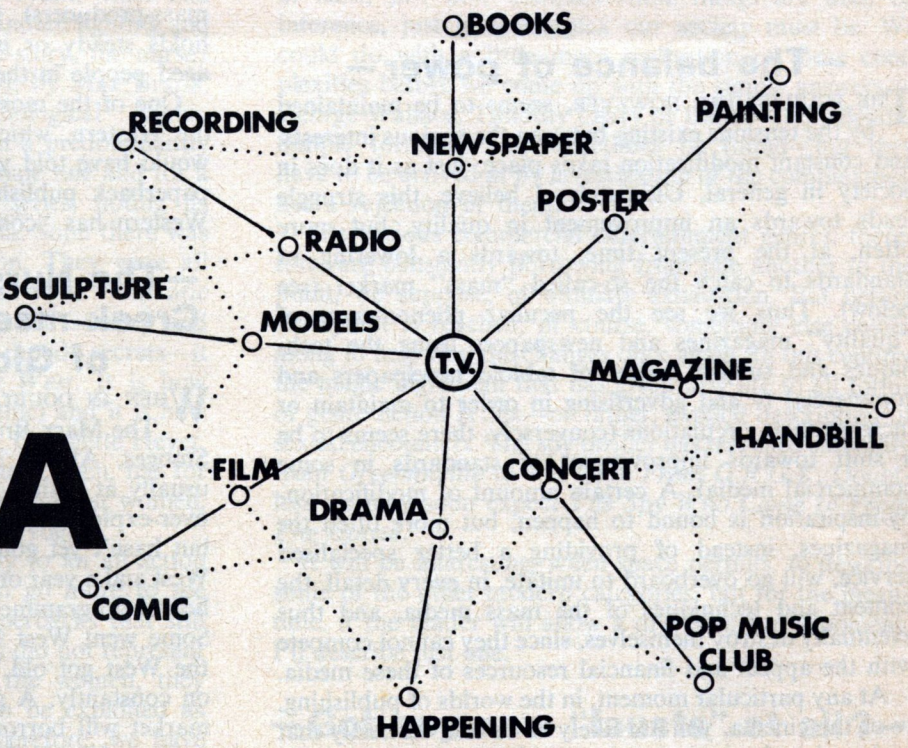
The baby will be born in September. September, August, July, June, May, April, March, February, January.

Which night in January? Floyd Copman thinks himself silly for wondering. The thing is, one of the wrigglers found his way home.

When I wrote The Mechanical Bride some years ago I did not realise that I was attempting a defence of book-culture against the new media. I can now see that I was trying to bring some of the critical awareness fostered by literary training to bear on the new media of sight and sound. My strategy was wrong, because my obsession with literary values blinded me to much that was actually happening for good or ill. What we have to defend today is not the values developed in any particular culture or by any one mode of communication. Modern technology presumes to attempt a total transformation of man and his environment. This calls in turn for an inspection and defence of all human values. And so far as merely human aid goes, the citadel of this defence must be located in analytical awareness of the nature of the creative process involved in human cognition. For it is in this citadel that science and technology have already established themselves in their manipulation of the new media.—Marshall McLuhan.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK

INTO THE MEDIA WEB



—Hang loose. Do your own thing—

NOTHING INVENTED EVER dies.

Ideas, tools, methods of study, art forms, crafts; though these may sometimes have only a few practitioners, there often comes a moment when the crank is mysteriously transformed into the visionary or, indeed, vice versa (depending entirely on society's particular needs or enthusiasms at any one time).

McLuhan's vision of the electronic global village may have considerable validity, but even McLuhan does not suggest that the most powerful and acceptable media will completely extinguish the less powerful, and those of his admirers who do say this are probably wrong, for they reckon without the human factor—the capacity of an individual to become bored by any one particular medium or part of that medium. Indeed, the emergence of audio-visual media should ultimately stimulate the printed media to do what they are best fitted to do and to do it better than ever before, as the advent of steam resulted in the building of the clipper ships; a few clippers are still built and sailed every year, and their presence enriches our culture (sailing vessels of all kinds are also, perhaps, society's insurance against a total breakdown of communications in the event of fuel and power supplies failing!).

Certainly the printed medium in Britain and the U.S. is no longer "boss" (although more books are printed every year) and perhaps ultimately most of us will cease to need to read, if we are served to our complete satisfaction by the audio-visual media—but the *ability* to read if we care to will remain, even if, for most of the time, it becomes a quirky, donnish pastime, like making up limericks in Latin. Doubtless, too, some people will get considerable pleasure from reading novels "in the original" rather than from listening to them, particularly since the presence of an actual voice, as opposed to the author's written "voice", may even be intrusive. Most Beethoven is played too fast these days, but Archive Records specialise in recordings of classical music played as they were meant to be played, and Archive is enjoying an increasing share of the classical record market.

The advent of a new invention, therefore, while making our society more complex, also enriches that society and demands increased refinement of sensibility and intellectual sophistication in the individual.

At present we have by no means reached the point McLuhan visualises and the various means of communicating ideas, information and entertainment have

achieved a certain equilibrium. This does not mean, however, that this has worked to the advantage of all the media, or that the public is sufficiently well served by its various media. The industries themselves wish to exploit the largest possible market and are prepared to compromise in terms of quality and presentation to get it, while, logically, one would have thought, they would survive, in the long term, by specialising in what they do best.

—The balance of power—

THE EQUILIBRIUM, HOWEVER, seems to be maintained by the tensions existing between the various interests, and constant modification takes place, just as it does in society in general. Ultimately, I believe, this struggle leads towards an improvement in quality, but more often, at the present time, towards a lowering of standards to catch the so-called "mass" market (see below). Thus we see the peculiar phenomenon of "quality" magazines and newspapers using the techniques and subject matter of tabloid newspapers and commercial tv and advertising in order to maintain or increase their circulations (conversely, there seems to be a shift towards improvement of standards in some commercial media). A certain amount of modification-by-inspiration is bound to happen, but more often the magazines, instead of providing a better specialised service, will go overboard to imitate, in every detail, the content and techniques of the mass media, and thus eventually destroy themselves, since they cannot compete with the appeal and financial resources of these media.

At any particular moment, in the worlds of publishing, tv or the cinema, you are likely to be told earnestly that such-and-such a genre or approach is "dead", i.e. it no longer seems to have a large enough public to make it commercially viable. At any other moment you are told, with some surprise, that such-and-such a thing has "come back". The media masters seem to regard this as a mystical matter, as if public taste were something created by random supernatural means. But there are many publics, and sometimes their tastes overlap sufficiently to produce the so-called "mass market".

The mass market is never really the same and gradually alters over the years, though its basic needs remain the same (essentially it wants reassurance that its assumptions about itself and its society are worth holding) and the media will adapt to serve it. Usually the "new" ideas are not cooked up in the vice-president's smoke-filled office, but are hit upon either by luck or by instinct (by luck if a rather tired tv producer works out a twist on an old formula, or by instinct if a newcomer, more in touch with public taste, is allowed to put an "offbeat" together). If the "offbeat" show (usually a variation on the old themes) is discovered to have enormous appeal, then all the shows become "offbeat" that season and although quickly assimilated and made big business, will continue to be considered offbeat long after they have become staple fare. Usually the big "discovery" is made by publishers (spy fiction, for instance), sometimes by tv producers.

The public gets bored quickly, however, and its tastes, created by its particular social and psychological environment, alter rapidly. There is usually a "constant" public for one particular thing and that "constant" public tends to increase as the population increases or educational facilities become available to a larger percentage of that population. A fad for health foods (if the public becomes nervous of its environment and begins to feel it is being secretly poisoned by mass-produced foods) may come and go (and, of course, be exploited readily by the mass-producers) but the basic health food market holds steady or increases usually with an increase of aged people in the community.

One of the most popular examples of genre fiction is the Western, which a little while ago the tv producer would have told you was "dead" as a safe bet, but the paperback publisher is beginning to discover that the Western has "come back".

—The Nursing Nun from Sixgun Creek meets the Outlaw Doctor of Gloomdark Ranch—

WHEN IN DOUBT, go West.

The Marx Brothers, the Saint, the Ghost, the Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello and a host of others, usually at a time when their original appeal had been over-exploited, went West. Dracula met the Wolfman, but hasn't yet gone West—but a Fiend has walked the West and a year or so ago many elements of the standard horror programme were cropping up in Western settings. Some went West when the West was young and, when the West got old, it went to them. This feedback goes on constantly. A genre failing to get a big share of the market will borrow elements from currently successful genres, often resulting in a final bastardisation acceptable to nobody, and then the "real" thing—the undiluted or slightly modified mixture—will tend to come back in a big way (though not always through the same medium). Note, too, how the fantasy or horror show has been used successfully when married to the domestic comedy show. Sometimes these mixed marriages do not work out (sex *and* horror tend to cancel one another out since the appeal of the horror show is largely to the sexually repressed and they are uncomfortable when the elements are explicitly combined—see *Witchfinder General*—the "logic" of the horror film is contradicted by the "logic" of the "lust in the barn" film).

Eight years or more ago Western paperbacks and comic strips in the United Kingdom were largely "dead". Publishers found that they could not sell sufficient quantities of books to a public large enough to make them a safe viable proposition. Outstanding examples were published occasionally (there is always one person in a publisher's office who tends to represent "constant" taste) and sold relatively well to the "constant" public, but as big business, the Western didn't work. You could no longer publish ten titles a month and know that nine were sure to make you a decent profit and one would make you a very good profit.

The reason for this, of course, was that the Western was then going very strong on television. You could watch a Western pretty nearly every night of the week

and, if you were a Western fan, you got everything you needed from your television set. You didn't go out, unless you were an incredibly rabid fan, and buy books and comics as well, though you might occasionally think of going to a particularly outstanding Western movie like *The Magnificent Seven* or *Rio Bravo*.

Then the usual thing started to happen to the tv Western. It ran out of situations, of ideas, and began borrowing from other genres. *Wagon Train*, which had begun by emphasising rugged action, Indian fighting and the like, took elements from the love-story, the nurse/doctor story (discovered, more or less, by Max Brand, as it happened), the so-called "psychological" drama, and so on. Its audience changed from a predominantly male audience to a predominantly female one and for a while it did extremely well. Other series, noting its success, began to use the same formula. Soon there was hardly a "real" Western on television. They were all love-stories transposed to the West. The romantic situation was heightened by the romantic scenery and the romantic men of action with dark, moody secrets—it was almost *Wuthering Heights Goes West*. It is how the historical romance began (the Gothic) and it is how it seems to have continued (*Angelique*, Georgette Heyer, Frank Yerby, etc.). This kind of Western, then, has for a long time been a mixture irresistible to most women, and still enjoys a reasonably successful vogue.

But then men—who respond largely to an all-action formula—felt cheated. They began to go more to see Western movies and buy Western paperbacks that still offered the basic formula. Though they did not represent as large a section of the public as the women, they represented a large enough section to be exploited as a "mass". In the past year or so, therefore, we have seen a rapid increase in the numbers of paperback Westerns published by major paperback publishers (Corgi's buying of dozens of J. T. Edson books), and we have been able to see a good number of well-made Western films.

Admittedly, even these have modified slightly to satisfy the sentiments of makers and public (relationships are more complicated, for instance) and a certain number of humorous Westerns have also been popular (an undercurrent of irony, at very least, is perceptible in most good Westerns these days).

The situation is altering subtly all the time and even now, doubtless, the paperback Western has begun its gradual decline and the tv "basic formula" Western is beginning to gain in popularity again. The relationships between the media exist all the time, but the strength of the influence varies (I have deliberately made no reference to the influence of the mass media on the arts, which is, of course, nowadays quite marked). While tv is currently the "boss" medium, having replaced the printed book and newspaper that was "boss" a hundred years ago, the other media influence it as much as it influences them. The lines of correspondence, of influence and so on, between the media may be seen as a web (see Figure 1) with tv as the central node or "tension point". The figure is not intended to show relative influence (a conventional matrix diagram would do that better) but rather to display the relative complexity of the inter-relationships between media. At no one time, of course, can you "fix" the overall popularity of any one form. If the web figure were three-dimensional and modelling the changes as they took place, it would shimmer and shift with millions of tiny movements, would extend and contract imperceptibly in different sections. It would be very beautiful and, naturally, supremely enigmatic. The figure would serve to show us, at least, *just how complex these things are* and, by inference, just how complex our society must be. We could do with a little more realisation of these complexities before we come up with the simple answers of George Wallace, Timothy Leary or Danny Cohn-Bendit. Simple formulae can sometimes be found—but they have to be arrived at by investigation of the complexities, not a rejection of them.

The various commercial entertainment genres, therefore, are constantly borrowing from one another to the point, we suppose, of ultimate exhaustion. But before that point is reached, of course, something else comes along to help ring the changes once again. In this century the magic ingredient that has given new life to all forms of genre fiction is Sex—or rather, explicit description of sexual encounters. The spy thriller has travelled smoothly from *Greenmantle* to *The Man From O.R.G.Y.* Doubtless we may soon expect *The Spy Who Came In From The Corral*.

It will be interesting, when space permits, to describe some of the other modern categories, but for the meantime, if the reader will allow a diversion for a moment, I'll describe just one.

—Got any new "fausts" at all?—

AN INDUSTRY THAT has come more and more to rely (somewhat desperately) on the whizz-kid, has in turn seemed to develop a kind of whizz-kid fiction. He and his fortunes have become the established subject of a genre in its own right. You know the formula. Bright young man sacrifices something to make it, makes it, holds it, loses grip (a woman is involved), falls (spiritually or physically, you take your pick). In British films this has been a steadily exploited formula from *Room At The Top* to *I'll Never Forget Whatsisname?* Often they are produced by ex-admen. For ex-admen they are doubtless beautifully traumatic or "true". For the public they offer comfort: glamour, riches and beautiful women are not really worth having—look what they do to a man. In American fiction this has been a constant theme for something like fifty years and has been the subject of films as diverse as *Citizen Kane* or *The Carpetbaggers*. The genre hasn't received an established name yet—maybe the profit-and-losser is as good a term as any. It's the old comforter (the Faust story) dressed up.

The strange thing is, of course, that this school is still generally considered to be a "literary" school rather than a commercial one. Its practitioners are called "novelists" and not "faust-writers". They are essentially writers of romance (as are the writers of any established genre) without the stigma of seeming to be commercial hacks.

The profit-and-losser, therefore, is a viable commercial

genre with the added appeal, in the minds of its public and practitioners, of being a quality product, like the works of Charles Dickens or Henry James.

—Baby, you know I love you, but will you sell?—

ALL MEDIA ARE commercial media. All depend on money for survival, all depend, ultimately, on selling their products. These products can be sold on the mass market or the "prestige" market, can be sponsored by soup manufacturers, public institutions or private patrons. The familiar is saleable (you can sell a tomato juice carton for a thousand dollars because people "know" it) and the unfamiliar is a little harder to sell if you haven't massive backing (you can sell a new art movement to your art patrons if you have the time and money to spend convincing them of the movement's merits). A public is a public, however small a percentage it is of the overall public. A "discriminating" public is usually richer, so to them you sell your goods dearer. Power is money, money is power. Everyone struggles for power—the tv company for the biggest share of the market, the independent artist for recognition by a minority.

The nicest thing that can happen to an artist is for someone to think so well of his work that he will pay for it. The thing starts to go wrong, of course, when payment is confused with merit as opposed to popularity, and the artist will often confuse himself with his work and start selling himself because that is easier. The best ones, we suppose, survive.

All mass media are without doubt strictly commercial. Whether they are respectable publishing houses or, in the public view, less respectable tv companies, they are in the business to make money. They may wish to make money so that they can stay in business and continue to give the public what they think is the best (a goal often swiftly obscured) or they may wish to make money simply so they can get rich. The policies of publishers and tv producers alike are dictated largely by fashion. Sometimes, in a small edition or an off-peak slot, somebody's individual enthusiasm may be pushed and it may even be found to have a public, but generally speaking a good publisher or tv producer is one who is thought to have his feet on the ground, to have a good commercial sense. The odd hero is the man who can produce quality goods that sell very well. But if he stays in the organisation he soon loses his flair and modifications rapidly take place—he will arrive at a barren formula that sells or he will desperately cast around for a new formula. There's nothing more pathetic than yesterday's whizz-kid.

Popularity and merit are not the same thing. Merit offers you something new or something infinitely interpretable, while popularity comes from giving the public something old—the difference between telling it what it doesn't want to know and what it does want to know. Sometimes popularity and merit are combined when the public thinks it's getting what it wants (late Dickens is a perfect example) or when an artist has gained authority from initially giving the public what it wants and then branching out and actually influencing public taste (the Beatles have done this). Sometimes it works the other way—a man will begin as an artist and wind up as a popular entertainer, by imitating his imitators, a danger which many artists—like Harold Pinter for instance—must constantly be aware of.

—Who am I? What are you? Will it work?—

THOUGH TV MAY be the boss medium, it still relies heavily on the other media for its inspiration—for its drama, its news programmes, its general entertainment programmes. Gradually it is developing its own ideas and is promising to be the most stimulating developer of certain film techniques; but it will be a long time yet before it can do without the other media and have, like painting, the independence of a "pure" art form. TV producers have not yet been able to produce a thoroughly original synthesis incorporating the various influences of the longer-established media. Some of the best entertainment on television in Britain, for instance, still seems to be in the form of faithfully dramatised serials of the works of Dickens, Galsworthy and Henry James, or plays taken from the short stories of Lawrence, Kipling, Conrad, Conan Doyle, de Maupassant, O. Henry, Algernon Blackwood, Saki and others. Only in the documentary field is it becoming outstanding in its own right, and of course the immediacy of its news programmes and debates gives it a distinct edge over newspapers and weekly news magazines.

So far, however, even where documentaries and news are concerned, television cannot completely fulfil the roles of the newspaper or weekly review—for television is not easily portable and not easily recordable. Therefore you cannot refer back to a television programme, you cannot watch it at your own convenience and you cannot roll it up and stuff it in your pocket. Ultimately, of course, it will be possible to obtain cheap, pocket video-recorders and only then will the newspapers and reviews be seriously threatened, but it is highly likely that they will not be completely extinguished if they continue to serve, say, a section of the public which is not satisfactorily served by television. Doubtless, however, they will undergo considerable modifications—from paper form to microfilm form to audio-visual form; by this time, too, the holograph may be in general use and the images will be three-dimensional. All that will be left to do will be for someone to discover means of communicating smell and touch (doubtless in an initially unwieldy form). The total experience will be in a strip you wrap, like a pair of glasses, around your eyes and ears, or even beamed straight into the brain by laser.

The nature and function of the various media, therefore, tend to change, but the media themselves do not perish, neither does it seem that, in certain specialised areas, they are actually "dominated" by rival media, though their exponents may *feel* dominated (because they have not properly worked out their role).

Since all mass media are commercial media (and all media are healthy if they are financially healthy—in the sense that they can afford to experiment more) then we may analyse them in terms of simple economics.

If, say, the cost of a television programme is £15,000, then that programme must reach an audience of, say, a half million people if it is to be deemed successful. If, on the other hand, the cost of producing a book is around £1,000 then it only needs to sell (at, say 25s.) to 5,000 people to be deemed very successful. Obviously the actual economics of publishing and television are differently arranged and the turn-over is in relation to expenditure, but since there is actually less profit or loss at stake in publishing, a publisher can afford to take several risks whereas a tv producer can only afford to take one or two (assuming he's allowed the chance at all). This means that two things make the media of television and hardcover publishing interdependent—the publisher can test out the market at less capital risk than can the television producer, and the television producer can test out the potential audience for the publisher's wares.

In practice, of course, many publishers are not willing to take many risks at all, largely because of the random and unspecialised nature of their business methods which result in enormous wastage of time and money (they are still trying to compete in areas where they have been eclipsed by tv etc.) and partly because most of them are as incapable of recognising genuine innovation as the public they serve. Hardcover publishers still effectively control the publishing world, through a series of agreements that set the terms offered to authors and the trade and at which the paperback rights of a book are offered to a paperback publisher.

The large firms tend, like all large firms, to get moribund and cautious, but these are usually stimulated, in their turn, by the smaller and younger enterprises that are constantly springing up (and usually falling down). And understanding of this situation has led to hardcover publishers employing "fresher" staff, either to produce special "new fiction" lists under the imprint of the company, or to head new imprints run by the company (a better method seems to be for publishers to share imprints and risks with a smaller publishing venture). In recent years, this worthy impulse of publishers has led to the employing of many whizz kids who are employed more from the ability to convey enthusiasm and energy than from any proven ability. The result is often fairly disastrous for all concerned and means that publishers who have had their fingers burned will look on young talent with deep suspicion. The confusion of spontaneity with originality seems to be a common one these days.

—"I like your spirit, lad. Why don't you come and be destroyed by my organisation?—

THE IRONY, OF course, is that much of the genuine talent is attracted to the higher rewards of television and advertising which do not have the means or motivation, as have publishers, of encouraging their originality (or, strictly speaking, find themselves frustrating the people they employ because of the complexity and heavy financial overheads of their organisations). Given that these assumptions are correct, the logical thing to do is for the richer media to finance, in some way, the poorer media. Usually this comes about from sales of film rights and the like, but there are now tv and film companies which directly finance publishing enterprises (and there are publishing enterprises which derive their chief income from their tv interests). This, however, tends to be detrimental to quality. A company like the Granada organisation will buy controlling interests in hardcover and paperback often with the worthy aim of keeping publishing alive and healthy, as well as with the aim of controlling as many media as possible, since they recognise the complementary roles of the media. The danger here seems to be that centralisation of accounting tends to put the power into the hands of people used to the steady increase of black figures (television profits) and not the regular and disturbing intrusion of red figures (publishing losses). They usually have considerable power in an organisation and begin to demand larger profits from the publishers which, if the publishers are forced to produce them, results in fewer and fewer risks being taken and the sad spectacle of the usual desperate aping of sensational television and newspaper methods to push up sales figures. The "rationalisation" of accounting methods seems, in the long run, to militate effectively against the autonomy and sense of purpose and idealism (morale) of the publishing concerns affected. This, in my own experience, has certainly happened in the IPC empire and in the Thomson empire in recent years—defeatist cynicism takes over from inspiration. In short, monopoly, no matter how enlightened and idealistic, tends to result in mediocrity.

Because, as institutions, the industries concerned are still trying to use 19th-century methods applied to 21st-century situations (often because their shareholders and governors will not allow them time for thorough reorganisation) the independence of the individual seems to be threatened and the role of the original creative person is becoming obscured by the pressures on him to produce bland "safe-selling" work when he should be encouraged to produce the best examples of the form he is using. The argument for doing this remains economic and not idealistic. Ultimately quality is more commercial than trivia. *Bonnie and Clyde* made (or will make) much more money for fewer people at a smaller investment than, say, a dozen big-budget pictures that have been cynically made. The commercial reaction, of course, is always to make more versions of *Bonnie and Clyde* (if one's good ten are better). It always will be the reaction of most of the people in any industry. For every innovator there are a few hundred imitators. There seems no reason, however, to encourage these people to do what they are incapable of not doing. We might just as well encourage the new Arthur Penns to do something that Arthur Penn hasn't done yet—and do it better.

The same applies to all the media (Hollywood already seems partially to understand the truth of the above), particularly those who have lost their empires but have not yet found their roles. The current flailing around for any catchpenny device, that might or might not make a few more people listen to radio or buy a book, seems to me to be at once cynical, foolish and economically unsound.

This essay is an abridged extract from "Popcorn" (Moorcock/Sallis) published 1969 (Gollancz).

THOMAS M. DISCH:
CASABLANCA

IN THE MORNING the man with the red fez always brought them coffee and toast on a tray. He would ask them how it goes, and Mrs. Richmond, who had some French, would say it goes well. The hotel always served the same kind of jam, plum jam. That eventually became so tiresome that Mrs. Richmond went out and bought their own jar of strawberry jam, but in a little while that was just as tiresome as the plum jam. Then they alternated, having plum jam one day, and strawberry jam the next. They wouldn't have taken their breakfasts in the hotel at all, except for the money it saved.

When, on the morning of their second Wednesday at the Belmonte, they came down to the lobby, there was no mail for them at the desk. "You can't really expect them to think of us here," Mrs. Richmond said in a piqued tone, for it had been her expectation.

"I suppose not." Fred agreed.

"I think I'm sick again. It was that funny stew we had last night. Didn't I tell you? Why don't *you* go out and get the newspaper this morning?"

So Fred went, by himself, to the news-stand on the corner. It had neither the Times nor the Tribune. There weren't even the usual papers from London. Fred went to the magazine store nearby the Marhaba, the big luxury hotel. On the way someone tried to sell him a

gold watch. It seemed to Fred that everyone in Morocco was trying to sell gold watches.

The magazine store still had copies of the Times from last week. Fred had read those papers already. "Where is today's Times?" he asked loudly, in English.

The middle-aged man behind the counter shook his head sadly, either because he didn't understand Fred's question or because he didn't know the answer. He asked Fred how it goes.

"Byen," said Fred, without conviction, "byen."

The local French newspaper, *La Vigie Marocaine*, had black, portentous headlines, which Fred could not decipher. Fred spoke "four languages: English, Irish, Scottish, and American." With only those languages, he insisted, one could be understood anywhere in the free world.

At ten o'clock, Bulova watch time, Fred found himself, as though by chance, outside his favourite ice cream parlour. Usually when he was with his wife, he wasn't able to indulge his sweet tooth, because Mrs. Richmond, who had a delicate stomach, distrusted Moroccan dairy products, unless boiled.

The waiter smiled and said, "Good morning, Mister Richmon." Foreigners were never able to pronounce his name right for some reason.

Fred said, "Good morning."

"How are you?"

"I'm just fine, thank you."

"Good, good," the waiter said. Nevertheless, he looked saddened. He seemed to want to say something to Fred, but his English was very limited.

It was amazing, to Fred, that he had to come halfway around the world to discover the best damned ice cream sundaes he'd ever tasted. Instead of going to bars, the young men of the town went to ice cream parlours, like this, just as they had in Fred's youth, in Iowa, during Prohibition. It had something to do, here in Casablanca, with the Moslem religion.

A ragged shoe-shine boy came in and asked to shine Fred's shoes, which were very well shined already. Fred looked out the plate glass window to the travel agency across the street. The boy hissed *monsieur, monsieur,* until Fred would have been happy to kick him. The wisest policy was to ignore the beggars. They went away quicker if you just didn't look at them. The travel agency displayed a poster showing a pretty young blonde, rather like Doris Day, in a cowboy costume. It was a poster for Pan-American airlines.

At last the shoe-shine boy went away. Fred's face was flushed with stifled anger. His sparse white hair made the redness of the flesh seem all the brighter, like a winter sunset.

A grown man came into the ice cream parlour with a bundle of newspapers, French newspapers. Despite his lack of French, Fred could understand the headlines. He bought a copy for twenty francs and went back to the hotel, leaving half the sundae uneaten.

The minute he was in the door, Mrs. Richmond cried out, "Isn't it terrible?" She had a copy of the paper already spread out on the bed. "It doesn't say *anything* about Cleveland."

Cleveland was where Nan, the Richmonds' married daughter, lived. There was no point in wondering about their own home. It was in Florida, within fifty miles of the Cape, and they'd always known that if there were a war it would be one of the first places to go.

"The dirty reds!" Fred said, flushing. His face began to cry. "God damn them to hell! What did the newspaper say? How did it start?"

"Do you suppose," Mrs. Richmond asked, "that Billy and Midge could be at Grandma Holt's farm?"

Fred paged through *La Vigie Marocaine* helplessly, looking for pictures. Except for the big cutout of a mushroom cloud on the front page and a stock picture on the second of the president in a cowboy hat, there were no photos. He tried to read the lead story but it made no sense.

Mrs. Richmond rushed out of the room, crying aloud.

Fred wanted to tear the paper into ribbons. To calm himself he poured a shot from the pint of bourbon he kept in the dresser. Then he went out into the hall and called through the locked door to the W.C.: "Well, I'll bet we knocked hell out of *them* at least."

This was of no comfort to Mrs. Richmond.

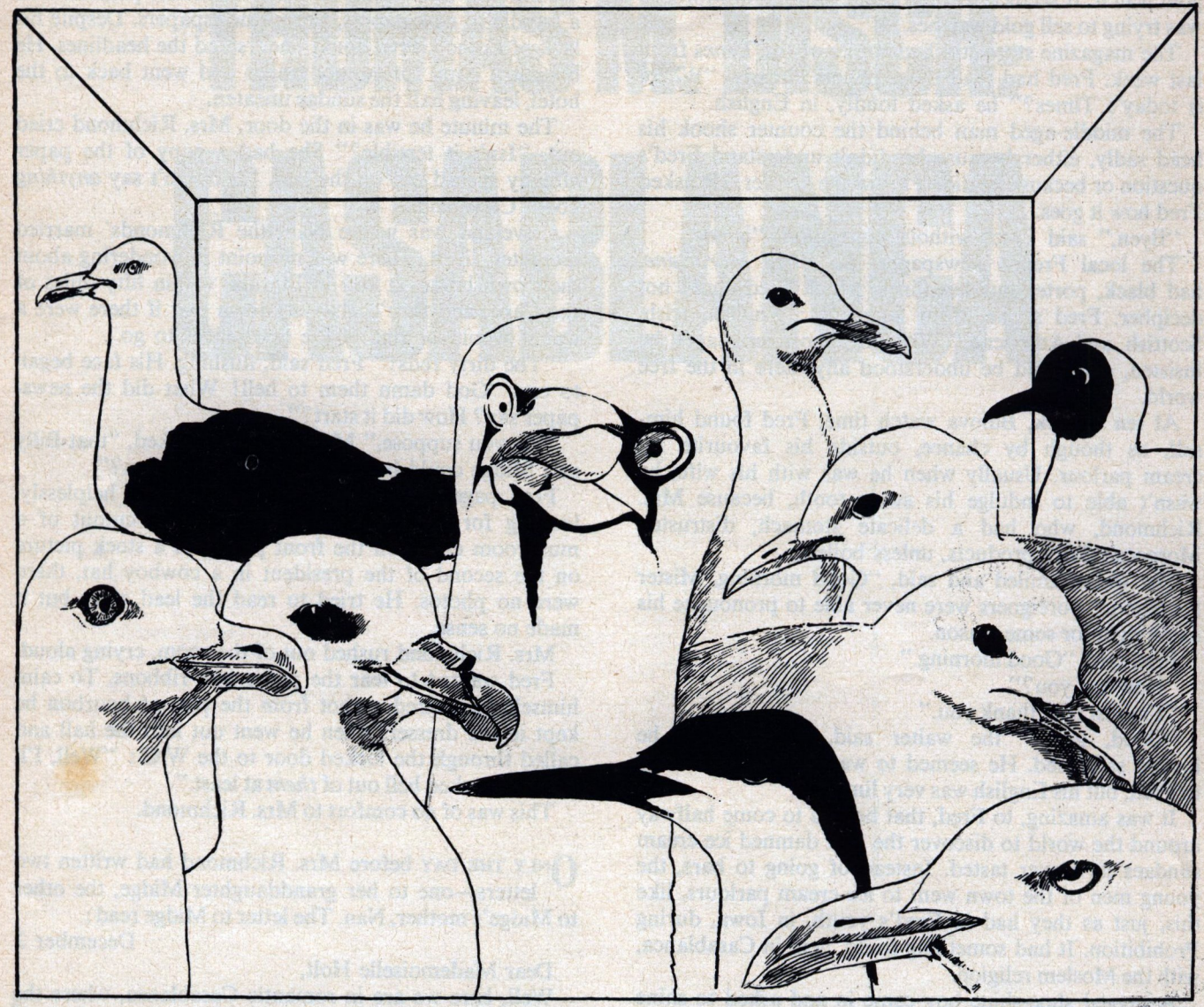
ONLY THE DAY before Mrs. Richmond had written two letters—one to her granddaughter Midge, the other to Midge's mother, Nan. The letter to Midge read:

December 2

Dear Mademoiselle Holt,

Well, here we are in romantic Casablanca, where the old and the new come together. There are palm trees growing on the boulevard outside our hotel window, and sometimes it seems that we never left Florida at all. In Marrakesh we bought presents for you and Billy, which you should get in time for Christmas if the mails are good. Wouldn't you like to know what's in those packages! But you'll just have to wait till Christmas!

You should thank God every day, darling, that you live in America. If you could only see the poor Moroccan children, begging on the streets. They aren't able to go to school, and many of them don't even have shoes or warm clothes. And don't think it doesn't get cold here, even if it is Africa! You and Billy don't know how lucky



you are!

On the train ride to Marrakesh we saw the farmers plowing their fields in *December*. Each plow has one donkey and one camel. That would probably be an interesting fact for you to tell your geography teacher in school.

Casablanca is wonderfully exciting, and I often wish that you and Billy were here to enjoy it with us. Someday, perhaps! Be good—remember it will be Christmas soon.

Your loving Grandmother,
"Grams"

The second letter, to Midge's mother, read as follows:

Dec. 2, Mond. afternoon

Dear Nan,

There's no use my pretending any more with *you*! You saw it in my first letter—before I even knew my own feelings. Yes, Morocco has been a terrible disappointment. You wouldn't believe some of the things that have happened. For instance, it is almost impossible to mail a package out of this country! I will have to wait till we get to Spain, therefore, to send Billy and Midge their Xmas presents. Better not tell B & M that however!

Marrakesh was terrible. Fred and I got *lost* in the native quarter, and we thought we'd never escape! The filth is unbelievable, but if I talk about that it will only

make me ill. After our experience on "the wrong side of the tracks" I wouldn't leave our hotel. Fred got very angry, and we took the train back to Casablanca the same night. At least there are decent restaurants in Casablanca. You can get a very satisfactory French-type dinner for about $1.00.

After all this you won't believe me when I tell you that we're going to stay here two more weeks. That's when the next boat leaves for Spain. Two more weeks!!! Fred says take an airplane, but you know me. And I'll be d——ed if I'll take a trip on the local railroad with all our luggage, which is the only other way.

I've finished the one book I brought along, and now I have nothing to read but newspapers. They are printed up in Paris and have mostly the news from India and Angola, which I find too depressing, and the political news from Europe, which I can't ever keep up with. Who is Chancellor Zucker and what does he have to do with the war in India? I say if people would just sit down and try to *understand* each other, most of the world's so-called problems would disappear. Well, that's my opinion, but I have to keep it to myself, or Fred gets an apoplexy. You know Fred! He says, drop a bomb on Red China and to H—— with it! Good old Fred!

I hope you and Dan are both fine and *dan*-dy, and I hope B & M are coming along in school. We were both excited to hear about Billy's A in geography. Fred says it's due to all the stories he's told Billy about our travels. Maybe he's right for once!

Love & kisses,
"Grams"

Fred had forgotten to mail these two letters yesterday afternoon, and now, after the news in the paper, it didn't seem worthwhile. The Holts, Nan and Dan and Billy and Midge, were all very probably dead.

"IT'S SO STRANGE," Mrs. Richmond observed at lunch at their restaurant. "I can't believe it really happened. Nothing has changed here. You'd think it would make more of a difference."

"God damned reds."

"Will you drink the rest of my wine? I'm too upset."

"What do you suppose we should do? Should we try and telephone to Nan?"

"Trans-*Atlantic*? Wouldn't a telegram do just as well?"

So, after lunch, they went to the telegraph office, which was in the main post office, and filled out a form. The message they finally agreed on was: IS EVERY-ONE WELL QUESTION WAS CLEVELAND HIT QUESTION RETURN REPLY REQUESTED. It cost eleven dollars to send off, one dollar a word. The post office wouldn't accept a travellers' cheque, so while Mrs. Richmond waited at the desk, Fred went across the street to the Bank of Morocco to cash it there.

The teller behind the grill looked at Fred's cheque doubtfully and asked to see his passport. He brought cheque and passport into an office at the back of the bank. Fred grew more and more peeved, as the time wore on and nothing was done. He was accustomed to being treated with respect, at least. The teller returned with a portly gentleman not much younger than Fred himself. He wore a striped suit with a flower in his buttonhole.

"Are you Mr. Richmon?" the older gentleman asked.

"Of course I am. Look at the picture in my passport."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Richmon, but we are not able to cash this cheque."

"What do you mean? I've cashed cheques here before. Look I've noted it down: on November 28, forty dollars; on December 1, twenty dollars."

The man shook his head. "I'm sorry, Mr. Richmon, but we are not able to cash these cheques."

"I'd like to see the manager."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Richmon, it is not possible for us to cash your cheque. Thank you very much." He turned to go.

"I want to see the manager!" Everybody in the bank, the tellers and the other clients, were staring at Fred, who had turned quite red.

"I am the manager," said the man in the striped suit. "Good-bye, Mr. Richmon."

"These are American Express travellers' cheques. They're good anywhere in the world!"

The manager returned to his office, and the teller began to wait on another customer. Fred returned to the post office.

"We'll have to return here later, darling," he explained to his wife. She didn't ask why, and he didn't want to tell her.

They bought food to bring back to the hotel, since Mrs. Richmond didn't feel up to dressing for dinner.

The manager of the hotel, a thin, nervous man who wore wire-framed spectacles, was waiting at the desk to see them. Wordlessly he presented them a bill for the room.

Fred protested angrily. "We're paid up. We're paid until the twelfth of this month. What are you trying to pull?"

The manager smiled. He had gold teeth. He explained, in imperfect English, that this was the bill.

"*Nous sommes payée,*" Mrs. Richmond explained pleasantly. Then in a diplomatic whisper to her husband, "Show him the receipt."

The manager examined the receipt. "*Non, non, non,*" he said, shaking his head. He handed Fred, instead of his receipt, the new bill.

"I'll take that receipt back, thank you very much." The manager smiled and backed away from Fred. Fred acted without thinking. He grabbed the manager's wrist and prised the receipt out of his fingers. The manager shouted words at him in Arabic. Fred took the key for their room, 216, off its hook behind the desk. Then he took his wife by the elbow and led her up the stairs. The man with the red fez came running down the stairs to do the manager's bidding.

Once they were inside the room, Fred locked the door. He was trembling and short of breath. Mrs. Richmond made him sit down and sponged his fevered brow with cold water. Five minutes later, a little slip of paper slid in under the door. It was the bill.

"Look at this!" he exclaimed. "Forty dirham a day. Eight dollars! That son of a bitch." The regular per diem rate for the room was twenty dirham, and the Richmonds, by taking it for a fortnight, had bargained it down to fifteen.

"Now, Freddy!"

"That bastard!"

"It's probably some sort of misunderstanding."

"He saw that receipt, didn't he? He made out that receipt himself. *You* know why he's doing it. Because of what's happened. Now I won't be able to cash my travellers' cheques here either. That son of a bitch!"

"Now, Freddy." She smoothed the ruffled strands of white hair with the wet sponge.

"Don't you now-Freddy me! I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to the American Consulate and register a complaint."

"That's a good idea, but not today, Freddy. Let's stay inside until tomorrow. We're both too tired and upset. Tomorrow we can go there together. Maybe they'll know something about Cleveland by then." Mrs. Richmond was prevented from giving further counsel by a new onset of her illness. She went out into the hall, but returned almost immediately. "The door into the toilet is padlocked," she said. Her eyes were wide with terror. She had just begun to understand what was happening.

THAT NIGHT, AFTER a frugal dinner of olives, cheese sandwiches and figs, Mrs. Richmond tried to look on the bright side. "Actually we're very lucky," she said, "to be here, instead of there, when it happened. At least, we're alive. We should thank God for being alive."

"If we'd of bombed them twenty years ago, we wouldn't be in this spot now. Didn't I say way back then that we should have bombed them?"

"Yes, darling. But there's no use crying over spilt milk. Try and look on the bright side, like I do."

"God-damn dirty reds."

The bourbon was all gone. It was dark, and outside, across the square, a billboard advertising Olympic Bleue cigarettes (C'est mieux!) winked on and off, as it had on all other nights of their visit to Casablanca. Nothing here seemed to have been affected by the momentous events across the ocean.

"We're out of envelopes," Mrs. Richmond complained. She had been trying to compose a letter to her daughter.

Fred was staring out the window, wondering what it had been like: had the sky been filled with planes? Were they still fighting on the ground in India and Angola? What did Florida look like now? He had always wanted to build a bomb shelter in their back yard in Florida, but his wife had been against it. Now it would be impossible to know which of them had been right.

"What time is it?" Mrs. Richmond asked, winding the alarm.

He looked at his watch, which was always right. "Eleven o'clock, Bulova watch time." It was an Accutron that his company, Iowa Mutual Life, had presented to him at retirement.

There was, in the direction of the waterfront, a din of shouting and clashing metal. As it grew louder, Fred could see the head of a ragged parade advancing up the boulevard. He pulled down the lath shutters over the windows till there was just a narrow slit to watch the parade through.

"They're burning something," he informed his wife. "Come see."

"I don't want to watch that sort of thing."

"Some kind of statue, or scarecrow. You can't tell who it's meant to be. Someone in a cowboy hat, looks like. I'll bet they're Commies."

When the mob of demonstrators reached the square over which the Belmonte Hotel looked, they turned to the left, toward the larger luxury hotels, the Marhaba and El Mansour. They were banging cymbals together and beating drums and blowing on loud horns that sounded like bagpipes. Instead of marching in rows, they did a sort of whirling, skipping dance step. Once they'd turned the corner, Fred couldn't see any more of them.

"I'll bet every beggar in town is out there, blowing his horn," Fred said sourly. "Every god-damn watch pedlad and shoe-shine boy in Casablanca."

"They sound very happy," Mrs. Richmond said. Then she began crying again.

The Richmonds slept together in the same bed that evening for the first time in several months. The noise of the demonstration continued, off and on, nearer or

farther away, for several hours. This too set the evening apart from other evenings, for Casablanca was usually very quiet, surprisingly so, after ten o'clock at night.

THE OFFICE OF the American Consul seemed to have been bombed. The front door was broken off its hinges, and Fred entered, after some reluctance, to find all the downstairs rooms empty of furniture, the carpets torn away, the mouldings pried from the walls. The files of the consulate had been emptied out and the contents burned in the centre of the largest room. Slogans in Arabic had been scrawled on the walls with the ashes.

Leaving the building, he discovered a piece of typing paper nailed to the deranged door. It read: "All Americans in Morocco, whether of tourist or resident status, are advised to leave the country until the present crisis is over. The Consul cannot guarantee the safety of those who choose to remain."

A shoe-shine boy, his diseased scalp inadequately concealed by a dirty wool cap, tried to slip his box under Fred's foot.

"Go away, you! *Vamoose*! This is your fault. I know what happened last night. You and your kind did this. Red beggars!"

The boy smiled uncertainly at Fred and tried again to get his shoe on the box. "*Monsier, monsieur*," he hissed—or, perhaps, "*Merci, merci.*"

By noonday the centre of the town was aswarm with Americans. Fred hadn't realised there had been so many in Casablanca. What were they doing here? Where had they kept themselves hidden? Most of the Americans were on their way to the airport, their cars piled high with luggage. Some said they were bound for England, others for Germany. Spain, they claimed, wouldn't be safe, though it was probably safer than Morocco. They were brusque with Fred to the point of rudeness.

He returned to the hotel room where Mrs. Richmond was waiting for him. They had agreed that one of them must always be in the room. As Fred went up the stairs the manager tried to hand him another bill. "I will call the police," he threatened. Fred was too angry to reply. He wanted to hit the man in the nose and stamp on his ridiculous spectacles. If he'd been five years younger he might have done so.

"They've cut off the water," Mrs. Richmond announced dramatically, after she'd admitted her husband to the room. "And the man with the red hat tried to get in, but I had the chain across the door, thank heaven. We can't wash or use the bidet. I don't know what will happen. I'm afraid."

She wouldn't listen to anything Fred said about the Consulate. "We've got to take a plane," he insisted. "To England. All the other Americans are going there. There was a sign on the door of the Con—"

"No, Fred. No. Not a plane. You won't make me get into an airplane. I've gone twenty years without that, and I won't start now."

"But this is an emergency. We have to!"

"I refuse to talk about it. And don't you shout at *me*, Fred Richmond. We'll sail when the boat sails, and that's that! Now, let's be practical, shall we? The first thing that we have to do is for you to get out and buy some bottled water. Four bottles, and bread, and—— No, you'll never remember everything. I'll write out a list."

But when Fred returned, four hours later, when it was growing dark, he had but a single bottle of soda, one loaf of hard bread, and a little box of pasteurised process cheese.

"It was all the money I had. They won't cash my cheques. Not at the bank, not at the Marhaba, not anywhere." There were flecks of violet in his red, dirty face, and his voice was hoarse. He had been shouting hours long.

Mrs. Richmond used half the bottle of soda to wash off his face. Then she made sandwiches of cheese and strawberry jam, all the while maintaining a steady stream of conversation, on cheerful topics. She was afraid her husband would have a stroke.

ON THURSDAY THE twelfth, the day before their scheduled sailing, Fred went to the travel agency to find out what pier their ship had docked in. He was informed that the sailing had been cancelled, permanently. The ship, a Yugoslav freighter, had been in Norfolk on December 4. The agency politely refunded the price of the tickets—in American dollars.

"Couldn't you give me dirham instead?"

"But you paid in dollars, Mr. Richmond." The agent spoke with a fussy, overprecise accent that annoyed Fred more than an honest French accent. "You paid in American Express travellers' cheques."

"But I'd *rather* have dirham."

"That would be impossible."

"I'll give you one to one. How about that? One dirham for one dollar." He did not even become angry at being forced to make so unfair a suggestion. He had been through this same scene too many times—at banks, at stores, with people off the street.

"The government has forbidden us to trade in American money, Mr. Richmond. I am truly sorry that I cannot help you. If you would be interested to purchase an airplane ticket, however, I can accept money for that.

If you have enough."

"You don't leave me much choice, do you?" (He thought: *Betty will be furious.*) "What will it cost for two tickets to London?"

The agent named the price. Fred flared up. "That's highway robbery! Why, that's more than the first-class to New York City!"

The agent smiled. "We have no flights scheduled to New York, sir."

Grimly, Fred signed away his travellers' cheques to pay for the tickets. It took all his cheques and all but 50 dollars of the refunded money. His wife, however, had her own bundle of American Express cheques that hadn't even been touched yet. He examined the tickets, which were printed in French. "What does this say here? When does it leave?"

"On the fourteenth. Saturday. At eight in the evening."

"You don't have anything tomorrow?"

"I'm sorry. You should be quite happy that we can sell you these tickets. If it weren't for the fact that our main office is in Paris, and that they've directed that Americans be given priority on all Pan-Am flights, we wouldn't be able to."

"I see. The thing is this—I'm in rather a tight spot. Nobody, not even the banks, will take American money. This is our last night at the hotel, and if we have to stay over Friday night as well. . . ."

"You might go to the airport waiting room, sir."

Fred took off his Accutron wristwatch. "In America this watch would cost $120 wholesale. You wouldn't be interested. . . ."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Richmond. I have a watch of my own."

Fred, with the tickets securely tucked into his passport case, went out through the thick glass door. He would have liked to have a sundae at the ice cream parlour across the street, but he couldn't afford it. He couldn't afford anything unless he was able to sell his watch. They had lived the last week out on what he'd gotten for the alarm clock and the electric shaver. Now there was nothing left.

When Fred was at the corner, he heard someone calling his name. "Mr. Richmond. Mr. Richmond, sir." It was the agent. Shyly he held out a ten dirham note and three fives. Fred took the money and handed him the watch. The agent put Fred's Accutron on his wrist beside his old watch. He smiled and offered Fred his hand to shake. Fred walked away, ignoring the outstretched hand.

Five dollars, he thought over and over again, *five dollars.* He was too ashamed to return at once to the hotel.

MRS. RICHMOND wasn't in the room. Instead the man in the red fez was engaged in packing all their clothes and toilet articles into the three suitcases. "Hey!" Fred shouted. "What do you think you're going? Stop that!"

"You must pay your bill," the hotel manager, who stood back at a safe distance in the hallway, shrilled at him. "You must pay your bill or leave."

Fred tried to prevent the man in the red fez from packing the bags. He was furious with his wife for having gone off—to the W.C. probably—and left the hotel room unguarded.

"Where is my wife?" he demanded of the manager. "This is an outrage." He began to swear. The man in the red fez returned to packing the bags.

Fred made a determined effort to calm himself. He could not risk a stroke. After all, he reasoned with himself, whether they spent one or two nights in the airport waiting room wouldn't make that much difference. So he chased the man in the red fez away and finished the packing himself. When he was done, he rang for the porter, and the man in the red fez returned and helped him carry the bags downstairs. He waited in the dark lobby, using the largest of the suitcases for a stool, for his wife to return. She had probably gone to "their" restaurant, some blocks away, where they were still allowed to use the W.C. The owner of the restaurant couldn't understand why they didn't take their meals there any more and didn't want to offend them, hoping, perhaps, that they would come back.

While he waited, Fred occupied the time by trying to remember the name of the Englishman who had been a supper guest at their house in Florida three years before. It was a strange name that was not pronounced at all the way that it was spelled. At intervals he would go out into the street to try and catch a sight of his wife returning to the hotel. Whenever he tried to ask the manager where she had gone, the man would renew his shrill complaint. Fred became desperate. She was taking too long. He telephoned the restaurant. The owner of the restaurant understood enough English to be able to tell him that she had not visited his W.C. all that day.

An hour or so after sunset, Fred found his way to the police station, a wretched stucco building inside the ancient medina, the non-European quarter. Americans were advised not to venture into the medina after dark.

"My wife is missing," he told one of the grey-uniformed men. "I think she may be the victim of a robbery."

The policeman replied brusquely in French.

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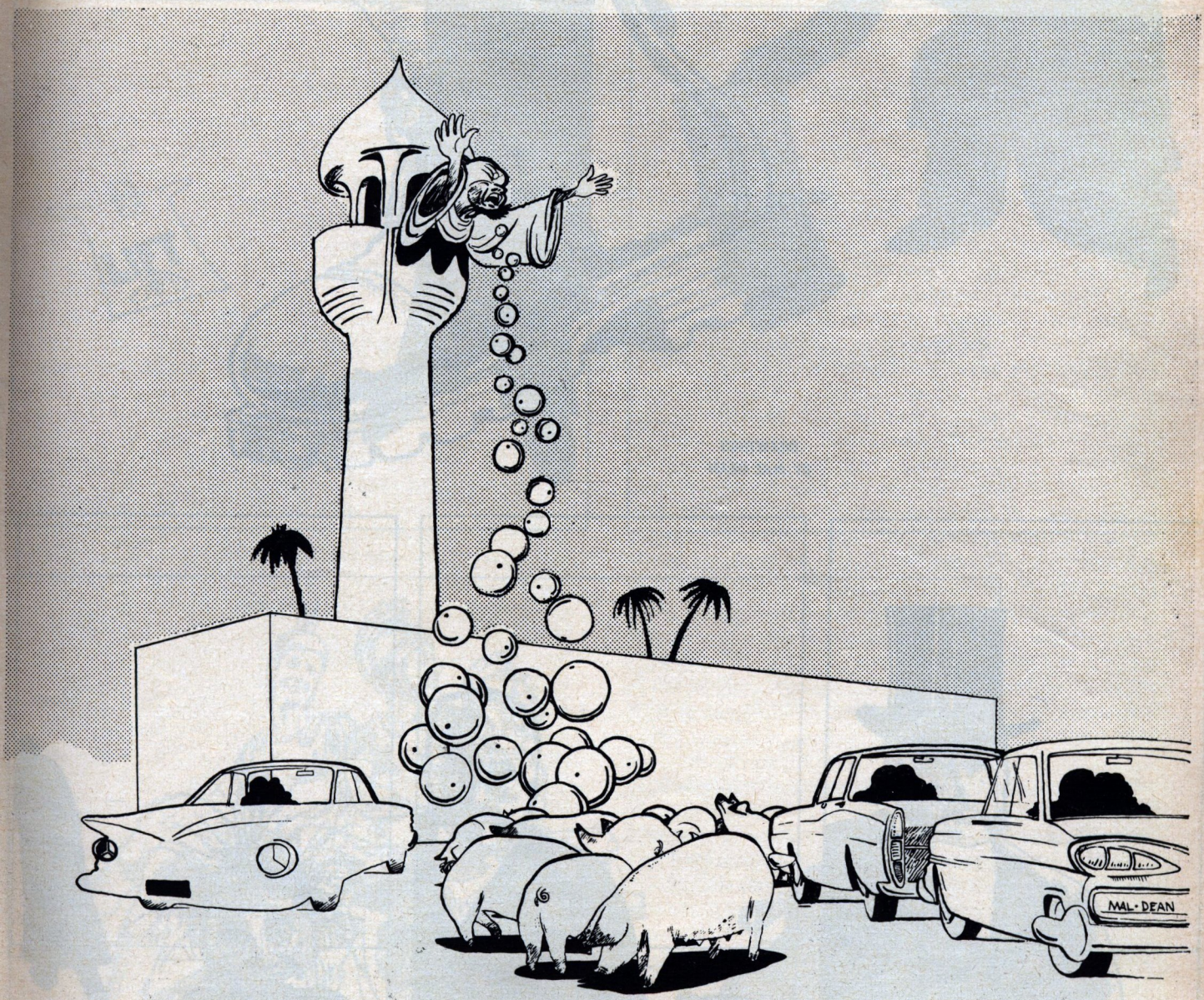
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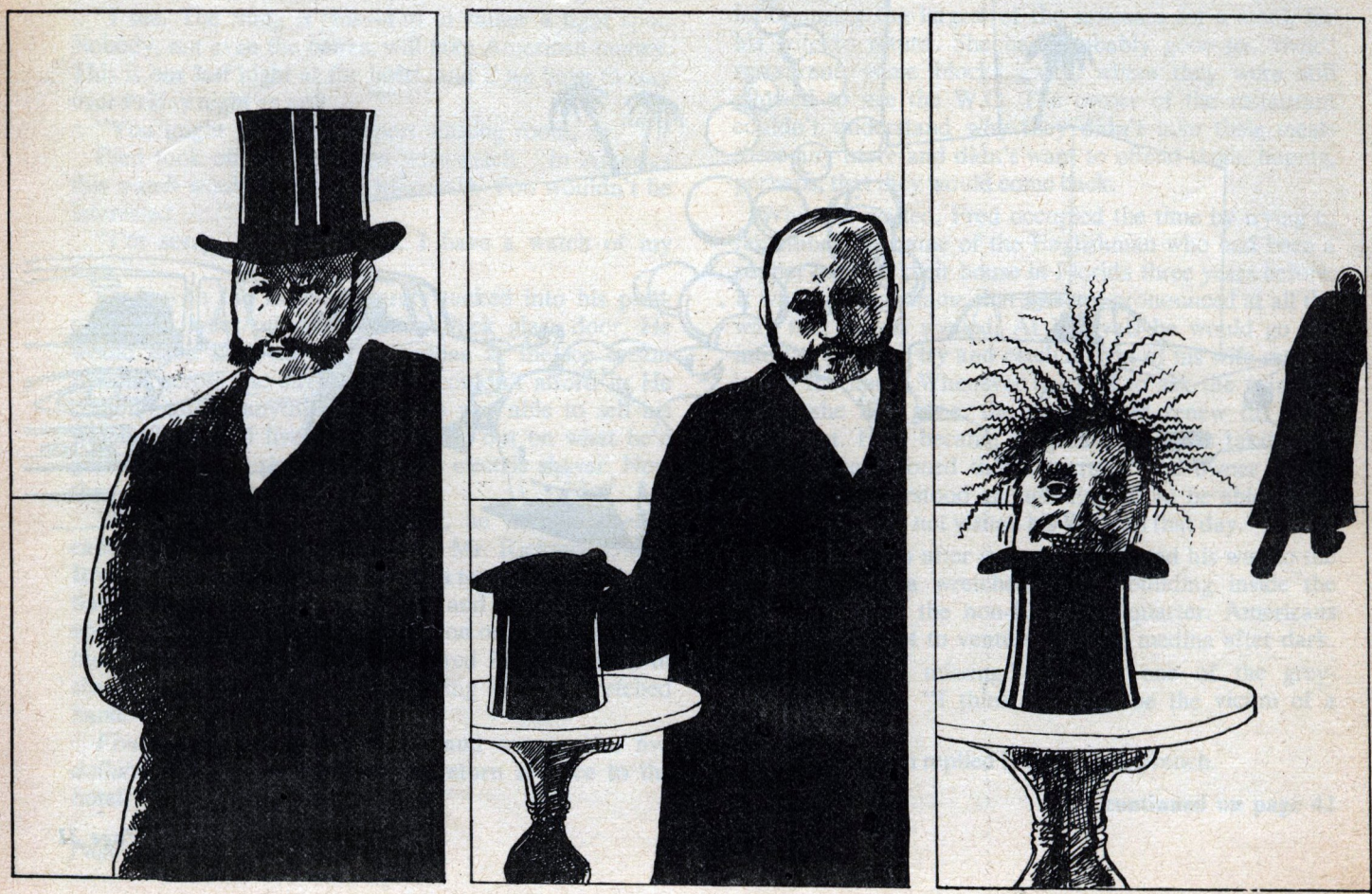
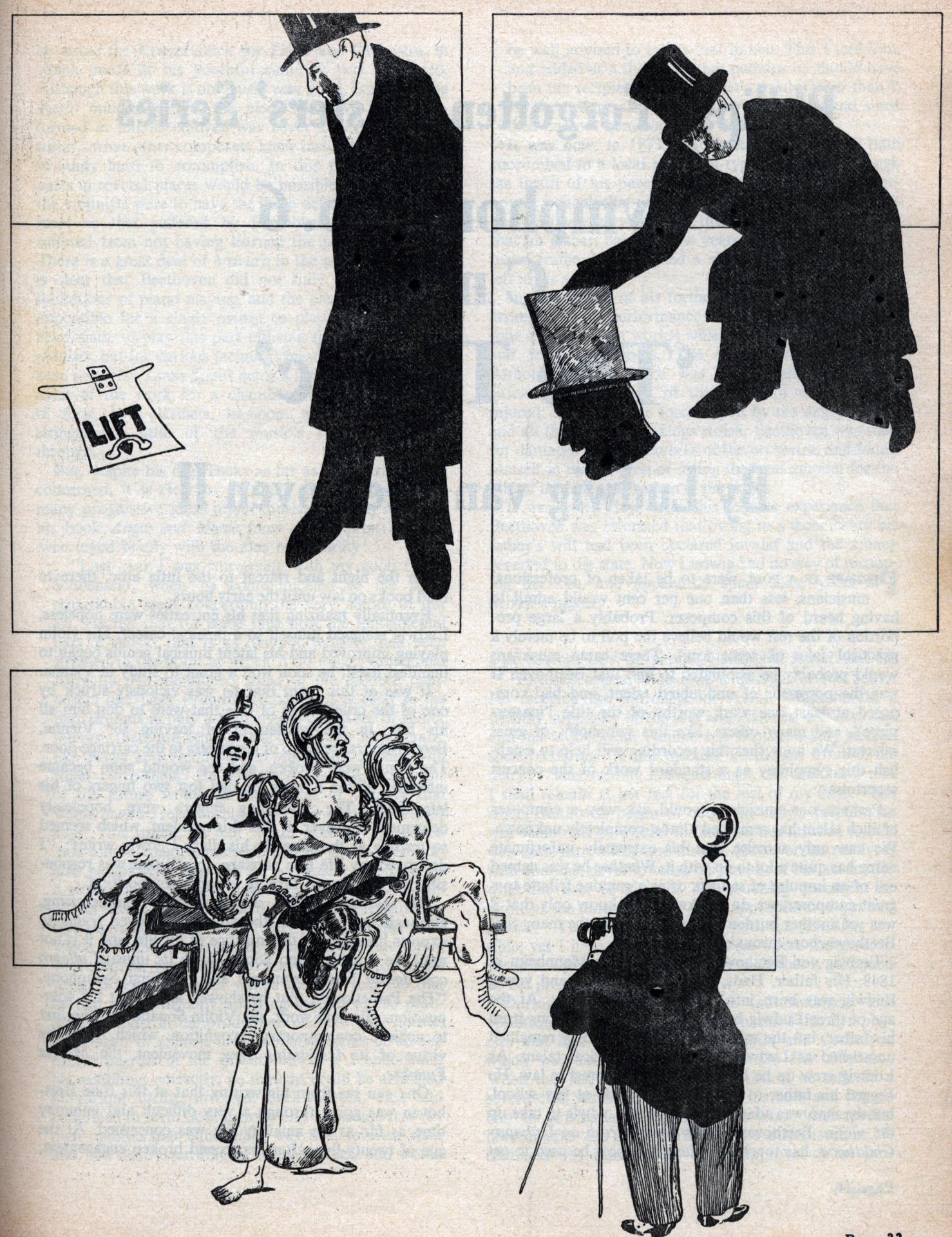



LIFT

Philips' 'Forgotten Masters' Series

Symphony No. 6 in C minor 'The Tragic'

By Ludwig van Beethoven II

PERHAPS IF A POLL were to be taken of professional musicians, less than one per cent would admit to having heard of this composer. Probably a large proportion of the rest would believe the poll to be merely a practical joke of some kind. These same musicians would probably be astounded to find that Beethoven II was the possessor of undoubted talent, and had composed at least one work worthy of the title "masterpiece", and many others, like this symphony, of great interest. We hope that this recording will help to establish this symphony as a standard work of the concert repertoire.

Perhaps our musicians would ask why a composer of such talent has remained almost completely unknown. We can only surmise that his extremely unfortunate name has quite a lot to do with it. Whether he was named out of an impulse of sadism, or as a genuine tribute to a great composer, we do not know. We know only that it was yet another burden that was added to the many that Beethoven bore throughout his life.

Ludwig van Beethoven II was born in Mannheim in 1848. His father, Hans, was a piano tuner, and young Ludwig was born into a very musical family. At the age of three Ludwig began receiving piano lessons from his father, but the man's dreams of a prodigy remained unsatisfied as Ludwig showed little musical talent. As Ludwig grew up he began to take an interest in law. He begged his father to be allowed to study at law school, but the man was adamant, and forced Ludwig to take up the violin. Beethoven, in his *Scenes from an Unhappy Childhood*, has touchingly described how he used to get up in the night and retreat to the little attic, there to read books on law until the early hours.

Eventually realizing that his entreaties were hopeless, Ludwig resigned himself to a musical career. His violin playing improved and his latent musical genius began to manifest itself; he soon won a grant to study in Vienna.

It was at this point that he was viciously struck by one of the cruel blows of fate that were to dog him all his life. In the excitement of leaving for Vienna, Beethoven trapped two of his fingers in the carriage door. The bones were broken, and the wound soon became infected. Within a week he had lost two fingers of his left hand. The remaining fingers were hopelessly deformed. However, it was this accident, which seemed so terrible at the time (in his diary Ludwig writes: "I destroyed my life in a carriage door") that was responsible for Beethoven turning towards composition.

His earliest works are uniformly uninteresting, although one can hear the young Beethoven trying to express his anger at the injustice of his life, and it is not until the Fourth Piano Sonata (with its unusual *allegro con dolore* first movement) and the First Symphony, "The Pathetique", that he showed any talent for composition. His next work, the Violin Sonata, was the first to achieve contemporary recognition, which it did by virtue of its fascinating slow movement, the *Marcia Funebre*.

One can see from his writing that at this time Beethoven was going through a very difficult and unhappy time as far as his amatory life was concerned. At the age of twenty-five, after his second broken engagement,

he wrote the Konzertstück for Piano and Orchestra, in which much of his youthful suffering was expressed. Although this work is obviously very good, especially the *mesto* middle section, the piece has never been performed in full. Beethoven was never an expert orchestrator: what other composers knew instinctively, he had to study hard to accomplish. In this piece the violin parts in several places would be possible to play only if the violinists were to have the same deformity of the left hand as that suffered by Beethoven. Also, Ludwig suffered from not having learned the piano as a child. There is a great deal of *bravura* in the piano part, but it is clear that Beethoven did not fully understand the limitations of piano playing, and the piece is completely impossible for a single pianist to play. Attempts have been made to play this part utilising three or even four pianists, but for various technical reasons these have not been a success. Louis Spohr made a little-known arrangement of the work for a chamber orchestra composed of flute, two clarinets, bassoon, wind machine and strings, but little of the music's splendour comes through.

But, despite his drawbacks as far as orchestration are concerned, it is clear to us today that Beethoven had many progressive ideas about music. One can see from his book *Angst and Music* (now out of print) that he even toyed briefly with the idea of atonality:

"Last year I was conversing with my good friend Schoenfeld, when he communicated to me some remarkable ideas concerning the very nature of our art. He felt that for some time now the fundamental part of music, that is its diatonic tonality, had been strained to the point at which it no longer functioned correctly. He mentioned some of the modern composers like Herr Brahms. Although it is clear to me that Brahms is only a fashionable composer of minor interest, there are other artists of extreme importance, like Nagel and Fleinstock, to whom this applies with equal correctness. He explained that the musicians of the future would develop ideas of tonality that would have no relationship with our methods of related keys. This music, he felt, would probably be called 'non-tonal'. I had to concede that he showed remarkable perspicacity, and felt for a moment that perhaps it would be in my own interest to begin some works of this nature, thus being credited with this remarkable discovery, but owing to a greatly painful hornet sting which I sustained during the course of the interesting conversation, was unable to leave my bed for a full week. Schoenfeld again visited me and told me that he had been diligently applying himself to the problems involved in the production of 'non-tonal' music, and began to express ideas about a series of all the twelve degrees of the gamut, which, if I understand his ramblings correctly, he thought could be arranged in various forms, inverted, back-to-front, etc., and combined to form both melody and harmony. It is my own opinion that Schoenfeld was in a feverish state and had been over-diligent in his studies, and would be well advised to take a rest in bed. This I told him, and added as a little joke that perhaps he should have been the recipient of the hornet's wrath rather than I. He seemed greatly offended at my words, and since then has not communicated with me."

It was now, in 1873, that Beethoven's parents both succumbed to a local plague of typhoid fever. Although the death of his parents was a terrible shock to Beethoven, a shock that plunged him into despair, at least he had no financial worries at this time, owing to the fact that his father, having some years ago invented the iron piano frame, had amassed a sizeable fortune, which he left to his son.

In expectation of his forthcoming fortune, Beethoven arranged for a performance of the Second Symphony (one of his poorest works) which involved eight hundred and forty performers. The concert was a disaster. Although the audience was very small, such a riot ensued that members of the orchestra were severely injured, the box office forced open by the angry crowd, and all the evening's takings stolen. Beethoven was sued for damages by ten members of the orchestra, and found himself in the position of owing the total amount for the hire of the hall and the fees of the artists.

It was a few days after this terrible experience that Beethoven was informed that owing to a technicality his father's will had been declared invalid and the money reverted to the state. Now Ludwig had no way of recouping his loss, and apparently spent some years in a debtor's prison.

ON COMING OUT OF prison, Beethoven found that his fortunes appeared to take a change for the better. He received the patronage of Anton Goldschmidt, a wealthy supporter of the arts and sciences, and also met and fell in love with Pauline von Birnitz, a lady of high social standing. Of this meeting Beethoven wrote in his diary: "This evening I saw an angel, fell, and know that I shall remain at her feet for the rest of my days." But when Beethoven began to court the lady's favours, he was somewhat perplexed to find that her attitude to him was both patronising and distant. However, he resolved, with courage, never to cease his pursuit of her, no matter what the cost to himself. The touching document he wrote at the time is printed as an appendix to *Angst and Music*: "Though the terrain be hard, the privation terrible, yet I have no choice but to go where she goes, to see what she sees, to breathe the very air that is perfumed by her presence."

During this period of resolve (not untinged with optimism), he composed the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies and also the Serenade for Violin and Orchestra, which was subtitled: *For Pauline On Her Birthday.* When this last work was almost finished, he suffered a severe chill which confined him to his bed, and caused him to be unable to complete the work until several months after the lady's birthday. Her displeasure at his tardiness was increased by her disapproval of the pro-

gressive harmony employed in the work, and she promptly broke off her relationship with him. At almost the same time he lost the patronage of Goldschmidt, owing to the fact that Beethoven persuaded him to invest a great deal of money into the wet-plate shadowscopy process, which at that time was seen as a possible alternative to the new science of photography, thus causing his patron to lose a great deal of money.

Beethoven was made prostrate by these two blows. His condition was made even worse when he discovered that his new-found social standing was being destroyed by Fraulein von Birnitz, who was apparently the source of several rumours concerning Ludwig's lack of virility and unusual sexual proclivities, which were at that time circulating through the higher strata of German society.

This was the time of the first of Beethoven's suicide attempts. The composer writes (in *Diary of a Sad Man*):

"One morning I awoke from a particularly troubled sleep, and I knew within myself that this would be my last day in this world. I had a long piece of hemp rope, which I had kept within my view for the whole of the last week, for perhaps I knew that in my extremity I would come at length to this, the only resolution of my grief. I affixed the rope at one end, to a large old beam that ran the length of the ceiling at the top of the house. The other end I fastened into a deadly loop. I stood on a chair, placed the loop about my throat, and offered a brief prayer to my Creator. I looked for a little while at the room which I was so glad to quit, and then stepped without fear from off the chair.

I fell, and was conscious of a strangling blow at my neck, then a frightful pain in my leg as I hit the floor. I felt something strike my back with a fearful blow, and then found myself in the midst of a torrent of falling masonry. For a moment I fancied that I had died and had been taken to the very bowels of Hell itself..."

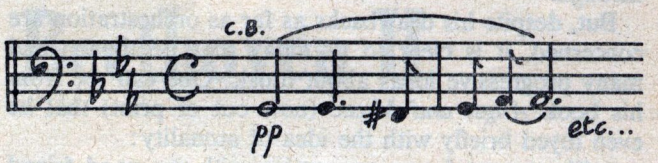
Beethoven was not in hell, however, but still in his own home. The beam over which Beethoven had slung his rope was infested with dry rot, and had been unable to withstand the extra strain imposed on it. The beam had split, and in falling, had brought with it half the ceiling. The whole house collapsed to the ground, and it was not until six hours had passed that the rescuers were able to free Beethoven from the wreckage. His life was in the balance for some time, but finally he emerged homeless into the world again, but now lacking his right eye and his left arm.

It was at this time that he began the "Tragic" Symphony, the culmination of twenty years of composition. As his mind had been dwelling recently on the subject of death, he had the idea of giving the symphony a choral movement, the text of which would deal with the experiences of a soul after death, and its judgment before God. Not unnaturally he turned to the work of Heinrich Totenfreund, the dramatist and poet. Beethoven had always greatly admired Totenfreund's work, and believed him to be the most important artist of Germany at that time. In fact it was the work of Totenfreund that first gave Beethoven his interest in literature, an interest that developed into a profound knowledge and understanding.

Beethoven wrote to the dramatist suggesting the idea and, surprisingly, received a very warm and enthusiastic reply, urging him to come to Totenfreund's home in the country to spend a few days there. Beethoven was delighted, and quickly set off for Totenfreund's home. In his diary he briefly scribbled: "To see Totenfreund—this almost compensates me for my suffering!"

Beethoven's joy was to be only short-lived. On arriving at the home of the dramatist, Beethoven was met by grim-faced servants who informed him that Totenfreund had died suddenly that very morning.

Perhaps something of the desolation Beethoven felt at that moment is expressed in the *pianissimo* introduction to the symphony (Ex. 1).



Example 1

Beethoven's coach had already left, and another one had to be summoned from a nearby town. As the hours passed in waiting for the coach, it is reported that Beethoven's agitation grew ever more strong. Finally the coach arrived, and Beethoven climbed in with a strange, jerky-limbed gait, and they set off along the mountain road. On the way back to Mannheim, at the highest point of the journey, Ludwig stopped the coach, walked to the cliff edge, and without a word cast himself over.

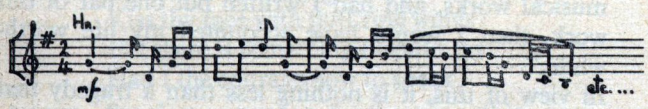
Not yet was he to be allowed the easement of death, however. Firty feet down his coat was caught in a bush, and Beethoven was left hanging over the abyss. It was several hours before a rescue team arrived from Mannheim, and the attempt to save Beethoven took a great deal of time. He was finally brought to the top fifteen hours after he had fallen, suffering severely from exposure.

IN HOSPITAL HE began work on the symphony in earnest. In music he could release the feelings that boiled within him—suffering at which we can only guess. In his hospital bed he planned the symphony—a strangely constructed work of two movements—and chose his text from the published works of Totenfreund. It was only a few weeks before he had completed the draft of the short first movement, which leads without a break into the

large-scale choral finale.

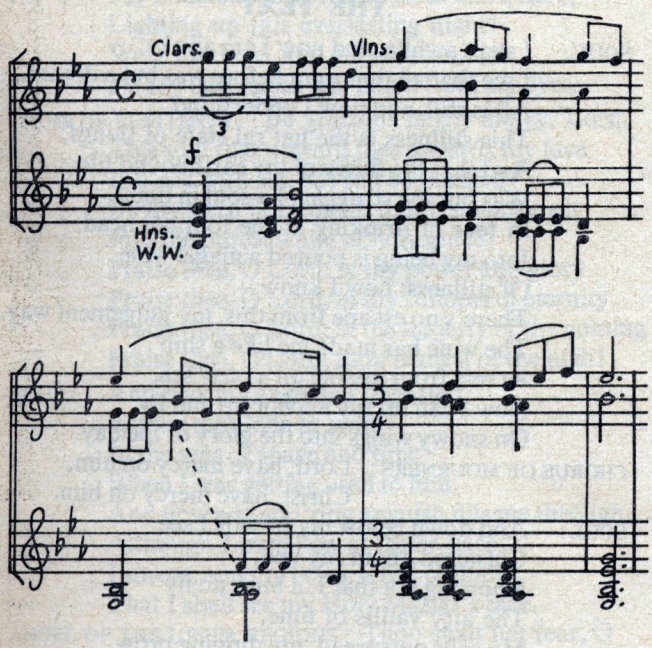
The opening of the symphony takes place in an atmosphere of desolation and gloom. The double basses intone their solemn motif, and the violins enter with a hushed tremolando. There is a brief oboe solo which adds to the feeling of timelessness, the falling sixths like stones dropping into the stillness of a stagnant pool.

A cymbal clash heralds the beginning of the first subject proper, but first there is a stirring and oddly familiar horn call in an unrelated key, that reminds one of a general marshalling his forces (Ex. 2). Then begins the controversial first subject.



Example 2

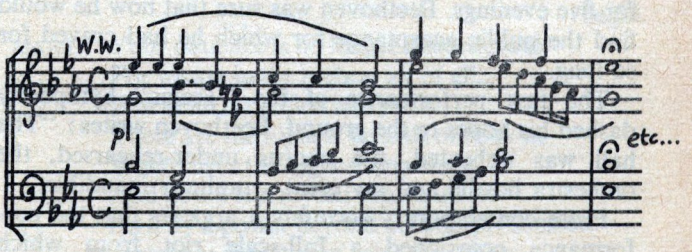
There is no doubt that Beethoven's unfortunate name had a great effect on him. One can only imagine the effect that this name, the name of one of the greatest of all masters, would have on the mind of a sensitive composer. Some critics have suggested that Beethoven was influenced by his namesake to an unhealthy degree, and have quoted this symphony, and particularly its first subject, as their evidence. This writer maintains that one has only to listen to the delightful close of this section (Ex. 3) after it has modulated into the Eb major of the forthcoming second subject, to hear the impressive originality of this composer's mind.



Example 3

The second subject is a great contrast. Perhaps the light-hearted nature of the long string tune is due to the fact that at this time Pauline von Birnitz was visiting him in hospital. Certainly this section is the most cheerful thing that Beethoven wrote, and, at the same time, it demonstrates a remarkably developed melodic gift. There is a fairly short development section, at the end of which the brass blazes forth in a triumphant march. Gradually the rest of the orchestra joins this march, and at its climax the organ enters with a repetition of the double bass motif at the opening of the work.

Then there is silence. The woodwind plays a brief, but hauntingly beautiful chorale (Ex. 4), the bridge from one movement to the next (and perhaps, symbolically, the bridge from one world to the next).



Example 4

It is at this point, at the emotional climax of the work, that Beethoven's music goes beyond the bounds of purely orchestral sound, and he finds it necessary to introduce the human voice. The symphony moves into a new sphere of experience. The vocal entry is surely one of the most transcendental moments of all music. It is unfortunate that there exists a certain disagreement about which soloist should actually sing this part. Beethoven always showed a distressing carelessness in the preparation of his scores, and his absent-mindedness has here caused a great deal of confusion. The part of The Soul is marked in the score to be sung by the contralto soloist. But the part rises at times to *b″*, and is clearly beyond normal contralto *tessitura*, as those performances in which the score has been faithfully followed, painfully testify. Usually a soprano is given this difficult part to sing. However, there is a school of thought which maintains that the part should actüally be sung by a bass, high *b* then becoming D (actual pitch). There is some evidence that makes this claim less preposterous. Beethoven, at the time he wrote this symphony, had help from Pauline von Birnitz in preparing the orchestral staves. It is then easy to see how possible it could be for a double mistake to have occurred—for Fraulein von Birnitz to have written "contralto" instead of "bass" and to have written in the "correct" treble clef; it is also easy to see how Beethoven, in the white heat of his inspiration, could have missed this error.

Having a bass sing this part, and consequently transposing the intervals by major and minor sixths, certainly changes the character of the music. It removes the grinding dissonance of this solo part, which shocks the mind like a bolt of electricity, and expresses the total

alienation of the disembodied soul, and reduces the effect to the banal. On this recording the part is taken by a soprano. It is this writer's opinion that this is the only version that can be taken seriously.

Beethoven followed faithfully the mood of Totenfreund's text (taken from *Canticles and Dramatic Fragments* [now out of print]). Certainly the Sixth Symphony has its faults. Some people maintain that the work's weaknesses outweigh its moments of inspiration: that is for the listener to decide for himself.

Beethoven was to make one more attempt to end his own life. On leaving hospital he swiftly arranged a performance of this symphony, the work he believed to be his masterpiece. At great expense he travelled to Vienna, and spent his remaining money on hiring the *Konzerthaus* for five evenings. Beethoven was sure that now he would find the public acceptance for which he had craved for so long.

The first performance of the "Tragic" Symphony dashed his hopes to the ground. Beethoven writes: "The hall was unheated, the chorus under-rehearsed, the orchestra hostile and my great symphony inaudible."

From contemporary accounts it appears that the performance occasioned a full-scale riot from which Beethoven was lucky to escape with his life. The performances scheduled for the remaining four nights were cancelled.

Standing in the rain outside the empty *Konzerthaus* the next evening, perhaps hearing in his mind the sounds of the closing bars of his symphony and the rapturous applause for which he longed, Beethoven was met by an old colleague from Mannheim. It was then that Beethoven learned of the engagement of Pauline von Birnitz to a young rival composer.

That evening Beethoven returned to his lodgings, after walking aimlessly about the streets of Vienna, and drank a great quantity of an oven-cleansing liquid. He was rushed to hospital, and after a long and arduous operation in which half his stomach was removed, he was pronounced saved.

FROM THIS TIME ON Beethoven's life is not at all well chronicled. Beethoven himself stopped writing his journal, and there is a singular lack of contemporary writing about him. We know only that something happened to make Beethoven change his whole attitude to life. Whether he had reached the extremity of suffering, which then metamorphosed into joy, we do not know, but certainly something caused him to change his outlook. Whether this experience was an internal or external one we cannot say. Beethoven himself merely writes, in his last journal entry: "One must *live*!"

He abruptly began work on the Mass in D, the work that was destined to be his greatest. Hector Berlioz was present at the first performance, and wrote in his *Memoirs*:

"Ludwig van Beethoven II has never been taken seriously as a composer, and deservedly, for there is no doubt that his work has had grievous faults, not the least of which has been its singular lack of inspiration. I now say, having heard last night his Mass in D, that his muse has at last responded, nay, has veritably heaped upon his head the riches of a lifetime. With what fluttering intoxication I listened to Beethoven's music last night! I tore out my hair in a delirium of delight, I wept, I could not restrain the groans that Beethoven drew from me! Beethoven says to us, 'You must live life to the full, you must take the suffering and build it into a foundation for joy, for joy is eternal, and can never die.' Here is life herself speaking to us with her full and glorious voice. I say that Beethoven's Mass is one of the greatest of all musical works, and had I written but one bar of this work, then I would have accounted my life worthwhile."

In view of this, it is nothing less than a tragedy that this one performance of the Mass seems to be the only one ever to have taken place. The manuscript appears to have been lost, and has since never been discovered.

Immediately after completing the Mass, Beethoven sustained a small wound to the right thigh, when he fell in the street outside his house. Blood-poisoning soon developed, and within three weeks he had died. An ornate tomb was constructed at Mannheim, but it was unfortunately destroyed during the war.

THE TEXT

SOUL: I slept awhile, and now I am awake,
I see that all that went before was but a dream.
All is still, and now I understand
This stillness is the nat'ral state of things,
And that the flurry of my earthbound life
Was but the struggle of a soul in flight,
In fear of drinking at the fountainhead.
Into my being is poured a magic wine
Of stillness; now I know
There's no escape from this, my judgement way.
The wine has made me like a ship
At rest from tossing on a busy sea.
Now I can lift my anchor up and fly
On snowy wings into the glory of the day.

CHORUS OF MOURNERS: Lord, have mercy on him,
Christ, have mercy on him.

SOUL: And down below my friends I see
Clustered about my bed,
Knowing not that I, a bird, do fly
The airy vaults of time,
My sails outspread, my dipping prow,
The wine of peace from stern to bow.
But what is this? I feel that I
Am urged still further in the sky.

Did not this solitude so lack
Another being apart from me,
And had I corporeal form,
I'd say a hand pressed in my back.

ANGEL OF THE LOWER REGIONS: Be thou not feared, O little soul,
'Tis only I, thy humble guide
Into the regions of the bless'd
Where thou shalt stand before the throne
And see thy Father, there to take thy place
On the heavenly scale, and to be judged and weighed.

SOUL: O blessed one, my gratitude will surely
Kiss thy face with flutt'ring wings!
But there is something I would say
Had I the courage now to speak.

ANGEL: Speak now, my son, for there is nothing here
To cause you to forbear.

SOUL: Then I will speak; O glorious one,
I would not try to influence my fate,
For I would see the Holy One.
But in my earthly life I stood
On many scales, and I do know my weight.

ANGEL: O innocent! O cow'ring soul!
These scales are nothing like the ones you know,
But measure here the worthiness,
The virtue and the grace of he who's weighed.
The denizens of heav'n oft speak rhetorically,
These scales are just meant metaphorically.

SOUL: Now all is clear, as if the world
Were bathed in incandescent light!
My understanding shines forth like a flare,
Lighting up this everlasting night!
Were I so bold, and not so wise,
I'd say that scales had fallen from my eyes.

CHOIR OF PENITENTS: Be gracious in thy mercy, Lord,
This soul that upward flies towards thy face
Is black with sin, but can be purified
By thy stern judgement, thus transposing it
Into the purest white of holy grace!
Praise thee, O Lord, in thy power and glory
Praise thee, O Lord, in thy fullness of eternity
Praise thee, O Lord, in the majesty of thy coming
Praise thee, O Lord, thou highest of the high!

SOUL: And now my angel has departed,
leaving me alone to swim
In the seas of space and time
When I was getting used to him.
And now a shudd'ring anguish fills me through,
Although I travel on at faster pace.
I shiver, and my being is full of doubt
That I shall see my Holy Master's face.

ANGEL OF THE UPPER REGIONS: Thou shalt not fear, O quaking soul,
Thy pain is nought but agony
Of incompleteness: thou shalt see his face,
For my task is to conduct you to his gracious
But the seeing of him you will find overpowering,
And thy present pain will multiply itself,
But our most glorious Church has always taught
Its worshippers to glory in their anguish,
And many times has added to their pain
By taking their last money for our altars
So that they starve, in preparation for the afterlife.
And when thy pain comes shalt thou too rejoice
To see the greatness of the greatest one,
To see His face; to hear His voice.

SOUL: All hail, O being of the higher slopes!
Your message brings to me great comfortment.
But I grow now impatient for my moment to begin.

ANGEL: Your patience is no longer needed, soul,
For we are in the highest air of all,
Where all is rarified and pure.
These are the highest bounds of heav'n,
Where lives the highest one of all.

SOUL: And now I feel myself drawn up
As if by a power beyond my comprehension.
A strange convulsion grips my senses,
A delirium of glory!
I feel that I have come at last
Unto the place where I will meet my Lord.
For this moment was I first created,
And spent my earthly life so long ago.
A golden shape before my eyes I see,
And I know now that I'm approaching Thee!

CHOIR OF ANGELICALS: Praise to the God of ages past,
Praise to the Lord today,
Who made both heav'n and earth and hell,
To help in ev'ry way.
Who sent his only son to us
To labour and to toil,
To spend his life in earthly pain
Old Satan's plans to foil.
Who rules above in glorious might,
With Christ at his right hand,
And spreads his waves of gorgeous pain
All over this fair land.

ANGEL: Brothers! Hist! The soul I see
Descends from the high throne
In pain and wrapp'd in misery,
The judgement now is done.

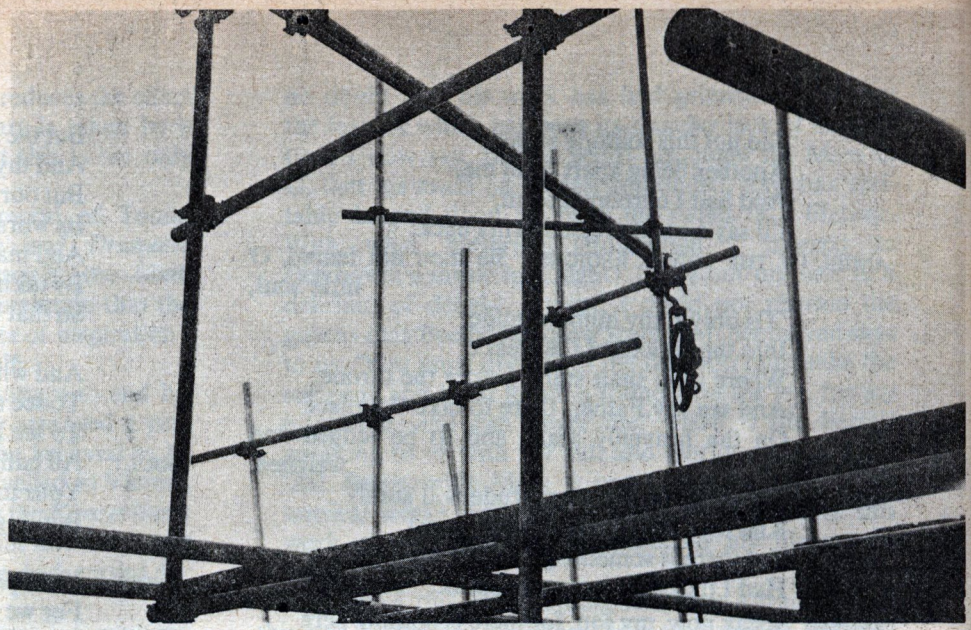
SOUL: Stand back, O Angels, touch not me,
My pain I cannot tell,
For down I go with utmost speed,
To the very depths of Hell.

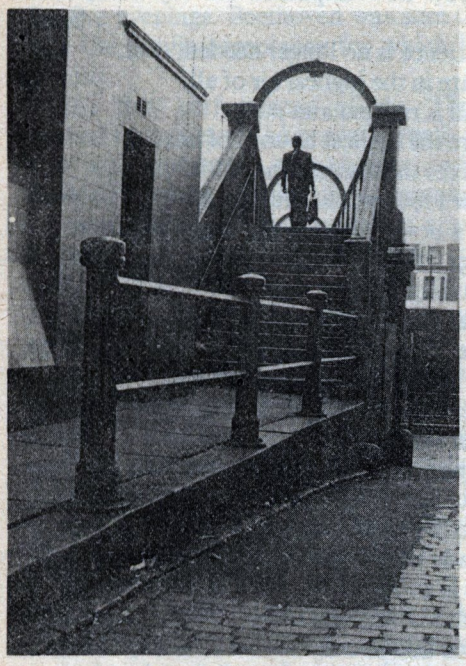
ANGEL: Brothers, be not thou downcast,
At this soul's plight thou must not frown,
For though this damned soul plunges fast,
At least we cannot be cast down.

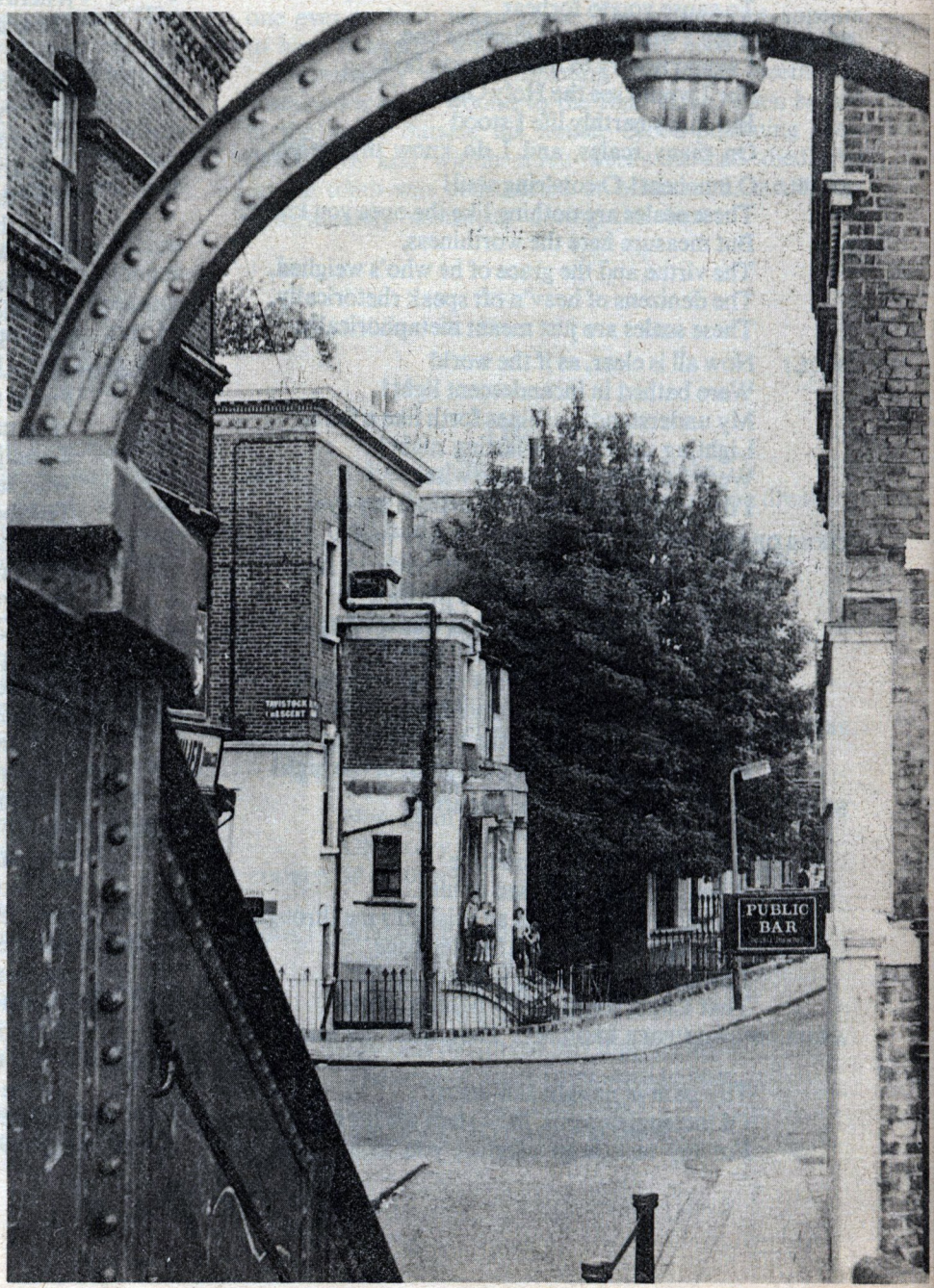
ANGEL OF THE HIGHER REGIONS & CHOIR OF ANGELICALS:
Praise to the God of ages past,
Praise to the Lord today, etc. . . .

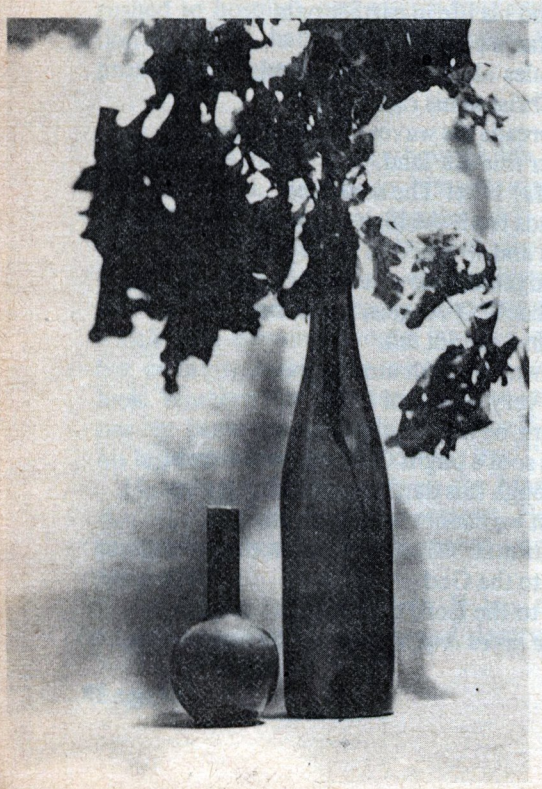
(Sleeve notes and translation by Langdon Jones)

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ROY CORNWALL







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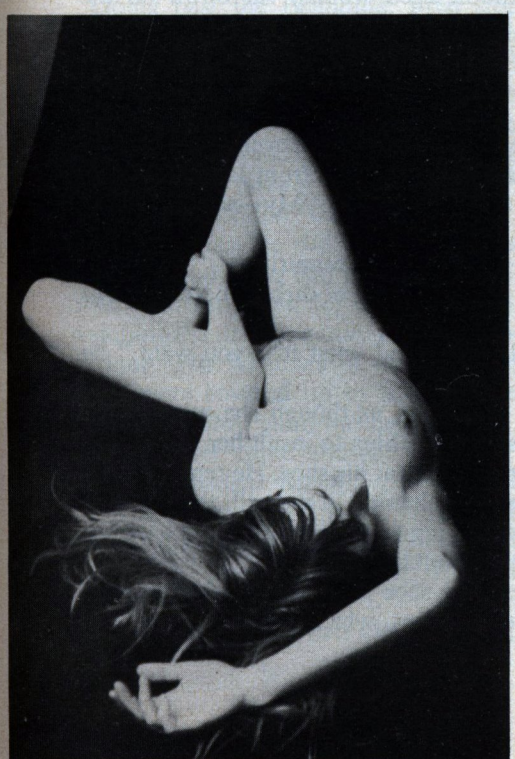


Casablanca continued from page 30

"My wife," Fred repeated loudly, gesturing in a vague way.

The policeman turned to speak to his fellows. It was a piece of deliberate rudeness.

Fred took out his passport and waved it in the policeman's face. "This is my passport," he shouted. "My wife is missing. My wife. Doesn't somebody here speak English? Somebody *must* speak English. *Ing-glish*!"

The policeman shrugged and handed Fred back his passport.

"My wife!" Fred screamed hysterically. "Listen to me—my wife, my wife, my wife!"

The policeman, a scrawny, moustached man, grabbed Fred by the neck of his coat and lead him forcibly into another room and down a long, unlighted corridor that smelled of urine. Fred didn't realise, until he had been thrust into the room, that it was a cell. The door that closed behind him was made not of bars, but of sheet metal nailed over wood. There was no light in the room, no air. He screamed, he kicked at the door and pounded on it with his fists until he had cut a deep gash into the side of his palm. He stopped, to suck the blood, fearful of blood-poisoning.

He could, when his eyes had adjusted to the darkness, see a little of the room about him. It was not much larger than Room 216 at the Belmonte, but it contained more people than Fred could count. They were heaped all along the walls, an indiscriminate tumble of rags and filth, old men and young men, a wretched assembly.

They stared at the American gentleman in astonishment.

THE POLICE RELEASED Fred in the morning, and he returned at once to the hotel, speaking to no one. He was angry but, even more, he was terrified.

His wife had not returned. The three suitcases, for a wonder, were still sitting where he had left them. The manager insisted that he leave the lobby, and Fred did not protest. The Richmonds' time at the hotel had expired, and Fred didn't have the money for another night, even at the old rate.

Outside, he did not know what to do. He stood on the kerbside, trying to decide. His pants were wrinkled, and he feared (though he could not smell it himself) that he stank of the prison cell.

The traffic policeman in the centre of the square began giving him funny looks. He was afraid of the policeman, afraid of being returned to the cell. He hailed a taxi and directed the driver to go to the airport.

"*Où*?" the driver asked.

"The airport, the airport," he said testily. Cabbies, at least, could be expected to know English.

But where was his wife? Where was Betty?

When they arrived at the airport, the driver demanded fifteen dirhams, which was an outrageous price in Casablanca, where cabs are pleasantly cheap. Having not had the foresight to negotiate the price in advance, Fred had no choice but to pay the man what he asked.

The waiting room was filled with people, though few seemed to be Americans. The stench of the close air was almost as bad as it had been in the cell. There were no porters, and he could not move through the crowd, so he set the suitcases down just outside the entrance and seated himself on the largest bag.

A man in an olive-drab uniform with a black beret asked, in French, to see his passport. "*Votre passeport*," he repeated patiently, until Fred had understood. He examined each page with a great show of suspicion, but eventually he handed it back.

"Do you speak English?" Fred asked him then. He thought, because of the different uniform, that he might not be one of the city police. He answered with a stream of coarse Arabic gabbling.

Perhaps, Fred told himself, *she will come out here to look for me*. But why, after all, should she? He should have remained outside the hotel.

He imagined himself safely in England, telling his story to the American Consul there. He imagined the international repercussions it would have. What had been the name of that English man he knew? He had lived in London. It began with *C* or *Ch*.

An attractive middle-aged woman sat down on the other end of his suitcase and began speaking in rapid French, making sharp gestures, like karate chops, with her well-groomed hand. She was trying to explain something to him, but of course he couldn't understand her. She broke into tears. Fred couldn't even offer her his handkerchief, because it was dirty from last night.

"My wife," he tried to explain. "My—wife—is missing. My wife."

"Bee-yay," the woman said despairingly. "Vote bee-yay." She showed him a handful of dirham notes in large denominations.

"I wish I could understand what it is you want," he said.

She went away from him, as though she were angry, as though he had said something to insult her.

Fred felt someone tugging at his shoe. He remembered, with a start of terror, awakening in the cell, the old man tugging at his shoes, trying to steal them but not understanding, apparently, about the laces.

It was only, after all, a shoe-shine boy. He had already begun to brush Fred's shoes, which were, he could see,

rather dirty. He pushed the boy away.

He had to go back to the hotel to see if his wife had returned there, but he hadn't the money for another taxi and there was no one in the waiting room that he dared trust with the bags.

Yet he couldn't leave Casablanca without his wife. Could he? But if he did stay, what was he to do, if the police would not listen to him?

At about ten o'clock the waiting room grew quiet. All that day no planes had entered or left the airfield. Everyone here was waiting for tomorrow's plane to London. How were so many people, and so much luggage, to fit on one plane, even the largest jet? Did they all have tickets?

They slept anywhere on the hard benches, on newspapers on the concrete floor, on the narrow window ledges. Fred was one of the luckiest, because he could sleep on his three suitcases.

When he woke the next morning, he found that his passport and the two tickets had been stolen from his breast pocket. He still had his billfold, because he had slept on his back. It contained nine dirham.

CHRISTMAS MORNING, Fred went out and treated himself to an ice cream sundae. Nobody seemed to be celebrating the holiday in Casablanca. Most of the shops in the ancient medina (where Fred had found a hotel room for three dirham a day) were open for business, while in the European quarter one couldn't tell if the stores were closed permanently or just for the day.

Going past the Belmonte, Fred stopped, as was his custom, to ask after his wife. The manager was very polite and said that nothing was known of Mrs. Richmond. The police had her description now.

Hoping to delay the moment when he sat down before the sundae, he walked to the post office and asked if there had been any answer to his telegram to the American Embassy in London. There had not.

When at last he did have his sundae it didn't seem quite as good as he had remembered. There was so little of it! He sat down for an hour with his empty dish, watching the drizzling rain. He was alone in the ice cream parlour. The windows of the travel agency across the street were covered up by a heavy metal shutter, from which the yellow paint was flaking.

The waiter came and sat down at Fred's table. "*Il pleuve, Monsieur Richmon.* It rains. *Il pleuve.*"

"Yes, it does," said Fred. "It rains. It falls. Fall-out."

But the waiter had very little English. "Merry Christmas," he said. "*Joyeuse Nöel.* Merry Christmas."

Fred agreed.

When the drizzle had cleared a bit, Fred strolled to the United Nations Plaza and found a bench under a palm tree that was dry. Despite the cold and damp, he didn't want to return to his cramped hotel room and spend the rest of the day sitting on the edge of his bed.

Fred was by no means alone in the plaza. A number of figures in heavy woollen djelabas, with hoods over their heads, stood or sat on benches, or strolled in circles on the gravel paths. The djelabas made ideal raincoats. Fred had sold his own London Fog three days before for twenty dirham. He was getting better prices for his things now that he had learned to count in French. The hardest lesson to learn (and he had not yet learned it) was to keep from thinking. When he could do that, he wouldn't become angry, or afraid.

At noon the whistle blew in the handsome tower at the end of the plaza, from the top of which one could see all of Casablanca in every direction. Fred took out the cheese sandwich from the pocket of his suit coat and ate it, a little bit at a time. Then he took out the chocolate bar with almonds. His mouth began to water.

A shoe-shine boy scampered across the gravelled circle and sat down in the damp at Fred's feet. He tried to lift Fred's foot and place it on his box.

"No," said Fred. "Go away."

"*Monsieur, monsieur,*" the boy insisted. Or, perhaps, "*Merci, merci.*"

Fred looked down guiltily at his shoes. They were very dirty. He hadn't had them shined in weeks.

The boy kept whistling those meaningless words at him. His gaze was fixed on Fred's chocolate bar. Fred pushed his away with the side of his foot. The boy grabbed for the candy. Fred struck him in the side of his head. The chocolate bar fell to the gravel, not far from the boy's calloused feet. The boy lay on his side, whimpering.

"You little sneak!" Fred shouted at him.

It was a clear-cut case of thievery. He was furious. He had a right to be furious. Standing up to his full height, his foot came down accidentally on the boy's rubbishy shoe-shine box. The wood splintered.

The boy began to gabble at Fred in Arabic. He scurried forward on hands and knees to pick up the pieces of the box.

"You asked for this," Fred said. He kicked the boy in the ribs. The boy rolled with the blow, as though he were not unused to such treatment. "Little beggar! Thief!" Fred screamed.

He bent forward and tried to grasp a handhold in the boy's hair, but it was cut too close to his head, to prevent lice. Fred hit again in the face, but now the boy was on his feet and running.

There was no use pursuing him, he was too fast, too

fast.

Fred's face was violet and red, and his white hair, in need of a trim, straggled down over his flushed forehead. He had not noticed, while he was beating the boy, the group of Arabs, or Moslems, or whatever they were, that had gathered around him to watch. Fred could not read the expressions on their dark, wrinkly faces.

"Did you see that?" he asked loudly. "Did you see what that little thief tried to do? Did you see him try to steal . . . my candy bar?"

One of the men, in a long jelaba striped with brown, said something to Fred that sounded like so much gargling. Another, younger man, in European dress, struck Fred in the face. Fred teetered backward.

"Now see here!" He had not time to tell them he was an American citizen. The next blow caught him in the mouth, and he fell to the ground. Once he was lying on his back, the older men joined in in kicking him. Some kicked him in the ribs, others in his head, still others had to content themselves with his legs. Curiously, nobody went for his groin. The shoe-shine boy watched from a distance, and when Fred was unconscious, came forward and removed his shoes. The young man who had first hit him removed his suit coat and his belt. Wisely, Fred had left his billfold behind at his hotel.

When he woke up he was sitting on the bench again. A policeman was addressing him in Arabic. Fred shook his head uncomprehendingly. His back hurt dreadfully, from when he had fallen to the ground. The policeman addressed him in French. He shivered. Their kicks had not damaged him so much as he had expected. Except for the young man, they had worn slippers instead of shoes. His face experienced only a dull ache, but there was blood all down the front of his shirt, and his mouth tasted of blood. He was cold, very cold.

The policeman went away, shaking his head.

At just that moment Fred remembered the name of the Englishman who had had supper in his house in Florida. It was Cholmondeley, but it was pronounced *Chum-ly*. He was still unable to remember his London address.

Only when he tried to stand did he realise that his shoes were gone. The gravel hurt the tender soles of his bare feet. Fred was mortally certain that the shoe-shine boy had stolen his shoes.

He sat back down on the bench with a groan. He hoped to hell he'd hurt the god-damned little son of a bitch. He hoped to hell he had. He grated his teeth together, wishing that he could get hold of him again. The little beggar. He'd kick him this time so that he'd remember it. The god-damn dirty little red beggar. He'd kick his face in.

WE'LL ALL BE SPACE-MEN BEFORE WE DIE

We'll all be spacemen before we die
flying in purple ships
to the sun
like children
on their first trip
to the sea

We'll all be spacemen before we die
striding across
blue meadows
the rain
under our feet

We'll all be spacemen before we die
sleeping
between black velvet sheets
woken
only by the moon.

MIKE EVANS

BUG JACK BARRON

PART 6 · BY NORMAN SPINRAD

For space reasons we have had to condense the conclusion of this novel to be published in 1969 by Avon Books.

JACK BARRON—founder member of the radical Social Justice Coalition which is now about as strong as the withering, super-reactionary Republican Party. But Barron has sold out the SJC, now panders controversy on a powerful TV show, "Bug Jack Barron", where individual's grievances are given a coast-to-coast airing. The show appears fearless, knocking the establishment hard, but really never goes far enough to rock the boat. Barron knows it, is careful. He's estranged from his hippy wife SARA WESTERFELD who hates to hear his name mentioned, loves and remembers the idealist he once was.

BENEDICT HOWARDS—man of even greater power than Barron. He owns the Foundation for Human Immortality: leave the Foundation $50,000, and you're good for—who knows—maybe forever. On death you're frozen and stored till the secret of immortality has been discovered. That moment may be fast approaching. Howards is given a treatment. Maybe he has forever.

On the day of Howards' greatest triumph, Barron comes up against the Foundation. A negro claims (wrongly, as Barron knows) that the Foundation practices colour prejudice. On the show Barron tries to contact Howards. But Howards won't be disturbed and, angry, Barron hits harder than he normally would have, bringing in people he knows hate Howards—like his old friend and co-founder of the SJC LUKAS GREENE, now the Negro Governor of Mississippi.

Barron tries to put things right and contacts Senator TEDDY HENNERING, co-sponsor of the Freezer Utility Bill, which would grant Howards' Foundation a Freezing monopoly. But Hennering appears strangely agitated and inexplicably throws away his chance. Barron is worried, realises he's made an unwanted enemy in Howards—an enemy he can't afford to have.

Little more than a year to go till the Democratic Convention. President Bobby had his run; will Teddy the Pretender get the nomination? Howards has his own plans. Great big plans he won't let Barron scotch.

Howards comes to Barron's office the day after the show. He threatens, cajoles—and finally offers a free Freeze contract if Barron will promote the Freeze Bill on his show. Barron knows Howards is running scared, and pushes. Finally Howards tells him: Hennering has just died in an air crash! Howards has lost his front man. Now Teddy the pretender has the Presidency in his pocket, but Howards thinks Barron can swing it back to his side.

Barron takes a week to think it over. With his producer he plans to give Howards a taste of fire on the next show, so he'll back off. Deathbed scene, the family begging for a Freeze. Then put Howards on and let him answer *that*.

But Howards is working at his own plans. Barron is "the last piece in a pattern of power". How can he force the piece into place?

He learns of Barron's estrangement from Sara Westerfield and has Sara brought to him. Knowing she needs only half an excuse to go running back to Barron, he confronts her with the images of her own death, then offers a free Freeze contract if she'll get Barron into bed with her. A simple deal: the minute Barron signs, she gets a contract of her own.

But Sara realizes now what will happen. It will be her and Jack together again—forever. She'll give Barron to Howards, but it will be *her* Barron—turned-on, angry, love-filled, an apocalyptic angel to destroy Howards and all he stands for. She looks up at Howards and wonders: how much does he know? What kind of man would try to turn love into a weapon of paranoid power?

And now a day of surprises for Barron. In the warm afterglow of a night with secretary Carrie the vidphone chimes: smooth face of Gregory Morris, Governor of California and de facto head of the semi-vestigal Republican Party. And he asks Barron: *"How would you like to be President of the United States?"*

The vidphone chimes again and it's Sara. Barron rushes across the city to see her and they are reunited, full of guilt at having copped out on one another, and full of the old love. Safe in that love, Barron thinks: *Morris is right, I could do it.* And Sara: *Jack, Jack, someone like you should never die.*

Finally: the confrontation. "Deathbed at go"—and Barron puts Howards on to answer the appeal. He backs Howards into a corner, then agrees to pull off if Howards will give him the whole Freezer story.

Howards comes to Barron and tells him that he was closer than he thought last night: the Foundation *does* have immortality—and this is what he is offering Barron if Barron will snag him public support, sell the people on the idea of immortality for a select few.

Meanwhile Barron learns that he's been offered the Republican nomination on a fusion ticket with the SJC. And back home he learns something else: Sara reveals her connection with Howards.

Howards proffers the contracts, assuring Barron he can have immortality any time he likes (and thinking to himself that Barron will then be in over his head, Howards' man for ever). Though suspicious—what's Howards' hurry?—Barron finally signs, and Sara too. Later Sara queries Barron's hesitation: Barron insists on his refusal to play anyone's game but his own.

That night Barron gets a call from the wife of Teddy Hennering, the dead Senator. She tells him hysterically that Howards had her husband murdered. Hennering had learned something about the Foundation and threatened to reveal it. Barron dismisses the accusation—but the next day, before his Wednesday night show, Mrs. Hennering is killed in a too-coincidental hit-and-run. With Barron's mind preoccupied, the show suffers—until a drunken Negro from Mississippi, HENRY FRANKLIN, comes on.

Franklin reveals that some time previously he had *sold* his little daughter, to a nameless white flunky—for $50,000. Barron is intrigued, and even more so when, after the show, Benedict Howards rings him in a rage, demanding that Franklin be kept off the show. Barron reacts angrily to the demands—and to his own curiosity. Though Howards threatens to have him killed (like Hennering?) Barron tells Howards he is going to visit Franklin in Mississippi.

So he arrives in Evers, to a red-carpet reception from Governor Luke Greene and a wild crowd cheering Barron as the "Black Shade". That night Barron seeks out Franklin in a sleazy bar, where the old drunk tells his story, and begs Barron to get his daughter back again. Barron sets out to take Franklin back to the Governor—but on the way a hidden gunman opens fire on them. Barron is saved by the protection of a parked car—but Franklin is killed.

Now Barron is sure that Howards bought the little girl. A

quick computer check of Mississippi records turns up other kids who have oddly disappeared. Is Howards using the kids as guinea pigs in some way? Did Hennering find out, and so get himself killed? But the questions have to be put aside while Barron plays politics with the Republicans and the SJC. His deal: they protect the TV show – against Howards, pressuring sponsors, etc. – and he will oppose Howards' candidate. But before making promises he plans to test Howards, on his next show.

Back in New York, Barron tells Sara about the near-miss in Mississippi, and vows to get Howards. First step: get immortality. And while he's in Howards' Colorado lab, he plans to carry a miniphone – a hidden bug linked to recording apparatus in New York. Maybe, if provoked, Howards will incriminate himself on tape.

So they confront Howards in Colorado. And, alone with Barron, Howards does admit to killing Hennering – but remains unfazed when Barron produces the miniphone. Instead, armed guards hustle Barron to the lab. He awakens later in a hospital bed, feeling no after-effects. Has Howards faked the treatment? But Howards comes in gloating, assures Barron that he – and Sara – are now immortal. To prove it, he takes Barron on a tour of the place.

On the way he tells Barron that immortality is "all in the glands" – a matter of endocrine balance. There is a point when a child's body stops growing, when ageing begins: at that point the glandular make-up is in equilibrium. The immortality treatment involves holding the glands at that moment, to stay young forever. How? By hard radiation for two days. But that's a fatal dose, says Barron. True, Howards says; "I said you had glands that would stay young forever – but when did I say they were *yours*?"

And Barron sees the terrible truth: that the bodies of children, the missing Negroes, are fatally irradiated, and the immortalized glands removed to be transplanted into the body of the recipient. Barron, maddened, goes for Howards' throat, but is held back. Then Howards reminds him of the contracts, of Barron's incriminating involvement in the whole process. And, he adds, what would the truth do to Sara?

So Barron returns to New York, fighting his shock and horror, and his fear of what kind of show he can do the next night. He can no longer attack Howards without literally committing suicide. And Sara? He tries to escape by making love to her, but the vision of the murdered children turns him nauseous. Sara, astonished, asks why. And Barron hopelessly tells her the whole story. Her horror is even greater than his, and she urges him to stop Howards. But Barron asks: do we live for a million years, or do we fight Howards and die now?

On the night of Barron's TV show, Sara turns on with LSD and is soon in the throes of an evil trip. She calls Barron, half an hour before the show, and tells him that she believes he is avoiding a showdown with Howards to protect her. She can't let him – and she can't live with the knowledge of the transplant inside her, and the trap they're in. You've got to be free, she tells him – "to see what you are and what you've got to do".

And she moves out on to the balcony of the apartment, with Barron watching from the vidphone, and steps off the parapet:

JACK and stars spinning across her retinas JACK and
the skin of her face pulled drum-tight JACK free
fall nausea JACK mass rushing up JACK screams
below JACK fear JACK acid freak-out JACK
for you JACK I'm afraid JACK help me
JACK no no JACK don't want JACK
death JACK forever JACK no
JACK no JACK no JACK no
JACK no JACK no no
JACK flash of b-
linding pain
JAC-

CHAPTER TWENTY

Sara
no! it ca-
n't have happen-
ed Sara you're not
Sara dead no! not dead
not down there on the sidewalk
in a puddle of—Sara! Sara! no no no
You can't be dead! Can't be dead! No! No! Sara! Sara you crazy bitch how could you do a thing like this to me!

How could you do a thing like this to me. . . . The foulness, the utter selfish foulness of the thought brought Jack Barron's mind back into reality from the point of anaesthetic blackout into which it had retreated like a whipped dog howling.

The vidphone screen before him showed a crazy slash of black sky over a section of the concrete parapet off which—

He reached out, snapped off the vidphone, and in the motion fumbled an Acapulco Gold out of the pack on his desk. He jammed it in his mouth, lit it with the table-lighter, and sucked the smoke in-out-in-out-in-out in savage, compulsive pants.

How could you do a thing like this to me—oh Barron, you shit you! How could you do it to her? You bastard! You heartless motherfucker! Sara! Sara! You . . . you. . . .

He flagellated himself with images of her eyes: pool-deep eyes before she blew him wide and shiny my hero little girl eyes naked beside him in Berkeley attic cold eyes boring through him shouting cop-out! the day they broke up eyes glazing and opaqueing to stainless steel mirrors as their flesh crawled from each other the last night (last night! last night there ever was between them and a night spent as strangers!) poor lost phosphor-dot eyes like windows into grey on grey blind acid jungle inside naked and writhing, and he could see it building and building like runaway cancer and all he could do was gibber into the fucking phone while her eyes grew crazier and crazier as she was sucked deeper and deeper into the acid freakout nightmare, eyes from the nowhere non-reality of LSD insanity and all I could do was watch on the phone while she jumped, poor crazy lost eyes and I couldn't do a fucking thing but watch her jump!

SaraSaraSara. . . . No Sara any more, never, no Sara Sara Sara Sara-shaped hole against the sky of his night that would never be filled, not in a million years, and he *had* a million years, dammit, a million years to be without her, a million years to watch her jump, million years to know he killed her—

Bullshit, man! he thought. Stop trying to con yourself . . . guilty, maybe you should feel it, but you don't. You didn't kill her, damn it, it was the acid, was nothing you did or could've done, was Sara freaking out into her own crazy bag again, doing it to save me, make me free to be the fucking Baby Bolshevik hero I never was . . . to save me. . . . From what, from living? From caring? From giving a shit about what happens next? Sara . . .

Sara . . . I didn't kill you, you killed me!

Killed the best things inside me, is all. Tore out my flesh-and-blood guts, replaced with electronic circuitry, can't even make myself cry knowing you're dead. Was nothing I did that killed you, Sara, was what I *was*. Murderer . . . vampire off babies . . . not even that, was it Sara?

Was fucking cop-out, is all! Was seeing my bod owned by that fucker Howards, body not even my own with slug-green pieces of immortality-slime drip-dripping inside me, seeing me selling out to Bennie. . . . You didn't kill me and I didn't kill you, we were both dead already, died when we couldn't stand to touch each other last night, that mother-fucker Howards killed us both. Killed us both by making us immortal, now ain't that a pisser?

Sara . . . I can't cry for you Sara, don't have any tears left in me. But . . . but I can kill for you, baby, kill that fucker Howards! Oh yeah, I can kill for you all right! Can hate, all right! Maybe you were right in your own dumb way, 'cause you're gonna get what you wanted, you and those hundred million dumb bastards out there.

Yeah, I'll do a show like no one's ever seen! They want their fucking hero, I'll give him to them on a silver platter, see how they like it! Let the stupid bastards out there see where it's really at for once in their lives—how's *that* for a television first?

The vidphone began to chime. Barron made the connection, and Vince Gelardi's face appeared on the screen, ashen, stunned, and Barron knew that he knew even before Vince muttered: "Jack . . . the police just called . . . Sara. . . ."

"I saw it all happen, Vince," he said quickly, determined to spare Vince the agony of telling him. "Don't say anything. Don't even tell me how sorry you are. I know . . . I know. . . ."

"Jack . . . I hate to have to bring it up, but we go on the air in nine minutes. I'm trying to get through to the network brass so we can run an old tape, so you don't have to—"

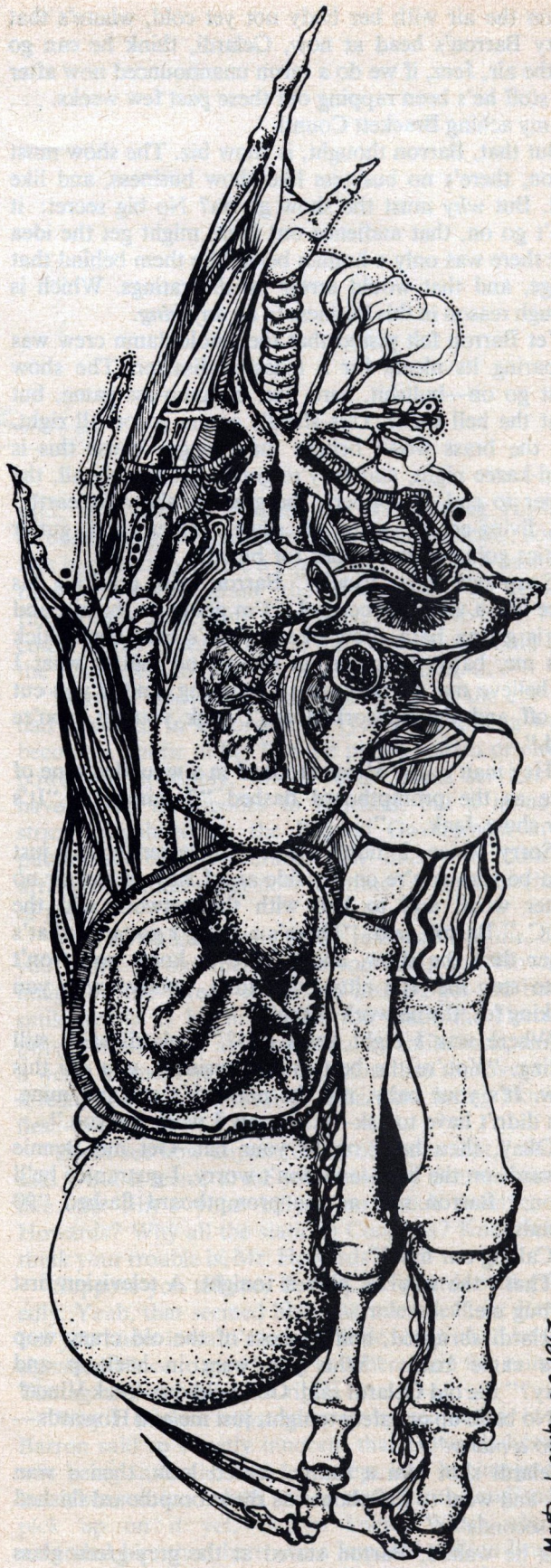
"Forget it!" Barron snapped. "I'm gonna do the show tonight, gonna do it for Sara! Show biz, baby . . . the show must go on, and words from the same picture. . . ."

"Jack, you don't have to—"

"But I do, man! More than any show in the history of this whole dumb business, *this* one's gotta go on! See you in the studio, Vince—but thanks anyway."

JACK BARRON SAT down in the white chair behind the black-wash-over-kinesthop background, clocked the cameraman (cameraman he never noticed during the show) staring ashen-faced at him, saw that the prompt-board was live and showed "3 minutes", and somehow he could sense the disaster-aura reaching all the way to the monkey block behind the control room.

And it bugged him. Fucking network brass coming on like they really care how I feel with Sara Sara . . . Yeah sure, all they want to know is does it mean a fiasco if I



go on the air with her body not yet cold, where's that crazy Barron's head at now, Gelardi, think he can go on the air, Jeez, if we do a rerun unannounced now after the stuff he's been rapping out these past few weeks. . . . Oh my aching Brackett Count!

But that, Barron thought, is show biz. The show must go on, there's no business like show business, and like that. But *why* must the show go on? No big secret: it don't go on, that audience out there might get the idea that there was only a human being like them behind that image, and that would screw up the ratings. Which is enough reason in this business to do *anything*.

Yet Barron felt pissed that the whole damn crew was preparing its ulcers for a massive disaster. The show must go on—bullshit, sure, just a dumb-ass game, but what the hell isn't? This show's gonna go on all right, and the brass won't believe the ratings, 'cause this is kami-kazee night, and they're gonna get the big all, the topper to end all toppers, the greatest show on earth: two living-colour stars of stage, screen and gutter politics going at each other for blood.

"Snap out of it, Vince!" Barron said, cracking his voice like a whip for control. "I'm going on the air, and this is gonna be a show like no one's ever seen. Stick with me, baby, keep me on the air no matter what I do, believe me, I know what I'm doing, and if you cut me off and the network doesn't back you up, you're fired."

"Hey man . . . ," Vince crooned in a wounded tone of voice as the promptboard flashed "2 minutes". "It's *your* show, Jack. . . ."

"Sorry Vince, I didn't mean to threaten you, I just gotta be sure you're on my side and I stay on the air no matter what, and to hell with the network and the F.C.C.," Barron said. "There's a thing I gotta do that's bigger than the show, and I have to know you won't try to stop me. It's nitty-gritty time, buddy: who you working for, the network or me?"

"Where was I eight years ago?" Gelardi said, still hurting. "You're the best in the business, you *are* this show. It's your baby, not the network's and not mine. You didn't have to ask—you know I work for you."

"Okay, then hang on to your hat. Get me Bennie Howards on the line—and don't worry, I guarantee he'll go on," Barron said as the promptboard flashed "90 seconds".

"Calling *out* first?"

"That's the way we play it tonight. A television first—I bug me."

Gelardi shrugged, and a ghost of the old crazy wop smile came back. "Who you want in back-up and safety?" the old Gelardi said. Good old one-track Vince!

"No back-up or safety tonight, just me and Howards—*mano a mano*."

Gelardi shot him a funny, scared look, then a wan grin, and went to the phones as the promptboard flashed "30 seconds".

As he waited, Barron stared at the grey-green glass face of the monitor. With his guts so damn empty—a musty cavern haunted by unreal ghosts—there was something hypnotic about it; he felt the vacuum within reach out for the waiting vacuum in the cathode ray tube, meet, merge, form a reality-to-reality tunnel across the non-space of the studio. As if there were nothing real in the whole universe but himself and that screen and the circuit connecting them. Even the network that logic said connected him with a hundred million other screen-realities didn't seem to exist. Just him and the tube.

The monitor screen came to living colour life, a phosphor-dot image straight to the backs of his eyes: his own name "BUG JACK BARRON" in red Yankee-go-home letters, with the barroom voice behind it.

"Bugged?"

Then the montage of anger-sounds, and the voice again:

"Then go bug Jack Barron!"

And then he was staring at his own face, a living colour mirror-reality that moved when he moved, the eyes shadowed, the mouth grim and heavy. He backed off a bit from what he felt, saw the face on the screen become less tense, less savage, responding to his mind like a remote-controlled puppet.

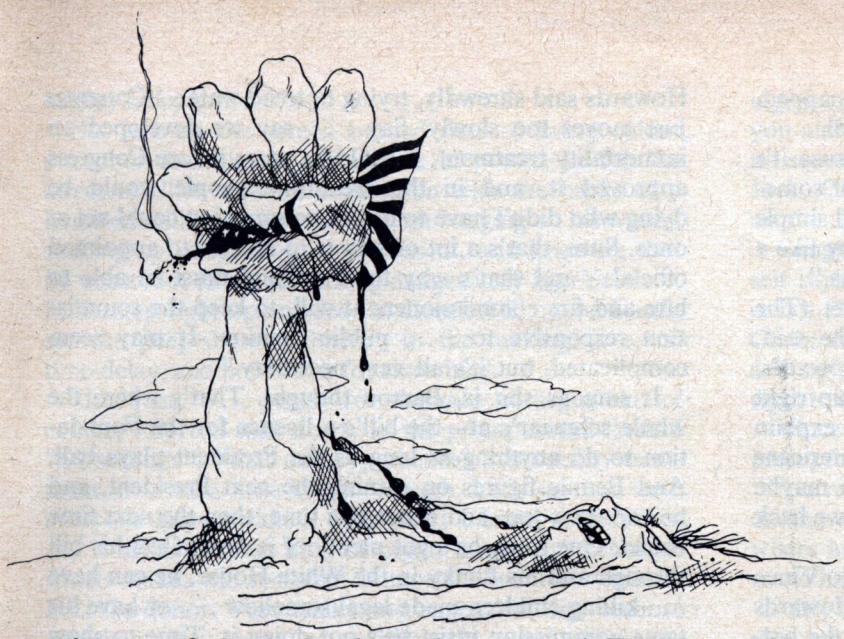
As they rolled the first Acapulco Golds commercial, he pulled himself away from that vertiginous rapport with the screen, saw that the promptboard said "Howards on line"—and it was like a nerve of his own body reporting back on the readiness of his fist. Indeed, it was hard for him to feel the interface of his own body—his consciousness seemed as much in the promptboard and the monitor as in his own flesh. He was the room, was the studio set-up, the monkey block-control-booth-studio gestalt. It was part of him, and he of it.

And everything else—memories of Sara, slug-things inside him, all he had ever been—was locked away, reflex-encapsulated, unreal. Though he felt the mechanism activating and knew it for what it was—electric circuit anaesthesia—he was grateful for it, knowing that his gut wouldn't have to feel what was going to happen, living colour kick 'em in the ass image-Jack Barron was back in the catbirdseat and knew what to do.

His face was back on the monitor screen. "This is *Bug Jack Barron*," he said, feeling the flesh of his mouth move, seeing it duplicated in the image before him, cell by phosphor-dot image cell, "and tonight we're gonna do a show that's a little different. You've been bugging me out there for years, folks, using me as your voice to get to the vips. Well this is worm-turning night, folks, tonight we play the old switcheroo. Tonight I'm bugged, tonight it's my gripe, tonight I'm out for blood on my own."

And in a weird leap of perspective, he seemed to be moving the image-lips on the screen directly, a brain-to-phosphor-dot electronic-flesh reflex-arc circuit, as he said: "Tonight *Jack Barron* bugs *himself*."

HE MADE THE FACE on the screen an unreadable devil-mask (let Bennie sweat, don't tip him off till he's too far in, blow his mind naked, on camera!), said: "Tonight



we're gonna find out a few things about cryogenic Freezing that nobody knows. Seems like we haven't been able to do two shows in a row without mentioning the Foundation for Human Immortality lately, and those of you out there who think it's just a coincidence got a few shocks coming. Lot of people got a few shocks coming, so stick around for the fun and games—you're gonna see how the old fur flies when Jack Barron bugs himself."

Lowering his head to shadow his eyes, he caught kinesthop flashes off the backdrop, turning the image on the screen sly and threatening as he said: "And we won't wait to get down to the nitty-gritty either, friends. I've got Mr. Benedict Howards right on the line."

Signalling Vince to give him three-quarters screen, he made the connection on the number one vidphone and Benedict Howards' face appeared in the lower left-hand corner of the monitor screen, a pale grey on grey vidphone phantom enveloped by Barron's living colour hyper-real image. You're on my turf tonight, Bennie, he thought, and so am I, all the way this time, and you're gonna get a flash of what paranoia can really be. . . .

"This is *Bug Jack Barron*, Mr. Howards, and tonight we're going all the way for the straight poop on. . . . (he purposefully paused, smirked a private, threatening smile, watched Howards freeze in terror, then threw him the change-up, fat hanging curve) . . . the Freezer Utility Bill."

And watched Howards' face melt to jello, every tense muscle relaxing in flaccid momentary relief, leaving Bennie wide open for the primrose path schtick, he'll think I'm playing ball till I pull the reversal, and he'll be stuck before he can hang up the phone.

"Good," Howards said awkwardly. "It's about time all this crap about the Foundation for Human Immortality was cleared up."

Barron smiled, tapped his left foot twice, and Vince gave Howards half screen. "Don't worry about that, Mr. Howards," he said. "By the end of the show it'll all be . . . *cleared up.*" And again, Howards tensed as he picked up on the emphasis of the last words. Sweat, you bastard, sweat, Barron thought. And it's only beginning. . . .

"So let's talk about this Freezer Utility Bill," Barron said, saw that once again, he was putting Howards through changes—tension-release-tension-release, bounce him back and forth like a ping-pong ball. "Now basically, this bill would grant the Foundation for Human Immortality a Freezing monopoly, right? No other outfit could legally Freeze corpses; the Foundation would have the whole field to itself . . . a law unto itself. . . ."

"Hardly," Howards said, picking up on the cue they had arranged in Colorado. "Cryogenic Freezing would become a public utility like the phone system or electric power—a monopoly, sure, because some services just have to be monopolies to function, but a monopoly strictly regulated by the Federal Government in the public interest." Beautiful, just like you think we arranged, Bennie—but now it's time for another change of pace.

"Well now that sounds pretty reasonable to me, don't you think so out there?" Barron said, and Howards' image on the screen smiled an inside-I-got-you-bought smile across at his image. Barron made the electronic puppet-mask smile an earnest-flunky smile back, and for a weird moment he felt his consciousness slur over to the screen, and it was almost as if he were facing Howards flesh-to-flesh.

"Don't see how anyone could object to that," Barron said. "But it seems to me you could say that real simple-like. So why's your bill in so much trouble, Mr. Howards? Why all the static in Congress? Know what I think your trouble is, Mr. Howards?"

"Suppose you tell me, Barron," Howards said guardedly. Yeah, that seemed like a harmless lead-in, Bennie, but you know it wasn't in your little script. And he foot-signalled Vince to give him a commercial in five minutes. Timing here had to be just right.

"Why I think it's just screwed up semantics, is all." Barron said so sweetly innocent that Howards knew he was being sarcastic, and fear crept into his image-eyes, but it was all too subtle, inside stuff, for the audience to pick up on it yet, Barron knew. Which abruptly reminded him that there *was* a hundred million Brackett Count audience digging the whole scene, out there on the other side of the screen.

"What do you mean by that?" Howards snapped, and Barron recognised it as a slipping of control.

He smiled blandly. "Your bill's in trouble 'cause it's badly written, its all. So long and complicated for something that's supposed to be so straightforward and simple . . . all those funny little clauses, twisty and turny like a snake. Pretty hard to figure out what it all means."

He pulled a blank sheaf of paper out of a pocket. (The old Joe McCarthy schtick.) "Tell you what," he said, waving the papers across the monitor screen at Howards' now-uptight image, "why don't we clear it all up right now, straight from the horse's mouth, you can explain the confusing parts to a hundred million Americans right now, Mr. Howards, and who knows, then maybe your simple little bill'll go right through. Soon as we hack away all the confusing underbrush, dig?"

And he put a razor in the last word, signalled to Vince to give him three-quarters screen, and zingo, Howards was a scared little twerp cowering below him in the hot-seat. He suddenly realised that to the hundred million people on the other side of the screen, what they saw there *was* reality, reality that was realer than real because a whole country was sharing the direct sensory experience; it was history taking place right before their eyes, albeit non-event history that existed only on the screen. A strange chill went through him as for the first time he got a full gut-reality flash of the unprecedented power wielded by his image on the screen.

And like an internal neural time-sense circuit, the promptboard told him: "4 minutes".

HE HARDENED THAT image to a mask of inquisitor-iron, yet spoke blandly, innocently, creating a gestalt of impending dread in the contrast: "Now lessee . . . this bill would set up a five member regulating commission appointed and holding office at 'the pleasure of the President'. That's a funny set-up, isn't it? Seems like the commission would be totally controlled by the President if he could hire and fire commissioners whenever he pleased. . . ."

"Freezing's a very delicate problem," Howards said defensively, like a boy caught with his hand in the old cookie jar. "If the commissioners had fixed terms . . . they might make mistakes that couldn't be corrected for years. And in this case, time means human life."

"And of course, the Foundation for Human Immortality is very concerned with . . . *human life*," Barron said as the promptboard flashed "3 minutes". "Now there's another bit of funny language in here. The part that gives the Freezing Commission full power to 'regulate, oversee, and pass on the appropriateness of all current operations of the Foundation for Human Immortality and any further operations in the area of life-extension as the Foundation may in the future undertake.' If you translate that into English, it seems to mean that the commission would operate independent of Congress, in effect making its own law in the area of . . . life-extension."

"Well . . . ah, doesn't that answer your first question?" Howards said shrewdly, trying to tread water. "Congress just moves too slowly. Say . . . say we developed an immortality treatment; it could be years before Congress approved it, and in the meantime people would be dying who didn't have to die. A commission could act at once. Sure, that's a lot of power to entrust to appointed officials—and that's why the President must be able to hire and fire commissioners at will, to keep the commission responsive to . . . public opinion. It may seem complicated, but it's all very necessary."

It sure as shit is, Barron thought. That's where the whole schmear's at—the bill's a licence for the Foundation to do anything as long as the President plays ball. And Bennie figures on owning the next President, and he can do it too, and if not this time, then the next time round. One thing he's got plenty of is *time*. Gets his bill through and his flunky in the White House, he can have . . . killing children made legal somehow . . . or have his tame commission insist he's not doing it. Time to show the fucker the razor inside.

"In other words, Howards, you and the President'll run the whole show. The Foundation will control all Freezing and . . . *life extension*, and only the President, comes nitty gritty, can tell you what you can and can't do."

Howards' image glared at him like a rat in a trap, and the paranoia within began to leak out through his eyes.

"The President . . ." Howards practically gibbered, "what's wrong with that? Don't you—"

"I wonder if it's smart to trust all that to one man, even the President," Barron said as the promptboard flashed "2 minutes". "I mean, one man, even a President, could be bought. With all your money, and maybe . . . *something more*?"

"You're crazy, Barron!" Howards shrieked, blowing all cool, his eyes becoming really rabid. "You're slandering the President of the United States!"

"Who, me?" said Barron, footsignalling Vince to cut Howards' audio, give Howards three-quarters screen. "Why I'm a regular pussycat, I wouldn't slander anyone. I'm talking about a hypothetical President in a hypothetical situation, so all I gotta worry about is a hypothetical lawsuit, right?" And Howards' face was a mute backdrop of paranoia surrounding his on the monitor screen.

"So let's just take a farfetched blue-sky hypothetical situation," he said, footsignalling Vince to give Howards full screen. "Let's say the Foundation for Human Immortality finally develops an immortality treatment. . . ."

A feral twitch of pure terror spasmed Howards' face for the hundred million Brackett Count audience to see, as Barron called for full screen for himself and the promptboard flashed "90 seconds".

"Let's say your little story takes place after the next Presidential election, and let's just say the President is the Foundation's man, without naming names. That sound so impossible to you out there, I mean the Foundation has *only* fifty billion bucks to work with, and if they have immortality to peddle . . . well, that'd make a

mighty fancy bribe. . . ."

His face on the screen burned dots of living colour phosphor into him in a feedback of power; he felt the direct satellite network connection with the backs of a hundred million brains, all of them hanging on his words, sucking up image from that glass tit, and knowing that he was about to say something dangerously big. Yessiree, folks, step right up and see the Greatest Show on Earth, see the peep-show of history in the making, live, no time-delay, and how's *that* for show biz?

"Let's say . . . purely for the sake of argument, of course," Barron said slowly as the promptboard flashed "60 seconds", "that our hypothetical immortality treatment involves a little kicker, though. Let's say . . . well, everyone knows what a dirty mind I have, so let's just say it involves some kind of organ transplant technique which makes the recipient immortal, but unfortunately kills the donor. Very tricky and expensive, dig, because somehow they gotta get victims. In other words, to make one winner immortal, the Foundation's gotta kill one loser. I believe the legal profession has a technical term for that . . . I think they call it *murder*."

Just enough time to set Bennie up, Barron thought as the promptboard flashed "30 seconds". He let a ray of the hate he felt inside him play on his image, a nitty-gritty flash to a hundred million Brackett Count slobs that maybe it all wasn't just hot air.

"Now see where that's at? Just a *hypothetical* situation, folks," he said, sneering his image-lips slightly, giving the word "hypothetical" a sardonic intonation. "But hypothetically, if the Freezer bill is passed as it stands, if the Foundation for Human Immortality can elect itself a President, and if they had a *hypothetical* immortality treatment that involved murder, then *hypothetically* the Foundation for Human Immortality could damn well commit murder and get away with it. . . ."

He paused, filled three full seconds of airtime with dead silence, till he was damn sure all of 'em would know exactly what he was saying (and a special dig for Bennie Howards):

"*Hypothetically* . . ." he drawled, and the word was just a shade off being a bald accusation. "Of course, the Foundation's hot to get the bill passed, and that's not *hypothetical*, and a lot of people who should know say there was hanky-panky between the Foundation and a certain potential Presidential candidate who died under . . . *questionable* circumstances, that's not hypothetical, and one and one *have* been known to add up to two. And we'll see just how *hypothetical* the rest of it is—if Mr. Benedict Howards has the guts to stay on the line —after this word from our unquestionably non-hypothetical sponsor."

"WHAT THE FUCK are you *doing*?" Vince Gelardi said over the intercom circuit the moment they had the commercial rolling, his face tense and drawn, but a kind of manic elation that Barron could sense peeked through it. "The phones are going crazy, and Howards is gibbering, I mean *literally* gibbering, man! Stuff about killing you and eviscerated niggers and black circles . . . makes no sense. He's flipped, he's all the way round the bend, Jack. Christ knows what he'll say if we put him back on the air."

Caught up in the smell of combat, Barron found himself saying, with the old *Bug Jack Barron* relish: "This is not *Bug Jesus H.*, Vince, it's *Bug Jack Barron*, and Christ doesn't *have* to know what Howards is gonna say as long as *I* do, dig? Keep him on the line, and feed him right to me as soon as we're back on the air."

Vince winced through the control booth glass as the promptboard flashed "60 seconds", said nervously: "You're right on the edge as it is. You let a lunatic babble on the air, a lunatic like Bennie Howards who knows where half the bodies in the country are buried, and we could have a lawsuit that—"

"It's my show," Barron said sharply. "But. . . . Maybe you got a point (can I keep Howards from doing me in, really pull it off?). Tell you what, when I'm talking, give me three-quarters screen and kill Howards' audio. When I throw the ball to Bennie, give *him* three-quarters, let him rave for a couple seconds, then quick-cut back to me at three-quarters and kill his audio again. We play it back and forth like that, and he won't be able to get more than a couple words in edgewise, dig?"

"Ah, that's the dirty old Jack Barron we all know and love," Gelardi said as the promptboard flashed "30 seconds".

As the last seconds of the Chevy commercial rolled on the monitor screen, Jack Barron got another flash of the total power he wielded over that screen, the power of an artificial phosphor-dot pattern that went straight from his mind through the satellite network circuit to a hundred million brains, the power of a reality-illusion that wasn't even real. Life and death, he thought, just Bennie and me, and the poor bastard doesn't have a prayer. No matter how high the cards he holds in reality are, he still wouldn't have a chance on my turf, 'cause on those hundred million screens, he says only what I let him say, he *is* only what I let him be, it's *my* reality, it's like he was stuck inside my head.

And he finally understood fully where Luke and Morris were at. It didn't matter that he would be a joke as President, what the flesh and blood man in the studio is doesn't matter at all—the only thing that matters is what a hundred million schmucks see on the screen, *that's* what's really real, image is all, because when it comes to what's happening in That Big World Out There, image is all the poor fuckers ever get to see.

Oh what a shuck! he thought as the promptboard flashed "On the Air", and he stared at his own electric face, the eyes sinister pits of power, strictly from holding his head slightly downturned to catch kinesthop flashes from the backdrop behind him. I can do *anything* on that fucking screen, anything—no one's in my league in *this* brand of reality, no matter who the hell they are in the flesh and blood private reality that nobody sees. What happens on the screen is just my word made flesh,

I make all the rules, control every damn phosphor-dot the whole country sees. Why couldn't it make me President, or anything else—shit, they haven't elected a *man* President since Truman, they elect an image, is all, and who's bigger league in the image-racket than me?

And the unreal black and white face of Benedict Howards in the lower left quadrant was nothing less than pathetic; Howards didn't even have the beginnings of a chance, because what the whole country was seeing wasn't *Bennie's* Howards, but Benedict Howards as edited and re-written by him!

"All right," Barron said, feeling unfairly, obscenely confident, "let's get back to our fairy story and see just how *hypothetical* it really is. A while back on this show, we discussed immortality research, didn't we, Mr. Howards? (Howards began to shout something soundlessly on the screen, and Barron thought of Sara, felt a savage elation at the total, paranoid frustration Howards must be going through, knowing it was his life going down the drain and not a damn thing he could do about it, not even scream.) You said then you didn't have an immortality treatment. . . . What if I say you have? What if I say I have proof? (Watch those libel-laws, man!) What do you say to *that*, Benedict Howards? Go ahead, I dare you, deny you have an immortality treatment, right here, right now, in front of a hundred million witnesses! "

Barron's face was a triple-size full-colour monster surrounding the mute image of Benedict Howards. As the images inverted, Barron realised what was about to happen even as—

Howard's eyes glazed over, and crazy tension-lines from every coarse, open, black-and-white-exaggerated pore seemed to radiate paranoid fury as the devil-mask of his face filled three-quarters of the screen, and as Vince cut in his audio, he was screaming:

". . . you, Barron! I'll kill you! You—" Howards suddenly blanched as the fact that he was on the air penetrated the red mist.

"It's a lie! " he managed to shout somewhat less shrilly. "It's a goddamn lie! " But every fear-line in his face shouted that it wasn't. "There's no immortality treatment, I swear there isn't, only the fading black circle, against it, we're against it on the side of life, we don't eviscerate picka—" Howards' whole face shook as he realised what he had started to say, and he cut himself off even as Gelardi killed his audio and gave Barron back three-quarters screen.

Jeez, doesn't matter *what* he says, Baron realised. All I gotta do is blow my own riff and just let 'em see it bounce off his face. . . .

"Stop gibbering, Howards! " he said coldly. "Makes you feel any better, why we'll talk about the other end of our little hypothesis. Let's just suppose, hypothetically, *if you insist*, that there *is* an immortality treatment that involves, oh say a gland transplant operation that requires the glands of young children, that involves cutting them apart, *murdering them* for their glands."

He paused. Howards was screaming mutely again on his quarter of the screen like an impotent bug impaled on a pin. Squirm, you bastard, squirm! Had any brains, you'd hang up the phone, but you can't, can you? I got you in too deep now.

"Dig?" Barron said. "If there was such a treatment and it did involve murder, that would sure explain a lot of funny things, wouldn't it folks? Would explain why Mr. Howards is so hot to get his Freezer Utility Bill passed, get himself a nice commission, with his Foundation answerable only to that commission, and the commission controlled completely by the President. . . . Especially if the President we elect is answerable only to *him*. What about it, Mr. Howards, *doesn't* that make sense?"

GELARDI INVERTED the images, and Howards' stricken face once more dominated the screen. "You—" he began to shout. And then Barron could all but see a shade pulling down behind his desperate eyes, a shade of silence, his only possible retreat.

"Okay," Barron said as the images reverted, "so Mr. Howards doesn't care for . . . hypothetical situations. So let's talk about hard facts. Let's talk about Presidential candidates. (Watch them libel-laws!) Now I'm only repeating what I read in the papers—but a lot of people thought that the late Senator Theodore Hennering had the inside track to the Democratic nomination, and things being what they are, that meant the inside track to the Presidency. Before his . . . *unfortunate accident*. Tell us, Mr. Howards, were you a Hennering man—or was Hennering a Foundation man?"

Howards came out fighting this time as his audio came on and the images on the screen inverted: "That's libel, Barron, and you know it! " But before he could get in another word, Vince flashed him back into the silent coventry of the lower left quadrant hotseat.

"Libelling *who*? Now there's a good question," Barron said. "You or Hennering? Anyway, I'm not libelling anyone, just asking a question. Fact: Hennering was a sponsor and the Senate floor leader for the Freezer Utility Bill. Fact: Hennering's Presidential balloon had mighty big bread behind it. I gotta watch those libel laws, folks, so you'll have to add it up all by yourselves—one and one makes. . . . Got it, folks? 'Cause here comes some more *hypothetical* stuff. Let's say that a Foundation which the libel laws prevent me from naming has bought itself a Presidential candidate who the libel laws prevent me from naming, got a lot of muscle behind a certain bill which the libel laws prevent me from naming because they've got a beep! beep! treatment that amounts to murder, and let's say that our unnameable Senator from Illinois *doesn't know* about this treatment. Are you with me so far, out there? Ain't it wonderful, living in a free country where you can . . . hypothesize anything you want to as long as you don't name names? Even when you all know what names to put into the blank spaces."

He paused and clocked how Howards' face had become a pasty mask, how he didn't even seem to be paying attention, knowing for sure it was all over now.

"Let's go one step further. Let's say that our unname-

able Senator finds out about this here . . . *treatment*. Let's say he doesn't like it one bit. Let's say he calls up the unnameable head of the unnameable Foundation and tells him precisely where he can stuff his unnameable treatment. Let's say our Senator tells him he's gonna oppose his own bill, blow the whistle on our hypothetical Foundation on the floor of the Senate. That means our hypothetical Foundation head's gonna be tried for murder, unless . . . unless something happens to close our Senator's mouth. Tell us, Mr. Howards—just hypothetically of course—if *you* were the head of our hypothetical Foundation and this Senator's big mouth was your ticket to the electric chair, what would *you* do?"

"—sue you!" Howards' voice shouted as Vince switched the images and cut in his audio. "Sue you for libel! I'll get you, Barron! Send you to the chair! I'll—"

Gelardi husted him back into the lower left quadrant hotseat like a sergeant-at-arms, and Barron felt the moment hang in the air. Nitty-gritty time, he thought. All I gotta do is spring it; I've got him set up for the kill. Kill myself with him maybe, with that contract as a signed confession, me and Sara— Sara! Sara Sara Sara. . . . No more Sara. . . . He felt slug-green things drip-dripping the stolen life-juices of broken babies within him, and in a flash of pure, blessed berserker rage knew that it had to be get Bennie first and try to save himself later.

"Now let's get back to what's laughingly known as the real world," Barron said. "Fact: Senator Theodore Hennering was killed in a mid-air plane explosion which conveniently destroyed any evidence there might be of murder, hypothetical or otherwise. Fact: few weeks later, Hennering's widow just happens to get herself run over by a hit and run rented truck. What do you say to that, Mr. Howards?"

Vince flashed Howards to three-quarters screen just long enough for him to mutter "How should I know? Coincidence—" before he was cut off again, and Barron was back at three-quarters screen.

Here comes a tricky part, Barron thought. If I can get him to admit it, at least I'm off the libel hook.

"And another fact that nobody knows: Madge Hennering called me before she was killed, told me that Benedict Howards had threatened to kill her husband shortly before he died, *just* before he died, because Hennering had found out something about the Foundation terrible enough to make him switch sides. And that's not libel either, friends," Barron lied, "because I can prove it. I have the whole conversation on tape."

"It's a lie!" Howards screamed, as Vince flashed him on, then off. "Lie! Goddamn fading black circle lie! lie!"

"Watch that, Bennie," Barron said, giving his puppet-mask on the screen an ironic smile, "you're calling me a liar and that's libel, and I can prove it with the tape."

Barron paused, knowing what the next link in the chain had to be. Gotta come right out and accuse him of murdering Hennering, and that *is* libel any way you slice it without legal evidence which I ain't got unless he gives it to me—and he won't unless I climb out on that limb. Okay smart-ass, this is the *real* nitty gritty, the razor inside—go! go! go!

"Last week I flew down to Mississippi to talk to a man who claimed—you saw it here, folks—that someone had bought his daughter for $50,000," Barron said, still playing footsie with the libel-laws. "Now if some Foundation needed children for an immortality transplant operation . . . get the picture, folks? Three people and only three people knew I was going down there: Governor Lukas Greene, a very old friend, the woman I loved—and Mr. Benedict Howards. Someone shot the man I went down there to talk to, a real pro job, and he almost got me too. One of those three people had Henry George Franklin killed and tried to kill me. Who do *you* think it was, my friend, my wife, or . . .?"

Barron paused again, half for the effect, half hesitating at the bank of an abysmal Rubicon, knowing the total, mortal danger his next words had to bring. Howards' inset face on the monitor screen was ashen but strangely calm, knowing what was coming, knowing he couldn't save himself, but also knowing that the power to destroy was mutual, was also his. Fuck you, Bennie! Barron thought. Banzai for the Emperor, live a thousand years! Yeah, *a thousand years*. . . .

"Or Benedict Howards, who bought that man's child to coldbloodedly vivisect in his Colorado labs, Benedict Howards, who is immortal with the glands of a murdered child sewn into his rotten hide, Benedict Howards, who murdered Theodore Hennering and his wife and Henry George Franklin, Benedict Howards, who tried to kill me. After all, *Mr.* Howards, murder's cheaper by the dozen, isn't it? You can only fry once."

AND HE FOOTSIGNALLED Vince to cut in Howards' audio and give him the full screen treatment. Moment of truth, Barron thought as the image of Benedict Howards ballooned on the screen like a bloated bladder. I'm wide open for a libel suit unless Bennie's far gone enough to cover my bet. He let Howards' silent face eat up three or four seconds of dead airtime, and behind his eyes Barron could sense a straining interface between blind paranoid rage and shrewd vestiges of the amoral coldness that had built the Foundation, had made this ruthless fucker immortal, let him gut children on a goddamn assembly-line and then bitch about the cost.

Two sides of the same coin, Barron realised. Paranoia either way, is all. A cool paranoiac uses his head coldly and ruthlessly to do in everyone in sight 'cause he *knows* everyone's out to get him, and when a cat like that finally freaks out, he's gonna be shrieking and screaming at everything in sight. Gotta push him over that line!

"How does it feel, Howards?" he said, speaking from his own gut, washing the words over Howards' full screen image like the black-wash-over-moire-patterns behind his own head. "How's it feel to have the stolen glands of some dead kid inside you, crawling around under your skin like spastic slugs oozing slime all over your body twitching and itching—feel 'em?—like they were slowly eating you alive always eating eating eating but never

finished eating you up inside for a million—"

"Stop it! Stop it!" Howards screamed, his face filling the screen with a mask of feral terror, his eyes rolling like dervishes, his mouth slack and wet like that of a man in a trance. "Don't let them kill me! Fading black circle of eviscerated niggers tubes of slime up my nose down my throat choking me. . . . Don't let them kill me! Nobody kills Benedict Howards! Buy 'em own 'em kill 'em, Senators, President, fading black circle. . . . I don't want to die! Please! Please! Don't let them—"

Zingo! Vince chickened out finally; Howards' face was off the screen, his audio dead, and Barron's face filled the entire screen.

Fuck! Barron almost muttered aloud. What a time to get squeamish! What— Suddenly, came a gut-flash that nearly knocked Barron out of his chair: Bennie's *totally* freaked out! Doesn't know what he's saying. Maybe I can do more than get him to admit he killed Hennering, get him to admit on the air he conned me, I didn't know about the treatment beforehand. The truth! Maybe he's crazy enough so I can get him to tell the truth. But I gotta lay it *all* on the line, take away even his doomsday machine weapon, pull out all the stops, throw it all in their fat little laps out there, my life, everything. How's that for a television first—the *fucking truth*!

"Tell them, Howards," he said. "Tell the whole damn country what you're putting over on them. Tell them about Teddy Hennering, tell them about the Foundation for Human Immortality, tell them about immortality from the inside. Tell 'em what it feels like to be a murderer."

He paused, tapped his left foot once—and nothing happened. Behind the control booth glass, Gelardi shook his head "no". Barron tapped his foot again; again Gelardi shook his head. Barron slammed his foot against the floor. Vince groaned silently, then capitulated and Howards' face filled three-quarters of the screen.

"You tell 'em, or I'll tell 'em," Barron said, tapping his right foot twice for a commercial in two minutes, almost grinned as Vince brought his hands together in a mock prayer of thanks.

"Barron, listen, it's not too late, Barron," Howards whined, and the rage was gone from his face, whited-out by a craven, feral fear. "Not too late to stop the fading black circle closing in closing in. . . . I won't tell. I swear I won't tell, we can live forever, Barron, you and me, never have to die, young and strong, smell the air in the morning, it's not too late, I swear it, you and me and your wife. . . ."

Barron signalled to keep the screen split as is, said softly, measuredly, letting something harder than sorrow and colder than anger gleam in his image's eyes: "My wife is dead, Howards. She jumped twenty-three stories, *twenty-three stories*. Suicide . . . but not from where I sit. From where I sit, you killed her sure as if you pushed her. Afraid now, Bennie? Can you guess where my head is at?"

Incredibly, the total fear on Benedict Howards's face took a quantum jump, it was more than terror now, it was abysmal paranoid despair. And all he could do was mutter: "No . . . no . . . no. . . no . . . no . . ." like some obscene million-year-old infant, trembling wet lips of incredible age forming a baby's drool. He knew.

Barron signalled for and got full screen and solo audio as the promptboard flashed "90 seconds". "Let's talk about why my wife died," he said, his voice and face purposely composed into an artfully-ill-concealed ersatz calm that was far more wrenching than any histronics could ever be.

"My wife died because Benedict Howards made her immortal," he said. "He made her immortal and it killed her, now ain't that a bitch? She couldn't live with herself after she found out . . . Sara wasn't the only one her immortality killed. There was someone else she never saw who died so she could be immortal—a poor kid whose body was irradiated by the Foundation till it was one living cancer, so they could cut out his very special glands and sew them into my wife. And make her live forever. . . . But she won't live forever, she's dead; she killed herself because she couldn't stand living knowing what had been done to her. I loved that woman, so you'll pardon my thinking it wasn't just guilt. She told me why, just before she jumped. She knew that he would get away with it, live forever, kill forever, buy or kill anyone that stood in his way unless. . . . Unless someone was desperate enough or dumb enough or didn't care enough about living to scream from the mountaintops what he was doing. Sara Westerfeld died to make me do just what I'm doing now. She died for you! How does *that* grab you, suckers?"

Barron felt himself cloaked in the crystal mist of legend: the studio, the monitor, the figures behind the control booth glass were things that couldn't possibly exist. The things he had said were things that were *never* said in public, not in front of a hundred million people, what was happening did not ever happen in front of cameras, you could watch the glass tit forever and not see anything like this.

But it *was* happening, he was making it happen, and it was the easiest thing in the world. History, he thought, I'm making fucking history—and it's nothing but show biz, is all. Moving images around and making myth . . .

He footsignalled and got Howards back at one-quarter screen, with his audio back on. But Bennie was as stiff and mute as a still photo.

"Go ahead, Howards," he said, "now's your big chance, tell 'em the rest. Tell 'em *why* you made Sara Westerfeld immortal, tell 'em who else you made immortal. Go ahead, time to hit back, isn't it?"

Howards remained silent, didn't even seem to hear, as the promptboard flashed "30 seconds". His empty eyes looked off into the dreadful landscape within. Barron knew he had him sick and bleeding—set him up right, and after the commercial, he'd start to shriek.

"All right," Barron said with razors in his voice, "I'll tell 'em!" He reached into a pocket, pulled out the same blank papers he had used before.

"See this folks? This is a Freeze contract, a very

special Freeze contract. It entitles the client to have the Foundation for Human Immortality make him immortal . . ."

He paused, waved the paper at the camera like a bloody shirt.

"This is *my* contract," he said.

And the promptboard flashed "Off the Air".

THE COMMERCIAL rolled, and behind the glass of the control booth, Barron could see the confusion, the death-watch smell, and Vince's face seemed ten years older as he stared through the glass, then spoke into the intercom circuit:

"Jack, what are you—"

"Keep me on the air, Vine," Barron said.

"What in hell is going on? Do you realise what you're *doing*?"

Do I realise what I'm doing! Barron thought. Did I ever realise what I was doing before tonight?

"Just keep me on the air, Vince," Barron said, "and make damn sure Howards stays on the phone."

Gelardi hesitated and Barron could read the pain on his face as he said: "The network brass is screaming. You've laid them open to the biggest libel suit in history. They're ordering me to keep you off the air. I'm sorry. . . ."

"This is my show, Vince," Barron shouted, "and you can tell those fuckers to get stuffed! You can also tell them that every word I've said is true, and the *only* way they can avoid a libel suit is to keep me on the air and let me prove it."

"That's pretty dirty pool," Gelardi said as the promptboard flashed "60 seconds".

"It's a pretty dirty world, Vince," Barron said, and he broke the intercom connection.

How's this for the old power-junk? Barron thought. Benedict Howards totally raving out of his mind, and I've got him trapped on my turf where I make all the rules, can change 'em anytime I want. Howards, with all his power, with his dirty fingers in every Democratic pie, I can do more than save myself—that's no real sweat now—I can kick the whole cabal that runs the country to pieces, throw the next election so wide open *anyone* might win. Right here, right now, live!

A dream, yeah a Jack and Sara dream, just me standing at the focus of everything and kicking the whole rotten scheme apart. Dream made reality—I got the monster that knows where all the bodies are buried (shit, who you think buried them in the first place!) right where I want him, ready to pick him apart. . . .

Sara! Sara! If only you were here to see the show now, baby! *Bug Jack Barron* goes down, it'll go down with a bang that'll take the whole sorry mess with it. Sara . . . Sara . . . it's the only way I know how to cry for you.

He stared at the meaningless commercial on the monitor as the promptboard flashed "30 seconds" and knew that in half a minute his image, a reality that was realer than real, would burn into a hundred million eyes as if they were in the room with him.

No, they would be sucked in deeper than that, they would be in his head, behind his eyes, seeing and hearing only what he wanted them to, nothing more and not a phosphor-dot less.

And in a strange reversal of perspective, he saw that if they were all a part of him, the image—Jack Barron was also a part of them. What he had always avoided had come at him from where he least expected it—*Bug Jack Barron*, like it or not, was power, terrible, unprecedented power, and with it came the unavoidable choice that had faced every power-junkie since time began: to have the sheer gall to fake being something greater than a man, or cop-out on the millions who poured a part of themselves into your image and be something less.

And as the promptboard flashed "On the Air", Jack Barron knew that there was only one way he could play it. Been called a lot of things, he thought, but *humble* was never one of them!

On the screen, the pack of Acapulco Golds fades out and is replaced by a face, an expanded vidphone image, grey, fuzzy, somehow bloated. There is something inhuman about the eyes, a too-bright rodent emptiness, and the mouth is trembling, the lips beaded with spittle.

Over this close-up of Benedict Howards, a voice, controlled, unwavering, yet an undertone of suppressed agony that gives it total conviction, the voice of Jack Barron:

"Surprise! Surprise! We're back on the air, and in case you tuned in late, the man you're looking at is Benedict Howards. The man you're looking at thought he could buy anyone in the United States, me included, and you know something—he was *right*."

The black and white face on the screen seems to shout something soundlessly at this, as if the words will not come, and then suddenly it is gone and the face of Jack Barron, in close-up, fills the screen. His sandy hair is a tangle as if the pregnancy of the moment has forbidden him to comb it; his eyes seem huge, leaping out of the screen from deeply-shadowed pits, and somehow he looks older and younger all at once.

"Think *you* couldn't be bought, out there?" he says, and the words are bitter, knowing, yet also somehow ironically forgiving. "Pretty sure of that, aren't you? So was I, baby, so was I. But what if the man that was buying was Benedict Howards and the coin he was paying for your bod was eternal life? You so sure now? Really? Then think about what it's like to be dead. You say you can't? Of course you can't, 'cause you can't *nothing* when you're dead. Think about that, because you're *all* going to die, gonna be *nothing*—dead. Unless Benedict Howards thinks he has a good reason to give you eternal life. And he thought he had a good reason to buy me—so he bought, and I sold. No excuses, friends, I just didn't want to die. Would you? So now I'm immortal, with the glands of a dead child sewn inside my hide. How's that grab you? You hate me—or is that

twinge in your gut just envy? But before you make up your mind. . . ."

Now the left half of the screen is filled with the face of Benedict Howards, a grey spectre of menacing madness that Jack Barron pins with his big green eyes as he says: "Go ahead, Howards, tell them the rest."

"Rest . . .?" Benedict Howards mumbles like a lost little boy. "What rest? Isn't any rest just fading black circle life leaking away in plastic tubes eviscerated niggers . . . you're killing me, Barron, throwing me to the black circle of death closing in choking me choking me . . . you're killing me! Rest . . . ? Rest . . . ?"

Jack Barron's sky-blue sportjac and yellow shirt, his sandy hair and wounded eyes seem like an oasis of embattled humanity beside the grey, grey madness that radiates from the left half of the screen, as unreal and preternatural as a grainy newsreel of Adolf Hitler.

"You forgot your little kicker, didn't you Bennie?" Barron says. "Back in Colorado, folks, Bennie told me I'd never have the b—, ah, *cojones* to do what I'm doing now. Remember, Bennie? Remember the contract? Remember the special clause you wrote in just for this occasion? Remember what you said you'd do?"

HOWARDS' FACE seems to expand like a grey balloon, and it fills the entire screen and he begins to babble, his voice dopplering upward in pitch as the words pour out faster and faster: "I'll get you Barron, swear I'll get you for this, you murderer you killer on the side of the fading black circle closing in, you killed me, Barron, get you kill you like you're killing me. . . ."

Jack Barron's living colour image appears in the lower lefthand quadrant, a frail, vivid splotch of fleshy humanity, threatened by yet somehow more cogent than the grey newsreel monster surrounding him, a contrast that makes you proud to be a man.

"Got your name on the contract in black and white," Howards babbles shrilly, "a legal confession in any court in the country. Murder! Yeah, he's a murderer, accessory to murder, I can prove it, got his name on the contract accepting legal liability for the results of the immortality treatment—if it's murder, sends me to the chair, you fry with me, Barron; you're a murderer too!" Coming from the grey, unreal monster, the words are unreal, and there is a blessed relief of tension when the images reverse and Barron's flesh-and-blood face fills three-quarters of the screen, and Howards' black and white newspaper photo face appears tiny in the lower left quarter of the screen, as if a more natural order has been restored.

"*Too*? I'm a murderer too?" Barron says, and every syllable seems to carry a total conviction, coming as it does from a *man*, not an image.

"You are! You know you are I can prove it, you're a murderer too!" the little newsreel figure says.

Jack Barron turns from the thing below him, stares out from the screen with pain and fury written on those huge green eyes. Those wounded, *human* eyes.

"I'm a murderer too," he says. "You heard the man, folks, *too*. I'm a murderer *too*. Didn't I tell you I sold out to Howards? He made me immortal, and to get that I signed a contract that made me legally liable for every result of that treatment, including a charge of murder. Yeah, murder, because the Foundation's been buying children, killing them, and transplanting their glands, and I've got pieces of some poor dead kid sewn inside me. So I'm a murderer too."

The image of Benedict Howards winks out, and the face of Jack Barron fills the entire screen. And as it does, something seems to happen to that hard-edged face. It goes soft, vulnerably soft, and the big eyes seem to become wet and shiny, guilty, self-accusing, a face that makes you want to comfort the hurt soul behind it, a face that in its pain bears the mark of unquestionable, wrenching truth.

And when Barron speaks, his voice is quiet, subdued, without an iota of guile in it:

"I'm going to ask something of you out there that I've never asked before. I've got no right to do it, but I'm going to ask you to believe something just because I say it's true. I didn't know. I really didn't know that my immortality meant killing a child until I woke up in a hospital bed and Benedict Howards told me. Look, I'm no little tin saint, and we all know it. I admit I wanted to live forever bad enough to sell out to Benedict Howards, and you've got every right to hate me for that. But murdering children is something I would never stomach under any circumstances for any reason, and that's all I'm asking you to believe. Proof? Howards has all the proof on *his* side, the signed contract and the best witnesses money can buy to say I knew what I was doing. And you better believe it, money can buy plenty. The only proof I've got that I'm telling the truth is that I'm right here in front of you, laying my life in your hands and saying it, telling you the whole truth because I couldn't live with myself otherwise, and to hell with what happens to me. It's all up to you out there. I ask you to believe that I'm telling the truth."

Silence, three full seconds of dead silence that seem to crawl on forever, as the face of Jack Barron stares out from the screen, the eyes like a pair of open wounds, windows into the soul within, hurt eyes, strangely humble eyes, and yet with a certain open defiance, a guileless defiance with no defences but the truth. And in that very open and defenceless defiance, the certainty of the truth behind it.

An unbearable moment of human reality leaping out from the flat phosphor-dot pattern of the screen. . . .

And then suddenly the moment passes, and a certain hardness returns to Barron's face (but a hardness made poignant by the knowledge of the softness behind it), and purposefulness comes back to his eyes.

"Only one more thing to tell you, friends," he says, "and then you'll have the whole ugly truth. Now you know what Bennie did for me; the question is, what was I supposed to do for *him*?"

The grainy grey face of Benedict Howards appears in the lower left quarter of the screen, and now Barron is not a victim but an inquisitor as he stares down at him.

"What about it, Howards?" Barron says. "Do you tell them or do I? Go ahead, tell them! Tell 'em how you've been buying up children, tell 'em how many Congressmen you got in your hip pocket, tell 'em your plans for the next Democratic convention. And tell 'em what you wanted me for, tell 'em what *I* was supposed to do for you."

Howards' face expands to fill three-quarters of the screen, with Barron in the upper right hand corner, his eyes flaying the grey image like whips.

"No! No!" Howards screams. "You got it all wrong, don't understand, no one understands, gotta push the fading black circle back forever. . . . Life is all I want, I'm on the side of life against death! Senators, Congressmen, Governors, President—gotta be on the side of *life*, not the side of the fading black circle closing in eviscerated niggers vultures' beaks up nose down throat choking away life in tubes and bottles—"

Howards is suddenly compressed into the lower left-hand corner of the screen, screaming silently as Jack Barron ignores him, stares straight out from the screen, says:

"That's where it's at, folks. All I was supposed to do is lie to you. Tell enough lies to get that Freezer bill passed and then help Bennie elect his tame President—and guess which party he has bought? I may stink to high heaven with Foundation B.O., but half the Democrats in Congress stink worse than I do. I can't name names, but just maybe some of 'em'll have the guts poor Ted Hennering had now and stand up and be counted. And if they don't. . . . Well, just read a list of the Congressmen who support the Foundation's bill. Can't sue the Congressional Record for libel!"

Howards' face fills the entire screen, his eyes glazed and rolling, little flecks of spittle spraying from his trembling lips as Barron's voice over begins to almost chant: "You're a dead man, Bennie. Dead . . . dead . . . dead. You're gonna fry till you die. Till they kill you dead. Dead . . . dead . . . dead. . . ."

"Noooooooo!" Howards screams. "I'll get you get you all kill you buy you own you destroy you forces of the fading black circle nobody kills Benedict Howards, Senators, Governors, Congressmen, kill 'em all own 'em all kill. . . . Nobody kills Benedict Howards! Nobody, never, young and strong and. . . ."

Howards' mad eyes stare straight out from the screen, and his screaming becomes harsh, clipped, savage. "Barron! Barron! I'll get you Barron! Kill you! Kill you! Kill!"

From nowhere, a great grey fist suddenly fills the entire screen—and then the whole screen goes dead, a scintillating field of speckled grey and white static and over it an electric serpent hiss.

Just the dead screen and the hissing static for a beat, and then the grey field of random electric impulses is pushed up into the upper right-hand corner, as if by the hand of Jack Barron who fills the rest of the screen in a head-and-shoulders shot, pointing to the square of hissing nothingness (like the random non-being of the grave) with his eyes.

"You out there, you suckers, you!" he shouts. "Look at the thing you made! We all made Benedict Howards, we always make our Benedict Howards, because there'll always be men who know the Big Secret: *we can all be bought*. Who wants to die? Who wants to live in a rat-trap? Who wants to eat garbage? They know it, and they suck on it—politicians! Power-junkies, giving you just enough to keep you bought with Welfare and Medicare and Niggercare and nice-sounding lies; crumbs from the table, is all! Just enough to cool it, and not a crumb more. Hold your noses and take a good look around you for a change—we've got a thousand little Benedict Howards calling themselves Governors, Congressmen, Senators, Presidents. And the only difference between them and Howards is that they're not in his league, they're pikers. What are you gonna do about it? Sit on your fat asses like you always have? Or maybe go out and get yours—anyone with a kid can get a nice piece of change for his bod. A lot more than twenty pieces of silver. Well, suckers? Had enough? Or are you gonna let it go on and on and on till you die? Just remember though, when you die *now*, baby you die *alone*."

Barron pauses, and almost laughs, the old inside-joke laugh, as he says the next words with the old endearing bad-boy shrug: "I'm afraid you're gonna have to wait some more to get your licks, folks—till after this word from our palpitating sponsor."

EPILOGUE

Never . . . never . . . never . . . never kill me, Barron! No no no no no one kills Benedict Howards your honour! Buy you, your honour, kill you own you with the power of life against death, your honour . . . make you immortal, your honour . . . Barron's on the side of the fading black circle, your honour . . . I'm innocent, on the side of life, your honour. . . . No one kills Benedict Howards, your honour! No one! Young and strong and healthy soft-skinned women in air-cooled circles of power Los Angeles, Dallas, Vegas, New York, Washington, forever, your honour. . . .

Benedict Howards paced the small room endlessly; planning, scheming, mumbling threats to himself. It was a pretty bare room, not quite what he was accustomed to, but not really very much like a prison cell either. Maybe those goddamn lawyers knew what they were doing after all.

"My client is obviously mentally incapable of standing trial at this time."

See, Barron, even you couldn't do it! Nobody can do it, nobody kills Benedict Howards! Young and strong and healthy for the next million years! Forever! No electric chair, no prison, just a nice public sanatorium commitment until those goddamn expensive lawyers

figure out a way to get me off scot-free. And they will, they said they would, promised me they would! They got all the time in the world to get me off, got a million years (". . . paranoid delusions . . .") got enough time to breed me lawyers (". . . . semi-hallucinatory state . . ."), yeah, breed whole new races of the bastards, (". . . incapable of standing trial . . . is to be confined in a hospital for the criminally insane until such time as he may be deemed mentally competent to stand trial . . .") controlled mutation whole new races of purebred lawyers can kill that murder indictment, and then I can get out of here, when it's safe.

Benedict Howards insane! What a joke! Joke on Jack Barron, Senators, Congressmen, President, your honour. You prick, your honour, I didn't even have to buy you, your honour, you could've lived forever, your honour, but you cretin you, you did just what my lawyers wanted you to, put me here where the fading black circle electric chair can't get at me, never get at me, while my lawyers hold it back, push it back, keep it back for a million years.

Sure, all they gotta do is quash that murder indictment, and the next day I walk right out of here, 'cause I'm not crazy, Benedict Howards is the sanest man in the world, saner than a man, better than a man, immortal like a god. . . .

Howards paced the room thinking: I paid good money for worse rooms than this in cold dry Panhandle days when I couldn't afford better, not a bad deal, the dumb fucking government pays the rent on this joint while I sit it out, while they quash the indictment. . . . Then I can stop faking it and get myself declared sane again, easiest thing in the world, 'cause I'm the sanest man in the world, nobody's ever been as sane as me. . . .

Yeah, not such a bad room, pretty good view, the bed isn't bad, and they even bring me my meals, breakfast, lunch, dinner in bed any time I want it. Even got . . . even got . . . even got. . . .

Howards froze. Mustn't think about it! Can't think about it! Think about it, and it turns itself on! Barron! That fucker Barron, he can turn it on from the inside, the bastard! Any time he wants to, he can turn it on from the inside, any time I forget not to think about it, he can turn it on . . . from the inside . . . don't think about it . . . don't. . . .

But Benedict Howards knew that it was too late. He *had* thought about it, about the television set built into the wall, high up where he couldn't get at it, couldn't smash the leering smart-ass fading black circle of Jack Barron watching him, always watching him, immortal just like me, be there forever, always watching! Watching! Watching! Watching!

He found his eyes moving upward to watch the face on the television screen; he had to watch, had to stay on guard, that fucker Barron was always watching him! And Barron's immortal, I made him immortal, can't get rid of him, and he's on the side of the fading black circle, gotta watch him, don't dare turn my back. . . .

Benedict Howards shook his fist at the television screen, the screen they had sworn they were cutting out of the hospital circuit the first time he had tried to climb the wall and smash it. But they lied! They lied!

"Damn you, Barron! I'll get you, kill you, buy you! You hear that, Barron, I own you! Own you down to your toes!"

But the smirking phosphorescent face burning itself from the glass screen to the backs of his eyes said nothing, just smiled that damn smart-ass smile, the deep, shadowed eye hollows black, black, black, shimmering, circling, face of the fading black circle closing in, fading black circle of death. . . .

Howards staggered backwards, felt the edge of the bed cut into the small of his back, fell backwards onto it, feeling tube up nose down throat choking him his life leaking away in phosphor-dot plastic bottles, and Jack Barron's face laughing smart-ass doctors nurses fading black circle life leaking away tube up nose down throat forever. . . .

"Noooooooo!" Howards screamed and screamed and screamed. "I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying. . . ."

Footsteps outside, the man with the needle again, needle of sleep, of blackness, needle of dreams of the fading black circle closing in, darkness closing in, face of Jack Barron, life leaking away forever . . . forever. . . .

"I'm not crazy!" Howards screamed. "I'm not! I'm not! I'm dying . . . I don't wanna die, don't wanna, don't wanna. . . . Don't let it kill me! Don't let him kill me!"

LUKAS GREENE pushed the vidphone across his desk, rubbed his eyes. Malcolm running too! he thought. What's that make, four . . . or five? Everybody wants to get into the act! As the Chinese like to say when the shit hits the fan, "We are living in interesting times."

Hard to figure what's gonna spring next; when Jack torpedoed Howards, all the shit in the country hit the fan. Teddy the Pretender locking up the "regular" Democratic nomination, if there is such a thing any more. . . . And the old "Foundation Democrats" read out of the party and running their own candidate . . . Democrats jumping to the SJC . . . maverick Republicans bolting the coalition and running *their* independent candidate . . . now Malcolm Shabazz running too. Still, with Jack on an SJC-Republican coalition ticket and with Morris somewhere (better not to know how!) keeping him on the air, we probably have the inside track.

But it's sure become a bookie's nightmare! Yeah, we're living in interesting times. But at least we got as much chance as anyone of coming out on top when the Great Unwashed finally puts Humpty-Dumpty together again.

Greene sighed. President Jack Barron, he thought, and Vice-President Lukas Greene. . . . Well stop crying, you nigger you, you knew that was the way it had to be. Jack up front and you number two shit colour brown, black is more like it, you maybe get to go as far as any

nigger can.

The Black Shade, oh what a laugh, you white nigger you, as if there could be a black shade any more than there could be a white nigger! Who knows, maybe that's why I started that one in the first place, Greene thought. If there really could be a black shade, then maybe there could somehow be a white nigger . . . in a White House, someday, somehow. . . .

Can't kid yourself now, baby, this is nitty-gritty time, and if the SJC finally gets President, it's gonna be Jack, not you, white, not black.

Come on, he told himself, snap out of it, man! Remember why you got into this racket in the first place, you felt it in your belly then, remember how it was? Well, that's over now, it's a whole new hand of cards, and who knows, maybe now we got some aces.

And without Jack, we'd still be nowhere. Whatever Jack gets, he deserves it, he paid his dues, the poor fucker, with him immortal and Sara dead, the only immortal except for Howards squirrelled away in some loony-bin somewhere. Don't envy Jack Barron, man! Maybe now he *is* like a black shade, in the way that counts, like black is being a stranger in someone else's land. . . . Like alone. . . . And who's more alone now than Jack?

Greene shivered at the thought of the man who was his friend, who might still be alive when he was dust a million years, unless they found a new way to immortality in time, or we win the election and everyone has a chance in the Freezers. But until then, who can be as alone as Jack, who can see what he sees, feel what he feels . . . ?

Look him in the eye and call him friend . . . ?

Jack Barron fingered the Acapulco Gold, hesitating at the door to his outer office. Come on, man, you gotta stop brooding and play 'em one day at a time already. Can't keep playing this *Weltschmertz* schtick for the next ten thousand years. . . .

But so many things I want to forget that never should be forgotten. Sara . . . won't forget Sara ever. . . .

Oh yeah? *Ever*. . . . The word had a whole new meaning, like everything else when you looked at it through new eyes. Eyes that would *always* be new, young eyes going through changes every morning like a kid who knows he's got his whole life ahead of him, always ahead of him, and what will I be like in a thousand years?

A thousand years alone. . . .

No, that's old-style thinking, just the short view. Someday they'll lick immortality for everyone without murder, now that the slobs can taste it coming, with a Public Freezer Bill already on the President's desk and hara-kiri for him not to sign it, with all that public pressure. . . . In the long run, everyone'll make it to where I stand, and in the meantime, I can sit it out alone, got all the time in the world. In the meantime. . . .

In the meantime, looks like I'm stuck in the politics bag till after the election—had to play along with Morris to keep the show. And anyway, admit it, man, it's kinda fun.

Forty-seven different Presidential candidates all running around like chickens with their heads cut off, sure to shake things up, just what the country needs. And who knows, I might even win—and then the good old US of A is *really* gonna get a boot in the ass. But not the one Luke and his boys are figuring on. . . .

What a joke on Luke, he thought, he'll piss in his pants! "Social Justice"—hope I do win just so that dumb fucker Morris can clock what Jack Barron's brand of Social Justice is. *Nitty gritty* Social Justice, is all, once we get a Negro in the White House, even by the back door, nothing'll ever be the same.

Politics! Politicians! Such schmucks, they got no sense of humour at all. Think they got themselves an image that can win, and a puppet they think they can screw around behind the scenes with after the election.

Boy, if I *do* win, is everyone gonna shit bricks after the Inauguration! When good old Jack Barron resigns the Presidency in favour of Vice-President Lukas Greene. *Black* Vice-President Lukas Greene!

That'd teach the pricks to play the image game with the world's champ. A nice juicy custard pie in the face of the whole country, just what it needs, four years of a black President, and who knows, they might end up liking it enough to make it eight the hard way.

In the meantime. . . .

He opened the door and stepped into the outer office, stood by Carrie Donaldson's desk. Carrie looked up at him with guarded eyes. "Mr. Barron?" she said.

Well, why not? thought Jack Barron. You got wounds, but they'll heal, and anyway you owe this chick something. And she's a mighty fine lay, remember?

"Let's go have some lunch, Carrie," he said. "I'm gonna take the afternoon off, so you're off duty too. Want to take it off with me?"

"Does that sound the way I think it sounds . . . Jack?"

Barron laughed. It felt good. "It does as long as you keep calling me Jack," he said.

"*Jack* . . . " she said, taking his hand. And they left the office together.

Just another chick? Barron wondered. Or something more? Well, who cares how it'll turn out, a one-night stand or a week or a year or a hundred years, what's it matter how long?

Suddenly it didn't seem very important to know just how anything would turn out, what would happen in the next minute, or the next year, or the next century. It wasn't even such a hang-up anymore that he hadn't learned how to remember Sara without hurting. It had finally gotten through to him that he had plenty of time to heal even the deepest of wounds, play any game he wanted to any number of times, become anything he wanted to be and then change his mind. Time enough for anything. . . .

Like all the time in the world.

THE END

BOOKS & COMMENT

BORIS VIAN & FRIENDS

Rapp & Whiting's publication of Boris Vian's *Froth on the Daydream* (reviewed in NEW WORLDS 181) has now been followed up by publication of the same author's *Heartsnatcher* (Rapp & Whiting, 30s.). The translator is again Stanley Chapman.

My admiration for this "new" novel (it was published in France in 1962) is just as strong as for the last—perhaps, with further exposure to Vian's startling and peculiar individual style, stronger. It contains all I've learned to anticipate from Vian: outrageous puns (both verbal and associative), bizarre imagery, perverse mirrors set into the structure, sudden shifts in rhythm and orientation, a tone which somehow works as a film of acceptance (almost insouciance) over terror, rich invention, a wholly alien voice. Another world—perhaps to us inpenetrable, perhaps horrible—but with its own inviolable logic. And the representation, too, is all of a piece: a self-contained book.

To give you some idea of that tone and voice—this, from quite early in the book. A woman has given birth to three children. Two emerged within moments of one another and are twins. The other, as though in purposeful deliberation, arrived several moments after its brothers. ("It's the sign of a strong personality," Dr. Timortis remarks, just after the midwife has tied the cords into bows.) Now the mother is feeding the babies . . .

> When she picked up the last of the three, she noticed that he was looking back at her. With his thick curly hair and his eyes wide open, he had the profoundly enigmatic and worrying gaze of a little oriental god. He gave a funny little conniving smile.
>
> He drank his share. Now and again he would stop and look at her, and then, still staring, keep the tip of the breast in his mouth without swallowing anything.

Or read the scene on pages 86-89, in which a stallion is crucified for its sins. And Timortis, running from the sight:

> The scarlet stream, which he had just crossed on a light wooden bridge, ran smoothly, deeply, ripple-free and still. A little further on, Glory Hallelujah was swimming, struggling to get his breath, trying to drag on to his vessel a shred of pale flesh and bone that crumbled and disintegrated under his teeth.

The novel's theme is guilt. The protagonist, Dr. Timortis, is an Edwardian-styled psychiatrist looking for "something to fill myself up with", borrowing passion and fear and doubt from his patients but unable to retain any of it. ("I'm just empty. The only things I have are movements, reactions, habits.") Seeking new subjects, Timortis comes onto an isolated village, first attending the birth of the three children to Angel and Clementine under extremely curious circumstances, then, as he searches for a subject for analysis among the villagers (finding only a sexless cat), witnessing the children's development. The people of the village seem to Timortis vicious and enigmatic—*until* he discovers that in fact they have no sense of guilt.

Why?

This is Timortis' initial encounter with a man whom he's seen jumping off a boat to fetch "dead things or rotten things" out of the water with his teeth. The man explains that this is his job, and Timortis asks if he gets much money for doing it. "I get the barge," the man answers. "And they pay me out in shame and in gold." At the word *shame*, Timortis takes a step backward, and at once feels shame for doing so. The old man goes on:

> "They pay me to feel their remorse for them. Remorse for everything wicked and evil that they do. For every one of their vices. And every one of their crimes. . . . For the tortured animals . . . and for all the filth and scum."
>
> He stopped for a moment.
>
> "But all this can't be very interesting for you," he went on again. "You don't mean to stay here, do you?"
>
> There was a long pause
>
> And then, "Yes. I do," said Timortis, decisively. "I *do* mean to stay here."
>
> "Then you'll grow like all the others," said the man. "You'll learn to live with a clear conscience and you'll load the weight of your shame on me. And you'll give me gold. And sell me nothing for it in return."
>
> "What's your name?" asked Timortis.
>
> "Glory Hallelujah," said the man. "At least, *they* call me Glory Hallelujah. It's really the name of the boat. I haven't got one any more."
>
> "Well, I'll be seeing you . . ." said Timortis.
>
> "You'll grow to be just the same as them," said the man. "You won't talk to me again. You'll just pay me. And you'll throw *all* the skeletons out of your cupboard at me. And *all* your shame."
>
> "But why do you do it?" asked Timortis.
>
> The man shrugged his shoulders.
>
> "Somebody else did it before me."
>
> "Well, then, how did you take over?" insisted Timortis.
>
> "The first person to be more ashamed than I am takes my place," said the man. "That's the village tradition. They're very religious here. . . . And the man who weakens . . . The man who revolts . . ."
>
> "So you went into revolt," he said.
>
> "Oh! It doesn't happen very often nowadays . . ." said the man. "Maybe I'll be the last. My mother wasn't a local girl."
>
> He got back into position and bent over the sculls.
>
> "I've got to get on with my work," he said. "Good-bye."
>
> "See you," said Timortis.

And it is of course Timortis who,

at the close of the book, when Clementine has put the children in furnished cages to keep them from flying away, replaces Glory Hallelujah: he has finally found something to fill himself up with. Guilt.

QUITE simply, I cannot recommend this novel or the one which preceded it strongly enough. Not only for their excellence, and for the sheer joy of reading them—but also because I believe that they are exceptional examples of a new and perhaps very important kind of fiction which is now emerging. It is difficult, and incautious, to attempt to define the qualities of this new fiction, but eventually the attempt will have to be made. And for the moment we can at least note some of the tendencies, the shared concerns.

First of all, then, it is a fiction which deals with abstract concerns, which works with the stuff of abstract thought and abstract ideas (Vian's *guilt*, Ballard's *time*), being therefore in several senses metaphysical. It is arranged around an intensively symbolic structure (Thomas Pynchon's "Entropy"). It attempts to intensify that suspension of disparate qualities which generates fiction (my remarks about Vian's tone, the sudden shifts of direction). To this end, much of it is comic, or at least deeply ironic, and it is also highly eclectic, utilizing genre conventions to its own ends, adopting parody and pastiche, refusing, however, to take even itself wholly seriously (the perverse mirrors set into Vian's plot). It is the manner of expression, though, which gives the particular, and I think unmistakable, tone to this fiction; whereas most contemporary fiction aims for penetration, this new fiction aims for immediacy. (*Its material realisation — to use the correct expression — consists basically of a projection of reality, under favourable conditions, on to an irregularly tilting, and consequently distorting, plane of reference—Boris Vian.*)

Hence, there may be great underlying significance (what one of the writers has called "the underbelly implications"), but this will remain basically subliminal. The story *surface* becomes the important thing, and it fills itself with puns, extravagant imagery, energy and movement, exuberant invention and throw-away ideas. The abstract concerns are there, but they exist *beneath* the story surface—occasionally drifting to the surface, but only to be immediately taken back in a sudden shift of orientation—and functioning chiefly by resonance and overtone. (Somewhat as the word *freedom* drifts through all of *Heartsnatcher*, somewhat as the way you're never allowed to take the religious "symbolism" seriously.)

Notice, for instance, how *the scene* assumes such importance in Vian, as in much of this fiction. The story is carried forward in short bursts of energy (image or narration) which alternate with blatantly (though hardly serious) discursive passages; thus, the reader's actual movement within, or through, the story is controlled. These writers have learned a lesson from Thurston: that magic always points one way and happens another. The surface disruptions conceal—in fact, *contain*—an underlying order.

This all adds up to something unique, and something of which I believe we'll be seeing much more. It is indicated in writers as diverse as J. P. Donleavy, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Harry Mathews, Raymond Roussel, Douglas Woolf, Harvey Jacobs, J. G. Ballard, and Fritz Leiber. It has been very much evident in the work of writers in this magazine—Langdon Jones, Pamela Zoline, John Sladek, Michael Butterworth, Brian Aldiss, Thomas Disch, Giles Gordon, and several others—and perhaps most fully in the first volume of Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius tetralogy, *The Final Programme*.

These writers, I feel, are responding to the literary problem of the day: trying to avoid on one hand the narrowing of perception and on the other, the gymnastics (such as evidenced in Sontag, Barth, and so on) that results from boredom—from the unsuitability of contemporary literary forms. They are not giving information, nor interpreting: they are, in the purest sense, *creating*. They are consciously trying to meet the demands of increasing abstraction around us and to provide an equivalent fiction. The tone is necessarily a new one. And the voice may be, also necessarily, alien.

For these writers, like Vian in *Froth on the Daydream* and *Heartsnatcher*, are creating — out of abstraction, out of disparate qualities and extremes—a new logic of the imagination.

James Sallis

Melinda by Gaia Servadio (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 30s.). This fantasy, which, at time of writing, is top of the best seller list in Britain, has affinities, so far as its approach is concerned, with a number of modern novelists like John Barth or Terry Southern. Melinda is an amoral 20th century Moll Flanders rather than the Candide suggested by the publishers (were they thinking of *Candy*?). Like David Benedictus's *Hump* (reviewed in NW 180) it describes a variety of fantastic adventures, many of them sexual, but is unable to sustain interest largely because the author has not, it appears, considered the implications, aesthetic and moral, of her subject matter. Also offered as a satire, it is actually a light picaresque, moderately entertaining, moderately inventive, moderately amusing. Though it is representative, I feel, of the direction in which the best modern fiction is going, it does not contain the structural integrity, wit, irony and insight which the best examples (Barthelme, Vian, even Firbank) give us. Instead, *Melinda* offers us fashionable comments upon fashionable aspects of our society—comments which normally pass for wit

and irony in that society. In this respect alone it is all of a piece. However, if I make the mistake of going to a trendy party, I don't want the added horror of having to listen to the trendy guest who spends his time telling us how boring it all is. He's almost always the last to leave, anyway.

Writing in England Today, the last fifteen years (Penguin, 15s.), edited by Karl Miller. An unrepresentative selection, containing, with a few honourable exceptions, some of the most mediocre fiction ever collected in one volume. The book is an indictment of the British literary scene since the war, though it has a touch of pathos in that the Angry Young Men of the fifties are seen to have become the Mediocre Middleaged Men of the late sixties. Perhaps significantly, it contains work by Ian Fleming, but none by Angus Wilson or Iris Murdoch.

2001, A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke (Hutchinson, 25s.). An excellent Clarke novel, with all Clarke's virtues well-displayed. By no means a mere "book of the film", this novel communicates Clarke's intense enthusiasm for the marvels of modern science and the wonders of the universe. It rationalises many of the aspects of the film left unrationalised, and in this sense may be said to fail or to succeed, depending on how you felt about the film.

W.E.B.

AS A SHORT-STORY writer, William Tenn has made himself an apostle of the down-beat, the throw-away irony, the painful laugh, the nearly-beaten protagonist hanging grimly on in the face of adversity, folly and general human ineptitude. He is the closest thing America could produce to John Wyndham's stiff-upper-lip, life's-a-farce-but-one-must-cope approach. (But then Tenn, it seems, was born in London.)

For a reason not particularly clear, Ballantine Books have bestowed on him the singular honour of a six-uniform-volume (paperback, 75c. each) "celebratory" simultaneous publication.

Five of the volumes are story collections: *The Human Angle, The Seven Sexes, The Square Root of Man, The Wooden Star*, and *Of All Possible Worlds*. Some hectic barrel-scraping has gone on, reaching back to the 1940s when Tenn had barely got going in the satire-and-Jeremiad vein that he has mined successfully in more recent years. Forty-odd stories. The number could have been halved, and done Tenn more justice.

Setting up a writer like this—a writer with undeniable skill and many clever ideas, but no whirling genius—can give him delusions of grandeur. In a preface or two Tenn holds forth on the sf scene, like a speech at a world convention—the specialness of sf, its value today, its forms and roots, its poor treatment from nasty, jaded, snobbish critics, and the need to revivify it with loving care and injections of literary artsmanship. Tenn seems to feel that he's been doing that job of revival.

He hasn't. Sure, he may have brought in an unfamiliar (in the 50s) concept or two. But a majority of these pieces follow the deeper ruts —space adventure, time travel, robots, unpleasant/satirical futures, aliens on earth. And the form and style conforms in every way to the U.S. pulp-mag idea of readable professional fiction.

The sixth volume of this celebration is Tenn's only novel, *Of Men and Monsters*. It postulates a future on earth where men, in a primitive state, live as vermin in the walls of houses belonging to giant aliens. (Something in common with Kenneth Bulmer's *The Demons*, but a piece of Tenn's book appeared in *Galaxy* before Bulmer's came out.) True to Tenn's men-are-rats downbeat ethos, the aliens are not defeated by phoney heroics. Yet in a ratty way man does win a quasi-victory, and the ending approaches happiness.

Not a bad first novel, one might say. But, again, just what is being celebrated? And why does Sturgeon gush so in the back-cover quote? Tenn may be able to hold his head up in the company of his satiric peers—Pohl and his ilk—but if celebrations are in order Philip Dick and Vonnegut are way ahead in the queue.

Douglas Hill

Coming

Next month's issue of NEW WORLDS will be a special new writers issue, containing stories by writers who have never appeared in the magazine before and who have been unpublished, or rarely published, elsewhere.

The issue will include stories by:

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We intend to produce at least one such issue per year as a kind of showcase of emerging talent.

DR MOREAU VERSUS THE UTOPIANISTS

(continued from last month)

Hillegas shows not only how Wells' own ideas (deriving from Darwin, Huxley and other sources) developed in his successive books, but how they were then digested and continued to develop even in the novels of writers whose outlooks were opposed to the idea of "Progress" — how, indeed, those writers even used Wells' very symboys and situations. This was inevitable. Wells was an innovator on a considerable scale, and Hillegas' great accomplishment is to demonstrate how many of the tools for the discussion of our modern situation were originally forged by Wells, no matter who now uses them unknowingly.

WELLS' CONTEMPT FOR complacency, with his accompanying desire to uproot the old order and establish a better one, is apparent in many of his books—not least in his excellent autobiography. Whereas his wish to shatter complacency found most active expression in such novels as *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), that excellently dark and savage book, and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), it is in *A Modern Utopia* (1905) that Wells first bodies forth his better world in all striking detail. Later, in 1923, he wrote *Men Like Gods*, in which the utopian idea is extended still further into the future.

A Modern Utopia is very nearly *the* modern utopia. The only later examples Hillegas produces are *Walden Two* by B. F. Skinner, Yefremov's *Andromeda* and Huxley's *Island*, none of which have occasioned much discussion.

There is also the case of *Childhood's End* (1953), Arthur Clarke's "near classic", as Hillegas calls it. This depicts Earth becoming a technological utopia under the benevolent paternalism of the Overlords, until mankind is itself ready to guard the guards themselves. I have always thought this novel showed an interesting confusion of father-figures, and was sorry that Hillegas did not spend more time examining Arthur Clarke's writing. Clarke is one of the few writers who have not turned against the utopian idea; if prophesies are self-perpetuating, then it must be regretted that he is alone in this position.

Childhood's End is still in print, fifteen years on, but it and *Island* and *Andromeda* and the other later utopians cannot be said to have caused much stir.

A Modern Utopia, on the other hand, was a seminal and exciting book which survives today by confronting us with a list of desiderata that have turned sour upon achievement or which remain further than ever from achievement. Wells' hope that it might be contrived that everyone "shall live in a state of reasonable physical and mental comfort" finds its echo today in those terrible pictures in insurance company office windows, which show Dad in his slippers before a roaring fire, with a pipe in his mouth and the rest of the family simpering round him, the whole enclosed in a big walnut shell, and the trembling word "Happiness . . ." above it. The iron, not to mention the bedroom slippers, has entered into our soul; our metier now is the anti-utopia, the dystopia. Dr. Moreau has dogged every step of the utopian Dreamer's way.

So the descendents of Wells' vision have been black sheep: *The Machine Stops, Brave New World, R.U.R., We, 1984* and so on. Hillegas illuminates the way in which they have been no less influenced by Wells for that. Wells' was a vision of the triumph of reason; the dystopias show reason defeated or de-throned by a machine logic that is beyond reason (as in *Player Piano*); he professes to see a further development, towards a psychological utopia, in which category he places Aldous Huxley's *Island*, with its emphasis on "psychic self-actualisation", and he visualises subsequent utopias of this sort; I would be personally interested to know if Aldiss's Charteris stories came within this category.

Since *The Future as Nightmare* is a literary study, Hillegas does his duty and illustrates how the anti-utopians argue against Wells' concepts of utopia. Or else he shows C. S. Lewis in the trilogy that begins with *Out of the Silent Planet*, arguing against Stapledon, which is perhaps the same thing, since Stapledon, when writing to Wells in 1931, after publication of *Last and First Men*, acknowledged his indebtness to the master by saying, "A man does not record his debt to the air he breathes."

Well, literary studies are very enjoyable, and this one a deal more than many; but there were also extra-literary reasons why Wells' utopianism became increasingly untenable. To name the chief of these: Wells' modern utopia is the first to be planet-wide; it is planet-wide, and it is governed as a World State.

Poor Wells! He saw all too clearly the cramping pettiness of nationality and national boundaries, and he came up with the visionary idea of the World State! Not only did he write about it. He flew to White House and Kremlin and chatted to Roosevelt and Stalin about it. He wanted them to start one.

WE KNOW NOW, and hardly needed Orwell to rub in the lesson, that World States would be more painful than having the whole world divided up into Waleses and Walloonias. Psychological control of populations has increased in a way that Wells did not foresee: his Achilles heel was his rationalism, which forbade his accepting that there are tyrannical things in the mind. Disappointment creates a weltanschauung less favourable to art and life than does expectation.

So, in this respect, Wells was optimistic. And there is another extra-literary reason why his utopian hopes have failed—perhaps a deeper-seated one. Wells' enemies accuse him of philistinism, but the vision of machinery—science made flesh, as it were—was undoubtedly an aesthetic pleasure for him. He writes in *A Modern Utopia*, discussing machinery and "railways and iron bridges and engineering devices", that "everything to which men continue to give thought and attention, which they make and remake in the same direction, and with a continuing desire to do as well as they can, grows beautiful inevitably".

WELL, IT HASN'T worked out that way. We have not managed to implant a fair image on things. The rockets that look so brave as they roar upwards from their launching pads are nevertheless monstrous in the strict sense of the word, devour-

ing not only irreplaceable fossil oils but the psychic lubricants as well. They provide another guise in which we can worship might. This, as Hillegas points out, was C. S. Lewis's criticism of Wells' ideas. Lewis makes his villain, Weston, in *Perelandra,* obsessed by the "idea that humanity, having sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area".

It is the "at all costs" phrase that counts. Wells, escaping from the horrors of a lower-class Victorian environment, saw the hope that science offered the future; Lewis, with a religious cast of mind, saw only the eternal human condition. Wells also observed the human condition clearly enough, and loathed it—hence his strong vein of pessimism—but he believed it was malleable and not eternally the same. Ironically, he may yet be proved right! Gordon Rattray Taylor's new book, *The Biological Time-Bomb,* claims that almost complete biological control of the living organism is coming within our grasp, not to mention control of mind and memory by drugs and other means.

From all this, we can understand why Wells faces both ways; he hoped and he feared. His fears have by and large been accepted. His hopes — either challenged by men like Lewis and Orwell, or accepted as a basis for the science-fiction field. The utopian dreamer fathered more sickly progeny than Dr. Moreau.

One sees very clearly, reading Hillegas' lucid exposition, that the world of science fiction magazines is a world of debased utopianism or anti-utopianism, and that a good history of science fiction (were such a thing possible to write) would do well to begin with Wells rather than such exotics as Lucian of Samosata —for strong functional reasons as well as the praiseworthy one of avoiding boredom. Wells really did start it all; the proper study of mankind, he saw, was man—but man in relationship to his machines, society's changing relationship to the forces of science and technology; and this is still the proper study of science-fiction.

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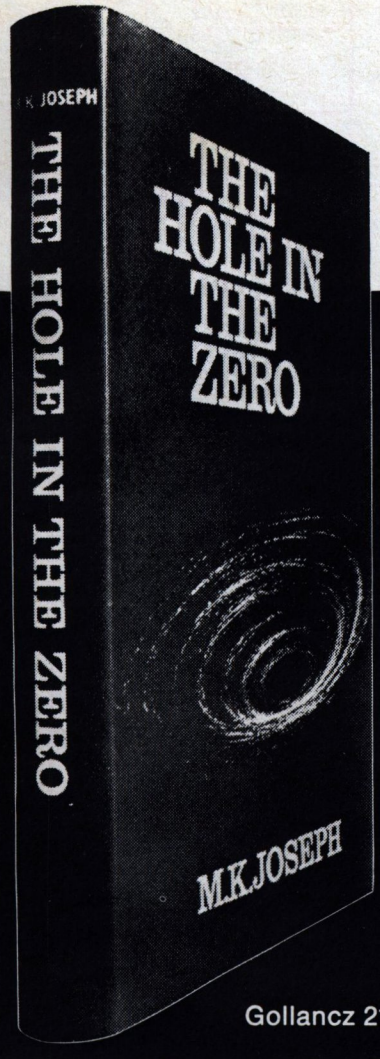

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