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Orthographies

James Sallis

We are separated
not by the paper
between words
but by the spaces
between
the letters themselves.
A. G. Sobin

THE NOVEL has perhaps always been something of an unwieldy, peculiar and unpredictable object, a kind of literary sport. Emerging from the epic and long poetic narratives such as *The Golden Ass*—with the social and mnemonic implications attendant to the generative oral tradition—it has always been somewhat uneasy with its parents and ancestors, faced on one side by the telling of grand tales and reportage, and on the other, by episodic fables and fableaux gathered loosely together in the picaresque or the frame-tale. (The same is of course true in its diminutive, the short story, roots firm in the moral allegory—Irving, Hawthorne—and the later truncated reportage of tranche de vie.) And its own ponderousness, its density, has always been there to distract it as well; hence its first progeny are comic picaresques and frame-tales little different, save for the quantity of detail, from its forebears, and books of vast social scope. The problem, as Colin Wilson once observed, was the union of the novel, an essentially impersonal form developed by men who wished to tell stories and offer a kind of surrogate, compensatory experience, with that intensely personal comment which the writers came to want. (Autobiography is of course the simplest connective tissue, and thus the most persistent.) 'Experimentation'—i.e., exploration of the form—eventually resulted and the novel contracted towards its own particular qualities; Dickens and Dostoevski were probably the first to begin fully realising these, though the traditions of impersonality and social scope were maintained.

With the modern novel, substance withdrew still further from exterior reality in any expansive sense. It could move outwards *or* inwards and in electing the latter acknowledged its twin heritage in reportage and in poetry. It realised that positive use of the *individual* imagination towards total engagement with inner *and* outer human experience which Rycroft explores in *Imagination and Reality*. The modern novel, I suppose, properly begins with Joyce and Proust: men aware that they are writing novels, aware of the surface forms of life and of its mute, affecting undercurrents; and constantly aware, as well, of the novelist's specific problems. Svevo, Gide, Camus—the list grows. The Symbolists, reacting to the Parnassian's 'sculptures' with their own immediacy of experience and subtlety of expression (Baudelaire, 'Correspondence'; Verlaine, 'only the nuance' and not 'the colour'). The Surrealists' attempts 'to go beyond the stated and defined' (Frederick Karl); to violate, ever more vividly, the apparent reality. These writers knew that the language of cause-and-effect which had consistently dominated our thought processes, at least since Mills, was a false assumption; that it was appropriate only to certain discontinuous situations; and that *any* linguistic system (speech, formulation, literature) must inevitably proceed towards further abstraction—if for no other reason, to avoid over-organisation, exhaustion and entropy. They sought a new vocabulary for fiction, and in their search tore open all the permutations of the fictional form to us. With Joyce, Gide, Proust, the new novelists, and finally Beckett, the possibilities of language and structure had been temporarily exhausted. Though now a few writers—Mathews, Barthelme, certain French and South American writers—are beginning to point the way through, new directions for fiction. At any rate, it seems that further experiment will perforce be with substance rather than form; and on the whole, I believe this to be true.

THE CONTEMPORARY WRITER of fiction, then, is technically an old man from his first writing. (Bacon: 'We sit down as ancients.') He begins with a set of assumptions quite different from those of his predecessors. He knows by way of Wittgenstein that all important things are unsayable; that his propositions are meaningless; that the true artist, or rebel, disdains even what comes of his own efforts. McLuhan has graciously informed him that narrative art has given way to improvisations on a theme. He knows the 'scrapbook' journals of Jules Renard; that Balzac, in Proust's word, produced anteromans, or 'prenovels'. According to Godard he is supposed to 'put the difficulties somewhere else from where they were before'. From James and Proust—even more strongly from Firbank—he knows that 'events are not really needed', that he should be able to 'achieve all his effects through the pauses and flickering of polite talk' and momentary forms (A. Alvarez), and has learned from contemporary poetry how this may be most effectively accomplished. He knows that the present, however apparently self-contained, is forever diluted by memory and anticipation. Film, in its melding of 'documentary' and 'fantasy', has taught him how to juggle new levels of surface and depth, or at least to juggle them in new ways; he has also learned the importance of an 'erotic' surface and (Warshow, Sontag, Robbe-Grillet) of *immediacy*. He remembers the intricate surface disruptions of Mozart and then recalls that Joyce, Eliot, and Pound compared their work to music (Pound, for example, the *Cantos* to a Bach fugue): perhaps all art *still* 'aspires to the condition of music'. He is interested in 'the varied ways in which men seek by symbolic means to make themselves at home in social tensions' (Kenneth Burke)—and for him the key word is *symbolic,* not in the sense of writing-as-refuge, but in the sense that people erect personal or interpersonal enclaves for themselves by the agitation of their imaginations; either negatively, towards retreat, or positively towards total engagement. He may be interested in these enclaves as *containers;* he may concern himself with their eduction, incrassation, or dissolution; he may be most intrigued by the gestures, surfaces and forms of which they are comprised; they may be enclaves of madness, resignation or compromise—but here it is, most likely, that his interest will lie.

And thus it seems to me that there has actually occurred (or *is* occurring) a shift in the whole concept of fiction. Wanting on the one hand to avoid limitation, a kind of tunnel vision (Updike, Roth, etc.), and on the other, any sort of verbal gymnastics (Barth, Sontag, many of the new novelists; at their worst, putting one in mind of, say, Huxley's including chunks of journals in novels, to hook readers on his 'ideas') which might result from boredom with contemporary forms—yet wanting to write and, if possible, advance the novel—our writers are forced to look elsewhere, to look in new directions. They want to produce neither fragments of personal visions nor novels that seem all method, each reminiscent of charts, like those a woman keeps for her menstrual cycle. Just as, earlier, *story* was replaced by *form* (the exact suspension of a vision of total reality), form is slowly giving way to something else, some broader

consideration.

NOW, IT IS most incautious to talk of literary 'trends' or 'movements'. The process of literary criticism is, after all, nothing more than the generation of preconceptions. (At best. It may also be the generation of more dangerous *mis*conceptions.) It is also unwise: even in its loosest sense, any programming of art results all too easily (and inevitably?) in mannerism or self-parody; or, as Alvarez remarks

Dashiel Hammett

of many avant garde poets, the theoretical, almost antiquarian attitude towards 'experiment' makes it seem 'as though their iconoclasm involved nothing more than the principles on which a seminar in Creative Writing should be run'—a subtle enough irony. Quite simply: programming stagnates, tends to arrest the flow of aesthetic development. (Sontag: Art does not change; it develops.) The extremist is finally recognised as the traditionalist in costume. America's Black Mountain poets were never at their best until they left Black Mountain behind in the distance, as did Creeley—

> The mountains blue now
> at the back of my head,
> such geography of self and soul
> brought to such limit of sight,
>
> I cannot relieve it
> nor leave it, my mind locked
> in seeing it
> as the light fades.
>
> Tonight let me go
> at last out of whatever
> mind I thought to have,
> and all the habits of it.

Those who remained (e.g. Corman), whatever their initial promise, were stunted, their individual development truncated. Still, the theorist, the spokesman is necessary, however outrageous and overblown his statements and platform, however insouciant and self-throttled (or often self-contradictory) his own work may be. For every Robbe-Grillet (arising out of Beckett rather as Charles Olson, chief of Black Mountain, derived from Pound and other diffuse sources, particularly William Carlos Williams), there will be—objectively realising the initial limitations, the further resource and potential of his attitudes—a Sarraute; and then there will be the Claude Simons, the Robert Pingets, the Olliers and Butors; the Monique Wittigs and Didier Costes (the Editions du Minuit writers). Eventually such extremism filters down and becomes simply another set of tools, another vocabulary, with which even the most traditional writer may work. Indeed, Alvarez, noting the manner in which art has increasingly become 'a focus of all values', sees this extremism as traditional in at least two senses: it is an extension of Romanticism (p. 12, *Beyond All This Fiddle;* recalling Richard Chase's studies in 'the Romance' and its persistent influence on American literature), and perhaps is as well 'the last, desperate reaction of the traditional arts to an untraditional situation.' That situation:

> Certainly, for the past forty years or more, the history of the arts could be written in terms of the continual and continually accelerating change from one style to another. The machinery of communications and publicity is now so efficient that we go through styles in the arts as quickly as we go through socks; so quickly, indeed, that there seem no longer any real styles at all. Instead, there are fashions, idiosyncracies, group mannerisms and obsessions. But all these are different from genuine style, which in the past has always been an expression of a certain fundamental coherence, an agreement about the ways random experience can be made sense of . . . Style, in short, is bound up with belief of one kind or another.
>
> Clearly, any modern artist starts from premises more dispersed, empirical and ad-libbed than that, and also more democratic, in de Tocqueville's sense of the term:
>
> *Men are no longer bound together by ideas, but by interests; and it would seem as if human opinions were reduced to a sort of intellectual dust, scattered on all sides, unable to collect, unable to cohere.*

Our recognition of the absence of absolutes (metaphysical, social, personal), then, has led to the impossibility of any aesthetic absolute. And the rejection of the 'grand style', begun in the Twenties, was in many ways the rejection of 'style' itself; resulting in the evolution of new concepts of *surface,* much as there is increasingly a reconsideration of the concept of fictional *substance.* The artist, perhaps more than ever before, is the concrescence of Yeats' long-legged fly. (Alvarez again: 'What sets the contemporary artist apart from his predecessors is his lack of external standards by which to judge his reality. He not only has to launch his craft and control it, he also has to make his own compass.')

THERE IS CERTAINLY every evidence that individual artists realise this dilemma and its repercussions; that they are fully aware of the unsuitability and exhaustion of current (concepts and manifestations of) forms. Hence a poet like Robert Lowell, whose early poems were intensely formal and rhetorical, will by the general loosening of autobiographical material and frustration with his own tricks (from *Lord Weary's Castle* to *The Mill of the Kavanaughs;* 'After the Surprising Conversions' and 'Memories of West Street and Lepke'; and finally 'Skunk-Hour') arrive at a book such as *Life Studies,* containing only four poems of the older, formal sort, echoing the freedom of Williams in lieu of the tension of Dylan Thomas, and exhibiting a sensibility wholly free in its resources of expression—nor will he stop there. James Wright will, with *The Branch Will Not Break,* issue what is virtually a manifesto of shifting attention: this is what I once did, and this is what I *will* do. W. S. Merwin will move through the concentrated rhetoric of *The Dancing Bears* and earlier books to *The Drunk in the Furnace*—adamantly formal poetry (e.g., the opening sonnets) dealing quite often with autobiographical material (his family, friends, vignettes adopted from his own experience) and containing overtones of Symbolism at once so integrated and divergent as to strongly suggest surrealism ('Small Woman on Swallow Street')—and then, under the influence of Spanish surrealists, to the remarkably unique material and voice of such poems as 'Some Last Questions' and of *The Moving Target.* The reaction of other artists—the first example to come to mind is that of Godard, slowly evolving from the visual semaphore of earlier films to the allusiveness of *Alphaville* (the book; the city as Gomorrah) and the open-end allegory of recent work—will be that of modulations within a single tone. Others will concentrate on invention (Barthelme,

in *Come Back, Dr Caligari* writing a book in which each story is utterly different in conception and voice; Harry Mathews in his two novels) and others on surface (Donleavy in 'One for Yes', a three-page tour-de-force, laying, upon the lightest surface possible, the whole question of identity and interpersonal relationships). Still others will look for new structures, new suspensions of ambivalence, adopting the most universal themes (the enigma, the quest) as a framework to 'contain' the associations; I would list their precursors (aside from the obvious antecedence in Cendrars and Apollinaire) as Firbank and Roussel, and William Gaddis, Mathews, Vian, Cortazar, and Claude Simon as a few of the chief practitioners. The categories are by no means mutually exclusive and many writers—Borges, Landolfi, Mrozek, Buzzati, Imbert, as well as several of those mentioned above and several of the writers for this magazine—seem to flicker back and forth. Also, in anything more than a passing reference, one should have to mention the pervasive influence of de Nerval and of Pataphysics, of Queneau and particularly of Ponge; such names as Svevo, Verga, and Baroja are perhaps equally important. And one should have to note the *Tel Quel* poets—Pleynet, Sollers, Faye—plus Arnaud, du Bouchet, Dupin, Guillevic, Roche, etc. Rene de Solier's essay 'Structure du récit' should also be mentioned, in addition to the American 'deep-image' poets, Montale, and so on. (Tendencies of this sort are perhaps generally more easily indicated in poetry, though then less accessible to explication.)

At any rate, one writer will concentrate on what dangles from the ends of his nerves (especially poets and 'stylists' such as Updike; early pop art is in some ways analogous to this position). Another, in a kind of eclectic fit, will attempt to encompass the entire process of literary development within his own work (Barth). Others still—'extremists'—will attempt new *kinds* of fiction. And all are reactions to an atmosphere currently prevalent, that of an 'abstract', discontinuous culture and an art not only inappropriate, but also ineffective, to it. Kenneth Burke may well have been correct in proposing that an art could be of value 'by preventing a society from too assertively, too hopelessly, itself', but to accomplish any such end, the art must be correspondent to the society, if (obviously) not in accord. And while I do not want to claim for art any high purpose or 'responsibility' (I have already remarked the dangers of programmed fiction; and art must be 'responsible' only to itself and its author—besides which, art has effect only when it has been filtered down, as through a Koch filter, diluted and rediluted, into the mass media), I *do* believe that such correspondence must exist. Art should develop with the increased, fluctuating awareness of the society itself; for it to do otherwise, to remain static or

Ronald Firbank

become involuted (decadent; Ourobourous-like), is an unhealthy signal. Alvarez:

> To survive and communicate the artist may have to abandon his inheritance, his training, even his habits of mind, and start from the beginning. Granted, this always happens when there is a fundamental change in the arts; that is why every genuinely new movement is resisted. But this time what is in question is something more radical and thorough-going than a manner of speaking or seeing; those 'new styles of architecture, a change of heart' seem newer, more changed and less hopeful than anyone ever expected. In the face of this threatening transformation, the Extremist style is the most courageous response. It may, after all, have less to do with the prognosis of a nuclear holocaust than with the relatively simple understanding of the fact that the traditional basis of the arts has smashed. Given a situation so precarious, internal confusion transmuted into new kinds of artistic order becomes the only possible form of coherence.

ON THE ONE HAND then, intellect—and on the other, the senses: that conflict from which all critical dichotomies (form and content; object and experience; surface and substance; even, in one sense, Van Wyck Brook's 'diagnostic' and 'curative' writer) derive, and from which, in fact, all *art* derives. One writer elects to *articulate for us,* with precision, the surface of moments and another, more expansively, to have us touch (from *either* side) the periphery of reality. Yet each is concerned with a synthesis of information and experience, with offering a suspension of reality accordant to his specific sensibility: his vision.

In some respects it *does* appear as though there is no emerging new art, as though all our talk of a truly contemporary literature, new forms and directions, were so much wind, and the object of this chatter but a distorted traditionalism. As Christopher Finch noted in NW 178, 'The whole notion of avant garde activity—at least, as it is popularly understood—seems obsolescent. An artist . . . exploits a current situation rather than creating a new one.' And (despite the fact that there is a Robert Cremean for every Hockney, a Bontecou for every Warhol, as well as the Duchamp-like hybrids such as Oldenburg: artists actively engaged in extending their sensibilities into the exploration, and exploitation, of new aesthetic possibilities) this seems to me an important point. Basically there are those who *realise* images and those who *create* images; finders and makers. The first are synthetic, the second syncretic. And it is this syncretism (in the sense used by Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art)* which accounts for the 'difficulties' of a new art—for the obvious surface discontinuities; for the disruption of the traditional, accustomed surface gestalt, both as object and experience; for the sense, both general and particular, of disorientation; for the 'contrast of surface fragmentation and low-level coherence'. (Cf. Koestler's 'reality of the third order', that underlying reality which contradicts the conceptual world yet gives it meaning, just as the conceptual world gives (qualified) coherence to 'the absurd patchiness of the sensory world'.)

For Ehrenzweig, one part of the mind must surrender itself to chaos, while the other—the outer edge—maintains a rigorous control; out of the first, 'art' is generated, and by the second, ordered. This naturally requires from the artist an ego-structure which is able to accept chaos, and just as naturally there will be some for whom the first is predominant (they will work freely, tapping the unconscious at full force) and others for whom 'the rigorous line' is more acceptable, or accessible. At any rate, the ideal is a perfect union of the two (this becoming the third part of the process), and it is where they come sharply together that *vision* occurs. (At the intersection of order and chance. Cf. Simone de Beauvoir: 'life is the reworking of a destiny by a freedom.') Somewhat more interesting if esoteric, is the way in which story structure may be seen as an analogue to this process.

I HAVE ALREADY REMARKED that for the writer, whatever his vocabulary and 'logic', perception is forever building its way towards conception; that this is the process of art, and that the degree to which they become syndetic, or tangential, will naturally vary in the individual writer. (Here, I must again quote Vian's explanation of the basis for his own work: 'Its material realization—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.' The specific plane of reference and angle of tilt being the individual writer's prerogative. Yet it should be noted that the method almost certainly presupposes an element of the fantastic, or at least of extremism.) And what seems 'new' to me is the quality of each and the ways in which they are reconciled.

I see one of the principle new directions of fiction, then, to be a particular concentration on *substance* and *surface*. Substance, I take to be the combination of themes, ideas, the complexity of relationships and associations at every level; surface, as the smooth tissue covering it. (The analogues are faith—deep and sincere, cohesive conviction—and belief, its ritualistic, perceptible manifestation. Another, more baroque metaphor, which I make with special reference to Durrell's poem 'Style', is that of the circulatory system and the skin.) It is the *realisation* of this dichotomy, however, which seems to me unique.

Several current writers are working, it appears, to produce a kind of structural periphrasis, in which substance and style are carefully *kept* dichotomous and but rarely allowed to intersect (when they *do* intersect, the effect is predictably that of falling through what was a moment before firm, solid ground). Substance is kept neatly tucked away underneath, like a subterranean cataract, and the whole emphasis is on—rather, appears to be on—the creation of a smooth, haptic surface. Obviously, these rare intersections are Ehrenzweig's 'surface discontinuities', rhythmic gasps, and 'disruptions of the surface gestalt'. It is also in some respects a reversal of Ehrenzweig's analysis, for there is little or no 'contrast of surface fragmentation and low-level coherence': the low-level substance may easily be shattered and tumultuous (though of course still cohesive, in that it informs the body of the work and is, generally, intensely symbolic); the surface, quite the opposite of fragmented, is rhythmic, highly textured and tactile, and self-contained, directing our eyes across its skin as surely as over a Rothko painting—and just as subtly effective in modifying our own sensibilities. Surface and substance are schizothymic, scherzo and adagio; like Firbank's characters, they but 'occasionally care to beckon. And they seldom really touch.' (A process which reminds us of Gide's assertion that 'We communicate in communicados' and of his remarks on Hammett's dialogue, in which 'every character is trying to deceive all the others in which the truth slowly becomes visible through the haze of deception'.) From this point it seems as though Ehrenzweig is describing the last of the old orders and gesturing cautiously towards new ones. For the new fiction is a fiction of misdirection: it points one way and happens another.

The process is in other ways as well reminiscent of Firbank, whose novels are 'carried on in a series of conversational gasps, each scene perfectly formed in itself, but each leading almost nowhere' (Alvarez); where everything occurs 'between chapters' and the surface is composed almost entirely of pauses and flickers, like a diffident neon. And it is for 'his particular excellence of style' that Firbank is most to be admired—as 'an artist in the rhythm of thoughts and verbal forms' (Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, *Ronald Firbank: A Memoir*); an artist who found it difficult to extract a pattern from the ubiquitous material of life, who declined to force one upon it and found his solution in a highly personal abstraction. *Rhythm* is the key word here, and the place we perceive the closest affinity of Firbank to this 'new fiction'. Fletcher: 'Much as a composer adds emphasis and strength to his symphony by "thickening" his part-writing, so Firbank created a method of treating dialogue, by which was traced a pattern of sound, not polyphonic in character, but built upon subtle contrasts and delicate resemblance'. This, taken in its full sense—and in conjunction with Vian's statement—might serve as well as any as an epithet for the 'new fiction'.

IT REMAINS, of course, to point up specific works: something difficult with a form still evolving, still very much in flux, and with a tendency so pervasive. And I have already suggested a few of the parallels, intimations, examples. Forced further, I would cite the novels of Queneau and Vian (as well as the general influence of the récit and of Ponge), the poetry of the *Tel Quel* group, much Polish writing from Kott through Mrozek, a great deal of South American work (Borges, Cortazar and Imbert, whose 'Casos' seem to me as viable a form as the récit). Closer to home, there are a number of young British novelists tending towards it: Paul Ableman, David Benedictus, B.S. Johnson. One might also include some of Ballard's work, a bit of Burgess', several of the young poets and poets-turned-novelist; and the work of Tom Stoppard—and many, perhaps the majority, of Donleavy's short stories are excellent examples ('One for Yes', 'In My Peach Shoes'). In the States there is the work of Thomas Pynchon (in particular, 'Entropy'); the short stories of Douglas Woolf ('Flyman', 'Bank Day'); the poems of writers as established as Merwin and Wright and of less widely-known poets as Coulette and Padgett; Harry Mathew's two novels (*The Conversions* and *Tlooth*) and William Gaddis' *The Recognitions*. There are Jacobs, Elkin, and several promising new writers such as Joseph McElroy;

A. Alvarez

there are also young writers just beginning to find their footing and produce their first mature work. (I would list Thomas M. Disch—especially with the as-yet unpublished short stories 'Quincunx' and 'Masters of the Milford Altarpiece'—as by far the best of these. John T. Sladek, often reminiscent of Queneau in the variety and eccentricity of his interests, is another.) And virtually any of Barthelme's stories; 'Florence Green Is 81' and 'The Piano Player', read together, would be especially helpful in understanding this new concept of structure, though both *Come Back, Dr Caligari* and *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts* (Barthelme's two collections) should be read in full, for their summary impact.

One last question. Redon sought 'a visual logic of the imagination': upon reflection, or transposition, yet another analogue for the process?

James Sallis

Part two of this article, 'Dynamos, Virgins', will appear next month. Fiction and poetry from Poland, France, Argentina, America, and Britain will be reviewed. Among those to be included are Nabokov, Woolf, Mrozek, Imbert, Ableman, Guillevic, Vian, Roussel, Barth, Barthelme, Calvino and Burgess.

JeremiaD

JAMES SALLIS

AND JERRY LEFT the burning city behind him, returned to the East—to Calcutta, to Burma, Peking, Mashhad. Would he now feel as out of place here as he had in London before he sat on the hill and watched the city burn, the people who stood so still on the harbor and stared into the violent water, the rubble and bodies drifting on the black water toward him?

In Cambodia he was assaulted by a gang of youths, his arm torn loose again in the struggle—and woke to find himself in occupied Vietnam. Days later, with a select group of fellow laborers (Jerry and a Buddhist South African, escaped just before the overthrow, were the only whites among them), his arm hanging limp and useless at his side, he fought his way across the border into the Republic. Only Jerry made it. The others died and the South African surrendered.

Women soldiers found Jerry wandering beside the Nhi Ha; in his delirium he thought they were American Indians and, when they approached him, turned and began to walk steadily out into the river. (There had been a time when Jerry recoiled from water; now he embraced it, opening his arms to take it to him. A fire in his shoulder.) One of the soldiers crossed herself and dived after him, dragging him by his hair, grown long again now, back to the bank. They took him to their general.

Weeks later, a white face above him, Jerry woke. The light struck his eyes like fists and he quickly shut them again. He heard a voice. English. It sounded far away; it came down long hollow corridors filled with the buzzing of flies.

"Mr Cornelius?"

Jerry moved his head weakly. There were thorns in his neck, knots of thorns. (Who was it—Schumann? Someone. Dead. Mad, from hearing a constant hum in his ears, and killed himself. A high F. Jerry's was E7, the full chord. In an echo chamber. In his skull.)

"Mr Cornelius?"

He opened his eyes and shut them even more quickly. They were full

of flames.

"You will be all right. My medic—"

Then the buzzing swelled, the flies settled down onto slabs of raw red meat. And then it was inside him, swelling inside him, and it blotted out all the rest.

AT NIGHT the flames would come back to him, filling the walls of the general's green room. Dark green, deep as the grass at night; bright red and yellow. Among them he could see the faces of his wife and son, Cass and Dylan (Dylan, he thought, Welsh for *water*), their faces black, dissolving, hair afire and eyes staring out at him. Her brown eyes wide, empty, as the fire (or was there fear in them?) picked the flesh off her body and Jerry remembered himself how soft each part would feel to the fire's rough hands. The child would open his mouth, scream, scream, but there would be no sound over the roar of flames and collapsing buildings, only his mouth open round and the flames leaping inside it. Their faces behind the flames now. And then, at the edge of the flames, he would hear the gentle, quick laughter of Michael, his friend. The sound of Michael saying: Guilt.

GENERAL LEE was a mercenary—or had been, until he found every regular soldier above him dead or wounded, the other mercenaries crossing the border, and the people here in Haiphong (women, children, the crippled and insane) looking to him for leadership. Secretly, he had made arrangements to leave the country; then the Republic was proclaimed and, inexplicably, supported by the League of Nations. That night a man was found dead in his small boat anchored just off the harbor, and the next day General Lee had assumed official control of the border sector, "Lee County". Weapons were requisitioned, and supplied. They were mostly .22's of American make. In the weeks which followed Lee's assumption, the few South Vietnamese soldiers who crossed into the North, and several mercenaries who tried to return, were quickly shot and torn apart by Lee's squads of women. They had no idea what force hatred, combined with loss and near-Messianic devotion, could have.

The General was small, like the people he "looked after", with slick black hair gathered to one side of his head with a blood-red ribbon. Beneath his thin, sharp face there were only the dense robes, blue, rising high on his neck and dropping over his hands and bare feet, giving no indication whatsoever of a body within them. He was an American, born in Louisiana and escaped just before the revolutions and final secession. He was Cajun, and still spoke with a slight French accent. "The bayou for the rice fields," he would say, the dark blue robes swaying ponderously as he gestured toward the lands beyond the patio. "It was not a difficult exchange."

Jerry remained with the General for several weeks, during which time he was given the best care and medical attention possible to the city, now little more than a village, though all the rubble had been cleared long ago and everything within Haiphong was clean and neatly ordered. The man who cared for him was in fact the General's own specially imported physician, a large, vague man with hands that reminded Jerry of palm leaves, who never spoke and never met Jerry's—or anyone's—eyes. Most likely this meant he was German. Jerry suspected so, but there were few Germans left after the '38 crisis in Ostrava and Jerry, having never seen one, couldn't be sure. "Du är ein Deutsche," he said one day as his bandages were being changed. That was the best he could manage. He knew a little Danish, and he dimly recalled struggling through Rilke as a child, but that was long ago; still, he thought the man would understand. But he made no reaction. He continued unwinding the soiled gauze and cotton, carried it carefully across the tiles to the disposal unit, then took fresh wrappings out of the sterilizer and bound them tightly across Jerry's chest and arm. When he had finished, he turned and left the room. Jerry's shoulder stang where he had pulled the mats of cotton away from the new, forming skin, following it with a gentle pressure of his fingertips to ease the pain.

Though it was rumored he had once been Taoist, the General had no religion, a rare thing these days; Jerry couldn't in fact remember ever having met another person —aside from himself, of course—who had been able to make his way through the welter of ancient and ephemeral codes of belief which the world offered now. The General was an ascetic, however, and this presented something of a problem. Still, love of a sort was possible between them, and in its own way, slowly, that love developed. When Jerry was better, the General sent women to his room several nights in succession. Jerry's turning them away (kindly and, once, regretfully) somehow cemented the relationship between the General and himself. They settled into a smooth, pure love, expressed in the many nights they spent alone together drinking local tea and talking (the General smoking rice-hulls in a briar pipe; this and the tea were the only concessions he allowed himself), fed by one's guilt and the other's gratitude, or by some curious combination of the two which existed in each. Soon they were speaking in French, falling back onto English when Jerry occasionally found the General's distorted Cajun French impenetrable, then onto Mandarin when the divergence of English and American became, as it often did, obtrusive. It was an experience wholly unique for Jerry, like nothing he had ever known or imagined.

The night he left, the General signed a safe passage for Jerry and escorted him to the boat which was to take him on the first lap toward Calcutta.

The sun was almost down, its maroons and ochres lying out flat along the river, filling it with color. Birds skimmed low to the surface. In the distance their wings, the size of Jerry's hand, appeared to be single feathers and their long legs, dangling down into the clear water, looked like lengths of thin bamboo.

"You'll come back, Mr Cornelius?" the General asked, in English. His brown eyes were very still, and caught none of the light from the water. It occurred to Jerry that they had never touched.

"Would there be something to come back to, General? When the time came?" From across the city he could hear the sound of gunfire as the women's army practised on

targets. Jerry had seen the targets; they were roughly-drawn outlines of small men, with the heart, genitals, and brain carefully drawn in.

"There is only peace here, Mr Cornelius, and that will not change. Nor will our values. Trouble and strife have done with our land. Now they have gone elsewhere, as you are about to do."

"Calcutta . . ."

"Perhaps. But not, I think, for the moment."

"And perhaps if I did return, I would bring the wars back with me?"

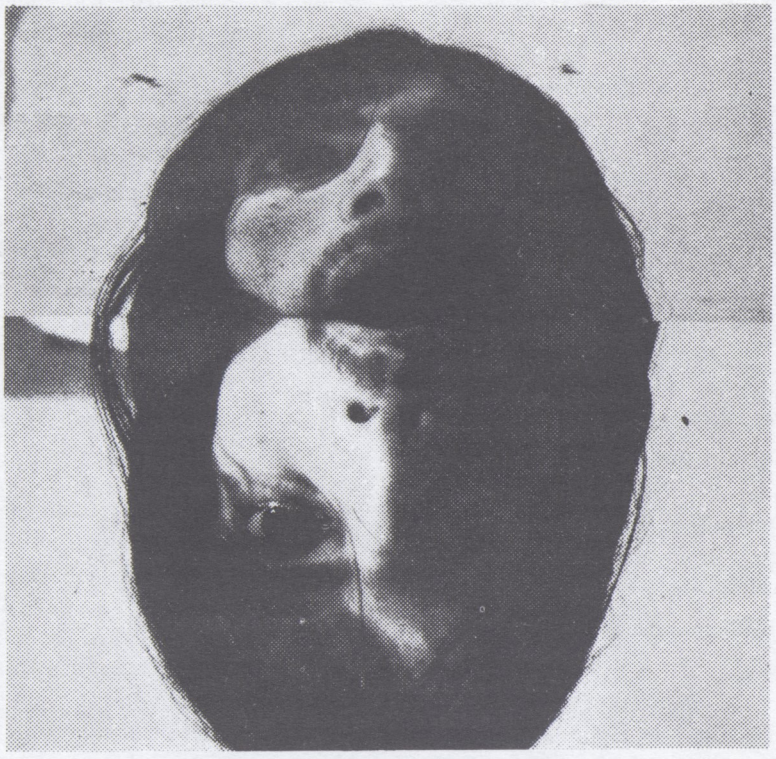
The General turned and looked out over the river. "It is possible. You are a most exceptional man. But it is not a thing one finds easy to admit."

The boat's motor coughed twice and caught. General Lee held out his hand to give Jerry the safe passage.

"Good-bye then, Mr Cornelius."

Jerry took the papers and his fingers for just a moment touched the General's palm. Impulsively he reached out to the blue robes, then dropped his hand. "I—" He turned and jumped quickly into the boat. Only when it was far out on the water and Jerry looked back to see the General standing there alone on the harbor did he begin to cry.

He was still weeping when the boat docked at Haing Nhu Khan.



THE BURNING CITY. Brown eyes. An open soundless mouth.

Jerry lay on one of the Persian carpets, staring into the empty fireplace. The words, remembered, were inside him: guilt, loss, denial, fear. Guilt. Michael's words, above the burning city.

It was all locked in his childhood. London, Simla. But wasn't the house, London—

Gone. It was no use; Jerry was confused. ("My childhood bends beside me. Too far for me to lay a hand there once or lightly.") There seemed so many childhoods when he tried to recall them, and all of them gone. Perhaps there was one for every change his body had suffered, the world filled with the broken childhoods of Jerry Cornelius. If that were true . . .

It would all be over soon.

London, Simla, now Calcutta, Mashhad. He had to get it all outside him; that was the only way.

Anything.

He tried to shake his head but the movement wasn't right. He knew what he meant to do but, for several moments, the words wouldn't come. This sort of thing had happened quite a lot recently; Jerry suspected he was suffering aphasia—slight, but on several levels. Words eluded him, almost there, the concept firm but the words fail to congeal around it, would be inaccurate, distorted. Other times, the words themselves would evoke no response. His gestures, too, were impaired, contradictory or at best inadequate.

He squeezed his right hand hard into a fist and managed to regain control. He rolled over on the carpet and got up, walking toward a small shelf of books beside the fireplace. He ran his finger slowly along the books, stopped at one, slid the finger up along the spine and tilted it out. He took it down, turning it over and over in his hands, the stiff coolness of it.

It was a small, thin volume, Foolscap 16mo, bound in black. The spine was bare. *Abyssinia*, in deep blue on the front. And below, in tiny silver letters: *Jeremiah Cornelius.* (Once he had refused a Nobel Prize for his unified-field theory; this time, he was saved such embarrassment. The night before publication he had broken into the printer's warehouses and burned every copy of the book, then methodically searched out every pre-release copy and disposed of it. This, to the best of his knowledge, was the sole remaining copy now, after the city's burning.) He opened the book, at random, saw first lines and had no need to read further. He remembered.

THE MURDER

I shall never,
never kill you, no. You will always
be there
on the headstone of morning;

your name
is written under my pillow on the walls,
the bottom of the toilet lid,

the towels. Your face
is inside all the spoons.

LIVING WITH YOU

Another year and the ground
pulls harder,

the heart
on its intricate stalk succumbs again

to your hair, your breath and voice.

A tree
grows, and the world grows

smaller. A pan on the stove,
boiling too much water,

raises the level of entropy in the world.

He didn't want to look at the dedication, but had to. It was in 6pt Perpetua, almost lost to the creamy white of the page.

To Camus,
who had no childhood;

To Dylan,
who will have nothing else;

and Cass.

He was sixteen, married, happy, and afraid. "A man of independent means." There had been this, a novel called *Moth* ("Father, the dark moths/Crouch at the sills of earth, waiting"—from James Wright), then the scientific treatises destroyed with his father's house, the unified-field theory (Who? Someone had told him, "It was your chance of immortality—you may never have another."), and then . . .

Jerry began to cry.

The epigraph was on the page opposite the dedication, in Tempo, bold small capitals. Camus. "There is only one liberty, to come to terms with death. After which, everything is possible." His voice soft, damp and choked, Jerry read it aloud. When he finished, the words remained in the room.

He looked around at the bare walls, the matched Persian carpets, the colonial cane furniture he'd brought here. The fireplace he never used. Her painting above it: soft-bodied women in groups, bleak, with hollow mouths and weak orange hair. Christ, he thought. Christ. It was true. Everything was water if you looked long enough.

He was still crying, but the tears helped now.

—Sorry to bother you, General Cornelius, but New Olgayte is bombing us again.
—Where the hell is New Olgayte?
—That new South American republic, sir. The one
—Oh, them. Again! With our own goddamn bombs, I suppose.
—Yes sir. What should we do, sir?
—Do? Don't be an ass, Brunner, you know we can't do anything. They'll get tired and stop eventually. More likely run out of missiles in an hour or so, anyhow.
—They've wiped out Denver, Lousiana's hit bad. Most of the Midwest. Mexico too, but we think that was a miscalculation.
—You've got to admire the little bastards.
—Yes sir.

JERRY WAS WALKING through the Mashhad streets, his light-weight black boots pushing through the mud and garbage, his fine black hair flapping behind him like a tiny cape. He was wearing a scarlet Edwardian suit that made his face look even paler than usual. He hadn't eaten for weeks, and was thinning back down from the influence of General Lee's rich food and drink.

The architecture here—baroque cotyledon pods looped and grooved with gold, occasional jade, makeshift concrete bunkers left from the war and taken over by the new government, wooden-slat houses—suited Jerry's mood perfectly. It was March, it had been raining for five days, and now it was very hot. Sweat gathered in Jerry's thick eyebrows, ran down his back inside the clothing. It collected, also, in his rough new mariner's beard. He took the clay pipe out of his mouth in sudden disgust and threw it into the street, then immediately wished he hadn't. The smell was terrible.

The markets were closed and no one else was about. A pack of dogs came out of one of the houses, spotted Jerry, and went running off together down the street away from him; only one stayed behind, nuzzling at the garbage and snorting as water went up its nose. One of its legs was chewed almost to the bone. Jerry had been locked away inside his house for some time now. He had no way of knowing why the people had left the city—or, indeed, if they all had. He noticed that there were no flies. On one of the bunkers a wet flag sagged against the pole. Like the buildings it was curiously hybrid, still-born. In the center of

a grass-green field an orange lion stood facing left, a sword in its paw. Yellow words in Farsi–probably a Sunni slogan–spilled out of its mouth. Behind it, a fierce red sun emblem raged, diminishing the rest.

Jerry passed close to a doorway and felt a pressure on his shoulder. He looked down and saw a ruined brown hand, looked back up and saw an old woman standing there. Her teeth were gone, the lips and skin around them little more than loose, leather-like flaps. She had been fat once, but now there was no flesh under the skin, and it had fallen into sags, slack and baggy like ancient breasts, covering her face. Which was probably just as well. He shouldn't have liked to see what was in that face. One ear was torn off, the eye on the same side half-closed and running; thick grey fluid had dried in several of the creases down that side of her face, weeks or months old. The bones were bending, fusing, pulling the body in toward them. She was naked, and her hand trembled on Jerry's shoulder. Even in the garbage-filled street, she stank.

"Jerry," the old woman said. She spoke in Kurdish. "Don't you know me?" He could barely make out the words–pick them out of the mumbling–but he knew. Her

hair was still violent red.

"Miss Brunner! Why, I haven't seen you since—"

"No. You haven't." She pulled the hand away and it fell limply to her side. She raised her head, and that seemed to take all the strength she had left in her body. "I've missed you, Jerry."

"Aristophanes and all that?"

"*Like* that, yes. I've changed, haven't I, Jerry?"

Jerry was full—of contempt or impatience, he wasn't sure which.

"Not significantly, Miss Brunner." Contempt, then.

"Ah, but I have, Jerry, and so have the times. Things get back to normal so quickly."

"Normal? My God—"

"Change requires death and destruction, Jerry. And change is normal."

" 'We are conceived in our conceits.' " Jerry shook his head. "No. You haven't changed. That's the same old Miss Brunner saying that."

Suddenly she stood up straight and almost made a smile out of the flaps of skin around her mouth. "We stopped too soon, Mr Cornelius."

"We didn't stop. Miss Brunner. We were stopped."

She collapsed again, her arms hanging out in front of the stooped body. She looked down and closed her eyes. Finally she said, "In the East. It was the East, wasn't it, Jerry? They stopped us in the East."

"Kuwait. We didn't get even that far."

She was quiet for several minutes. The dog started hesitantly towards them and Jerry kicked out at it, spattering muck against its side.

It turned and ran away, limping and, a little further on, falling. It didn't get back up. Jerry could hear it whimpering.

"Have you read Firbank, Miss Brunner?" he said, impulsively. "Firbank feared that serious talk would always become sober tosh. Firbank was right."

"There is a word . . ."

"Rodomontade. There are always words, Miss Brunner."

"Yes." That seemed to be the last of her breath.

"But we should have that one tattooed on our chests."

He turned and started away but the hand, somehow, managed to get to his shoulder again.

"Jerry. I've missed you, Jerry. Where are you staying?"

He grinned. "Hilton."

She shrugged her body down out of the doorway into the street. He thought for a moment she was going to fall, like the dog.

"That's a lie, Jerry." She stared away from him down the street.

"Yes. Of course."

She began to walk away, ponderously dragging her feet through the clogged, clotted streets, dragging the legs and then the body above them. She would die, he thought, unless she found someone soon.

"Good-bye, Miss Brunner."

"It's 'Mrs' now. Good-bye, Mr Cornelius."

Jerry stood watching her walk away. She reached a corner and turned, staggering against one of the bunkers. She rested a few seconds, then pushed herself back upright and went on. Jerry realised he was muttering to himself—

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

He shivered, and a tear ran down the crease of his cheek into the corner of his mouth. He reached up and brushed the hair back away from his face, felt the wetness on his fingertips now. He went over to the whimpering dog, raised a foot, and crushed its skull with the heel of his boot. It never moved.

The next day, he left the city.

HE SEARCHED THE HOUSE methodically. He went through every drawer, every cupboard, gutted all the furniture. He opened the back of the toilet and let out the water. He pulled off ventilators. He climbed to look down into light fixtures. He rapped on the walls, the floor. He took the tops off the stairs. He blew both safes—nothing but gold. He looked up the chimney—never used. He paced off the floors, walked outside and paced along the sides of the house. Nothing.

It wasn't here.

The floor was already covered with stuffing, rattling paper, splinters and slabs of wood, bricks, plaster. Furious, he tore the colonial cane furniture apart and threw it across the room. He ripped up the rugs with a knife from the kitchen. He dumped the books onto the floor and smashed the bookcase against a wall. After that it was more difficult, but he did what he could.

Finally he stood at the door and looked back, pleased.

There. That would give the bastard something to think about.

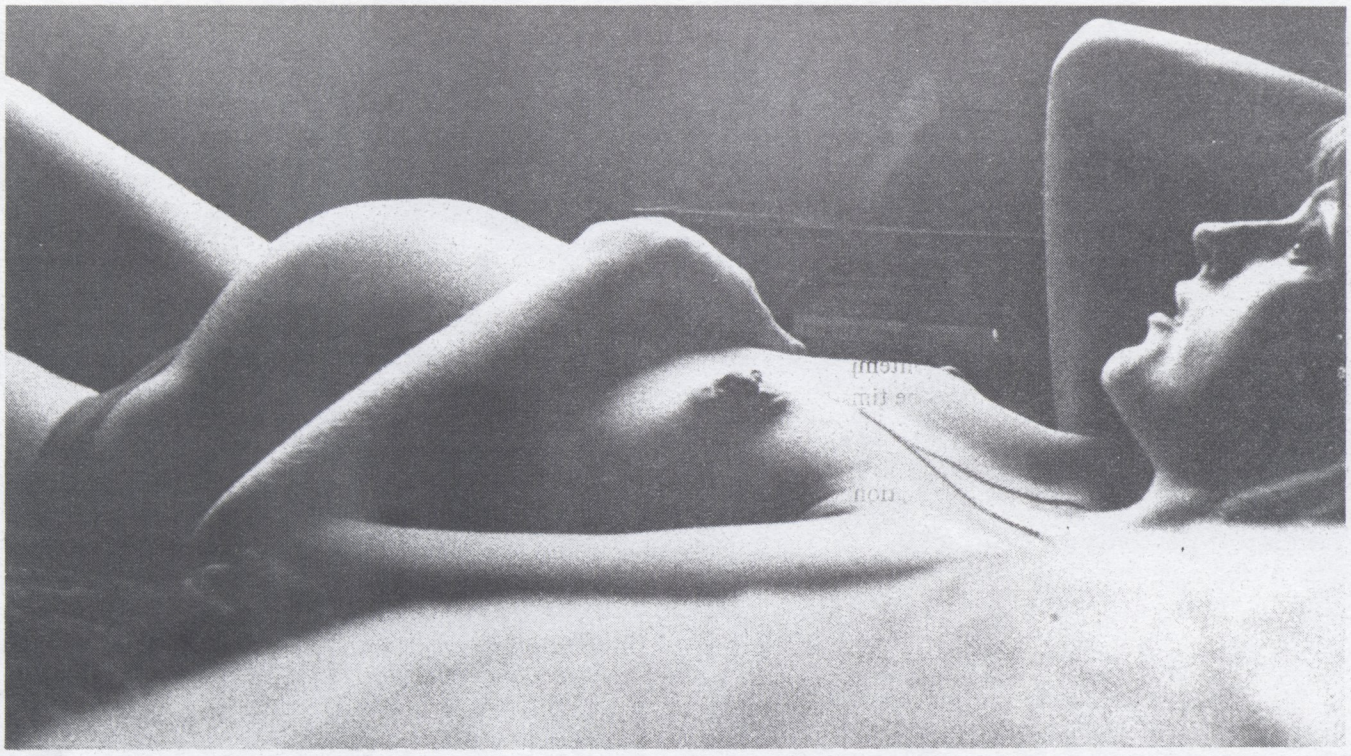
HE was going to die.

THERE was a cable waiting for him when he reached his house off Holland Park Avenue. There were also quite a lot of newspapers. He caught a glimpse of the headline on top of the four-foot stack, a *Daily Mail*: SADISTIC SKIPPER DROWNS PARROT. Chuckling, he opened the yellow envelope.

He had cabled, "What is the exact nature of the catastrophe. Don't know. Don't know. Back soon." And Michael answered, *Another collaboration, Jerry*? (Jerry and his wife had referred to the birth of Dylan as a collaboration; did his friend know this?) *I love you. I miss you.*

Another collaboration . . . yes. But with whom—Michael? There wasn't enough of Michael left. Miss Brunner? He didn't know where she was, even if she was alive, after Kuwait. The General, the girl?

Then he noticed the last line of Michael's cable. *Come home. I fear for your life, Jerry.* He went inside and began to laugh, and went on laughing, insanely, wildly, beyond control, until he was out of breath—then collapsed among the wreckage, still laughing, rolled over and passed out.



THEY LAY side by side, on their backs, in the bed. His heart beat irregularly; he put his hand over it and watched the fingers being pushed away from from his chest. The fingers were pleasantly thin.

Aside from the bed, a framework of hollow brass tubing and a mattress, there were only two low bamboo tables in the room. On one of them lay a small two-stringed instrument with a gourd body. On the other there were teacups without handles which would fit perfectly inside cupped hands, an alcohol burner, a loaf of ricecake. The windows were bare. Outside, a tear-shaped . . . *kite.* That was the word. (The aphasia again?) A tear-shaped white kite with a short white tail drifted steadily, slowly, across the cloudless sky. The afternoon sun showed on the side of one sill and the wall opposite. Outside, it would be hot; here everything was cool, even her body beside him.

"You're rather sentimental, Mr Cornelius."

"Yes, I know. Hell, isn't it?"

He reached out, very gently, and touched the bruise on her thigh, laying two fingers on the aureola. (He was amazed at his capacity for tenderness now, this moment.) It was beautiful. Almost perfectly round. There were three distinct colors, with bits of rainbow hue between them. The center very small, a spot of deep blue the size of the pupil of an eye and almost as dark; then the aureola of purple-brown, like another color for skin; a narrow penumbra outside, brown becoming yellow–and then the smooth whiteness of her skin. Her body was familiar to him, almost painfully so.

"You don't mind, then?" he asked.

She sat up and tossed the short brown hair back away from her face. Her eyes, too, were brown. Her breasts were so small they hardly moved; they were little more than the large, still-puckered nipples. Her stomach rubbed against her thighs as she shook her head.

"Names don't matter, Mr Cornelius. They are only words, and they mean nothing. Only gestures matter, between people." She watched the kite as it began to bounce, riding the corridors of wind. "That is all we can ask of another. My last . . . the last man I was with. He would have me take emetics before sex. When I climaxed–" She looked back at Jerry and grinned. "And sometimes he would join me."

"Without benefit of the emetics, I suppose?"

"Yes." She touched his hand, which was still lying gently across the bruise. "He put that there, at first. But I thought it was beautiful, and I wanted to keep it. Every few days it begins to fade and then I–"

"This man. It was in London? I think I know him."

"I believe you do." She rolled to get a cigarette and Jerry's hand slid off her leg. The breeze was steady now. The kite throbbed on its string, a cloud behind it. It began to rain, and the kite struggled as it was pulled towards the ground. Rain spattered on the sill. Jerry lay quietly for several minutes and watched the rain, the new water. (Dylan, he thought. Dylan was another word for water.) The girl sat beside him smoking. Hash, from the smell. He studied the casual white symmetry of her back, amazed at it.

"Words," he said after a while. "Mallarme said that poetry was made from words, not ideas." (That had come to him, he had remembered that, as he sat with Michael on the hill above the burning city.)

"French? Yes, it would take a Frenchman to say that. But I didn't think anyone knew French any more."

"I've been to America," Jerry said. "Louisiana. And long before that . . ."

She waited for him to go on. When he didn't, she took the last drags of the hash into her lungs, held them, and said, "At any rate, it's true now." She exhaled, coughing

slightly, then rolled on her buttocks and took a meerschaum-colored ceramic ashtray off the floor. She stubbed the cigarette out with deliberate concentration, squeezing the filter together and pushing down till the end crumpled like a drinking-straw wrapper. When she took her hand away, the end was smashed into the ashtray, the rest angled, tip tilted thirty degrees or so up from the bottom. (The associations, Jerry thought. They're starting again.) The filter was oval now, and there was a thin line of stain across it. It looked like a tiny mouth, precise and perfect as the fingernails of a newborn child. The kite was gone from the window.

"Do you know the work of Miroslav Holub, Mr Cornelius? He is a countryman of mine, a Czech. In 'The Root of the Matter' he wrote,

There is poetry in everything. That
is the biggest argument
against poetry."

"No. The Russians . . ."

"Yes. The Russians. I suppose the world hated us for that. Still, we had much to lose, either way. We cannot all be as fortunate as the Americans; we can't all remain neutral for fifty years. Look at Switzerland. The world hates them, too."

"The world recovered, dear. It was a little more drained, a little whiter, but the world always recovers. It has an amazing capacity for muddling on through." (Damn Firbank, he thought. Damn him for being right.) "Things can be destroyed only when they have some value. Or values." Enough, then, of that. Jerry got up and began to dress. He noticed a tiny red sore, an eruption, like a pimple, on his penis. He shrugged and pulled on the scarlet suit, sat on the bed and pushed his feet into the boots, still filthy from Mashhad. He stood and turned back to the girl.

"I'll find him in London, then?"

She nodded.

"Why are you telling me this?"

She paused, her pale face tilted to one side, staring at him. The nipples were relaxed now, small orange cylinders against her flat chest. The lipstick glistened slightly. "Perhaps . . . perhaps it is because I am sentimental too, Mr Cornelius."

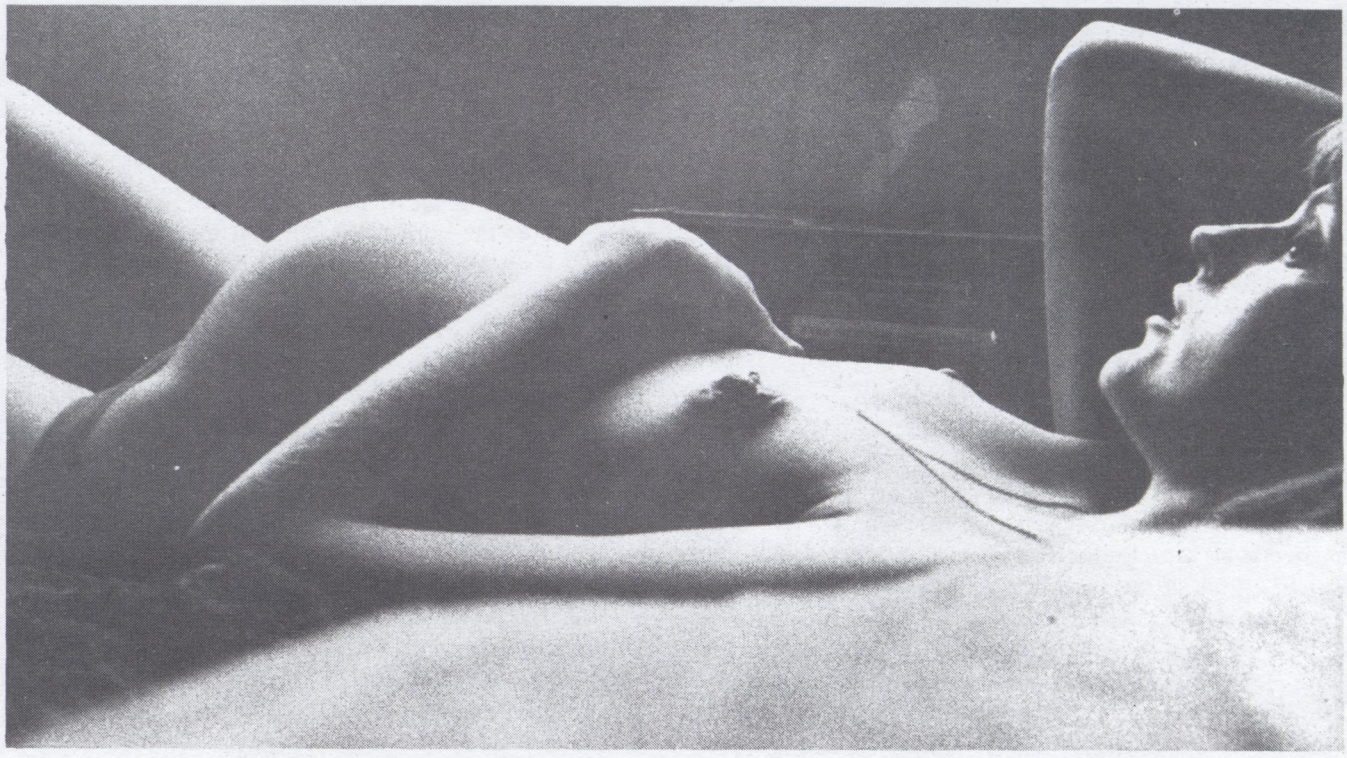
Jerry went across the room and opened the door. "I'll see you again. Soon."

She smiled. "Be discreet, Mr Cornelius."

"Thank you, but I'd rather be dead."

"Good-bye then, Mr Cornelius."

Jerry went out, closing the door gently behind him. Out into the rain. The thin fabric was soon soaked and it looked like blood.



THE DOOR was heavy teak. Grooves had been cut into it and filled with bronze, resembling the whorls and veins of various leaves. When he knocked, it opened and a slender, tall man stood there blinking. The room was dark behind him, dark and warm. He wore scarlet trousers and a bright yellow shirt. The top button was undone, the broad flowered tie tugged partly away from his neck. His black hair was fine, falling onto his shoulders. His face was pale, his mouth ascetic.

"You're Cornelius?" He pushed his way in and shut the door. The man backed quietly away and made no move to resist.

"Yes . . ." Then he smiled and said, "Yes. I've been expecting you." He raised his hand and pushed the hair together behind his neck. It had just been washed; it was still a bit wet, and it stood slightly out from his head. There was a copy of *Farewell, My Lovely* spread open, face down, on the bed. The pillow was damp where his head had been, the orange bedspread vaguely hollowed from his body.

"Yes, I suppose you have, haven't you?" He took the revolver out of his pocket. It was an American make, a .32 built on a .45 frame, the only one of its kind.

"I see you found your gun."

Yes, he had, finally, in an empty house in Mashhad. After a great deal of searching.

"And you didn't."

"Yes. I believe that puts you one up."

"Six, actually. Since you're counting."

Instinctively, the man backed against the desk. They stood for several minutes staring at one another, smiling. Then one of them stopped.

"Justice," Jerry said, very slowly. "Freedom. Truth. Love." With each word he moved his finger gently against the hair-trigger and the other's body jerked back against the desk, his back arching, as the bullets slapped into him and their soft heads spread like tiny hands across his skin and penetrated.

"Words—" he said, and died for them. His body rolled and fell forward onto the desk, then slid slowly backwards off it. He dropped onto the floor, sat there looking at the window with dim eyes, and finally collapsed against the side of the desk. Very slowly, his shoulder moved towards the corner, downwards, into open space. His head dragged against the edge of the desktop, bent without resistance, and he hit the floor lying halfway under the desk, staring up at it.

Jerry went over and looked at him for the last time, then reached down and closed his eyes. There was chewing gum stuck all over the bottom of the desktop. Now they were both smiling again. Things were back to normal.

Jerry looked around. There was nothing else in the room but the book and the coat that matched the trousers. It was hung on the back of a reading chair. He walked over and checked the pockets, taking out the safe passage stamped *Republic of Vietnam* and signed *General Lee*, which was all they contained. There was probably money and identification in the trousers, but Jerry had no use for either.

"Good-bye, Mr Cornelius," he said. He supposed it was bound to happen sooner or later. He went into the hall and shut the door behind him. It was like advancing to the next chamber of a nautilus. The lights were very bright.

"I fear those big words which make us so unhappy," Jerry said for the dead man.

THERE was one thing remaining.

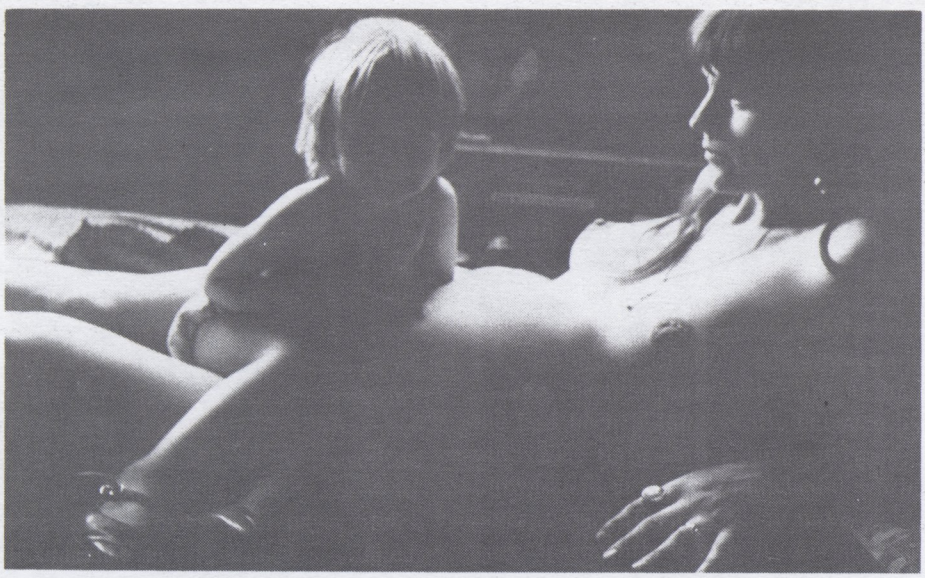
Jerry returned to his house off Holland Park Avenue and searched through the rubble and mess the dead man had left behind. Finally he found it at the bottom of a heap of papers and stuffing. He threw it into the fireplace, piling loose paper and stuffing on top of it—madly, frenzied—until the fireplace was filled. Then he struck a match, held it a moment and tossed it in. The pile caught at once, bursting into flame with a sound like that of the wind, expanding, all the bits exploding away from one another.

Jerry stood watching. Balls of burning paper and cotton wool rolled out into the room and he kicked them back. The flames, the poems, rose gently into the chimney.

THAT NIGHT Jerry dreamed of the burning city. Buildings tumbled back into themselves, pushing the flames higher through the empty corridors; people stood still in the harbor and stared; bodies and rubble and refuse drifted on the black waters toward him; and then there was only the fire, in the water, in the buildings—only the flames. But the woman and the child were no longer there inside them, and he wasn't sure now what the flames meant.

By morning the American planes were overhead. The bombs falling slowly, slowly, tumbling down into London . . .

When the first ones struck, Jerry was thinking of the girl, the kite, the fingernails of a newborn child.



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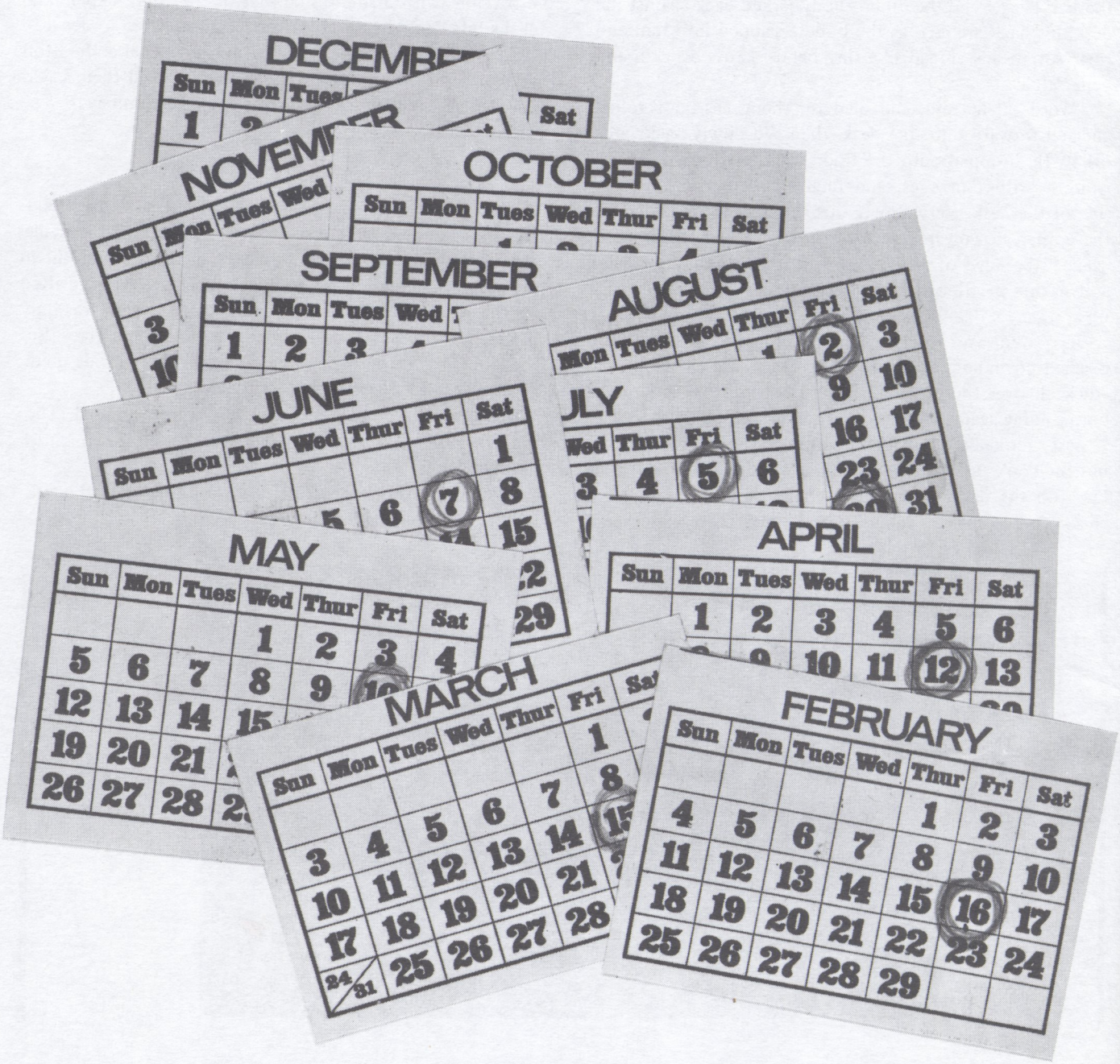
DECEMBER
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JULY
MAY
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MARCH
FEBRUARY
Sun Mon Tues Wed Thur Fri Sat

piece

j.m.rose

THE FLIES bat against the window, stunning themselves trying to get to the orange maple. They are fooled by the heat of the furnace. They are fooled by the glass. When I leave my room I will stick my hand out first. Can people kill themselves by running into walls? Only if they can't see them. I follow my hand out the door.

The last tomato in the garden. Cut out the soft spot. Slice it in quarters and fill it with tuna fish. Think about gathering butternuts in the afternoon. It is already too late for them. Think about sitting at a potter's wheel on the stone patio and throwing bottles. And lids. And spouts. Yesterday Tony and Jackie left. Tomorrow Gail arrives. Today is just space. I have all day to appreciate what people come here from the City to appreciate.

I HAVE LEFT cold cups of coffee in all the rooms. I have put anti-freeze in the car. And filled it with gas. I have put the storm windows up, bought four extra 100-watt bulbs and a package of six 24-Hour Cathedral Candles in case of emergency. The Dr's number is taped beside the phone. What is going to happen today?

Outside on the highway there is a near wreck. I find myself waiting for the thud that follows the screech. Do I remember how to give artificial respiration? Cardiac Massage? The timer on the stove goes off. It's time to knead the dough for 8-10 minutes until it's elastic and satin smooth. Then cover it with a damp cloth and set it in a warm draftless place until doubled in bulk, 1-2 hours. I look at the clock. 10:07. At 10:15 I will cover it with a dish towel and put it in the cold oven. I need more flour. It's sticking to the yellow formica counter. Especially in that little burst bubble of a burn. Formica is supposed to be heat resistant. And stain proof. But there are beet smears I can't get rid of. Little beets from my garden that never got big enough to eat alone. I put them in salads. When I cut them up I pressed the fresh slices to my lips, my cheeks, my chin, my forehead. It gave me the blush of youth. I am 25. I am 45. I am 65.

THERE ARE BABY chickens hatching in my mouth. I take them out one by one, holding them very gently and wipe them with the striped dish towel, spreading their clutched feet for the first time. Drying between their toes. Opening their tiny beaks, sucking out the mucous. I put them inside my shirt, inside my brassiere to keep them warm.

The ice cube floats up the side of the glass, always ahead of the cider. It sticks out above the glass when the cider reaches the rim. There is a pubic hair frozen in the cube. Whose? I shave.

IN THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL, under 'Can This Marriage Be Saved?', there is a story about a husband who takes his wife for granted. I understand this even though I am not married. I think it can. But I'm not sure. I am 5 feet 2 inches. I am 5 feet 7 inches. I am 5 feet 12 inches.

The American flag waves behind the yellow trees in front of the Post Office. I wave back. Perhaps I got male mail. No mail. The hall floor is empty. What time does the Postman come? I've never seen him.

The guaranteed self-rising flour doesn't rise. I type a letter demanding my money back to General Mills. I enclose the snipped-off label. I put the envelope in the aluminium mailbox that sits on a post in front of my house and raise the little red flag.

I will read the Bible this afternoon, sitting in the living room with Rachmaninoff on the record player. I will try to get past Genesis this time. It and *Little Women* are two books I've never been able to finish. *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* was the first book I ever read. It was very dull. I had to force myself to read it word by word, forgetting the sense of it, through to the ending. It was only 110 pages though. And the Bible is . . . 1132. I will do it. So I can say I've read the Bible. But *Little Women* is not that important, is it?

There is a scratch on the record. The longer it plays, the worse it gets. In the last three minutes the needle jumps two or three grooves every time it turns around. Does Van Cliburn ever think about that, how he sounds here with me in this room, making permanent mistakes? I met him once. Shook hands with him. After a concert. Where he had played this piece. Does he play any others? He's like that record. His hands were huge and boney and his knuckles must have stuck out about half an inch and they were wet and he didn't squeeze my hand at all, just let me hold it for a few seconds while he said how pleased he was to meet me. He was from Cliburn, Texas. I was from Dallas. I was 15. I weigh 110 lbs. I weigh 130 lbs. I weigh 180 lbs.

THE GOLD from the side of the Bible rubs off on my fingers. I rub my fingers under my nose, on my lip. It's buttercup dust and summer and Tommy Jackson loves me.

All at once the tops pop off the cider I'm letting ferment. The timer buzzes, the bread's done. The red flag on the box goes down. The chicks are crying, they want to be fed. The Bible sprouts wings, tries to escape but slams itself (its wings fall off) into the side of the plexiglass cage that drops down around me from the ceiling.

The outside begins to soften.

BARRY BOWES:

KITE

SHE PUT DOWN the *Observer* and looked around the room. It was *her* room; it had been for over four years. The furniture was cream, having been newly painted the week before she'd moved in. Mr Roach had said Mrs Roach had said a girl would appreciate cream. Even then, at 27, she'd wanted to be called a woman. Her face had suffered less than the paintwork. Although she got on well enough with the Roaches, she didn't like to mention the state of her furniture, in case they commented on her expectation of being there for some time to come. Tony Lessor would somehow be brought into the conversation.

Through the window she could see windows through which she could be seen pecking with her hand at a smudge of dirt on the curtain. She could wash it. Her hands appeared for one moment to be something alien, something through which an uncontrollable frenzy might take charge. There had been no frenzy since training college, when she'd been one of a dozen 'irresponsible students' in an Andover pub. The memory of falling into a rain barrel was still one of her most treasured possessions. To someone unable to enjoy anything, it was moments when she could recall having overcome embarrassment that became possessions. Where someone else might look at a photograph, a dress, a menu card.

Then I did a little bow, she thought. And everyone laughed.

She hadn't worn glasses then, or they might have fallen off and made her look ridiculous. They'd have laughed in a different manner. She put the glasses on her dresser, between a tin of body talc and a minute bottle of perfume she was scared to use. 'Real French,' her mother had said. The glasses stared stupidly ahead, having taken their place as one more macabre item in a room filled with things she didn't know how to use. In the wardrobe was an old dress that had been adjusted to end six inches above the knee; she would never wear it, not outside that room. A lifetime of not being able to cope with accessories. To someone unable to enjoy anything, it was little short of triumph when she just managed to avoid some humiliation.

'Like a latch,' she murmured. She was like a bolt that wouldn't fall from the latch. Never. Not once. It was no good getting into one of her negative moods; this was the one thing she could carry through with conviction. A Sunday afternoon wasn't the time to practise self-abuse. Nothing else to do. The paper? She picked it up and tried to pretend interest in an article on education. She might write a letter, have it printed next week; someone at school was sure to notice. Tony might look at her in a different light, instead of decrying her orthodox approach in that deceptively good-natured manner he had. 'There are no reasons,' he'd said. No reasons. She had to stop herself speaking, because the rain was there now, so light and . . .

No, she thought. Nothing to be gained by describing what was happening. Sometimes you followed something gentle and found yourself unnerved. Like being blown up with pollen.

It was stupid to think of Tony Lessor, even to think kindly of him as someone with much more natural talent than she; someone who might find himself in the same desperation. It might have been a streak of viciousness made her believe there was bewilderment behind the dismissive remarks he employed to cut back anger. Once she'd even spoken the name Noreen Lessor aloud, between pillow and sheet. Now this made her wince, as though she'd said it without realising, while drinking tea in the staff room, and heard chairs creaking. She closed the window, pretending to have been suddenly chilled. This at least was one step from real hurt, this game of pretending to be fooled by reasons that were patently false. There was some slight recompense in blunting the edge of self-abuse by managing to divide it between two people; the Noreen Polltoaster who was naive; and the Noreen Polltoaster who admitted the other Noreen Polltoaster was naive. To go on, to continue, to exist it was necessary to fragment yourself, and then to make sure that one part managed to assume a momentary advantage over the other parts.

This was too much to support with the window closed; she opened it and let cool air come against her waist Legs

too thick from calf to ankle; a nose just that fraction too small, making it appear to be hiding from the plainness of the face; a slight stoop, something that might have developed from leaning forward expectantly to gather understanding from children's faces. A sense of failure after every explanation. Maybe it was true she was too orthodox, taking conventional standards and hoping to refurnish them with an obvious belief in their necessity. It was all too easy for a teacher to become old without ever having been wrong. Young children could make you feel inadequate, yes, but there was always the thought they didn't realise this. There was always the knowledge they didn't challenge you as a whole person.

Representative. That was the word. She could represent what she knew. She was able to give to those who wanted to take what they didn't know, rather than wanting to tell what they did know. The relationship broke down where she was confronted by someone who seemed satisfied that what he did know was quite sufficient. A primary school suited her. The worst thing would be to find out her *willingness* was a sham.

The mood might have passed had she not glanced at the clock and seen a letter alongside it. Her mother had written to confirm they'd be going to Aunt Lily's for Easter, as they'd done every year since Mr Polltoaster had died. Uncle Jack would mention her twenty-five children, in deference to the fact Noreen was still a virgin. 'I can tell, woman. Just believe me. They walk different.' She'd overheard this while on her way downstairs to claim the radio for her bedside and somehow prove they were a different generation. What chance did you have, when your mother referred to your father as 'Mr Polltoaster'? There was no forgetting the night her father was locked out of the bedroom, how he swore for the first and last time in his life, how he had made breakfast for them the next day and never again took part in an argument. He seemed to be using meekness as a perpetual victory.

AT LEAST THE RAIN was heavier now; this provided some sense of movement. She was spared the sight of summer rain moistening summer dust, if not spared the memory. It was still winter; there'd be few people in the nearby park. Earlier in the afternoon she'd seen a kite and thought of the family on the other end. She'd ask the children what they'd done on Sunday, and they'd say nothing much. At least the rain was falling into rain that had fallen; the sky was darkening through a sky already gone beyond the constant noons of a Sunday. The dresser mirror reflected light and illuminated a hair that was sticking from a hairbrush. Tony had called one evening, to borrow some colour slides of Istanbul for a talk at a youth club. She hadn't dissuaded Mrs Roach from assuming this was her boyfriend, since it wasn't obvious he was 26, and it wasn't known she was older than she looked. Older than she could look. Already the glasses had begun to sheer off skin below the eyes and carve a niche at the bridge of her nose. A fossil print. She tipped the mirror, just enough to behead herself, and picked a hair from the brush, to let it drop into the dimness of the room. No sounds, no recriminations. Wrong again. She remembered the stupid embarrassment she'd felt when Tony had looked at her hairbrush. People just didn't like admitting things came out of their bodies.

Istanbul: it wasn't the kind of place you visited on your own, without a party, and knowing nothing of the language. She'd always found herself within shouting distance of another English voice; this was perhaps by instinct rather than design. Just once, undermined by the heat, and adjusted by now to the background babble of alien language, she'd wandered without looking for a familiar point on the skyline. Just once she'd felt that being raped would be no less than she deserved, no more. Less than she wanted, no more than she deserved.

But here, now, outside, this was England; there was rain on Sunday, in winter, and there were no kites in the sky.

'There are no kites,' she whispered. The room might at least have grumbled. 'Noreen' she said. Noreen said, 'Noreen.' The human voice was what counted; no room could be expected to react. 'Noreen Polltoaster.' It was crazy, she wanted to chant her name louder and louder and not stop until someone came to find out. The perfume bottle and a bottle of shampoo were joined together by shadow. Siamese twins, joined at the shoulder. If she'd been a twin, things might have been different. 'Only Brigid Brophy can save me now.'

Nothing had been meant, except perhaps to say something absurd enough to have no comeback. Noreen was smiling, feeling better than at any time since half-ten that morning, when she'd woken up thinking it was Monday. This was something: to feel better than you'd felt the first minute of waking. Some people asked for more. What could she ask for? The courage to go to school wearing no brassiere? To make the head look up just once from the *Guardian*. He'd called her Palltaster, Pooltoaster, Polt-aster. This was nothing really, since she'd called herself Tall-poster and Tall-toaster.

No one had ever sung to her, and she'd never sung to anyone. She'd never tried to utter musical sounds, meaning them for just one person, for just one person to hear her risk a charge of being off-key. As if this weren't enough condemnation, a vulgar laugh sounded from the next house. She suddenly recalled Tony saying he had more problems than a Jewish elephant. Any laughter could be vulgar if it caught you at the wrong moment. She went to the window, to close it silently, but next door's window closed with a thud and she changed her mind. Listened to the rain instead. All England was being washed clean; people were sheltering under bridges; just a few hundred yards from an Alfa Romeo, a young girl in glasses was trying on her sister's brassiere. It was because Susan Meckiff wore glasses she was always spoken to gently by her teacher. 'Please, Miss, can I be excused games, Miss?'

JAZZ MIGHT HAVE HELPED, had she liked jazz. She was too aware of the bass rhythm to feel comfortable; it had the effect of coming through suddenly, as reminder it was always there. 'Jazz on Sunday. Fish on Friday. No. Fish on Friday, jazz on Sunday . . . Come on, let's all . . . ' Just a few times, at training college, she'd been included in 'Let's all go . . . ' That time at Andover, when she'd had to

travel back with a cardigan over her knees and thighs, having discarded the wet skirt. And then there was that awful time she'd gone around school with one stocking rolling almost to the knee. Why had no one mentioned it? And then there was . . .

'God, if only my voice wasn't so hysterical.'

Nothing you could do about the sound of your voice. You could talk less, which she did, and you had to take care to cut your laughter before everyone else. 'Don't you think Noreen Polltoaster laughs like a giraffe?' In the privacy of a room, contending only with the privacy of herself, Noreen spoke like any other normal human being. It was the expectation in people's faces made her uneasy; the ways they had to conceal their excitement.

She thought of switching on the radio. Probably there'd be someone talking easily, confidently, telling someone else about something she used to do and doesn't do now.

A kibbutz might be the answer; she'd have to mix, become a member of some kind of society. She might meet someone who'd been persecuted, who'd realise through this there was no guarantee in physical beauty. Noreen Cohen. Noreen Finkelstein. He'd say: 'Do you think you can live down that name?' She'd reply: 'I've had enough practice.' And they'd laugh softly, they'd walk out onto a terrace and look at orange groves in a desert. These scenes she imagined, they came often but were soon gone. Surely

everyone carried such cameos of other lives they might step into, given the chance? Those women who brought their kids to school in the morning: those women still in slippers, and looking too old to have children that young. Did the men come home drunk and make love while thinking of the tart whose husband was in jail at that moment? She could actually believe they never took their hats off.

THE RAIN was soothing now, deeming it unnecessary for her to make any effort to speak. Noreen lay on the bed and watched the electricity meter whizzing around. Of all the stupid places, it was just above the bedhead; sometimes she'd lie there imagining this represented the world's silence. She could move her bed to a different position and start a new life. This thought produced a dejected grin, which in turn made her get up and go to the dresser. If she'd possessed false eyelashes she could have stuck them just above each nipple. People were allowed this, surely, allowed to go to such extremes in moments of desperation. There was only the perfume; this was reminder of her mother's first trip abroad. Three Yorkshire women giggling over a bidet: the thought filled Noreen with shame. And why did it have to be mentioned the other two were grandmothers?

Noreen turned off her electric fire, put on a coat and sat at the dresser. Just staring vacantly, for a long time, until she sensed a chill to the room. About this time the special Sunday treat would be served. *Down Your Way* would be on the radio, and the trifle would make its regal entrance. This was perhaps the only thing the three of them had shared. And Phyllis Steadman, Noreen's best friend, had said: 'Oh, we have trifle twice a week.' It even had sherry in it.

THERE WAS NO excitement as Noreen undressed; she did linger for a moment to run a hand across her stomach and watch herself in the mirror. The cold caused her to stoop, but even this made little difference to someone close on six foot. She put the coat back on, buttoning it to leave no part of her neck uncovered, then went out. Being completely naked under the coat, she had to keep her hands in pockets to prevent the indiscretion being noticed every time she put one foot in front of the other. With skirts so short there seemed little likelihood anyone would take undue interest. She remembered the time a man had stared at her all the way through a concert. He must have been six foot eight at least, and he'd kept turning his programme. Some obscure hint?

She hadn't come out with the idea of going to the park. The gates were shut, after all, and it was still raining; the grass would be wet. The thought of getting her ankles wet suddenly meant everything. There was a gap, she remembered, a gap in the fencing she'd already passed. It was necessary to make a detour and come back on the broken fence. It was less than five yards to trees, where she waited to make sure no one had seen her. Frightening to realise how dark everything could become without the comfort of street lights; she had to cross open ground to reach the protection of more bushes. Rain skittered amongst the evergreen. She recognised a leaf some child had brought proudly to school. Maybe the park keepers were still making their rounds?

She stood for a long time at the edge of an open space, a place where in summer there'd be crawling infants in white hats, fathers kicking plastic balls to their sons, who'd manage to propel them six inches and then rush forward ecstatically to kick them another six inches. It wasn't so dark now; there were lighted windows not a hundred yards away. She found it easier once she'd taken the first few steps, pausing once, then going on to stand out there under the rain and the sky. She lay flat on her back and opened the coat, drew it to either side of her body. The rain came gently against her tensed skin, producing in her stomach a feeling she could only call grief. Chaff blown against her.

At first she thought the sound must have been rain on the side of her head, even in the ear. Then it was more like the sound of someone running. She heard voices: two voices broken by her disturbing grass in an effort to hold her whole body rigid. The running sounds had stopped, and so had the whispering. She had both eyes shut tight, and despite all her efforts the rest of her felt more open than it had ever been before. As though she were scattered to a hundred different places.

'She's dead.'

'No she isn't.'

Good God, Noreen thought, if I keep my eyes closed they won't recognise me.

'Yes she is.'

She thought of springing up and laughing. Impossible to move. They'd get scared. But what if one stayed behind?

'Maybe she's fainted.'

She heard something between a gasp and a giggle, then there was the sound as before. They were running away, making for the trees. She'd opened her eyes to make sure it was two young boys, maybe twelve or thirteen, as the voices indicated. Still she couldn't move, in case they were watching from the trees. One might stay there while the other went for a policeman, but it was doubtful they'd be able to agree on which one it should be.

It had to be now, she decided. She'd run in the opposite direction, somehow get over the fencing. She scrambled to her feet and began running immediately, praying the shoes would stay on. The coat spread out; there was no desire to close it yet. It was a wall, not fencing, that had to be climbed, and the other side was someone's garden. She buttoned the coat and easily negotiated the wall. So there were some compensations in being so tall. Having come this far, it was not difficult to go through the side gate, along the wall of a house, out through the front gate.

ALL THE WAY BACK to her room it was as though she were in possession of a new body; this one was more confident. It belied the thought of two kids being scolded for playing a hoax; the thought of something in the newspapers tomorrow about a mystery corpse; the thought that these lads might have been ex-pupils of hers. How could they possibly identify her? No one, not even her own mother, had seen her from that angle, in that position, with a smile on her face.

CONSTRUCTION

giles gordon

ALL ANGLES AND EDGES but there are people on it. Now they are balancing on it without difficulty. With ease, you might say, except that they are not balancing. Not consciously, that is; not deliberately. They are standing. They stand as they would on the ground. As they do on the ground. When they are on the ground. *If* they are on the ground. That does not arise. They are usually on the ground. Their feet are on the ground more often than they are not. Even when they are up there. Have your next of kin been informed? a voice shouts up at them. You must be joking, one of them replies from fifty feet up. Admittedly it is good publicity for the architect. If there is an architect. It is unlikely that he would be behind such a stunt. Is it a stunt, is it publicity? Even if it is not it is good publicity. All publicity is good publicity, even if it is not publicity. All angles and edges but there are people on it.

AS FAR AS THEY are concerned the beams and girders and edges are ground. They more than act as ground, they are ground. A plane on which they operate. Planes on which they live, work out their lives. There are five of them. At least you see five. There may be others you don't see. There usually are. Not that you come here often. No, no . . . that must be a joke. Mustn't it? It is so confusing when you are not certain if something is intended as a joke. You look up again. You are certain there are five. Three women, two men. It seems braver of the women than the men to climb so high for your delight, for your delight. Or is that reaction merely a conventional untruth? Perhaps women are stouter hearted than men. In which case, it is braver of the men. Perhaps women are stouter hearted than men. Perhaps they are. Would you like to be up there? Would you? Are you a man? You're a voyeur, sir. You're prepared to read about them. to look at them. Are you prepared to climb to their heights? If so, why aren't you there now? Yes, yes, you will have your reasons.

THE STRUCTURE on which they stand may be described as follows. It is composed of a series of parallel vertical girders and parallel horizontal girders. The horizontal girders intersect the vertical girders at right angles. There are about five times as many horizontal girders as vertical ones. There is no denying, though, that the vertical girders are the thicker. Thickest. Thicker. The girders form the skeleton of the building. At present there is only the skeleton. They hardly make up the shell of the building. If you hadn't seen various other so-called buildings in similar states of construction or destruction, you might not have been able to guess or deduce that what was in front of you was a building in the making. When completed it will probably have fifty storeys and four lifts. Inevitably it will be an office block, as it is in the centre of the city. The five people on the angles and edges are now about one hundred and thirty feet up from the ground. Each time you look they seem to be higher up. Each time you look they are higher up. You never catch them moving upwards, only sideways. They must move too fast for you to see. Perhaps the foundations of the building are sinking. You wouldn't notice that, as the bottom girders are the same as the top, if you leave perspective out of account. Why should you let it intrude? It's illusory at the best of times, and these aren't they.

IT IS SUNDAY. Hence the lack of activity. During the week men are at work, constructing the construction, filling its teeth with dross, not gold. Each day that passes takes it, or should take it if you are looking, that little bit further forward towards being a finished building. Four walls, one roof, one floor. They can hope for that when they have finished. That shouldn't delude them. More than that might. They began work on it three years ago. They have not been working on it regularly since then. That data, three years ago—almost to the day, for those historically minded—was when the Duchess of ——— laid the foundation stone in the presence of the directors of the company whose building it was. Whose building it is. Whose building it will be. Whose building it would be. There were also present three pressmen. Two of them were from the same paper, one a reporter, the other a photographer.

THE DANGER of filling in backgrounds is that you run the risk of missing the present. Your heart misses a beat. Or leaps, leaps from one beat to the next, taking the shortest short cut and not the medically or divinely prescribed route. There, but for the grace of God knows who, nearly went he. One of the two men on the angles and edges ran along a girder and jumped a distance of about thirty inches (so it looked from down here; up there it may be far more; blame perspective again) into space. Between beams. Between ground and ground. He soared across space: that in which material bodies have extension. He seemed to reach his extension effortlessly, it must be said. He might have been on the ground now. He *might* have been. More of that later.

A ZOOM LENS shoots/shot up at him. To catch his motion. His action. His legs straddling the distance, his body swinging out, balancing like a pendulum. The photographer gestured up at him. Of course he wasn't looking down. He had other things to think about. Given that space he had the chance. He had other things to think about, hadn't he? Nevertheless he repeated his thirty inch step for the benefit of the camera. Cameras. Click click click. His action was caught/is caught on the photographic plate to try to prove it happened. Did it? Did it? *Did* a man really step over that distance all that way up, as if he were walking on . . . grass? Do you believe that? How gullible are you? The only way to know, to be certain, is to ask him, him up there. He won't tell you. Why should he? Why should men of action use words? Men of words don't use actions. Not when they should.

THERE WAS ONE reporter and three photographers when the building was consecrated. There is one reporter and one professional photographer here today. There are a number of amateur photographers. There is no chance of being more specific than that about the number as it fluctuates throughout the afternoon. They all take photographs as a hobby: a favourite pursuit followed as an amusement. An increasingly expensive occupation for the noveau gentilhomme. It allows him to contract out of participating in life, permits him to lie and distort it in print. So be it. But alas, two or three of them have more elaborate, certainly more expensive, cameras than the professional photographer. He can take it. He does his job conscientiously.

THE GAZERS all have heads tilted upwards. The sun is above the building, almost directly as if it's employed by the directors of the non-building. No doubt astronomers or astrologists or whoever they are that know about the sun would say it is million of light years away. Those here know better. It is immediately above the building, and shriekingly hot. It stabs down on sweating bodies. At a quick calculation there are three hundred people here. Some comparative figures for easy reference: half an hour ago there were approximately two hundred people, an hour ago seventy. But that was during the lunch hour, and not many people live around here. Two hours ago the site was empty. There was no sign of activity or imminent activity on the building. In another half hour there will be over a thousand people, but an hour after that there will be only a couple of policemen.

A PHOTOGRAPHER has appeared eight storeys up, on the girders. His position is about where the eighth storey will be. That remark is not meant to be more dogmatic than that. He sits astride a thin girder (thin in comparison with the thickest) and aims his viewfinder at the crowd. In his viewfinder little more is captured than tops of heads. Skulls. He draws out the telescopic lens, and shoots. Shoots again. Two dead photographs for posterity. Posterity will be interested. He will give them no choice. A voice calls up. The words reach him. Are you a gentleman of the press? He nods. Which press? the voice asks. Stop press, he replies, then starts to wiggle along the horizontal girder towards the nearest vertical so that he can spin down it to the ground as if he were clutching a fireman's greasy pole.

LOOK UP, into the sun. You don't look up at it but you see it. You try to avoid looking at it but it forces itself into your eyes. You looked up at one of the horizontal girders one hundred and fifty feet up on which stand a woman and a man. One of each sex with all the equality they could want. Now they walk, away from one another. Have they had enough of equality? Do they feel claustrophobic? You remember that a minute ago . . . no, five minutes ago, they were much lower. How did they get there, how did they get there? Perhaps Sir John Hunt's experience is relevant in this context. Sir John, you may be considered the doyen of British climbers. Why did you climb Everest? Because it was there. Thank you, Sir John.

THESE FIVE young people (two of them ex-participants in the Duke of ———'s Award Scheme) are climbing this building because it is not there/are not climbing this building because it is there. Are climbing/are not climbing. How high do they aspire, how high? Have they asked themselves that—do they need to? With a building that is not there there are no limits. Not even the sky. You reach it sooner than you expect, then swirl about in clouds looking for an exit. There are no notices on the top of this structure indicating that you may proceed no further. You may proceed as high as you wish, beyond the summit. There is a light which shines at night to indicate to passing aircraft that if they think they observe a light down there they are correct.

STILL LOOKING UP. All these random observations and comments spoil the effect of what you are trying to describe. Trying to classify. Trying to rationalise. Foolhardy youth? Is that your toast? You can't see their faces, not from this distance. They may not be as young as you might suppose. The sun has turned the five figures into silhouettes, though even the silhouettes are two dimensional like pastry men, after they have been burnt. Perhaps you have double vision—or are there ten of them? How did the other five get up there so quickly, or were they there all the time, on the other side of the structure, unseen from this position? It pays to walk round buildings like this and not remain in the same place for longer than a few minutes. One of the girls . . . no, you see another . . . two . . . wave their arms. They wave them in unison . . . slowly up . . . hold . . . slowly down. People wave back from below, from down under. Some of them turn and look at each other and smile. They have participated, they have taken part in one of the great events of our time, in one of the supreme acts of bravery or bravado. How bored their

grandchildren will be.

YOU CRINKLE YOUR EYES shut and drop your neck. It cricks into its normal upright position, vertical to the rest of your body. Your eyes flake away from your head and their sockets are filled with cascading fireworks. You open the lids and see through an orange filter sepia photographs of hundreds of people gazing up at the shell of a building on a hot Sunday afternoon in July. Has the building been burned down? There doesn't appear to be any smoke. Are those firemen on the top of it? They surely aren't wearing firemen's uniforms. Is there a building, are there people? Your eyes are sore and throbbing now. In addition you have a splitting headache. It splits you through the left eyeball, which is molten. You are only aware of voices and feet moving, and the heat.

THE TOPPING-UP CEREMONY will be carried out by the Duke of ——— four years from now. Yes, the building will be completed. Enough of it so that the visitors don't have to peer behind the hollow skirting board to see where all the shavings have been swept. There will be more than one reporter and three photographers present. Many more. The building will be famous then, or infamous, depending on your terms of reference. This Sunday afternoon has made it so/will make it so.

WILL YOU ACCEPT THAT statement without corroboration? Between friends? Or do you insist on evidence? You do? It would be wrong to put you in suspense, to expect you or wish you to chew your nails. To put you in such a position would be to render what is to come false, untruthful. It would be a trick of fiction, a gimmick. Though not entirely, not one hundred percent, it must be conceded, as people high up on a tight rope always throw those below into a state of uneasy uncertainty or a hot sweat. Whether artful or artless, deliberate or accidental, such a situation invariably causes breath to be held.

SO . . . THE FACTS without the build up, the drama. One girl two hundred feet up (they still kept getting higher) stripped herself naked to the crotch and showered her clothes down, one by one, to those below. One man lost his balance, whether deliberately or accidentally is unrevealed, and fell two hundred feet to his death. Those left alive descended quietly, and a kind policeman gave his cape to the naked girl. Her pubic parts were still public, as the cape reached only just below her navel.

THERE ARE PHOTOGRAPHS extant to show that these happenings occurred, or occurrences happened. Some photographs show the man's body spreadeagled and spattered on the concrete which forms the base of the building at present. These photographs do not present a pretty sight. They are neither better nor worse than the sight presented by the man's body. A number of women were sick when they saw it, or heard it hit the ground. No one has been reported sick looking at the photographs. But people aren't, are they? People aren't reported anything when they look at photographs. Nor are people sick when they look at photographs. There are photographs of the girl stripping off her clothes, of garments fluttering down to the good honest citizens below, of their vicious fights to retain a souvenir, and the nearer the souvenir was worn to the girl's body the more they liked it. There are photographs of the naked girl taken from one hundred feet up the building. Now who got up there? Not the professional photographer. He departed fifteen minutes before the excitement and high drama began.

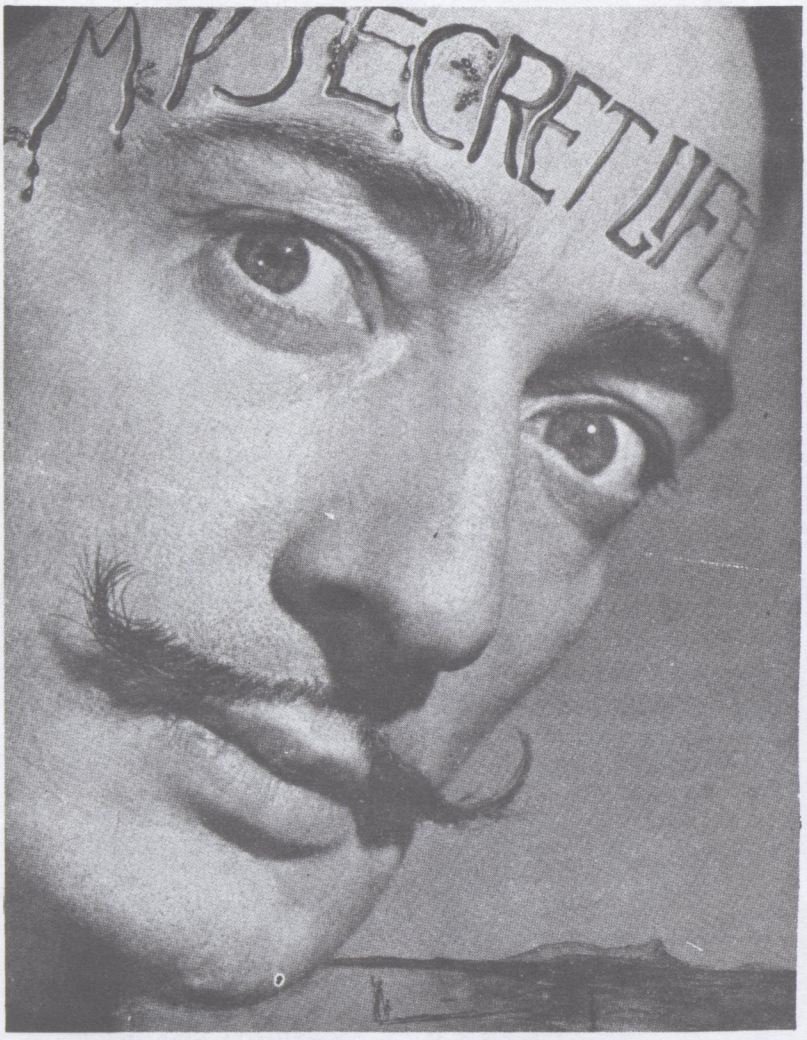
HERE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I am obliged to reveal myself. I dislike intensely interjecting a personal and subjective comment into what is, after all, intended to be a work of literature. What's that? What *is* a work of literature? Madam, thank you, thank you. I understand your feelings; you have the grace to try to understand mine. I have no alternative. I am concerned with truth, primarily and secondarily. Quite, we all are. So, I must tell you authoritatively—and my authority is that I was there, that I was present—that what I have just described to you did not happen. No, it did not happen. Neither the stripping nor the suicide. All right, death. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I did not mean to cause offence by saying that. It wasn't, I assure you, intentional. I grant you there are photographs. It would be foolish of me to deny what is a fact. But they are fakes, all fakes. They have all been conceived in the dark room, a very dark room. What has been described to you, even without the revolting detail normal to such description, is too horrid, too sensational to pass for truth. Too unnecessary, if you like. We all have good imaginations (they are not hard to come by), we have all read what is written above. So . . . we all now think it happened. Just because we have read about it, just because we have seen a few photographs. Well, we are all wrong, mercifully. It did not happen.

I WAS LUCKY enough to be allowed to interview four of the participants in the Sunday afternoon escapade, after it had happened. Our conversation went as follows:

Q: Where is your fifth member?
A: There is no fifth.
Q: But there were five of you?
A: No, you are mistaken. There were only four of us.
Q: Why are you, madam, wearing only a policeman's cape?
A: Because it is hot. I often dress like this on Sunday afternoons. I am an art student.
Q: Why did you climb that structure?
A: We climbed no structure. We were out for a walk. We often take a walk together on Sunday afternoons.
Q: Thank you.
A: Thank you.

I BELIEVE the answers of these four young people more readily than I do the tales and photographs that were smeared across every single newspaper in the country the following day. I believe that my eyes on this occasion played me false, that what I thought I saw I did not see. How often do our eyes play us false!

Salvador Dali: the innocent as paranoid



by J.G. Ballard

THE ART OF SALVADOR DALI is a metaphor that embraces the 20th century. Within his genius the marriage of reason and nightmare is celebrated across an altar smeared with excrement, in an order of service read from a textbook of psychopathology. Dali's paintings constitute a body of prophecy about ourselves unequalled in accuracy since Freud's 'Civilisation and its Discontents.' Voyeurism, self-disgust, biomorphic horror, the infantile basis of our dreams amd longings—these diseases of the psyche which Dali rightly diagnosed have now culminated in the most sinister casualty of the century: the death of affect.

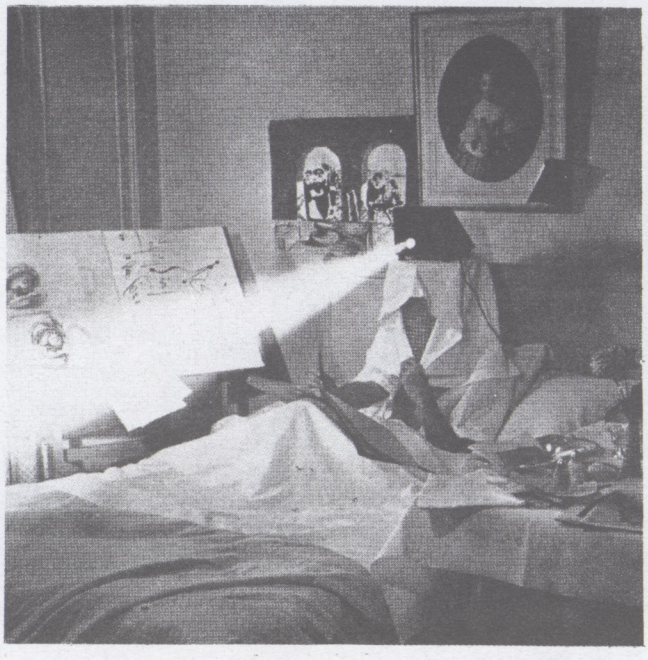
This demise of feeling and emotion has paved the way for all our most real and tender pleasures—in the excitements of pain and mutilation; in sex as the perfect arena, like a culture-bed of sterile pus, for all the veronicas of our own perversions; in our moral freedom to pursue our own psychopathology as a game; and in our ever-greater powers of abstraction—what our children have to fear is not the cars on the freeways of tomorrow but our

	Technique	Inspiration	Subject	Genius	Composition	Originality	Mystery	Authenticity	Imagination
H. G. Wells	8	10	18	17	10	15	5	15	18
Huxley	12	6	10	5	12	11	3	10	12
Orwell	12	10	9	10	12	12	10	17	15
Burroughs	20	20	20	20	19	20	20	20	20
Bradbury	15	12	10	8	5	18	12	13	15
Herman Kahn	7	15	19	12	15	16	2	0	15
Dali	19	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Pohl	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0
Asimov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Comparative table according to a Delinian Analysis (By J. G. B.)

own pleasure in calculating the most elegant parameters of their deaths.

Dali's paintings not only anticipate the psychic crisis that produced this glaucous paradise, but document the uneasy pleasures of living within it. The great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century—sex and paranoia—preside over his life, as over ours. With Max Ernst and William Burroughs he forms a trinity of the only living men of genius. However, where Ernst and Burroughs transmit their reports at midnight from the dark causeways of our own spinal columns, Dali has chosen to face all the chimeras of his mind in the full glare of noon. Again, unlike Ernst and Burroughs, whose reclusive personalities merge into the penumbra around them, Dali's identity remains entirely his own. Don Quixote in a silk lounge suit, he rides eccentrically across a viscous and overlit desert, protected by nothing more than his furious moustaches.



Hallucinatory mask invented by Dali during breakfast in bed at a New York hotel.

For most people, it goes without saying, Dali is far too much his own man. Although the pampered darling of jet-set aristocracy, many of whom, like Edward James and the Vicomte de Noialles, have done their intelligent best by him, forking out large amounts of cash when he most needed it, the general response to Dali is negative—thanks, firstly, to the international press, which has always encouraged his exhibitionist antics, and secondly, to the puritanical intelligentsia of Northern Europe and America, for whom Dali's subject matter, like the excrement he painted in 'The Lugubrious Game', reminds them far too

Mannequin rotting in a taxicab fitted by Dali with an interior rainfall and three hundred Burgundy snails.

The pileous history of Marxism

much of all the psychic capitulations of their childhoods.

Admittedly Dali's chosen public persona—part comic-opera barber, part mad muezzin on his phallic tower crying out a hymn of undigested gobbets of psycho-analysis and self-confession (just the kind of thing to upset those bowler-hatted literary customs clerks), part genius with all its even greater embarrassments—is not one that can be fitted into any handy category. Most people, even intelligent ones, are not notably inventive, and the effort of devising a wholly new category, and one at that to be occupied by only one tenant, demoralises them even before they have started.

At the same time it seems to me that the consistent failure, during the past thirty years, to grasp the immense importance of Dali's work has a significance that extends far beyond any feelings of distaste for his personal style. Painter, writer, engraver, illustrator, jeweller, personality—his polymath genius is on a par with Leonardo's. What mars it is not himself, but the cracks running across a million eyeballs.

Surrealism the main visual tradition of the 20th century; Science fiction the main literary tradition

Already one can see that science fiction, far from being an unimportant minor off-shoot, in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century, and certainly its oldest—a tradition of imaginative response to science and technology that runs in an intact line through Wells, Aldous Huxley, the writers of modern American science fiction, and such present day innovators as William Burroughs and Paolozzi.

The main 'fact' of the 20th century is the concept of the unlimited future. This predicate of science and technology enshrines the notion of a moratorium on the past, on the one hand, and on the other the limitless possibilities of even the most trivial situation. Above all, the 20th century is the first to realise the notion of the concept as a programmatic device, whether applied to the largest topics—space exploration, the neutralisation of emotion contained in what I have called 'the death of affect'—or in the most unimportant, such as the gesture of uncrossing one's legs, the geometry of a motor car fender, or what you will.

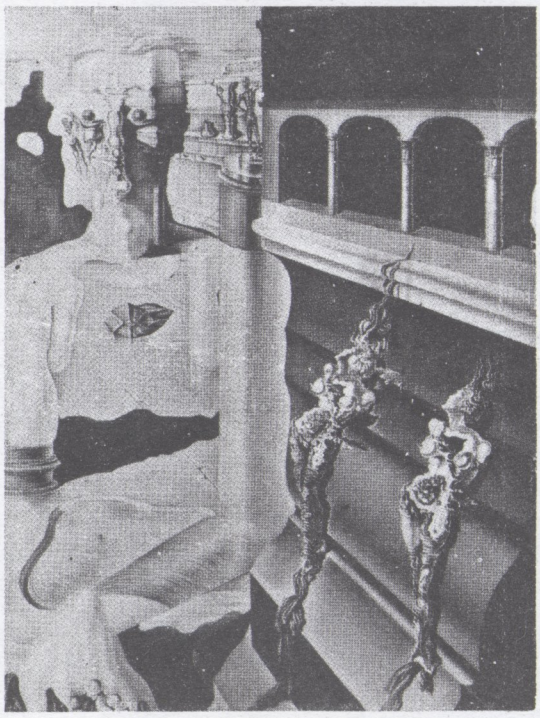
In the face of this immense continent of possibility, all literatures other than science fiction are doomed to irrelevance. None have the vocabulary of ideas and images to deal with the present, let alone the future. One of the conventions of the past thirty years has been that the so-called Modern Movement—i.e., the literary tradition running from Baudelaire and Rimbaud through Joyce and Eliot to Hemingway and Camus, to name a few landmarks—is the principal literary tradition of the 20th century. The dominant characteristic of this movement is its sense of individual isolation, its mood of introspection and alienation, a state of mind always assumed to be the hallmark of the 20th century consciousness.

Far from it. On the contrary, it seems to me that the Modern Movement belongs to the 19th century, a reaction against the monolithic Philistine character of Victorianism, against the tyranny of the paterfamilias, secure in his financial and sexual authority, and against the massive constraints of bourgeois society. In no way does the


The Dismal Spot (1932)

Modern Movement have any bearing on the facts of the 20th century, the first flight of the Wright brothers, the invention of the Pill, the social and sexual philosphy of the ejector seat. Apart from its marked retrospective bias, its obsession with the subjective nature of experience, its real subject matter is the rationalisation of guilt and

estrangement. Its elements are introspection, pessimism and sophistication. Yet if anything befits the 20th century



The Invisible Man (1930)

it is optimism, the iconography of mass-merchandising, and naivety.

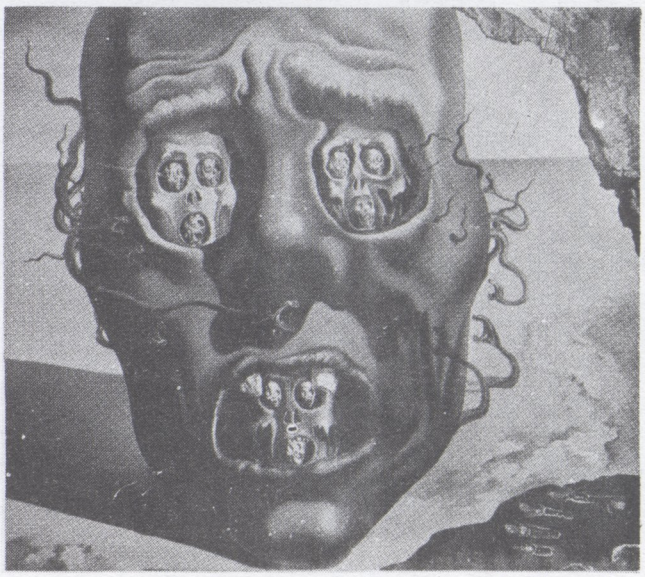
This long standing hostility to science fiction, and the inability to realise that the future provides a better key to the present than does the past, is reflected in a similar attitude to surrealism as a whole. Recently, as part of a general rejection and loss of interest in the past, both science fiction and surrealism have enjoyed a sudden vogue but Dali still remains excluded. He is popular as ever only with the rich—who presumably feel no puritan restraints about exploring the possibilities of their lives—and a few wayward spirits like myself.

Dali photographed in sleeping pose within the form of an egg, by F. Halsman

The Birth of Liquid Desires

Dali's background was conventional. Born in 1904, the second son of a well-to-do lawyer, he had a permissive childhood, which allowed him a number of quasi-incestuous involvements with governesses, art masters, old beggar women and the like. At art school he developed his precociously brilliant personality, and discovered psychoanalysis.

By this time, the late 1920s, surrealism was already a mature art. Chirico, Duchamp and Max Ernst were its elder statesmen. Dali, however, was the first to accept completely the logic of the Freudian age, to describe the extraordinary world of the 20th century psyche in terms of the commonplace vocabulary of everyday life—



The Face of War

telephones, wristwatches, fried eggs, cupboards, beaches. What distinguishes Dali's work, above everything else, is the hallucinatory naturalism of his renaissance style. For the most part the landscapes of Ernst, Tanguy or Magritte describe impossible or symbolic worlds—the events within them have 'occurred', but in a metaphoric or spinal sense. The events in Dali's paintings are not far from our ordinary reality.

This reflects Dali's total involvement in Freud's view of the unconscious as a narrative stage. Elements from the margins of one's mind—the gestures of minor domestic traffic, movements through doors, a glance across a balcony—become transformed into the materials of a bizarre and overlit drama. The Oedipal conflicts we have carried with us from childhood fuse with the polymorphic landscapes of the present to create a strange and ambiguous future—the contours of a woman's back, the significance of certain rectilinear forms, marry with our memories and desires. The roles of everything are switched. Christopher Columbus comes ashore, just having discovered a young woman's buttocks. A childhood governess still dominates the foreshore of one's life, windows let into her body as in the walls of one's nursery. Later, in the mature Dali, nuclear and fragmentary forms transcribe the postures of the Virgin, tachist explosions illuminate the cosmogony of the H-Bomb, the images of atomic physics are recruited

to represent a pietist icon of a Renaissance madonna.

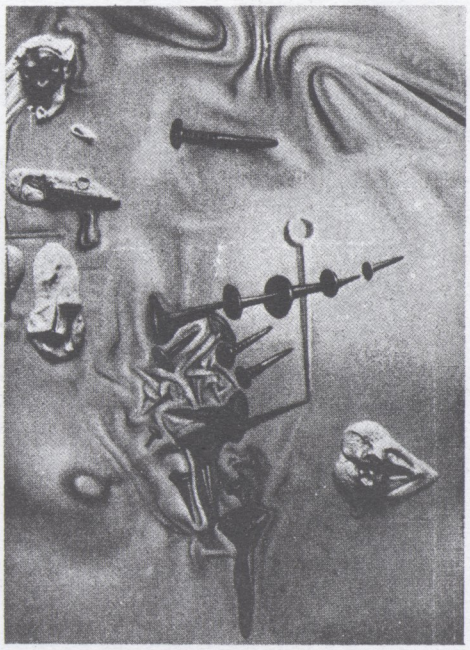
Given the extraordinary familiarity of Dali's paintings, it is surprising that so few people seem ever to have looked at them. If they remember them at all, it is in some kind of vague and uncomfortable way, which indicates that it is not only Oedipal and other symbols that frighten us, but any dislocation of our commonplace notions about reality. The latent significance of curvilinear as opposed

Madonna of Port Lligat: two virginal tabernacles fashioned in Gaela's body

to rectilinear forms, of soft as opposed to hard geometries, are topics that disturb us as much as any memory of a paternal ogre. Applying Freud's principle, we can see that reason safely rationalises reality for us. Dali pulls the fuses out of this comfortable system.

In addition, Dali's technique of photographic realism and the particular cinematic style he adopted involve the spectator too closely for his own comfort. Where Ernst, Magritte and Tanguy relied very much on a traditional narrative space, presenting the subject matter frontally and with a generalised time structure, Dali represents the events of his paintings as if each was a single frame from a movie.

Although he is now famous for his paintings of the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as 'The Persistence of Memory', at the time Dali was close to penury. Picasso, Braque and Matisse held a monopoly of the critics' attention; the great battle being fought then, older than any Uccello painted, was between a philistine public and the cubist painters. Faced with this position, Dali, assisted by his ruthless and ambitious wife Gala, set out to use that other developing popular art of the 20th century—publicity, then shunned by intellectuals and the preserve of newspapers, film companies and the like. Dali's originality lay in that he used the techniques of publicity for private purposes, to propound his own extremely private and conceptual ideas. Here he anticipated Warhol and a hundred other contemporary imitators.

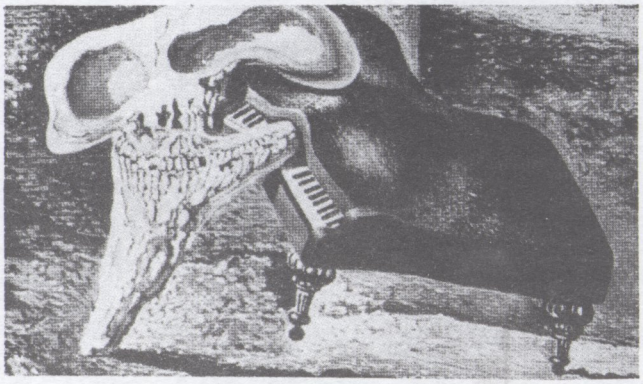


"My last metal cuneiform writing: Thirty-two years later I painted this new version, inserting the name of Garcia Lorca intertwined with that of Gaela, forming 'Galsia Larca'."

Applying himself to a thousand and one stunts, he soon achieved the success he needed. At the start of World War II he moved to America, and his autobiography (**The Secret Life of Salvador Dali**, Vision Press, £5 5s.) was written in the New England home of one of his first American patrons. Without doubt one of the great books of the century. **The Secret Life** was first published in England in 1948. Here Dali reveals his mastery as a writer. More than this, he invents a completely new alphabet, vocabulary and grammar of ideas, rich in psychoanalytic allusions but freighted also with an immense weight of

Dali describes Ingres' "The Turkish Bath" as a preeminent unconscious expression of the intra-uterine paradise

reference to geology, aesthetic theory, metaphysics, metabiology, Christian iconography, haute couture



Sodomy committed by a skull with a grand piano (1937)

mathematics, film criticism, heraldry, politics—melded together into a unique alloy. This new language, which few people seem willing to read, just as they refuse to look at his paintings, allowed him to enlarge verbally on his visual subject matter, and was formalised above all in his so-called paranoic-critical method, i.e., the systematic and rational interpretation of hallucinatory phenomena.

Some idea of the richness and seriousness of this language can be seen in the titles of Dali's paintings:

Gala and the Angelus of Millet immediately preceding the arrival of the conic anamorphosis.

Suburbs of the Paranoic-Critical town: Afternoon on the outskirts of European history.

The flesh of the decollete of my wife, clothed, outstripping light at full speed.

Velazquez painting the Infanta Margarita with the lights and shadows of his own glory.

The Chromosome of a highly-coloured fish's eye starting the harmonious disintegration of the Persistence of Memory.

Although apparently comic masterpieces at first sight, each of these titles, like dozens of others, exactly describes the subject matter of the painting. More than that, each illuminates its painting. To describe the landscapes of the 20th century, Dali uses its own techniques—its deliberate neuroticism, self-indulgence, its love of the glossy, lurid and bizzare. Behind these, however, is an eye as sharp as a surgeon's. Dali's work demonstrates that surrealism, far from being a gratuitous dislocation of one's perceptual processes, in fact represents the only reasonable technique for dealing with the subject matter of the century.

The Paintings

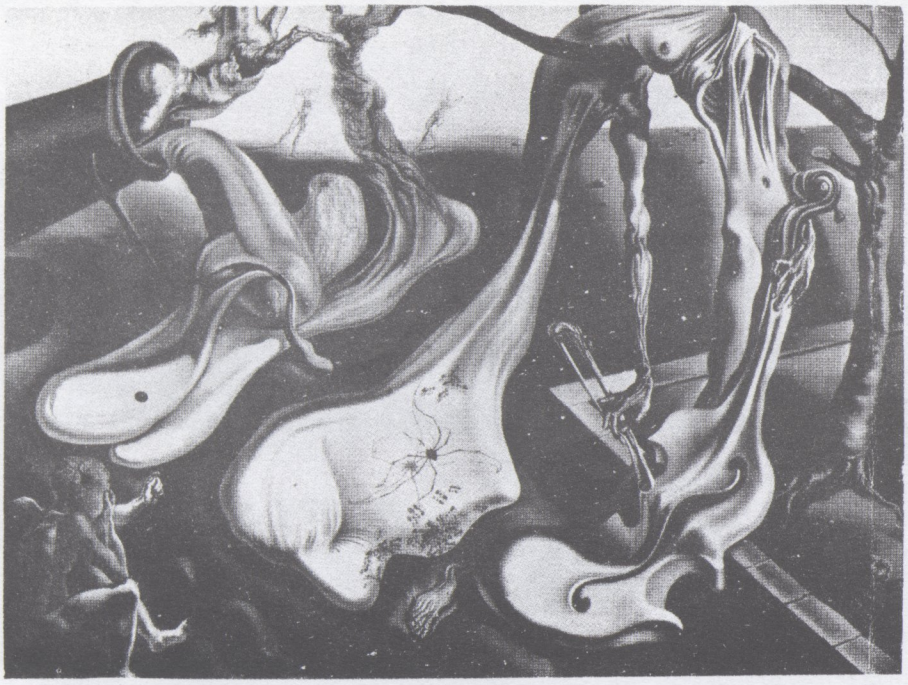
1 The classic Freudian phase. The trauma of birth, as in 'The Persistence of Memory', the irreconcilable melancholy of the exposed embryo. This world of fused beaches and overheated light is that perceived by the isolated child. The nervous surfaces are wounds on the cerebral cortex. The people who populate it, the Oedipal figures and marooned lovers, are those perceived through the glass of early childhood and adolesence. The obsessions are: excrement, the flaccid penis, anxiety, the timeless place, the threatening posture, the hallucinatory over-reality of tables and furniture, the geometry of rooms and stairways.

2 The metamorphic phase. A polyperverse period, a free-for-all of image and identity. From this period, during the late 1930s, come Dali's obsessions with Hitler (the milky breasts of the Fuhrer compressed by his leather belt) and Lenin's buttocks, elongated like an immense sexual salami. Also most of the nightmare paintings, such as 'The Horrors of War', which anticipates not only Hiroshima and the death camps, but the metamorphic horrors of heart surgery and organ transplants, the interchangability and dissolving identities of our own organs.

3 The Renaissance phase. Dali's penchant for a wiped academic style, Leonardoesque skies and grottoes, comes through strongly during the 1940s and 1950s in paintings such as his 'Hypercubic Christ.' These images of madonnas and martyred Christs, quantified by a formal geometry, represent a pagan phase in Dali's art.

4 The Cosmogonic-religious phase. In the fifties Dali embarked on a series of explicitly religious paintings (most

Apparition of Velasquez' Infanta in the summit of a piece of Hindu architecture



Soft Violoncello, Spirer, Great Masturbator, etc.

of them apparently on secular topics), such as those using the central figure of Christopher Columbus. Here the iconography of nuclear physics is used to invest his religious heroes with the unseen powers of the universe.

5 The phase of Analytic Geometry. The masterworks of this period, among the greatest in Dali's art, are the famous 'Young Virgin auto-sodomised by her own chastity', and 'Goddess leaning on her elbow.' Here the quantification of time and space is applied to the mysterious geometry of our own morphology and musculature.

6 Nuclear phase. Dali's marriage with the age of physics. Many of his most serene paintings, such as 'Raphaelesque Head Expolding', date from this recent period.

Notwithstanding the immense richness and vitality of this work, Dali still invites little more than hostility and derision. All too dearly one can see that polyperverse and polymorphic elements, acceptable within say automobile styling, are not acceptable when they explicitly refer to the basic props and perspectives of our consciousness.

Dali the Naive

At the same time other factors explain this hostility, above all the notion of the naive. Too often, when we think of the naive, we shed a sentimental tear for the Douanier Rousseau or the Facteur Cheval (the eccentric country postman who built with his own hands a dream palace in pebbles and cement that rivals Ankor). Both these men, naives of genius, for the most part lonely, ignored and derided during their lifetimes, fit conveniently into our idea of the naive—amiable simpletons with egg on their ties. We can reassure ourselves that Jarry, Apollinaire and Picasso laughed at Rousseau, and admit that we too might laugh faced with so bizarre a departure from the accepted norm.

What we fail to realise is that science fiction, like surrealism, provides just this departure, and is an example of an art of the naive in mid-20th century terms. None of us have egg on our ties (more likely crepe suzette, given Playboy prices), nor are we particularly amiable, but like Dali we may well be simpletons. I regard Dali, like Wells and the writers of modern science fiction, as true naives, i.e. those taking imagination and reality at their face value, never at all sure, or for that matter concerned, which is which. In the same category I place many other notable originators, such as William Burroughs—certainly a naive, with his weird delusions, possibly correct, that Time Magazine is out to subvert our minds and language— and Andy Warhol, a faun-like naive of the media landscape, using the basic techniques of 20th century mass communications, cinema and colour reproduction processes, for his own innocent and child-like amusement, the invention of conceptual games that delight the child in all of us.

Dali is a good example of the sophisticated naive, with an immense vocabulary of ideas and imagery, taking the facts' of psychoanalysis at their face value and applying them like a Sunday painter to the materials of 20th century life—our psychopathology, our electric gardens, our switchboards of emotion and orgasm. Rousseau's enchanted botanical forests have been replaced by flyovers and production lines, but Dali's paintings still remain a valid image of the interior landscape of our minds.

That other naive, Henri Rousseau, a minor customs official, died alone and in poverty in 1910. His friends who had laughed at him then realised his true worth. Two years later he was re-buried in a decent grave. The great sculptor, Brancusi, became a simple engraver and enscribed on the tomb an epitaph written by Apollinaire:

Dear Rousseau, can you hear us?
. . . . let our luggage pass through the doors of heaven
Without paying duty . . . .

Let us hope that on Dali's death a suitable epitaph is written to celebrate this unique and undervalued genius, who has counted for the first time the multiplication tables of obsession, psychopathology and possibility.

THE SPECTRUM

D. M. THOMAS

(after The XI Effect, a story by Philip Latham)

So engrossed, that night, three after Christmas,
The explosion of our mixed elements
Crystallizing to twin nicotine—
Novae that faded the winter-triangle
Beyond the frosty perspex—

We scarcely noticed the news, over the car radio,
That our galaxy was collapsing, contracting
After aeons of expansion;
Violent violet-shifts
In all the world's high altitude spectrographs.

And we must have missed the dramatic headlines
The next morning.
We seemed to spend that whole winter
Blinding the cat's-eyes, on our closed system,
In a thousand gullies and layby's leaving
The fading nebulas of secret cataclysms.
We avoided headlights, people, headlines.

What did we care when an announcement
That the occulatation of Jupiter 1
Had occurred thirty minutes ahead of time
Interrupted the midnight record spin?

What did we care, one night in March,
That the radio cut out
In the midst of a Scarlatti sonata?
We followed the eclipse
Station by station, down the short wave band.

I said, "Strange, that that first star
Pressing through the dusk is a millimetre away;
The light takes no time to come. It does not matter.
Your eyes still keep their closeness and their farness,
And this via lactea here, your breasts."
We touched the world through oily palms
Of mute petrol salesmen, in forest-garages.

But on Friday, the scarlet lipstick you produced
As you prepared to leave me
Turned black on your lips;

On Saturday, your skirt was no longer orange;

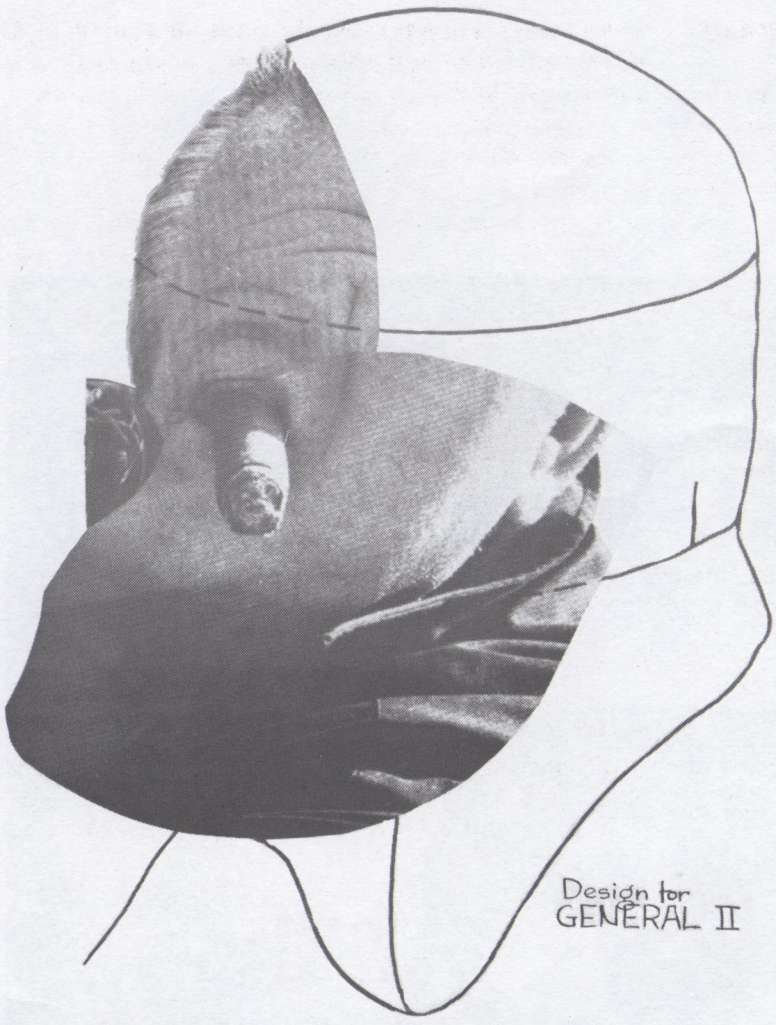
On Sunday, the moon was blue;

On Monday, we crossed a city
Where contrite hymnsinging
Shook the stadium:
We could not tell
Whether the streetlights said *Go:*
Till we reached the no-speedlimit sign
Tears did not cease to run
Your eye shadow not green but ash;

Tuesday, the sky was grey, with a black sun;

And today, at noon, there is no colour anywhere
Except in the purple of your suspenderbelt
Arched glowing around a tuft of darker shadow,
But fading slowly.
We must be approaching the moment
When even a cosmic wave will exceed
This car, these surrounding dimming trees, this galaxy
The headlights pour out their ebony beams.
I switch off. A breeze strums the aerial.
We wait.

THE MASTER PLAN



BY JOHN T. SLADEK

SH (Yes, that was a kind of command: QUIET–HOSPITAL ZONE. The General's dry eyes flicker, and he lets them close against the fluorescent whiteness.

He stands naked in the corridor, swaying slightly. When he opens his eyes he sees that the light has robbed him of his shadow. A little more gloom, he complains reasonably. And some eerie Muzak, please. *(Miss R. B. Glaski and Miss T. N. Nye were his two day nurses. The punning part of his backbrain relabelled them Miss Glass and Miss Nylon, and then went on to further barbarisms: Intern Al Hemorrhage, etc. Only the surgeon, Dr. Godden, seemed to escape.*

One night the General awoke with a high fever (The subject was born in Avalon, Iowa, in 1925, and there lived with both parents (and an older sister) until 1944, when drafted into the Army Air Force. The subject married Miss Ruth Matthias in 1946. Their only child, a boy, died at birth two years later.

Attended the following schools: University of Minnesota (USAFROTC), 1946-50: B.S. (Math.) Fort Buechner Flight School, Amis, Texas, 1951-2. The War College Annexe, Port Smith, Virginia: M.S., Ph.D. The Air Defense Academy, Casper, Wyoming, 1958-9. L'Ecole Superiéure de la Science Militaire, Antwerp, 1966.

The subject is an Associate Fellow of the Potomac Institute for Advanced Studies, Washington, D.C. (It may seem presumptuous to call the Master Plan both beautifully simple and elegant, but such is done in the certain knowledge that it is the only means of carrying on wars of any kind whatever; that it will supersede everything from the meanest counterinsurgency campaign to the most ambitious and brilliant global showdown. The Plan is a complete, self-contained system of programming which does not admit of lesser plans. Strategy and tactics are drawn into its circle of radiance and there transmuted. *(In his room with the door shut, and The Lone Ranger turned up loud. Even then, he could hear Dad shouting at her. She'd be better off dead than coming to him like this. He'd rather kill any daughter of his who came home in trouble. The razor blade slipped through the sheet of balsa and into his finger and right out again.(ITEM* DESCRIPTION: **(He was late to work at the hybrid seed corn plant, so now he had to drive through the late-maze that must be insoluble. "They're making a movie of my life," he explained to the doctor. "It must be in the next room, but I think it's too late to see it." "On TV," the doctor said, motioning him to the second butcher's block. On the first lay an oddly familiar figure, split open. It lay face down, like someone making love. The cleaver)** *Blood the color of dirty brick fell to the razor-nicked edge of the table. "Hi-yo, Silver!")* The subject was a jet ace twice in Korea, and was awarded the DFC in 1953. Later that year, the subject suffered a nervous collapse, and was retired from flight duty.) *conscious of a presence by the bed. Ruth? Out of the question–the night*

nurse, maybe. He did not roll over to look, but held himself rigid. After awhile, he slept again. Dreamlessly.

The next morning Captain Savage made the first of his many little visits. He was not only attached to the General's staff, he was for the moment the entire staff, his only link with the Pentagon. The two set about preparing the General's monograph on the Master Plan.

Captain Savage was a fussy, pedantic little clerk, complete to the pair of silver-rimmed glasses gripping his nose like calipers. His sharp face grew animated when he was talking of numbers, and his hands—when they were not making a priestly gesture, fingertips together—were forever busy counting and naming things.

His briefcase contained only a silver writing instrument, a blank note pad, and the scrambler tape recorder.

(In October, 1960, Ruth née Matthias filed for divorce from her husband on the grounds of mental cruelty. A month later, she dropped this suit. In December, 1960, she committed suicide by barbiturates. Her note is reproduced in full:

> This is it, big ace. Cram your Air Force. I've had it. I know you'll be happy to be rid of me, so you can marry Helen. At least this is one way I'll get away from the Air Force. Kiss me goodbye, dear. Be good. You've never loved me for a minute, or anything else but your magic squares or whatever they are. I want you to enjoy yourself, your last few years, with Helen. By the way ace, the doctor phoned. He says he thinks you've got cancer.

The note was pronounced genuine, after computer analysis by the Schneidman system, having the following characteristics:

1. Specific information.
2. Names of people, places, concrete things.*
3. Frequent mention of a man.
4. Gave instructions to others that were concrete enough to be carried out.
5. Fewer percentage of THINK words.
6. Greater percentage of actions by a man upon the writer.
7. Mention of the word "love".

*Although the name "Helen" does not seem to refer to a real person.

The following year, the subject underwent successful surgery for removal of a benign brain tumor. In 1966, a second tumor was removed from the colon. Within a few months, a malignancy was discovered in the region of the thyroid gland. The presence of a second growth in the brain was suspected, and in 1968 the subject entered Atwater Clinic for observation.

(THE BURAC 8800 SERIES COMPUTERS. This series, having been found useful for previous contingency theory operations, was selected for the Master Plan. Special, more highly flexible programming procedures were devised. To illustrate:

THE CHASE. Define a classic chase or hunt situation in which hunter A moves across the streets of a city in a car. He may make only right-angle turns, only at proper corners, and moves n blocks per second. The hunted, B, may move in any direction, not only keeping to the streets, but at a slower rate n−m blocks per second. At time t=O, B makes his presence known to A at some point (x_{OB}, y_{OB}), while A is at some other point (x_{OA}, y_{OA}). A is blind to B's movements, if any, after this time. The classic problem is to catch B in the shortest possible time. Assuming B's path to be completely random, this is a simple time series problem, and a solution is possible.

But suppose B able to transport himself instantaneously from any point to any other. Suppose he is able to disappear entirely for any finite duration. Suppose that he is able to move in three dimensions, or some higher number. Classical analysis is unable to deal with these processes. But the Master Plan may deal with these and many other contingencies, including the unlikely possibility that B becomes A himself (hiding by identity)!

(He kept a diary, marking certain days with asterisks. In the summer he went detasseling, and the slippery sex organs of the male hybrid seed corn cut into his hands. The older boys smoked corn silk rolled up in newspaper. They asked him if he knew what a blanket party without a blanket was called. Peace on earth was the answer, and when he failed to laugh, they turned away, disgusted by his ignorance.

(ITEM DESCRIPTION:

1. WOMAN, Human, self-propelled, four-limbed, objective, interesting, sexually

2. not applicable

3. n/a

(movie, in some other language, showed the three-year-old General tossing a stick into Fox Lake for Blackie to retrieve. The General wore his striped coveralls with the red rubber buttons he dared not touch. Blackie swam out and never came back.

"Something," something said, "has been let out of the cataloged ode ran:" and showed him the neat ranks of code letters.

AA=T	**BA=M**	**CA=W**	**DA=P**
AB=H	**BB=Y**	**CB=O**	**DB=D**
AC=I	**BC=E**	**CC=A**	**DC=.**
AD=S	**BD=N**	**CD=L**	**DD=/**

AAABACADDDACADDDBABBDDBCBDBCBA
BBDDACBDDDCAABCBBADDACDDCCBADD
CABCCDCDDDDACDBCCCADBCDBDDDC

He solved it without the key, but it was late, for work. The sound of the grindstone sharpening the cleaver, became the drone of medium bombers coming in over the lake.)

The last day of detasseling season he fought one of the biggest boys and won, although his cut lip developed a lump that lasted far into the winter—long after his blue jeans stopped smelling of sweat and pollen.

When the war began, the town put up a Roll of Honor on Courthouse Square. For a time, the sign painter had to come every day, ruling it with his blue chalk line and sketching in the names of the dead.)

The contingencies involved in a single battle plan are of course staggering. If each of two opposing generals has merely fifteen decisions to make, each decision comprising two choices, the number of possible battles is over a billion.

To investigate all of them would take some time. And even the simplest bush action requires hundreds of quick decisions, inter-related in obscure ways, and multivalent.)

The third week, he asked Savage how the scrambler tape recorder worked.

"It's sealed, you see." The captain named one finger. "Any attempt to open it will set off a charge which vaporizes its thin-film components." He moved to the second finger.

"Part of it generates a signal of unknown shape which is mixed with your speech and the resultant signal recorded."

On the Masonic signet finger, he said, "The REWIND button operates a destruct mechanism. There can be no rewinding or erasing."

Pinky. "To prevent the accumulation of a large amount of material and solution of the signal, the signal shape is changed with each new tape cartridge. This button does it."

"How's your sex life?"

"Sir?"

"Let's get on with it." The machine went on. "To begin with, let me repeat what I said at the start: It is not enough *for a plan to cover all contingencies. It must* also *be the simplest possible solution, and it must be beautiful–elegant, if you like. It must have the beauty of a dream: utterly strange, but* THE RIGHT PLACE. *When I see a good plan, something tells me* I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE."

Beaming Dr. Godden came in to draw some more blood. He sat on the edge of the bed, smoothing the skirts of his white coat. Flashing a penlight in the General's eyes, he asked him how we were feeling this morning. The General did not reply.

Abruptly the doctor put away the toy and forced his face from its molded smile for a moment. "We have the biopsy report on you, General. I'm afraid it's positively malignant. We'd like to try a little exploratory surgery, but of course I'm afraid there's nothing–in cases like these, one can't hold out too much–"

"Don't get so broken up about it, Doctor. You must handle a dozen or so terminal cancer patients a year, yeah? So let's not piss our britches over one more or less." The General showed his teeth.

"I'm glad you're resigned. However–"

"I'm far from resigned. I'm scared to hell, but there isn't anything I can do now but die. Except for my work."

"Your work?"

"I want to have enough time to finish this monograph. As long as I'm sane enough, logical enough, I want to go on with it. So no pain-killers. I don't want anything dulling my brain or shortening my life by a single minute, hear?"

The doctor rose, smiling assent, but behind that smile was another, which said: "You poor son of a bitch, you think you can get along without it, do you? A week or two from now, you're going to be begging for the needle, just like everyone else. And I, healer, physician, Christlike friend, will of course hear your plea. I may even 'help you across', if you ask me nice . . . we often get such requests . ."

"Where was I?" he asked Savage.

". . . the beauty of a dream, General."

(hoped the faceless code-clerk would not turn around. His androgynous father/mother helped him into the rear of the plane, where pretty Miss Glass was already treating the burned child. The medics joking and loitering around the door were drunk. "Peace on earth, get it? Don't you get it?" Miss Glass began peeling away the bandage roughly. The child screamed. The men began singing "When the Khe San Goes Rolling Along," then "Unter-der-Lyndon". He could see pieces of the burned flesh coming away in the bandage. The singing drowned the screams. One of the medics staggered over and offered the molten face a Hershey bar.)

"Gentlemen, before we get into the work, I'm reminded of a story–a geographic story, naturally." The class had permission to laugh with the colonel. "They say a woman at different ages is like the seven continents"–he thought of Miranda the changeable, kissing him goodbye at the train. He'd wondered how they looked to others, and peered around, but no one was watching them. Off We Go, Into The Wild Blue Yonder, the band played. A frantic, drunken soldier lurched to the train window and vomited into the bell of the tuba. Miranda promised to write, but never did–"then she is like North America: fully explored and free with her resources.") Plan must do exactly what a good general himself does:

1. Collect intelligence.
2. Outline a tentative plan of action, with reasonably accessible alternatives.
3. Feed in data from past personal and historical experiences.
4. Compute probable success of each operation.
5. Re-cast the original plan in terms of maximizing success.
6. Feed in newer intelligence, and reassess.
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 as often as needed.

To do all this, it has been necessary to equip the computer with immense amounts of historical and personal "experience." It is particularly important to clarify the vague notions of historians, and to break down the "hunches" of line officers into analytical operations.

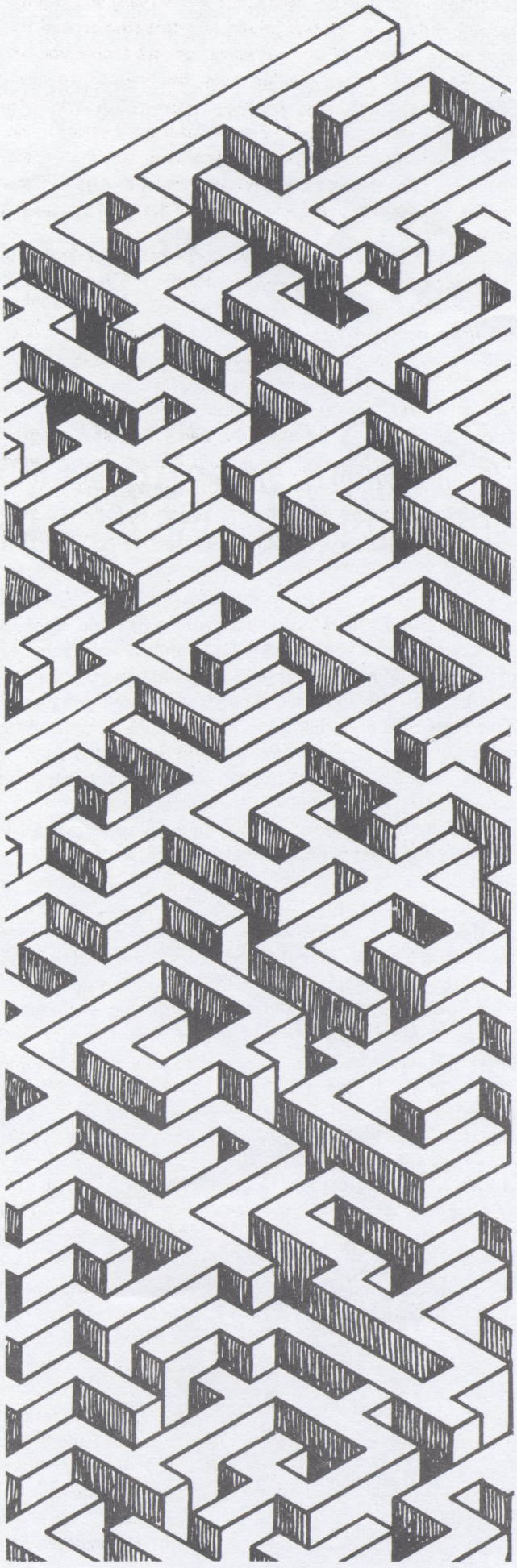
But there remained a further step: developing the scope and predictive ability of the Master Plan, by postulating novel situations and strategies to meet them.)

Psychologically, the subject seems relatively stable and integrated. The TAT shows a high ratio of paranoid fears and compulsive-obsessive enumeration to other characteristics. The MMPI profile showed paranoia more than two standard deviations above the norm, but the lie scale was too excessive to permit significant results. The subject has an I.Q. within the 170-200 range, with 70% certainty.)

"My own life is in a way an example of failure to consider contingencies," he said. Savage leaned forward, ferret-eager. "I begin to have bloody thoughts. My marriage has failed, and now my health. It would be pleasant, very pleasant, to blame all this on The Enemy. But ultimately, the responsibility is mine. *If I could not avert these catastrophes, I could at least have prepared for them."*

"You have an encyclopedic mind, General."

"It isn't enough to be encyclopedic." He breathed hard



from pain. "An encyclopedia is a miz-maze–I mean a mish-mash–of loose facts and opinions. A man must order his world completely. That's what life's all about."

Life *was a magazine Miss Nylon read, or pretended to* read, *near the window on rainy days. She was just out of nursing school, and obviously getting over an unhappy affair. Who else could sigh over* Life's *pretty pages?*

Watching her tight little ass, the General considered offering her what he would call depth therapy. He decided against it for two reasons: (a) it would upset her small, unstable ethical system to board this sinking hulk; she would feel guilty when he was gone. (b) anything that could shorten his pain-shot life by even a second was foolish now, with the end of his work in sight.

He contented himself with the kind of Hollywood-battle-wound-ward flirtation he knew Miss N. could accommodate:

HE: (pinches her buttock)
SHE: (slaps his hand) You old goat, you!
HE: (touches her leg at hemline)
SHE: (slaps his hand) Naughty little boy!
HE: But you're so sexy!
SHE: And you *are just plain oversexed!*
HE: If I were thirty years younger, etc. etc.

The pain dreams intruded often now **(His opposite number was General X, a fat Chinese sitting incredibly heavily on his chest. "They are showing a chest x-ray of you in the other room," he said. From under the tightly-closed door to the other room came a sudden gush of dark blood. "My eyes!")** *)))) and the occasional dullness of his mind was additional pain.)*

The two frightened nurses face him, uncertain whether or not to block his path. The boyish intern crouches near them in a fighter's stance. The figure on the floor is Dr. Godden. The instrument in the naked General's hand is a surgical knife.

"This is my body," he wants to gargle at them. "I know none of you *believes* in the body. And how could you, hacking away at it day after bloody day?

"I say to you, I am your Frankenstein. You put me together in England, and on the surface the parts matched perfectly. But inside there was an ugly twist, an interface of artist's hand and murderer's wrist. Do you appreciate that these medical experiments cannot go on any longer? These Jewish women, kashered by the tens of thousands on your hospitassembly lines–*verstehen Sie? (The headaches and backaches were horribly constant. He became suddenly jaundiced and went on baby foods ("Between forty and fifty, she is like Asia: Worn-out but exotic. And finally, after fifty, she is like Australia: Everybody knows it's down there, but nobody gives a damn.")*

Interviewed, the subject demonstrated lack of affect regarding the death of Ruth ("She got what she wanted, I guess." "The marriage was a mistake. I'm sorry I made it, as I always am when I figure things out badly."). Was reticent about father ("anal-sadistic, I guess you'd jargon him. I'll say no more.") and mother ("a non-entity. I'm interested in entities."), and under the strong delusion that a great discovery of some sort was imminent.)

If the following example appears vaguely worded and

incomprehensible, it is merely to demonstrate the kind of problem the Master Plan is now learning to deal with. The author of this monograph apologizes, but prefers to skip over less interesting examples and come to grips with an essential one: The nature of The Enemy.

The Enemy is no one is someone; is everyone. The Enemy is nowhere; somewhere; everywhere. He is without: within. The Enemy is myself.

These comprise a working vocabulary of statements the truth of which can be tested against various hypotheses. One may construct a hypothetical story, such as the following:

"I, Brig. Gen. Bernard Parks, USAF, know that I have an opposite number in some unspecified Asian nation, whom I temporarily designate The Enemy. He knows everything about the Master Plan, as indeed I know everything about his similar work. We know that we know, and so forth.

"He is faceless to me, this General X, but I do know that his thoughts, plans, aspirations are much on the order of my own. He knows little of my movements, nor I of his, yet we can make necessary assumptions about one another which turn out to be correct. If they were not, our faulty logic would one day become explicit on the battlefield.

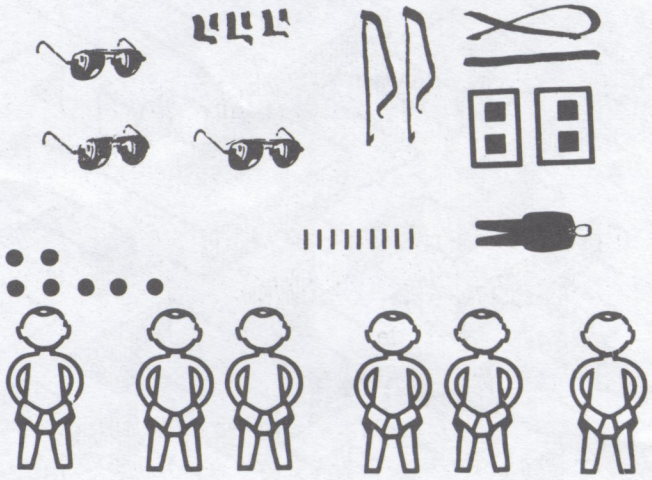
"Now I wish to subsume his thinking into the Master Plan. To do so, I must affect his system, drawing his soul into a snare while maintaining the integrity of my own soul. The fact our nations are at a stalemate underscores our equivalence; he is equally interested in entrapping my soul, or system. We make our secret plans and attack.)

"I am not a monster, forgive me, only a lesser card. The face cards you know only too well: the Communist bosses of Wall Street and Washington, the Fascist pigs of Moscow and Peking. I am a friend. I wanted only to live my life, solve my little calculus of war, and die. A decent burial with a free flag from the Veteran's Administration, that's all I wanted.

"Excuse me, I am of course terrifying: the face of death in the halls of *Life.* You are here to preserve my skin; I am here to take yours. Fair enough?

"Forgive me for being obscene pig. I have not the garment your race require for decent civilized discourse. Ignorant bastard, me. Have not even Jesus-boy laplap. Sorry, boss.

"Gentlemen, my work is *crucial* to the war effort. It is absolutely essential that I be left undisturbed, *not bled*



daily, and so forth. I would like to see my aide, Captain Savage, as soon as he comes in. I am our only real guarantee of liberty—I do not exaggerate. I would like the bombing to stop between ten and twenty hundred hours, if you please. And for God's sake, take that burned child away to some other ward!"

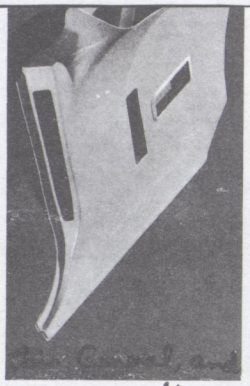
The nurses are frozen, like the men in his dream. The throat of Dr. Godden smiles at them from the floor.

"And the toilets are a disgrace. In conclusion, may I say that this has been a most successful year, fellows. I really mean it. The Enemy is everywhere, in our food and air, up our rectums and down our throats. But we have every confidence of an early victory. If we have to poison our food, burn our air, and flush our guts, I can promise you one thing—The Enema is finished! We will mop up his cells wherever we find them, and you have my word—the boys will be home for Christmas!" *(and standard purées. The only enjoyment left him at mealtime now was imagining the dietician ladling goop from tiny jars whose labels exhibited pretty babies. His hair began falling faster now, and there were sudden blinding headaches and spells of high fever. He was enveloped by a very ancient and fish-like smell which reminded him, when he happened to notice it, of woman.*

(4. *J: an attractive first piece*
   - *a. on earth*
   - *b. in winter*
   - *c. female dominant position*
   - *d. conclusions*
     - *(1) lazy and reluctantly responsive*
     - *(2) engages only to be sociable*

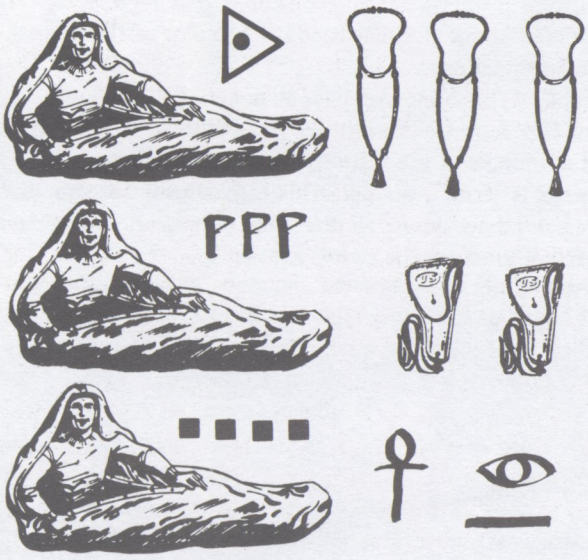
5. *J: a nice tight second*
   - *a. darkly tanned*
   - *b. athletic socks*
   - *c. boring*

6. *one night stand*
7. *not applicable*



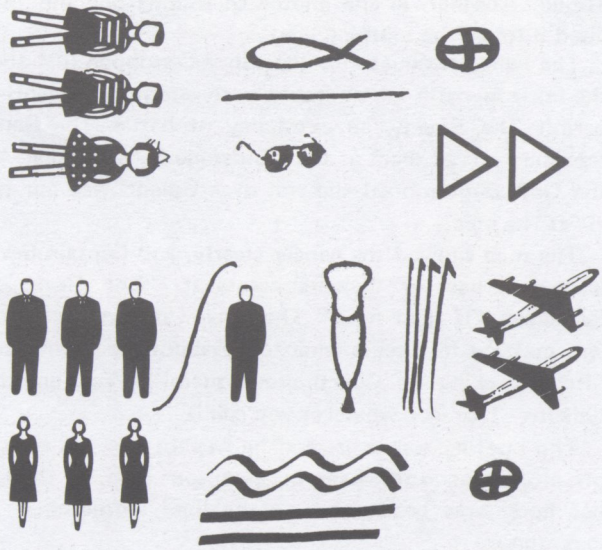
"There's [illegible] and he takes out his own appendix on the steps of the Pentagon. See, he's protesting about the war, he's supposed to be protesting about the war, or some God-damned thing. I guess it's supposed to be art, with all those funny typefaces, and all those pictures of Christ knows what..."

8. *n/a*
9. *M: a rich third*
   a. *needed to get drunk for it*
   b. *eventually, so did I*
10. *O.n.s.*
11. *O.n.s.*
12. *S: a beautiful fourth*
   a. *almond eyes*
      (1) *ophidian eyes*
      (2) *parenthetical*
         (A) *made me think of parenthood*
         (B) *made me wonder about her other, multiple parentheses*
13. *O.n.s.*
14. *R:a seductive fifth*
   a. *passionate*
   b. *intelligent*
   c. *well-made*
   d. *but*
      (1) *error*
      (2) *stillborn son changed things*
   e. *suicide*
      (1) *I made her nervous and sleepless*
      (2) *the doctors gave her pills to make her sleep*
      (3) *she slept*



      (4) *with the TV on*
         (A) *I thought she was watching the Big Picture*
         (B) *Battle of the Bulge*
         (C) *I watched it through, not knowing*
         (D) *then called the doctor*
         (E) *but she was dead when I got there*
         (F) *really*
   f. *parenthesis closed*
   g. *all she wrote*
15. *Suggested designation: MIL-W-84007/3)*

"I chose to destroy him with heart disease; he chose cancer for me. Thus far it seemed a stalemate again: each of us is drawn off against a new enemy, part of our energy and cognitive ability is thus diverted, and the significant changes in national strategic policy could now be examined.



"But The Enemy loses! Though he has established a salient within my brain, my REAL soul is intact. He is at my back, but my back is protected. He is at my window, behind me at the mirror when I shave, within my blood and soul—yet it is my soul which will subsume him entirely!"

The Master Plan has been given the above "tall tale" and queried as to the nature of The Enemy. We are now awaiting significant results.

(Seven divisions wiped out on paper! He leaned against the bar, sick with defeat. The other junior officers at the NATO mess tactfully avoided his eye. Those who had seen the printout and the plotting board grinned, or seemed to grin.

He had forgotten that Leap Year gives February 29 days. It was that simple: him sitting helplessly watching the plotting board, while a clerk erased his seven immobilized divisions: The Enemy leapt on Leap Day.

(His teeth were on fire. He ran down the streets of Avalon laughing with pain. They began to pull the burning roots, and as his jaw came crumbling away, they drew him into the Avalon Theater.

The movie was in special code. He put on the strange cardboard glasses everyone else wore and these made him invisible. "Gentlemen, Ruth is like the seven seas. I will translate her for you right now, if you please: Earth on earth, dust to dust. Get it?" Her cornsilk hair rattled across his face where it was burned.)

The razor blade cut through the silk-threads of the balsa sheet and skipped into his finger and out again. The blood was the color of dirty bricks. He watched it drip down on the razor-nicked edge of the table. **(watched the water-jug fling out a bouquet of water that hung there, shimmering. The movie was stuck or something; he got out of bed and went into the hall.**

In the barracks, he found them frozen as the dawn had taken them, in a grotesque game of "Statue". One airman field-stripping a cigarette had just exposed the wet tobacco

wound. Another, in the middle of shining one shoe, had tilted it to get the morning light.

The light continued, for the sun was stopped just above the horizon—with motes frozen in the stationary beams—to permit The Enemy an extra day of battle. The General screamed out at them as the grindstone began to sing. And the God who stopped the sun over Gibeon was our own ¡poƃ The map—

The map showed the cancer clearly, and Captain Savage walked a pair of dividers across it. "The Ruth," he explained, "is right here." The Avalon parents association was meeting to discuss what to do about the burned boy. "He's blocking up Courthouse Square!" "Yes, and that hideous 'face'—or whatever you call it."

The briefing was over, and he was up into the cockpit, off on Mission Ruth. Even on a contour map, he thought, her body was beautiful . . . the lines enfolding it like parentheses)

That last night—if it were the last—he allowed Miss Nylon to turn on the TV. It began as a family comedy, and he dozed (the albino butcher). *The room was dark when he woke, and Miss Nylon was nearer. Machine-guns clattered in the corridor. No, in the flickering window. "It's about Guadalcanal." There was a strange look in Miss Nylon's eyes. "If you like I can trim it off . . ."*

"No, it's all right."

"Al! I'm, hit, Al!"

Takatakataka. "This is it, kid!"

"You've certainly been grouchy, today. Is the pain . . .?"

"Al, I can't make it! Better—unh!—better go on without me. Leave me here."

"Old Grouchy. Why, you haven't even made a pass today, you old goat." Her eyes were glazed in death. She came nearer. She stood by the bed.

"Leave me here, I can hold 'em off. That's an order, soldier!"

"You old, oversexed goat."

The rain outside was machine-gunning on the wide window. She turned to draw the curtain, and he saw the glitter of wet red lower lip.

"Hey Joe! Hey Yankee pig! I coming cut your throat plitty soon now!"

Takataka.

"Sweet old grouchy goat.") He is simply Old Grouchy to them now, the fear is over. Every once in awhile there comes a mad bull to the slaughterhouse—routine. Give him the usual sedative, drag him back to the numbered room, slip him between the mitred sheets. The day he dies they will cover him with the same sheet. Then they will walk down to the clean cafeteria, and eat meat and gravy, mashed potatoes with a dab of butter, and frozen peas. Miss Nylon will leave her potatoes, and Al the intern will tell her she needn't worry about her figure, it looks just fine . . .

(Pretty Miss Nylon was taking off her white nylon uniform. The Zero came in low over the beach, probing for them with tines of fire budda-budda-budda.

"Sweet."

"Christ!"

(End of report.

(something tells me I've been here before.

("Hi-yo, Silver! Away!"

(all she wrote

(The albino butcher stood there, waiting, silent. White hair and skin, white apron and shirt, white hands holding the cleaver against the grindstone. Inscrutable in his white Oriental mourning. Unfathomable.

Chunk! "Full fathom five my finger lies . . ."

Chunk! It didn't hurt at all! "My face!"

(Within the dreamwork, a map of Littleworld is being plotted. The General leans over it, easing wind from a good dinner. His cigar taste accents the lingering flavour of the port.

Now he can see into it, the roofless hospital room, as a tiny Savage leans forward, ferret-eager over the dying feast.

"I begin to have bloody thoughts. The blood is leaking in my brain. I am changing into something rich and strange. This is all so real the General cannot help holding his cigar well away, lest he drop ash on the tiny figures," says the doll in bed. "My marriage has failed, and now my health. It would be pleasant, very pleasant . . ."

"Absolutely senseless at the last," says little Savage to little Dr. Godden. "It's a great pity. I ought really to destroy his final ruminations, to protect his reputation. But—well, regulations."

Smiling, the General muses that tiny Savage has his own miniature cancer. He, Cancer, has won. He finishes the inert replica's sentence:

". . . to imagine that The Enemy destroyed Ruth and fed cancer to my brain. But ultimately, the responsibility is *mine."*

The face of the doll has become the color of the fine ash on his Extramaduro.)

Chunk! "The dying man pays all debts . . . this is three . . ."

The five senses leave him by five wounds. A solid fifth, sweet numbness of the razor-nicked wooden block.

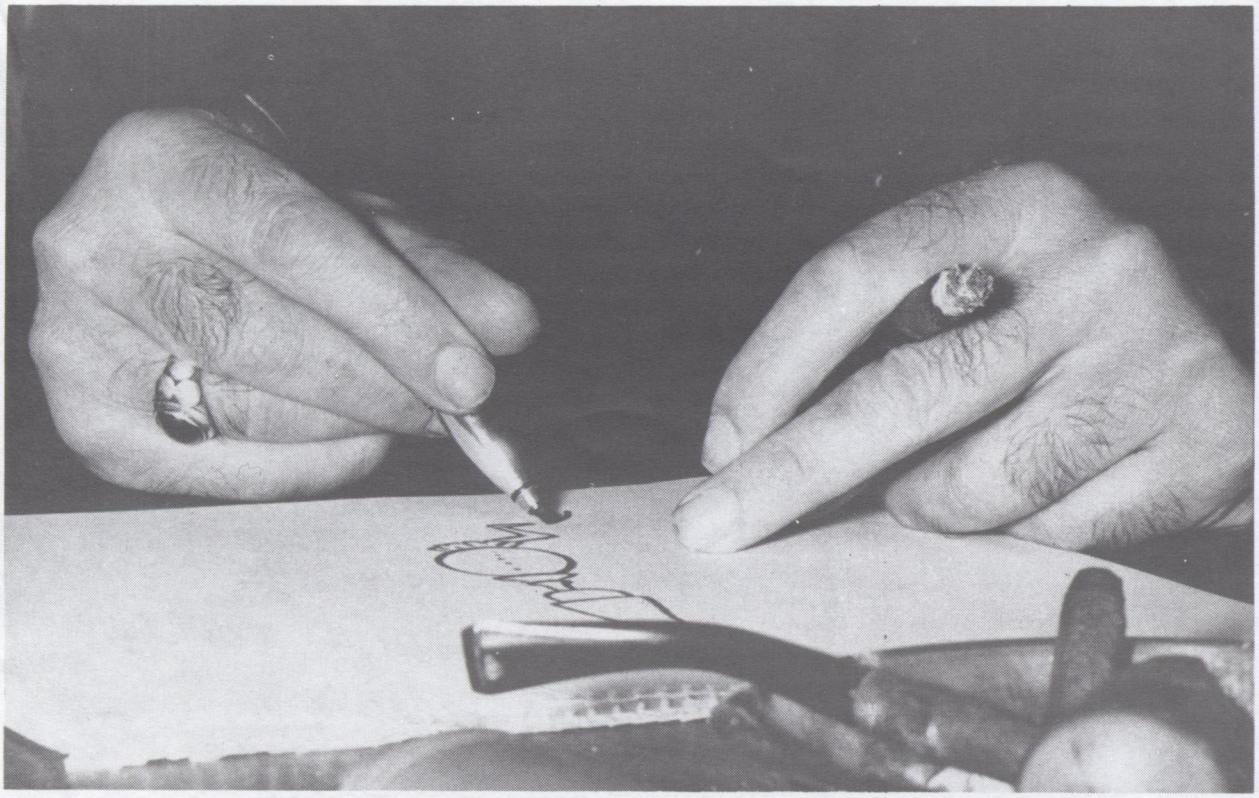
And it is Ruth who takes his carcass over her shoulder and carries him down to the snowy freezer. His cloven stomach enfolds her; he covers her again. . . .)

Anticipating his command, slime is drooling down his leg, as he drops the knife. And this is) **IT!**

Author's Note.

This story is told in nine parenthetical"layers":

1. **The general's last word.**
2. A present tense account of the "Battle of the Corridor" as he perceives it.
3. *A past tense account of the past few days in the hospital.*
4. A medico-military report on "the subject's" life, career and emotional state.
5. His top-secret monograph on The Master Plan.
6. *Brief extracts from scenes of his childhood, youth and young manhood.*
7. *An "Item Description" of Woman as he sees her.*
8. **His dreams.**
9. **A sub-dream "reality" which permits him an overview of all of the above.**

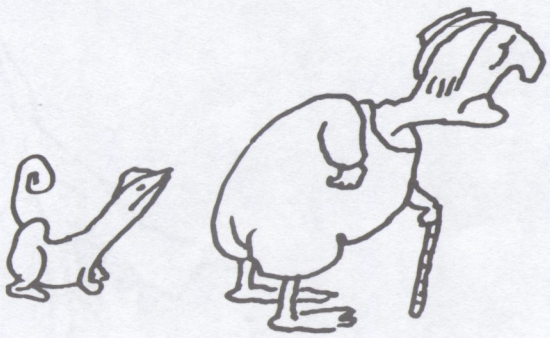


The Adventures of Foot-fruit

by Mervyn Peake

How

Otherwise can I unfold respect and
the affairs of Foot-fruit. and his
dog.



Let me make a confession. I
have never met him or been introduced
But I have followed his career, &
once I smelt the strong tang of
his cigar. So I was fairly near him
when I have followed him to his
nest

Shortly before the final stages of his illness, Mervyn Peake began a new book. We are grateful to Mrs Maeve Peake for enabling us to publish here some pages from the surviving manuscript, and the above photograph of the author at work. "The Adventures of Foot-fruit" was originally to be a long book but, unhappily, was barely begun when his illness overwhelmed him.

A memorial to Mervyn Peake appears on page 57.

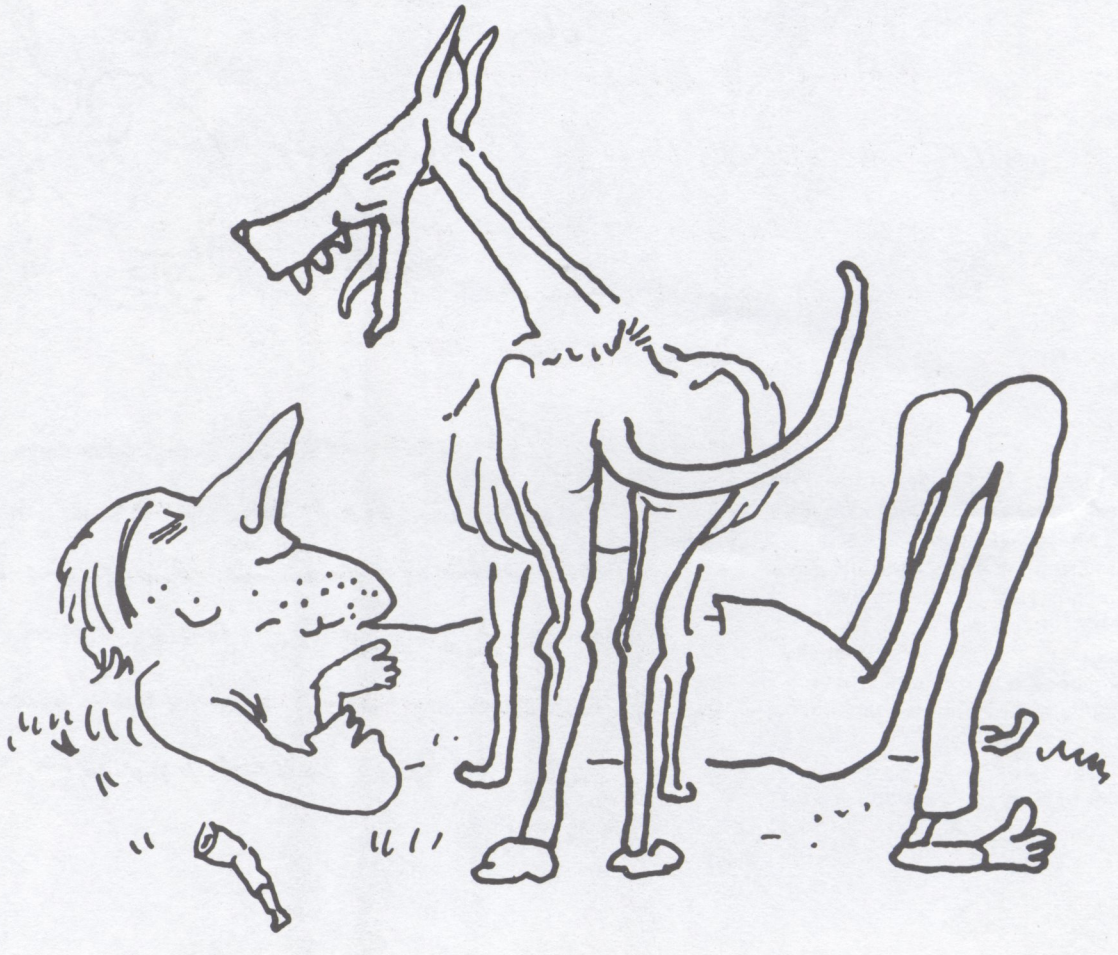
CHAPTER 1

Repeated in other drafts.

Here cometh Foot-fruit, head-foremost, bum backmost; Chapter 1, Verse 1 — heigh ho ... heigh ho ... and the high hills hoary:

Foot-fruit! Foot-Fruit! Where are you? (He has fire in his blood has Foot-Fruit and a nose for the Truth.) (This can be withdrawn.) ~~[illegible]~~ pass.

What no reply? Is this a time to tease your Chronicler? Really footfruit: the whole thing about as chronicle as it could be. Ha ha ha ... sh-sh-sh ...



1

Step out front-front, the world's
spread out before you : your failures
trail behind you & in the middle, why
there you are, my dear, with ears like
worm-casts.

Lo ! here he comes at last:
along with that vile hound that dogs him.
Jackpot by name. He irks me.

Security — but securely, let
me tell you something. I would rather be
trailing Jackpot than acting as a
kind of off-stage voice. In other words
I'm jealous. For he is a great man
with a great heart in front-
(and he has big feet too.) What
more I would be near him, wouldn't I?
if I was Jackpot & perhaps, who knows,
one day... (the stomach turns, pictures
it)— I might touch him.
Water! water! With a tongue

THE ANGSTROM PALACE

C.J.LOCKESLEY

1. The Atlantic waves are hostile Chinese dragons.
2. Every evening at the shore is dismal, funereal. (Alice has asked me whether I have unconsciously overlaid my own emotional structure upon the 'flux ecdysis' pulsating continually from the shore. How else, she asks, can the sight of an approaching stormcloud fill me with a pristine dread.)
3. She has already set sail for the sepulchral evening sun.
4. The war has begun and there seems little indication of an early subsidence. (Spermatozoa, the electrolytic outlaws, flash from limit to extremity, a nervous energy disguising the oscillatory pattern. I remember last summer with a hazed sun disturbing swooning lakes and larks. Alice complained that the boat leaked and I had seen her already submerged, the incrustations on her brow a fragment of an illusory cone-compressed manuscript caught in a time-flocked tomb. But the metastasis . . .)

A BURIED Mezzorilievo—a frantic scuffle of hands and feet accompanying the trials of razored tools. Incense in a rosiary of bone, it seemed an electrode were implanted in each skull. The expressions etched on their faces pointed to a fractured dimension, a wayward vector of infinity. Soon we were to search our dreams of childhood and future and there it would lay, a dull jewel to be contested for until each of us but one lay exhausted in the slime below. Alice was suddenly speaking, her voice a curious monotone.

"It's a garden in topiary," she murmured. "That oak—is it a boar, a digital calculator? And that hedgerow a wing-clipped bird. Those leaves can be nothing but rocks, the impossible eddies in the current."

I retreated into my deep cell where form and content were one, yet the rampant outlaws crawl in. I look from the only window and observe their progress everywhere—through a thousand steel towers, a million gleaming windows. They continue uninterrupted throughout the night. I cannot sleep.

DEATH sliced easily through my vault of childhood. It lay decanted in every intruder surveying my window. Then as a child the functioning of the radio fascinated me. Fascination, with its accompanying lack of knowledge—the degradation of involvement in an imperfectly known system. Yet still we live, riding the waves of consciousness until some lost piece of flotsam reminds us of the depths below. How much easier if human aspirations lay on the surface of the mind, locked like an insect boatman from the twisted deeps below.

My vision is caught in a self-inspired stenosis. Is there a destiny, a shroud of time incorporated in individual fields of tension? There is no fetial law in the battle with life. The lice of existence, the spermatozoa permeating the deepest cellar need no battle-cry. They are never at rest. They devour me day by day.

SO HERE I am imprisoned. Alice is still being kept from me. I call up to her when I see an opening in my prismatic jail, unwilling and unable to meet her face. She waits for an answer but if I speak now the echo will shatter me into a hundred fragments. The canopy of this cell is the dying brain of a Russian chess-master, gigantic and unrivalled in cell interconnection. Purple robes drape the switching circuitry. I quietly wonder whether there is a critical point of mind, usually suffered in youth, where the mind retreats or advances into 'insanity'. A decade ago Alice wouldn't have known me, covered in sweat after a thought-flooded night. Forget the present Alice. In the tramlines of the future must lie our joint nirvana.

ZERO-oscillation: is death valid or extra-matrical—somehow embedded in the psyche as a logical, emotionally-normal event? The results of this question allow me a brief respite, a cathartic interflow of images valid even here. In the city Alice would keep behind me in a strange reversal of roles. The building stretched to the heights of cirrus with Alice and I dwarfed by Mitsuki's conception. Mitsuki was a financial samurai. As we watched the block became transformed and the birds sang more sweetly. The block soon resembled an oak with its diverse connections of branch and leaf.

A memorandum unused and dusty came fluttering to my feet as the Mitsuki building vibrated across the wavelength of sight and disappeared. In its wake I caught an image of Alice, smiling yet with the first pangs of hunger etched into her soft face.

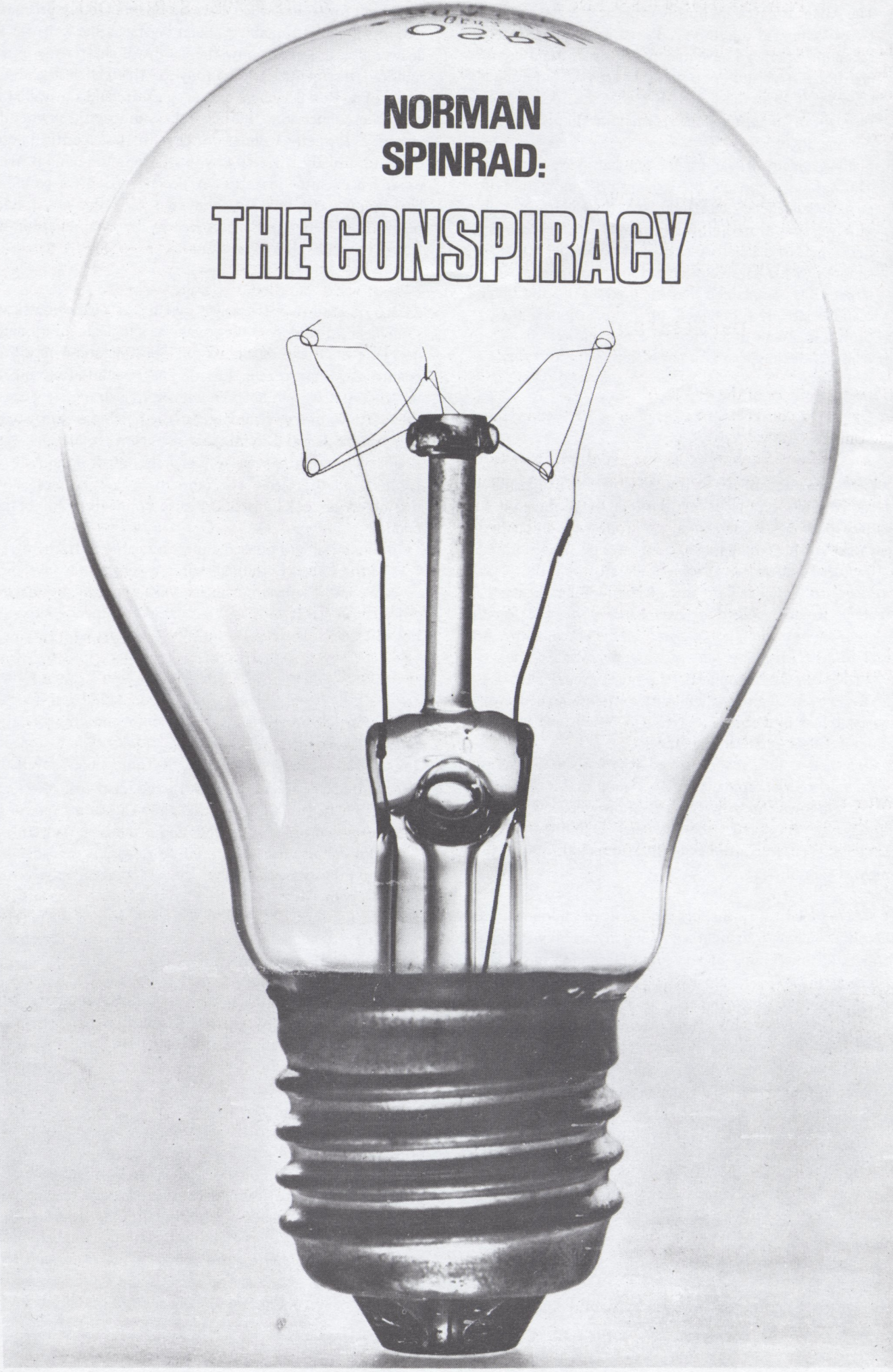
ONCE I knew a Chinese princess or called her by that name. Her self-involvement was absolute and bore a relation to the involvement of a Trappist monk as that of Zen to Indian Buddhism. The daughter of Tamerlane, I revelled in her slanted eyes and their vortexed rasp—palladiums of courage. When I took her to the Angstrom Palace she showed no surprise, just tacit understanding. Yet still she lived around a nucleus of mind, a heightened reality in a continuum estranged except by distant derivation from identification with the whole river of consciousness. She understood the Tabla yet if she ever learned to play she would strum a Charivari—chatelaine of dissonance, cheiroptera of achievement that she was. She left me near confirmed in misogyny.

But is she a private fantasy, an implanted memory? It is becoming increasingly more difficult to separate fact and fantasy, as if the senses and intellect are being relegated to some Diomedesian function.

MIDNIGHT: the two dinghies slipped awkwardly through the water, hidden from the shore by a blanket of mist. Alice sat at the stern of the smaller craft smiling benignly at the high moon projecting its outline through the vapour. A dissonant chord struck from the cliffs at the edge of the bay, increasing in amplitude until nothing could co-exist in the mind with this bizarre signal. I felt bone and tissue vibrate with a resonance no mind could attune to. And the progress of the dinghies no longer mattered.

NORMAN SPINRAD:

THE CONSPIRACY



PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE

In an obscure hotel room in Geneva Switzerland, the Grand High Wizard of the United Ku Klux Klan concluded a secret non-aggression pact with the Warlord of the Blackstone Rangers and the Foreign Minister of the Black Panther Party.

OVERKILL RATIO

Did Howard Hughes buy Nevada?

DEFOLIATION

(Press Conference of the Soul)

UPI: "Do you favor the admission of Mainland China to the United Nations"?

A: "I am in favor of admitting **Mainland China** to the United Nations on condition that the Chinks apply for admission under the official title of "Red China" and on condition that Mao Tze-tung must officially state beforehand that Communism sucks."

VICTOR CHARLIE

Was J. Edgar Hoover turned on to acid by Timothy Leary?

MEGADEATH ESTIMATE

After being debarked by submarine under cover of night on the coast of Nova Scotia, L. Ron Hubbard was placed in a sealed train for Los Angeles California.

FUCK COMMUNISM

Could retired Air Force General Curtis Lemay be found in a Haight-Ashbury crash-pad bombed back into the Stone Age?

YOUTH AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM

(Press Conference of the Soul)

Reuters: "Do you believe that the withdrawal of France has seriously weakened NATO"?

A: "I say we're better off without those Frogs and their filthy Un-American sex practices."

WHITE POWER STRUCTURE

Was J. Paul Getty turned on to acid by Hugh Hefner?

DISTANT EARLY WARNING LINE

In Croton New York, a man caught by police in the act of emptying a gallon jug of fluid into the reservoir admitted membership in the International Communist Conspiracy. The fluid in the jug, when analyzed, proved to be a supersaturated solution of sodium fluoride.

LIMITED PRE-EMPTIVE THERMONUCLEAR WAR

Will Earl Warren assassinate Mark Lane in the men's room of a Washington D.C. YMCA?

THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

(Press Conference of the Soul)

New York Times: "What is your program for dealing with the Black Militants"?

A: "Unlike certain commie faggot creeps infesting our Federal Government, I want to assure the American people that I know the best way to handle uppity niggers."

THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER I EVER MET

Did Howard Hughes buy controlling interest in the National Liberation Front?

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

Partisans freed a gorilla from the world-famous Bronx Zoo. The gorilla made its way, unnoticed, by Subway, to New York's Central Park where it was brutally beaten to death by muggers.

PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY

Did J. Paul Getty buy controlling interest in the Mafia, or visa versa?

PACIFICATION

(Press Conference of the Soul)

AP: "Do you believe that we should escalate the War on Poverty"?

A: "Not unless absolutely necessary. I have confidence that we can win the War on Poverty without resorting to Tactical Nuclear Weapons."

CREATIVE FEDERALISM

Was Spiro T. Agnew turned on to acid by J. Edgar Hoover?

PEPSI GENERATION

Escaped Nazi war-criminal Martin Bormann was kidnapped by Israeli agents in Chicago Illinois where he had been living under an assumed name for twenty years. Mr Bormann, at the time of his abduction, was slated for imminent retirement from the Chicago police force.

MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR

Was Eldridge Cleaver turned on to acid by William F. Buckley, Jr.?

PSEUDO-INTELLECTUALS

(Press Conference of the Soul)

Newsweek: "What steps have been taken to reverse the Gold Drain"?

A: "A three-part plan to increase the flow of gold into Fort Knox has been implemented. The Army will confiscate the fillings of all POWs, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare will confiscate the fillings of all welfare recipients, and the Veteran's Administration will replace the Stars of all Gold Star Mothers with life-like plastic facsimiles."

AMERICAN NAZI PARTY

Did H. L. Hunt buy Howard Hughes, or vice versa?

STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The Hollywood trade papers reported that Fidel Castro has signed a contract with a major studio to do a minimum of thirteen cameo appearances during the first season of the forthcoming network tv series, CHE.

DISCOVER AMERICA

Did General Motors buy controlling interest in the Red Guards or visa versa?

GOD, APPLE PIE, AND MOTHERHOOD

(Press Conference of the Soul)

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: "It has been reported that the Soviet Union is constructing a Doomsday Machine. Should the United States enter the Doomsday Race?"

A: "Definitely! We must not allow the Russians to destroy the world before we can. American prestige is at stake! Do you want the world to think Americans are faggots?"

NEW ULTRA BRITE GIVES YOUR MOUTH

SEX-APPEAL

How Dr Christopher Evans Landed on the Moon
by J G Ballard

CONNECTED ON CHANNEL
$NBR= 15
←LOGIN CQJBAA
15IN 12/04/68 12:37:24IN CQJBAA
←DELETE ALL
←LOAD $APOLLO

CONTROL CALLING LUNAR MODULE. YOU ARE ON SCHEDULED
VERTICAL LANDING COURSE, BUT AUTO LANDING CONTROL
SYSTEM IS OUT. YOU MUST LAND ON MANUAL CONTROL. YOU
WILL HAVE ALTITUDE CHECKS EACH TEN SECONDS, AND YOU
MAY THEN RESET THE RETRO ROCKET FUEL RATE K FOR THE
NEXT INTERVAL TO 0 OR ANY VALUE BETWEEN 8 AND 200 LBS/SEC
SECOND. YOU HAVE 16000 LBS OF FUEL. YOUR ESTIMATED
FREE FALL IMPACT TIME IS 120 SECS AFTER FIRST CHECK

FIRST RADAR CHECK COMING UP

COMMENCE LANDING PROCEDURE

TIME,SECS	ALTITUDE,MILES+FEET		VELOCITY,MPH	FUEL,LBS	FUEL RATE
0	120	0	3600	16000	K=0
10	109	5016	3636	16000	K=0
20	99	4224	3672	16000	K=0
30	89	2904	3708	16000	K=0
40	79	1056	3744	16000	K=0
50	68	3960	3780	16000	K=0
60	58	1056	3816	16000	K=100
70	47	4381	3649	15000	K=200
80	38	1195	3260	13000	K=200
90	29	3928	2841	11000	K=200
100	22	2492	2388	9000	K=200
110	16	2710	1895	7000	K=200
120	11	5218	1355	5000	K=100
130	8	3172	1082	4000	K=90
140	5	4998	827	3100	K=80
150	3	5131	593	2300	K=70
160	2	3242	383	1600	K=60
170	1	4233	201	1000	K=10
180	1	1298	199	900	K=10
190	0	3662	198	800	K=50
200	0	1879	44	300	K=10
210	0	1252	41	200	K=10
220	0	666	38	100	K=10
230	0	125	35	0	K=0
232	0	0	41	0	

CONGRATULATIONS ON EXCELLENT LANDING.
DO YOU WANT TO TRY AGAIN?
REPLY=NO
AUTO CONTROL LANDING SYSTEM NOW AVAILABLE. WILL YOU TRY IT?
REPLY=NO
←LOGOUT
15OT 12/04/68 12:37:24IN 12:44:43OT 00.12 HRS

ENTROPY

THOMAS PYNCHON

Boris has just given me a summary of his views. He is a weather prophet. The weather will continue bad, he says. There will be more calamities, more death, more despair. Not the slightest indication of a change anywhere. . . . We must get into step, a lockstep toward the prison of death. There is no escape. The weather will not change.

Tropic of Cancer

DOWNSTAIRS, Meatball Mulligan's lease-breaking party was moving into its fortieth hour. On the kitchen floor, amid a litter of empty champagne fifths, were Sandor Rojas and three friends, playing spit in the ocean and staying awake on Heidsieck and Benzedrine pills. In the living room Duke, Vincent, Krinkles and Paco sat crouched over a fifteen-inch speaker, which had been bolted into the top of a wastepaper basket, listening to twenty-seven watts worth of *The Heroes' Gate at Kiev.* They all wore horn-rimmed sunglasses and rapt expressions, and smoked funny-looking cigarettes that contained not, as you might expect, tobacco, but an adulterated form of *cannibis sativa.* This group was the Duke di Angelis quartet. They recorded for a local label called Tambú and had to their credit one ten-inch LP entitled *Songs of Outer Space.* From time to time one of them would flick the ashes from his cigarette into the speaker cone to watch them dance around. Meatball himself was sleeping over by the window, holding an empty magnum to his chest as if it were a Teddy bear. Several government girls, who worked for people like the State Department and NSA, had passed out on couches, chairs and, in one case, the bathroom sink.

This was in early February of '57, and back then there were a lot of American expatriates around Washington, D.C., who would talk, every time they met you, about how someday they were going to go over to Europe for real, but right now it seemed they were working for the government. Everyone saw a fine irony in this. They would stage, for instance, polyglot parties where the newcomer was sort of ignored if he couldn't carry on simultaneous conversations in three or four languages. They would haunt Armenian delicatessens for weeks at a stretch and invite you over for bulghour and lamb in tiny kitchens whose walls were covered with bullfight posters. They would have affairs with sultry girls from Andalucia or the Midi who studied economics at Georgetown. Their Dôme was a collegiate Rathskeller out on Wisconsin Avenue called the Old Heidelberg, and they had to settle for cherry blossoms instead of lime trees when spring came, but in its lethargic way their life provided, as they said, kicks.

At the moment, Meatball's party seemed to be gathering its second wind. Outside there was rain. Rain splattered against the tar paper on the roof and was fractured into a fine spray off the noses, eyebrows and lips of wooden gargoyles under the eaves and ran like drool down the windowpanes. The day before, it had snowed, and the day before that there had been winds of gale force, and before that the sun had made the city glitter bright as April, though the calendar read early February. It is a curious season in Washington, this false spring. Somewhere in it are Lincoln's Birthday and the Chinese New Year, and a forlornness in the streets because cherry blossoms are weeks away still and, as Sarah Vaughan has put it, spring will be a little late this year. Generally, crowds like the one that would gather in the Old Heidelberg on weekday afternoons to drink Würtzburger and to sing "Lili Marlene" (not to mention "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi") are inevitably and incorrigibly Romantic. And as every good Romantic knows, the soul *(spiritus, ruach, penuma)* is nothing, substantially, but air; it is only natural that warpings in the atmosphere should be recapitulated in those who breathe it. So that over and above the public components—holidays, tourist attractions—there are private meanderings, linked to the climate as if this spell were a stretto passage in the year's fugue: haphazard weather, aimless loves, unpredicted commitments; months one can easily spend *in* fugue, because oddly enough, later on, winds, rains, passions of February and March are never remembered in that city; it is as if they had never been.

THE LAST BASS NOTES of *The Heroes' Gate* boomed up through the floor and woke Callisto from an uneasy sleep. The first thing he became aware of was a small bird he had been holding gently between his hands, against his body. He turned his head sidewise on the pillow to smile down at it, at its blue hunched-down head and sick, lidded eyes, wondering how many more nights he would have to give it warmth before it was well again. He had been

holding the bird like that for three days: it was the only way he knew to restore its health. Next to him the girl stirred and whimpered, her arm thrown across her face. Mingled with the sounds of the rain came the first tentative, querulous morning voices of the other birds, hidden in philodendrons and small fan palms: patches of scarlet, yellow and blue laced through this Rousseau-like fantasy, this hothouse jungle it had taken him seven years to weave together. Hermetically sealed, it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the city's chaos, alien to the vagaries of the weather, of national politics, of any civil disorder. Through trial-and-error Callisto had perfected its ecological balance, with the help of the girl, its artistic harmony, so that the swayings of its plant life, the stirrings of its birds and human inhabitants were all as integral as the rhythms of a perfectly executed mobile. He and the girl could no longer, of course, be omitted from that sanctuary; they had become necessary to its unity. What they needed from outside was delivered. They did not go out.

"Is he all right?" she whispered. She lay like a tawny question mark facing him, her eyes suddenly huge and dark and blinking slowly. Callisto ran a finger beneath the feathers at the base of the bird's neck, caressed it gently. "He's going to be well, I think. See: he hears his friends

beginning to wake up." The girl had heard the rain and the birds even before she was fully awake. Her name was Aubade; she was part French and part Annamese, and she lived on her own curious and lonely planet, where the clouds and the odor of poincianas, the bitterness of wine and the accidental fingers at the small of her back or feathery against her breasts came to her reduced inevitably to the terms of sound, of music which emerged at intervals from a howling darkness of discordancy. "Aubade," he said, "go see." Obedient, she arose, padded to the window, pulled aside the drapes, and after a moment said: "It is thirty-seven. Still thirty-seven."

Callisto frowned. "Since Tuesday, then," he said, "no change." Henry Adams, three generations before his own, had stared aghast at Power; Callisto found himself now in much the same state over Thermodynamics, the inner life of that power, realizing like his predecessor that the Virgin and the dynamo stand as much for love as for power, that the two are indeed identical, and that love therefore not only makes the world go round but also makes the boccie ball spin, the nebula process. It was this latter or sidereal element which disturbed him. The cosmologists had predicted an eventual heat-death for the universe (something like Limbo: form and motion abolished, heat-energy identical at every point in it); the meteorologists, day-to-day, staved it off by contradicting with a reassuring array of varied temperatures.

But for three days now, despite the changeful weather, the mercury had stayed at thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit. Leery at omens of apocalypse, Callisto shifted beneath the covers. His fingers pressed the bird more firmly, as if needing some pulsing or suffering assurance of an early break in the temperature.

IT WAS THAT LAST cymbal crash that did it. Meatball was hurled wincing into consciousness as the synchronized wagging of heads over the wastebasket stopped. The final hiss remained for an instant in the room, then melted into the whisper of rain outside. "Aarrgghh," announced Meatball in the silence, looking at the empty magnum. Krinkles, in slow motion, turned, smiled and held out a cigarette. "Tea time, man," he said. "No, no," said Meatball. "How many times I got to tell you guys? Not at my place. You ought to know. Washington is lousy with Feds." Krinkles looked wistful. "Jeez, Meatball," he said, "you don't want to do nothing no more." "Hair of dog," said Meatball. "Only hope. Any juice left?" He began to crawl toward the kitchen. "No champagne, I don't think," Duke said. "Case of tequila behind the icebox." They put on an Earl Bostic side. Meatball paused at the kitchen door, glowering at Sandor Rojas. "Lemons," he said after some thought. He crawled to the refrigerator and got out three lemons and some cubes, found the tequila and set about restoring order to his nervous system. He drew blood once cutting the lemons and had to use two hands squeezing them and his foot to crack the ice tray, but after about ten minutes he found himself, through some miracle, beaming down into a monster tequila sour. "That looks yummy," Sandor Rojas said. "How about you make me one?" Meatball blinked at him. "*Kitchi lofass a shegitbe*," he replied automatically, and wandered away into the bathroom. "I say," he called out a moment later to no one in particular. "I say, there seems to be a girl or something sleeping in the sink." He took her by the shoulders and shook. "Wha," she said. "You don't look too comfortable," Meatball said. "Well," she agreed. She stumbled to the shower, turned on the cold water, and sat down cross-legged in the spray. "That's better," she smiled.

"Meatball," Sandor Rojas yelled from the kitchen, "Somebody is trying to come in the window. A burglar, I think. A second-story man." "What are you worrying about?" Meatball said. "We're on the third floor." He loped back into the kitchen. A shaggy woebegone figure stood out on the fire escape, raking his fingernails down the windowpane. Meatball opened the window. "Saul," he said.

"Sort of wet out," Saul said. He climbed in, dripping. "You heard, I guess."

"Miriam left you," Meatball said, "or something, is all I heard."

There was a sudden flurry of knocking at the front door. "Do come in," Sandor Rojas called. The door opened and there were three coeds from George Washington, all of whom were majoring in philosophy. They were each holding a gallon of Chianti. Sandor leaped up and dashed into the living room. "We heard there was a party," one blonde said. "Young blood," Sandor shouted. He was an ex-Hungarian freedom fighter who had easily the worst chronic case of what certain critics of the middle class have called Don Giovannism in the District of Columbia. *Purche porti la gonnella, voi sapete quel che fa.* Like Pavlov's dog: a contralto voice or a whiff of Arpège and Sandor would begin to salivate. Meatball regarded the trio blearily as they filed into the kitchen; he shrugged. "Put the wine in the icebox," he said, "and good morning."

AUBADE'S NECK made a golden bow as she bent over the sheets of foolscap, scribbling away in the green murk of the room. "As a young man at Princeton," Callisto was dictating, nestling the bird against the gray hairs of his chest, "Callisto had learned a mnemonic device for remembering the Laws of Thermodynamics: you can't win; things are going to get worse before they get better; who says they're going to get better? At the age of 54, confronted with Gibbs' notion of the universe, he suddenly realized that undergraduate cant had been oracle, after all. That spindly maze of equations became, for him, a vision of ultimate cosmic heat-death. He had known all along, of course, that nothing but a theoretical engine or system ever runs at one hundred per cent efficiency; and about the theorem of Clausius, which states that the entropy of an isolated system always continually increases. It was not, however, until Gibbs and Boltzmann brought to this principle the methods of statistical mechanics that the horrible significance of it all dawned on him: only then did he realize that the isolated system—galaxy, engine, human being, culture, whatever—must evolve spontaneously toward the Condition of the More Probable. He was forced, therefore, in the sad dying fall of middle age, to a radical re-evaluation of everything he had learned up to then; all the cities and seasons and casual passions of his days had

now to be looked at in a new and elusive light. He did not know if he was equal to the task. He was aware of the dangers of the reductive fallacy and, he hoped, strong enough not to drift into the graceful decadence of an enervated fatalism. His had always been a vigorous, Italian sort of pessimism: like Machiavelli, he allowed the forces of *virtú* and *fortuna* to be about 50/50; but the equations now introduced a random factor which pushed the odds to some unutterable and indeterminate ratio which he found himself afraid to calculate." Around him loomed vague hothouse shapes; the pitifully small heart fluttered against his own, Counterpointed against his words the girl heard the chatter of birds and fitful car honkings scattered along the wet morning and Earl Bostic's alto rising in occasional wild peaks through the floor. The architectonic purity of her world was constantly threatened by such hints of anarchy: gaps and excrescences and skew lines, and a shifting or tilting of planes to which she had continually to readjust lest the whole structure shiver into disarray of discrete and meaningless signals. Callisto had described the process once as a kind of "feedback": she crawled into dreams each night with a sense of exhaustion and a desperate resolve never to relax that vigilance. Even in the brief periods when Callisto made love to her, soaring above the bowing of taut nerves in haphazard double-stops would be the one singing string of her determination.

"Nevertheless," continued Callisto, "he found in entropy or the measure of disorganization for a closed system an adequate metaphor to apply to certain phenomena in his own world. He saw, for example, the younger generation responding to Madison Avenue with the same spleen his own had once reserved for Wall Street, and

in American 'consumerism' discovered a similar tendency from the least to the most probable, from differentiation to sameness, from ordered individuality to a kind of chaos. He found himself, in short, restating Gibbs' prediction in social terms, and envisioned a heat-death for his culture in which ideas, like heat-energy, would no longer be transferred, since each point in it would ultimately have the same quantity of energy, and intellectual motion would, accordingly, cease." He glanced up suddenly. "Check it now," he said. Again she rose and peered out at the thermometer. "Thirty-seven," she said. "The rain has stopped." He bent his head quickly and held his lips against a quivering wing. "Then it will change soon," he said, trying to keep his voice firm.

SITTING ON THE STOVE, Saul was like any big rag doll that a kid has been taking out some incomprehensible rage on. "What happened?" Meatball said. "If you feel like talking, I mean."

"Of course I feel like talking," Saul said. "One thing I did, I slugged her."

"Discipline must be maintained."

"Ha, ha. I wish you'd been there. Oh, Meatball, it was a lovely fight. She ended up throwing a *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* at me, only it missed and went through the window, and when the glass broke, I reckon something in her broke too. She stormed out of the house crying, out in the rain. No raincoat or anything."

"She'll be back."

"No."

"Well." Soon Meatball said: "It was something earth-shattering, no doubt. Like who is better, Sal Mineo or Ricky Nelson."

"What it was about," Saul said, "was communication theory. Which of course makes it very hilarious."

"I don't know anything about communication theory."

"Neither does my wife. Come right down to it, who does? That's the joke."

When Meatball saw the kind of smile Saul had on his face, he said: "Maybe you would like tequila or something."

"No. I mean, I'm sorry. It's a field you can go off the deep end in, is all. You get where you're watching all the time for security cops: behind bushes, around corners. MUFFET is top secret."

"What?"

"Multi-unit factorial field electronic tabulator."

"You were fighting about that?"

"Miriam has been reading science-fiction again. That and *Scientific American.* It seems she is, as we say, bugged at this idea of computers acting like people. I made the mistake of saying you can just as well turn that around and talk about human behavior like a program fed into an IBM machine."

"Why not?" Meatball said.

"Indeed, why not? In fact, it is sort of crucial to communication, not to mention information theory. Only, when I said that, she hit the roof. Up went the balloon. And I can't figure out *why.* If anybody should know why, I should. I refuse to believe the government is wasting taxpayers' money on me, when it has so many bigger and better things to waste it on."

Meatball made a *moue.* "Maybe she thought you were acting like a cold, dehumanized, amoral scientist type."

"My god," Saul flung up an arm. "Dehumanized? How much more human can I get? I worry, Meatball, I do. There are Europeans wandering around North Africa these days with their tongues torn out of their heads because those tongues have spoken the wrong words. Only the Europeans thought they were the right words."

"Language barrier," Meatball suggested.

Saul jumped down off the stove. "That," he said, angry, "is a good candidate for sick joke of the year. No, ace, it is *not* a barrier. If it is anything, it's a kind of leakage. Tell a girl: 'I love you.' No trouble with two-thirds of that, it's a closed circuit. Just you and she. But that nasty four-letter word in the middle, *that's* the one you have to look out for. Ambiguity. Redundance. Irrelevance, even. Leakage. All this is noise. Noise screws up your signal, makes for disorganization in the circuit."

Meatball shuffled around. "Well, now, Saul," he muttered, "you're sort of, I don't know, expecting a lot from people. I mean, you know. What it is is, most of the things we say, I guess, are mostly noise."

"Ha! Half of what you just said, for example."

"Well, you do it too."

"I know." Saul smiled grimly. "It's a bitch, ain't it?"

"I bet that's what keeps divorce lawyers in business. Whoops."

"Oh, I'm not sensitive. Besides," frowning, "you're right. You find, I think, that most 'successful' marriages—Miriam and me, up to last night—are sort of founded on compromises. You never run at top efficiency; usually all you have is a minimum basis for a workable thing. I believe the phrase is Togetherness."

"Aarrgghh."

"Exactly. You find that one a bit noisy, don't you? But the noise content is different for each of us because you're a bachelor and I'm not. Or wasn't. The hell with it."

"Well sure," Meatball said, trying to be helpful, "you were using different words. By 'human being' you meant something that you can look at like it was a computer. It helps you think better on the job or something. But Miriam meant something entirely—"

"The hell with it."

Meatball fell silent. "I'll take that drink," Saul said after a while.

The card game had been abandoned and Sandor's friends were slowly getting wasted on tequila. On the living room couch one of the coeds and Krinkles were engaged in amorous conversation. "No," Krinkles was saying, "no, I can't put Dave *down.* In fact I give Dave a lot of credit, man. Especially considering his accident and all." The girl's smile faded. "How terrible," she said. "What accident?" "Hadn't you heard?" Krinkles said. "When Dave was in the army, just a private E-2, they sent him down to Oak Ridge on special duty. Something to do with the Manhattan Project. He was handling hot stuff one day and got an overdose of radiation. So now he's got to wear lead gloves all the time." She shook her head sympathetically. "What an awful break for a piano-player."

Meatball had abandoned Saul to a bottle of tequila and was about to go to sleep in a closet when the front door flew open and the place was invaded by five enlisted personnel of the U.S. Navy, all in varying stages of abomination. "This is the place," shouted a fat, pimply seaman apprentice who had lost his white hat. "This here is the hoorhouse that chief was telling us about." A stringy-looking third-class boatswain's mate pushed him aside and cased the living room. "You're right, Slab," he said. "But it don't look like much, even for Stateside. I seen better tail in Naples, Italy." "How much, hey?" boomed a large seaman with adenoids, who was holding a Mason jar full of white lightning. "Oh, my god," said Meatball.

OUTSIDE the temperature remained constant at thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit. In the hothouse Aubade stood absently caressing the branches of a young mimosa, hearing a motif of sap-rising, the rough and unresolved anticipatory theme of those fragile pink blossoms which, it is said, insure fertility. That music rose in a tangled tracery: arabesques of order competing fugally with the improvised discords of the party downstairs, which peaked sometimes in cusps and ogees of noise. That precious signal-to-noise ratio, whose delicate balance required every calorie of her strength, seesawed inside the small tenuous skull as she watched Callisto, sheltering the bird. Callisto was trying to confront any idea of the heat-death now, as he nuzzled the feathery lump in his hands. He sought correspondences. Sade, of course. And Temple Drake, gaunt and hopeless in her little park in Paris, at the end of *Sanctuary.* Final equilibrium. *Nightwood.* And the tango. Any tango, but more than any perhaps the sad sick dance in Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat.* He thought back: What had tango music been for them after the war, what meanings had he missed in all the stately coupled automatons in the *cafés-dansants,* or in the metronomes which had ticked behind the eyes of his own partners? Not even the clean constant winds of Switzerland could cure the *grippe espagnole:* Stravinsky had had it, they all had had it. And how many musicians were left after Passchendaele, after the Marne? It came down in this case to seven: violin, double-bass. Clarinet, bassoon, cornet, trombone, tympani. Almost as if any tiny troupe of saltimbanques had set about conveying the same information as a full pit-orchestra. There was hardly a full complement left in Europe. Yet with violin and tympani Stravinsky had managed to communicate in that tango the same exhaustion, the same airlessness one saw in the slicked-down youths who were trying to imitate Vernon Castle, and in their mistresses, who simply did not care. *Ma maîtresse.* Celeste. Returning to Nice after the second war, he had found that café replaced by a perfume shop which catered to American tourists. And no secret vestige of her in the cobblestones or in the old pension next door; no perfume to match her breath heavy with the sweet Spanish wine she always drank. And so instead he had purchased a Henry Miller novel and left Paris, and read the book on the train so that when he arrived he had been given at least a little forewarning. And saw that Celeste and the others and even Temple Drake were not all that had changed. "Aubade," he said, "my head aches." The sound of his voice generated in the girl an answering scrap of melody. Her movement toward the kitchen, the towel, the cold water, and his eyes following her formed a weird and intricate canon; as she placed the compress on his forehead, his sigh of gratitude seemed to signal a new subject, another series of modulations.

"NO," Meatball was still saying, "no, I'm afraid not. This is not a house of ill repute. I'm sorry, really I am." Slab was adamant. "But the chief said," he kept repeating. The seaman offered to swap the moonshine for a good piece. Meatball looked around frantically, as if seeking assistance. In the middle of the room the Duke di Angelis quartet was engaged in a historic moment. Vincent was seated and the others standing: they were going through the emotions of a group having a session, only without instruments. "I say," Meatball said. Duke moved his head a few times, smiled faintly, lit a cigarette, and eventually caught sight of Meatball. "Quiet, man," he whispered. Vincent began to fling his arms around, his fists clenched, then, abruptly, was still, then repeated the performance. This went on for a few minutes while Meatball sipped his drink moodily. The navy had withdrawn to the kitchen. Finally, at some invisible signal the group stopped tapping their feet and Duke grinned and said, "At least we ended together."

Meatball glared at him. "I say," he said. "I have this new conception, man," Duke said. "You remember your namesake. You remember Gerry."

"No," said Meatball. "I'll remember April, if that's any help."

"As a matter of fact," Duke said, "it was 'Love for Sale.' Which shows how much you know. The point is, it was Mulligan, Chet Baker and that crew, way back then, out yonder. You dig?"

"Baritone sax," Meatball said. "Something about a

baritone sax."

"But no piano, man. No guitar. Or accordion. You know what that means."

"Not exactly," Meatball said.

"Well, first let me just say that I am no Mingus, no John Lewis. Theory was never my strong point. I mean things like reading were always difficult for me and all—"

"I know," Meatball said drily. "You got your card taken away because you changed key on "Happy Birthday" at a Kiwanis Club picnic."

"Rotarian. But it occurred to me, in one of these flashes of insight, that if that first quartet of Mulligan's had no piano, it could only mean one thing."

"No chords," said Paco, the baby-faced bass.

"What he is trying to say," Duke said, "is no root chords. Nothing to listen to while you blow a horizontal line. What one does in such a case is, one *thinks* the roots."

A horrified awareness was dawning on Meatball. "And the next logical extension," he said.

"Is to think everything," Duke announced with simple dignity. "Roots, line, everything."

Meatball looked at Duke, awed. "But," he said.

"Well," Duke said modestly, "there are a few bugs to work out."

"But," Meatball said.

"Just listen," Duke said, "You'll catch on." And off they went again into orbit, presumably somewhere around the asteroid belt. After a while Krinkles made an embouchure and started moving his fingers, and Duke clapped his hand to his forehead. "Oaf!" he roared. "The new head we're using, you remember, I wrote last night?" "Sure," Krinkles said, "the new head. I come in on the bridge. All your heads I come in then." "Right," Duke said. "So why—" "Wha," said Krinkles, "sixteen bars, I wait, I come in—" "Sixteen?" Duke said. "No. No, Krinkles. Eight you waited. You want me to sing it? 'A cigarette that bears a lipstick's traces, an airline ticket to romantic places.' " Krinkles scratched his head. " 'These Foolish Things,' you mean." "Yes," Duke said, "Yes, Krinkles. Bravo," "Not 'I'll Remember April,' " Krinkles said. *"Minghe morte,"* said Duke. "I *figured* we were playing it a little slow," Krinkles said. Meatball chuckled. "Back to the old drawing board," he said. "No, man," Duke said, "back to the airless void." And they took off again, only it seemed Paco was playing in G sharp while the rest were in E flat, so they had to start all over.

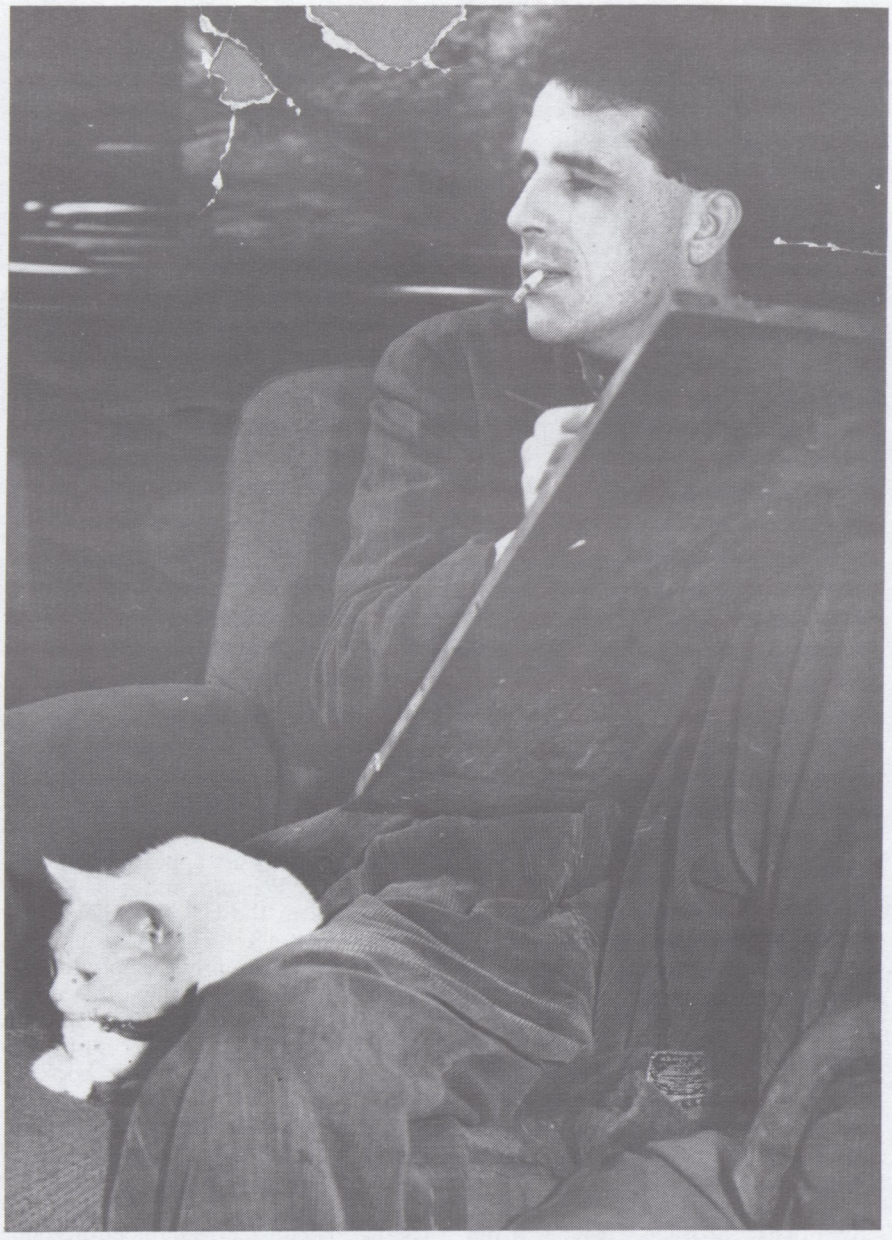
In the kitchen two of the girls from George Washington and the sailors were singing "Let's All Go Down and Piss on the *Forrestal*." There was a two-handed, bilingual *mura* game on over by the icebox. Saul had filled several paper bags with water and was sitting on the fire escape, dropping them on passers-by in the street. A fat government girl in a Bennington sweatshirt, recently engaged to an ensign attached to the *Forrestal,* came charging into the kitchen, head lowered, and butted Slab in the stomach. Figuring this was as good an excuse for a fight as any, Slab's buddies piled in. The *mura* players were nose-to-nose, screaming *trois, sette* at the tops of their lungs. From the shower the girl Meatball had taken out of the sink announced that she was drowning. She had apparently sat on the drain and the water was now up to her neck. The noise in Meatball's apartment had reached a sustained, ungodly crescendo.

Meatball stood and watched, scratching his stomach lazily. The way he figured, there were only about two ways he could cope: (a) lock himself in the closet and maybe eventually they would all go away, or (b) try to calm everybody down, one by one. (a) was certainly the more attractive alternative. But then he started thinking about that closet. It was dark and stuffy and he would be alone. He did not feature being alone. And then this crew off the good ship Lollipop or whatever it was might take it upon themselves to kick down the closet door, for a lark. And if that happened, he would be, at the very least, embarrassed. The other way was more a pain in the neck, but probably better in the long run.

So he decided to try to keep his lease-breaking party from deteriorating into total chaos: he gave wine to the sailors and separated the *mura* players; he introduced the fat government girl to Sandor Rojas, who would keep her out of trouble; he helped the girl in the shower to dry off and get into bed; he had another talk with Saul; he called a repairman for the refrigerator, which someone had discovered was on the blink. This is what he did until nightfall, when most of the revelers had passed out and the party trembled on the threshold of its third day.

UPSTAIRS, CALLISTO, helpless in the past, did not feel the faint rhythm inside the bird begin to slacken and fail. Aubade was by the window, wandering the ashes of her own lovely world; the temperature held steady, the sky had become a uniform darkening grey. Then something from downstairs—a girl's scream, an overturned chair, a glass dropped on the floor, he would never know what exactly—pierced that private time-warp and he became aware of the faltering, the constriction of muscles, the tiny tossings of the bird's head; and his own pulse began to pound more fiercely, as if trying to compensate. "Aubade," he called weakly, "he's dying." The girl, flowing and rapt, crossed the hothouse to gaze down at Callisto's hands. The two remained like that, poised, for one minute, and two, while the heartbeat ticked a graceful diminuendo down at last into stillness. Callisto raised his head slowly. "I held him," he protested, impotent with the wonder of it, "to give him the warmth of my body. Almost as if I were communicating life to him, or a sense of life. What has happened? Has the transfer of heat ceased to work? Is there no more . . ." He did not finish.

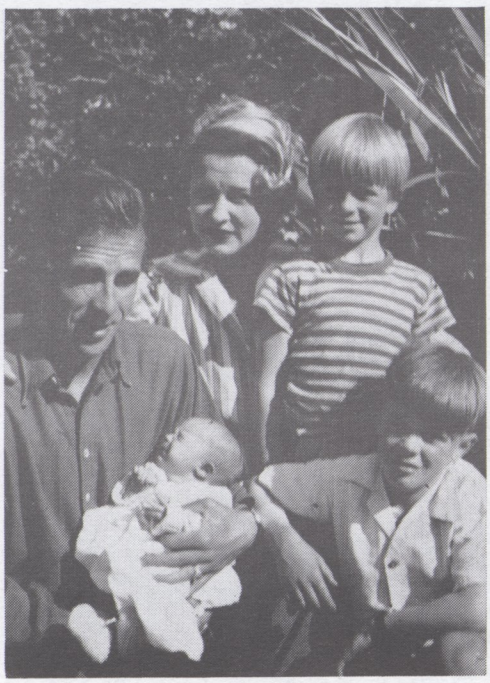
"I was just at the window," she said. He sank back, terrified. She stood a moment more, irresolute; she had sensed his obsession long ago, realized somehow that that constant thirty-seven was now decisive. Suddenly then, as if seeing the single and unavoidable conclusion to all this, she moved swiftly to the window before Callisto could speak, tore away the drapes, and smashed out the glass with two exquisite hands which came away bleeding and glistening with splinters; and turned to face the man on the bed and wait with him until the moment of equilibrium was reached, when thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit should prevail both outside and inside, and forever, and the hovering, curious dominant of their separate lives should resolve into a tonic of darkness and the final absence of all motion.

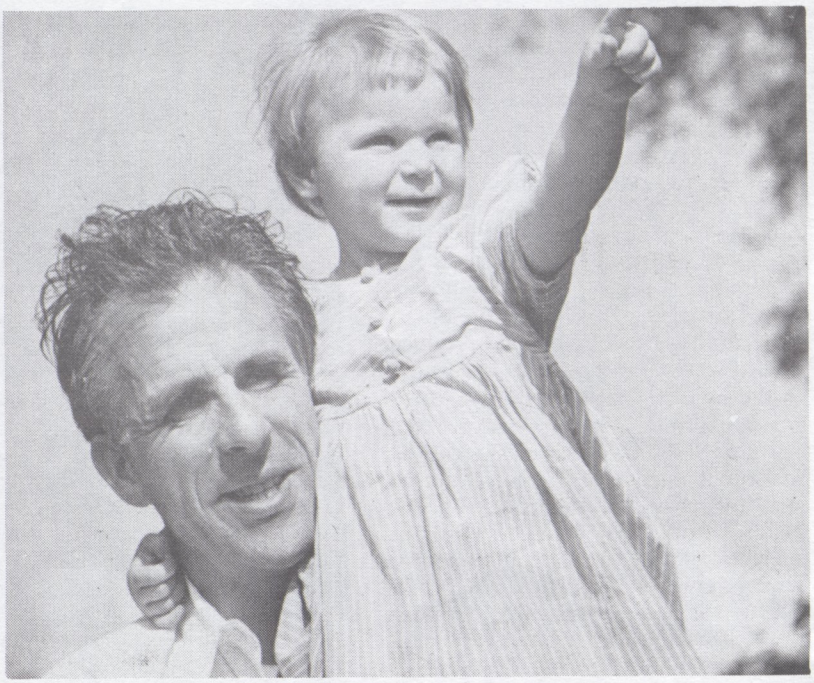


MERVYN PEAKE

MERVYN PEAKE DIED on November 17th 1968. He was fifty seven and had suffered from a disease similar to Parkinson's Disease for ten years. His last years were tragic and terrifying for those who loved him. The illness produced a gradual physical and mental decline and as his condition worsened the hope that many of us fostered, contrary to the medical evidence, that he would by some miracle get well and go on to write even greater books and produce even finer drawings and paintings began to fade. Then at the small establishment run by his wife's brother, James Gilmore, Mervyn Peake developed a haemorrhage and died peacefully and, as far as one could tell, happily, for his last months were spent with people who loved and respected him. I last visited him about a year ago and as usual for me the visit was pleasurable for although he could remember very little and could rarely finish a statement, his spirit and his sensibility (not to mention his sense of humour) remained and one's love for such a remarkable man could not be diminished by the superficial characteristics of his illness. One felt that he always remained aware of what had happened to him and at times when strangers patronised him it was possible to see a distinct glint of irony in his eyes. When I heard that he had died, I was filled with rage and then with bitterness. The bitterness, impossible to express now, remains, for Mervyn was a man who loved life and gave more to life than anyone I have ever known or heard about.

He was a man of great gifts and enormous generosity. His vitality was expressed through thousands of drawings and poems and through four novels and two plays. His vision was personal, unselfconscious and to do not with abstractions but with people, of whom he was a wry and sympathetic observer. What gives his *Gormenghast* books their power and quality is not so much their fantastic elements as their characters–the Count and Countess of Groan, Flay and Swelter, Steerpike, Fuchsia Groan, Irma Prunesquallor and Doctor Prunesquallor, the mad twins Cora and Clarice, Barquentine and a hundred others–who have bizarre names, certainly, but are as alive and credible as Dickens's finest creations. And it is with Dickens alone that Mervyn Peake can be compared. No other writer since Dickens has had the energy, the invention, the powers of observation, the capacity for rich and brilliant metaphor or the skill to control the flood of original invention, for one of Peake's most remarkable qualities was his craftsmanship, his control over the creations of his unique imagination. This control was observable in everything he drew and wrote. He is generally considered to be the finest illustrator of his day, perhaps his century, although, considering his talent, the commissions he received were comparatively few–*The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner, Treasure Island, Alice in Wonderland, Grimm's Household Tales* and *The Hunting of the Snark*–and not always as well paid as they should have been. His work overshadows that of any comparable illustrator and is remarkable where his portraits in particular are concerned, for their sympathy of observation and complete absence of sentimentality. Dozens of drawings could be mentioned: his portraits of children, his drawings of Belsen inmates, his sketches of Sark, Spain and all the other places he lived in or visited. And this is what made Mervyn Peake a unique and great artist, for although his imaginative invention was of the highest order, he was just as capable of cool observation. His talent was unmarred by any of the neuroses normally identified with artists of such intensity; he had no axes to grind, no messianic notions, no manifestos to justify his particular view of the world. Such things amused him and were often grist to his mill (the emphasis in the Gormenghast books, for instance, on ritual and the quest for power). He was concerned with the business of living, astonished by earnest discussions on the Nature of Art and Life, reduced to laughter by the antics of beaurocracy and politicians and, as his





old friend the Reverend A. C. Bridge told those who attended, would have been acutely embarrassed by his own Memorial Service which was held at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, on December 6th. Mervyn had a fine eye for irony and his work could often be sardonic, but there was no malice in him, no hatred—merely a considerable sympathy for the individual, particularly the underdog (whether his discomfort was physical or spiritual). In his amusement at Causes and Ideals, he might be thought to have had an innocence that some would call naive, but this amusement came much more from a maturity of outlook, an existentialist attitude, maybe, from someone who probably had no idea what Existentialism was supposed to be. Mervyn Peake had no particular political or religious convictions, no artistic convictions, in the ordinary sense, merely an outlook which was humane, tolerant and at the same time sharply observant, a craftsmanship that is rare in any age, and doubtless this is why critics could not 'place' him, why his work made many, whose attitudes have been conventionally moulded, uncomfortable or antagonistic, why the public took so long to 'find' him.

PART OF MY own bitterness comes from the fact that his work began to gain a larger audience, in England and the United States, towards the end of his long illness, when he was unable to enjoy the knowledge. For many years a few of us had been trying to persuade publishers to publish his work in paperback or bring out new editions and now they are beginning to do so. Eyre & Spottiswoode are issuing new editions of the *Gormenghast* books and they are appearing in paperback from Penguin in the U.K. and Ballantine in the U.S.A. while Allison & Busby, a new firm whose directors have long been enthusiastic admirers, will be publishing his only other novel, *Mr Pye,* as well as the long novella, *Boy in Darkness.* Allison & Busby also plan to bring out a new book of drawings and a book of poems.

Mervyn would have been humorously embarrassed if one had called him a Seminal Figure to his face, but there is no doubting the influence that he has had on a large number of young writers, perhaps even more from the point of view of subject matter and technique than of style. His outlook certainly had a considerable influence on what I think is my best work, and some of my early stories were nothing less than imitations of the *Gormenghast* books. His spirit lives on in those he has influenced, in his remarkable family who share many of his greatest virtues—his wife Maeve, his daughter Clare and his sons Sebastian and Fabian—and in his work which so often reflects his attitude to life. For instance, in this poem, published in the collection *The Glassblowers* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950):

To live at all is miracle enough.
The doom of nations is another thing.
Here in my hammering blood-pulse is
my proof.

Let every painter paint and poet sing
And all the sons of music ply their
trade;
Machines are weaker than a beetle's
wing.

Swung out of sunlight into cosmic
shade,
Come what come may the imagination's
heart
Is constellation high and can't
be weighed.

Nor greed nor fear can tear our faith
apart
When every heart-beat hammers out
the proof
That life itself is miracle enough.

And in one of his rare published statements about work *(Drawings of Mervyn Peake,* Grey Walls Press, 1949) he said: 'After all, there are no rules. With the wealth, skill, daring, vision of many centuries at one's back, yet one is ultimately quite alone. For it is one's ambition to create one's *own* world in a style germane to its substance, and to people it with its native forms and denizens that never were before, yet have their roots in one's experience.

'As the earth was thrown from the sun, so from the earth the artist must fling out into space, complete from pole to pole, his own world which, whatsoever form it takes, is the colour of the globe it flew from, as the world itself is coloured by the sun.'

Mervyn Peake did create his own world—a richly populated world—and he left it for us to enjoy.

Michael Moorcock

M. John Harrison: Trouble at t'White House

In the greener days of 'the Movement', Alan Sillitoe and Stan Barstow bled the sap of the post war class struggle, the initial impact of atomic neurosis, and the growing alienation of the factory worker to produce relevant, energetic novels. Their contemporary work, however, has the threadbare texture of their own early environment, because they have failed to keep pace: they continue to state problems that have long since mutated. Sillitoe's **Guzman Go Home** (Macmillan, 30s.), a collection of short stories, chews cud a decade and a half old.

Some of these stories are clever because they isolate and point up a facet of life; some are effective because they suggest a relationship, encapsulate a mood; one of them has a definite strength derived from simplicity and a folklorish sense of narrative absurdity. But the title story and showpiece—a mixture of first and third person narrative about an ex-Nazi—sags pathetically; it is maudlin, structurally imprecise and it says virtually nothing. *The Rope Trick,* Sillitoe's attempt to mate the junk-and-getaway scene to his obsession with Nottinghamshire, posits Greece as a suburb of Retford or Ollerton, creeping constantly out of focus to reveal cobbles, coal mines and dowdy old women in dun overcoats; 'good for nothing but a few black puddings' and apparently a facile way of camouflaging an old, old story. With the exception of the hilarious *Chicken,* **Guzman Go Home** is bread and butter pudding.

While Sillitoe bumbles sentimentally about the early fifties, Stan Barstow appears to have made it as far as the Industrial Revolution. **A Raging Calm** (Michael Joseph, 30s.) concerns an adulterous factory owner deprived by his wife's death of his prospects as a father-figure. He adopts the wife and family of a sickly lorry driver, becomes Uncle Tom, and fathers a daughter. The arrangement operates smoothly until the cuckold dies in a road accident and everyone has second thoughts. This might be the script for an upper cut *Coronation Street.* Barstow combines all the usual ingredients and stereotypes—the factory malingerer; the frank, stolid Northern wife; the young man learning sex up at t' University—without adding anything substantial of his own. The result is a piece of blunt Northern escapism.

Preserve And Protect (Michael Joseph, 35s.) by Allen Drury, is the fourth novel of a political tetralogy. The newly-elected president of the US dies in a Communist-effected air crash, 'robbed forever of his chance of glory by an Almighty Whose capacity for irony is quite a bit greater than men are willing to concede'. America is precipitated into a period of violence. Mr Drury visualises all liberals as neurotics and pawns of the radical front; all radicals as psychotics and pawns of the Kremlin; and all Communists as pawns of the Father Of Lies (whose capacity for irony isn't mentioned). Fair enough; but in his anxiety to make sure his polemic sticks, he distorts his characters and situations into hysterical self-parodies: Our White Haired President, invested 'in a simple log cabin, in a forest, by a lake'; the devils of the Press, consciously printing uncomplimentary photos of the right wing candidate; the candidate himself, the clean cut Orrin Knox. Drury's bomb plots and laser murders read like something from a farce about anarchists; his backgrounds are made of clapboard. His people are androids playing political charades, not men but mouthpieces for ten and twenty page tracts of ideological boredom. There wasn't much point in writing this in the novel form.

Suffering in Drury's journalistic landscape—without so much as an original image to alleviate the monotony—serves to heighten the impact of Vladimir Nabakov's **King Queen Knave** (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 35s.). The novel evolves from elephantine humour—in an opening made doubly interesting by Nabakov's matching of style and development to the rhythm of an accelerating train—through witty presentation of an urban love affair, to tragedy. Franz, the arch-typical bumpkin, comes to Berlin to take a job with Dreyer, his uncle; he is seduced by Dreyer's wife: their problem is to remove Dreyer while retaining his considerable fortune. From a plot as flimsy as an extended joke, Nabakov extracts regal whimsy and sad beauty —showing that slapstick is the agent of inexorable fate and Nemesis a punch line. His sympathy lies with Dreyer, who, like Pnin, is a harmless eccentric with an incisive intelligence blind-spotted by an introverted sense of humour, lover of drunken chauffers and odd inventions. His pleasures are childlike and appealing, his tragedy crushing. Nabakov is one of the most skilful writers of the century, and **King Queen Knave** is a remarkable book.

Geoffrey Household's latest novel, **Dance Of The Dwarfs** (Michael Joseph, 25s.), is a bland, pleasantly written suspense story set in South America. An agronomist, living and working on the edge of the Amazon rain forests, is found dead in the compound of his ranch house; Cuban-trained guerillas are blamed until his diary reveals his fascination with a particular local superstition. Household handles the diary form adequately, giving his hero the slight touch of smug self-sufficiency one associates with the professional hermit. There are moments of crisp humour reminiscent of Greene, especially in the portrayal of the revolutionaries. The suspense mounts powerfully—Household's technique must by now be the most well-oiled in this field of writing—and the fear element has a disturbing archetypal feel. He has tapped a strong mythos: the amorphous *duendes* move just off the periphery of consciousness. But on the whole this is very ordinary material, relying heavily on the National Geographic appeal of faraway places where the white man is but a brash child.

Crybaby Of The Western World (Macdonald, 42s.) is yet another pert modern myth. John Leonard leads the reader on a sour, erudite, satirical, sprawling young exploration of the American culture/commerce twilight, apparently unaware that this is strictly a tourist trip because other sour erudite young Americans have been visiting it for years. Leonard's Long Beach, California, abounds with characters like John the Ossified Man, Haruspex the gay motorcycle cop, and Svam Spade the mystic disc jockey: all of whom have a good basic grounding in Classics, a fair knowledge of Rimbaud and the symbolists, and a realisation that there is something wrong with society. This enables them to converse in Intellectual Puns and Literary References. There isn't much in the way of narrative; Leonard confines himself to a string of parables up to their eyes in surf and acid. Whether the point is **Freudian**—probably not, as the characters seem to give him a rough time—or Reichian or whatever, it is dependably deep, important and sincere.

The Floating Opera, John Barth's first novel, recently published for the first time in the UK by Secker & Warburg at 30s., is the story of a man who decides that life isn't even worth leaving. A weak-hearted lawyer with clubbed fingers and prostate trouble, he argues himself elaborately to the brink of suicide, his reasoning initiating a wry comic journey into his youth, which is spangled with spectacular failures. Unable to contain his sense of the ridiculous he unmans himself with laughter during his first

sex act; having finally opened communication with his father, he finds the old man hanging from a beam in the cellar; weak with fear during a first world war artillery barrage, he first befriends then kills a German soldier. Barth's flair for structure and technique—demonstrated to the point of preciousness in his later novels— enhances a gallery of grotesque characters and events. His continual use of the 'Dear reader' ploy is irritating.

To conduct a review of William Burroughs's **The Ticket That Exploded** (Calder, 42s.) in the space of two hundred words would be difficult and probably uninformative. Burroughs's folded image-complexes are subtle, beautiful and articulate. So, from the section entitled *'in a strange bed':*

> *The creature pulsed with translucent green light that flooded through the flesh in eddies—The head was a pointed dome that sprang from a slender neck on either side of which protruded gills like sensitive spongy wings —The creature was covered by a membranous substance with a network of transparent veins— The body surface was in constant motion like slow water dripping down a statue—The face was almost flat with lips and nose sharply and beautifully delineated and huge liquid eyes above the high ridged cheekbones the delicate structure of which shone through transparent skin . . .*

This book epitomises the work of a powerful literary artist, fascinating, multivalent and visionary.

R. Glyn Jones: The Death of Three Trees

Psychology is the 20th century superstition, invested in the popular mind with a peculiar aura of mystique. The reality is less magical and Penguin Books are regularly diminishing any magic that might remain with a series of rather earnest little works written by experts in their various specialist fields. While your intelligent layman can listen to the dogmas of a biochemist or an atomic physicist without much argument he will be more critical of psychological pronouncements which, after all, apply to himself—he may not have a thermonuclear reactor in the back yard but he will, infuriatingly, boast possession of a mind.

In his attempts to call the psychologist's bluff he might well, if he has an historical turn of mind, find himself reading **The Beginnings of Modern Psychology** by W. M. O'Neil (Penguin Books, 6s.), the first of a series of short monographs which will together make up the *Penguin Science of Behaviour.* And he will be taken on a lightning tour of those well-trodden philosophical roads that lead to psychology-as-we-know-it, with short pauses—perhaps a few sentences and a label to mark the spot—at most of the familiar landscapes. The danger with this kind of trip is that it can too easily degenerate into a tedious succession of names and labels: it may be possible to trace a thread of thought down the years, but when the same threads have already been traced so often and so thoroughly, the furious pace dictated by the enormity of the terrain and the brevity of the tour precludes any real understanding of what is happening *en route.* So we learn that although "Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) rejected the faculty notion, he accepted von Wolff's division of mental acts and passed it on to many of the philosophically minded psychologists of the late nineteenth century."—and that, incredibly, is all. As one of the most obscure and difficult of all philosophers, and one of immense originality and influence, he demands more than this throwaway sentence. But that's Kant.

Apart from making Professor O'Neil's book almost unreadable, this pigeon-holing approach produces some near-absurdities in the sub-headings for each tiny section. Hardly have we begun to read about, say, The Establishment of American Functionalism than we turn the page to find The Denouement of Functionalism—there is even a section entitled "A Significant Side Issue" (which turns out to be about hypnosis). I suppose that this is really a book for students or teachers of psychology and that, as such, its structure could be defended on the grounds that it will not be read from cover to cover but used mainly for quick reference. The biggest disappointment, however, is that a great opportunity was missed; the book could have been a useful addition to the classic texts on the subject had it attempted to bring them up to date and to review their arguments and their emphases in the light of what has happened in the last forty or so years. Instead the author was content to take a few quick looks at the different schools of psychology that emerged at the beginning of this century and then to call a lame halt. It seems that, for most historians of psychology, all the clocks stopped in 1925.

Psychologists themselves tend to be self-conscious about their science and spend a great deal of time trying to distinguish between different schools and systems within it. Perhaps the only true division, and certainly the biggest, is that between "hard" and "soft" psychology—the difference between a strictly empirical, experimental science and the practical realities of a society whose mentally sick are screaming for help. In **Asylums** (Penguin Books, 8s.) Erving Goffman seeks to set down these realities as he experienced them. The book consists of four long essays about different aspects of life in the "total institution," under which heading come boarding schools and colleges, monasteries, military camps, prisons, hospitals and the like, and illustrations of these are taken not only from the author's own studies and from clinical reports, but from literature too. The result is utterly convincing and often moving.

Confinement is necessarily degrading to the individual. In prisons and mental hospitals particularly, the inmates are deprived of those activities which, as it were, reinforce a person's humanity—things like taking decisions, spending money, making friends, and generally looking after oneself. What is alarming is that institutions take over these responsibilities so aggressively, and in the first of the essays Goffman describes these initiation procedures or "processes," as he calls them, "by which a person's self is mortified." Upon admission an inmate can expect to be deprived of his clothing and possessions—perhaps even his name—and to be examined, searched, measured, weighed, bathed, disinfected, classified and cut down to a size that the institution knows how to handle. Not that this kind of treatment is restricted to criminals and mental patients; witness St Benedict's Holy Rule:

> *Then forthwith he shall, there in the oratory, be divested of his own garments with which he is clothed and be clad in those of the monastery. Those garments of which he is divested shall be placed in the wardrobe, there to be kept, so that if, perchance, he should ever be persuaded by the devil to leave the monastery (which God forbid), he may be stripped of his monastic habit and cast forth.*

Whether the motive is punishment, therapy or abnegation the effects are clear enough: the inmate loses most of the props which support his individuality, his past becomes a dossier in somebody's filing cabinet, and his future is a prospect bounded by rules and filled with the uniformity of Standard Issue.

Goffman presents his information in an admirably clear and unsentimental manner but, perhaps because he is a sociologist and not a psychologist, he makes no attempt to solve any of the problems that he describes so well. His concern is, rather, to "understand" them by bringing out the features common to these diverse institutions: in this he succeeds well enough, but it is disturbing not to see more than occasional glimpses of the author's own face.

—Which is one of the few complaints that can *not* be made about Marshall McLuhan, the whizz-kid prophet of literature, communications, philosophy, psychology and practically any other subject you care to mention, whose books have by turns dazzled and infuriated us since they were published in this country a year ago. In **McLuhan Hot and Cool** (Penguin Books, 7s. 6d.) G. E. Stearn has collected various writings to produce what he calls a "McLuhan primer—a prologue to argument, a galaxy of opinion." The thirty pieces come mainly from "little" magazines, many of them American, and their authors span the intellectual scale from *kulchur*-conscious trend-mongers like Susan Sontag and Tom Wolfe to genuine unheard-of professors.

It is not so much a book about McLuhan as a document of McLuhanism and this is where its fascination lies, for whether you agree or disagree with McLuhan himself it is fascinating to watch all the strange creatures that come scurrying out from under the stone he has upturned. Part of the trouble is that his style is so infectious, resulting in a good deal of incoherence and bad punning on the part of the professors, and a lot of sheer nonsense from everyone:—

GEORGE STEINER: "As for Blake, McLuhan is his successor over and over again."

TOM WOLFE: ". . . the most important thinker since Newton, Darwin, Freud, Einstein and Pavlov?"

JONATHAN MILLER: ". . . his English is deplorable."

It is difficult to sympathize with McLuhan's apologists when they commit such excesses in his name and here, at least, the dissenters come out best. In his reply to his critics at the end of the book, McLuhan does little to resolve their differences. One of the book's best qualities is the sheer weight of information that it contains; to learn that McLuhan's idols include Chesterton, Joyce and Wyndham Lewis is worth several chapters of hysteria—print is too valuable for that. As William Blissett puts it:—

A BOOK IS THE DEATH OF A TREE . . . What is a T-V program the death of?

Peter White: A Scream from the Dorm

NOWADAYS THERE IS a tendency to regard surrealism mainly as a movement in painting. In fact, of course, its sources were literary. Antonin Artaud was in the inner circle of the movement; to dip into his **Collected Works, Volume One** (Calder and Boyars, 50s.) is to whirl backward through time to a lost and distant world. Those were the days before Art exploded into the mass media, when the cultural scene was a cloistered group, a small introverted circle of friends. One can picture the movements forming, the manifestos being written, the earnest young men squabbling, and the movements disintegrating. The echoes of distant feuds are heard in the book as early as the introduction, by translator Victor Corti.

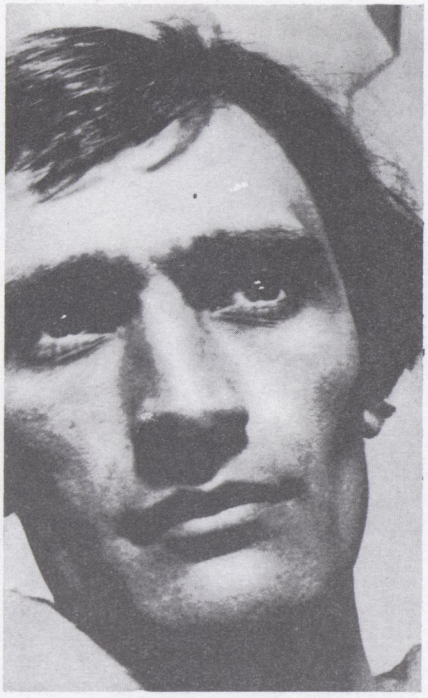
We are assured that Artaud never really was a surrealist, and that the work he did within the group was more personal; his own renunciation of surrealism comes in an essay titled *In the Dark, or, the Surrealist Bluff.* This takes the form of a fairly well controlled attack, which is unusual in view of Artaud's explosive spleen revealed when he attacks his other real or imagined enemies. An essay on Raymond Radiguet is a sort of literary assassination, full of phrases such as "(he) excels in making use of that little dash of talent nature gave him", while he interrupts a well argued attack on drug control laws to tell us, with schoolgirl shrillness, that a certain J. P. Liausu is not only an idiot but "furthermore is an ignorant freak".

If all this sounds perhaps a little odd, Corti's introduction tells us that "from Rivière on there was an inclination to pass Artaud off as talented but crazy". Furthermore, a doctor named Allendy, who tried to cure Artaud of his drug addiction by analysis, described him as a 'neuropath'.

Certainly Artaud's letters to Jacques Rivière, sparked off by the latter's rejection of some poetry submitted to the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise,* reveal some strange fancies—for instance, belief in an odd force inside his head which deflected his ideas before he could express them, making him inarticulate on any subject but his own sickness. And in this respect Artaud is certainly verbose. A letter to Mme. Yvonee Allendy is filled with fantastic complaints of incredible suffering: "The pains I endure beggar description . . . my limbs grow numb . . . violent spasms . . . spinal column full of cracks . . . brutal exhaustion . . . constriction . . . general ache . . . I am growing terribly worried. Kindest regards, A. Artaud."

The prose pieces in the collection include many products of automatic writing, which break out of the straight jacket of conventional literature onto a whole new plain of dullness, while to say that the poetry may have lost something in translation is probably unkind to Mr. Corti. The tremendous violence of Artaud's writing becomes merely monotonous because it is so rarely well directed; it is rather like William Burroughs without the fun, and the only piece I really enjoyed was his stirring attack on the narcotics laws: *The Liquidation of Opium.* Artaud himself maintains that Edgar Allen Poe exerted a strong influence on his writing, but the only derivation would appear to be Artaud's vehemence.

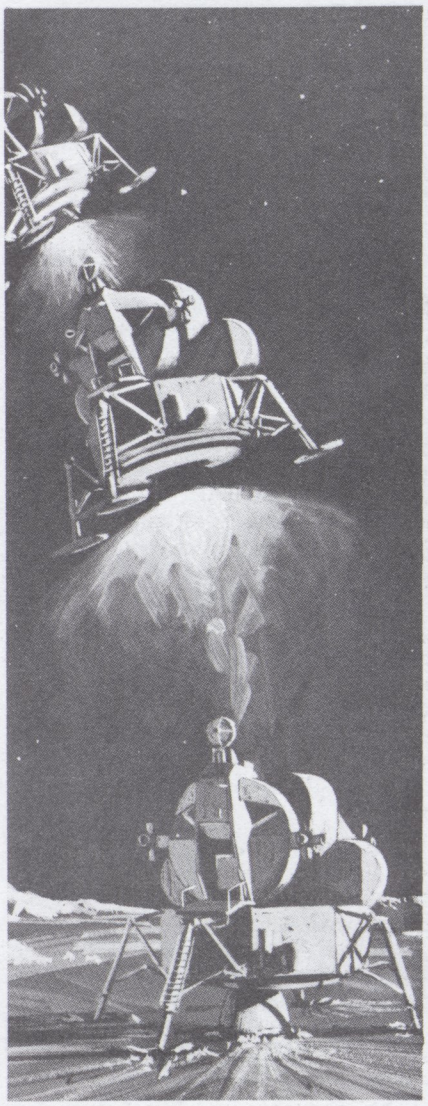
But with a book like this, questions of enjoyment hardly arise. It will be read only by serious students, and

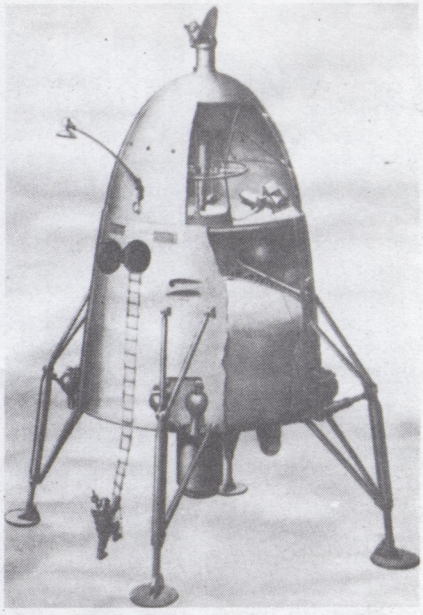


Antonin Artaud

serious students will seek other rewards. Besides, we must give him credit for being ahead of his time. A sort of aboriginal hippie, he took drugs, attacked both Pope and Church with tremendous violence, and vowed spiritual allegiance to the Dalai Lama. Perhaps strong criticism of him is also deflected by his own words, in a letter to Rivière: "We should never be too hasty in judging men. We should give them credit *ad absurdam,* right down to the last dregs."

Two Lunar Landing Modules pictured in Clarke's The Promise of Space. Left, *NASA 1968.* Right, *R. A. Smith, 1954*





Charles Platt: The Hard Stuff

READERS OF 1950s science fiction will remember with nostalgia the vignettes by Arthur C. Clarke which described, with strict attention to fact and logic, the steps that would be taken in the exploration of space. Somehow, despite the dry, matter-of-fact description, Clarke's near-future stories could never be read merely as journalism. They seemed more like romantic visions than views of a believable, everyday world.

With the fulfilment of the visions, their romance has vanished—displaced by the pragmatism of astronauts, the vocabulary of space hardware, the somehow unimaginative mechanical processes of Cape Kennedy. The satellite launch which would have rated headlines ten years ago is not even reported today.

But there is more than ever a place for Arthur C. Clarke. In many ways his new book, **The Promise of Space** (Hodder and Stoughton, 70s.) is more fascinating and stimulating than anything he has written before. At last, the ideas and predictions can be blended with present-day reality.

Commencing with the history of astronautics, Clarke gives interesting character sketches of the early pioneers. Lesser-known names are included, such as Interplanetary Society technical director J. H. Edwards, who in 1939 is said to have suggested the best way to test his design for a primitive 'inertial guidance' system would be on the London Underground escalators. There are many more similar anecdotes and out-of-the-way facts, such as the 'discovery' made independently by pioneers Tsiolovsky, Goddard and Oberth of a centrifugal drive similar to the 'Dean Drive' that was to preoccupy readers of ANALOG forty years later. (Naturally enough, the three men successively discarded the centrifugal drive idea, turning to rockets as a more workable form of propulsion).

Following the historical resumé, Clarke explains the usual questions of gravity, orbits, why the moon doesn't fall down and how he first thought of communication satellites in 1945. (It has been cynically suggested that Clarke has made more money, writing about the money he could have made if he'd been able to patent his comsat idea, than he would have made if he had been able to patent it).

From the theoretical explanations we move on to the most interesting section of the book—a chronicle of the early space shots, the failures and the heartbreaks, the occasional successes and the setting of new objectives. After a detailed description of the Apollo programme, Clarke uses the last third of the book for predictions. And, now that his dreams of twenty years ago have materialised, one looks at his remaining 'wild' ideas with more credulity.

Of course, this is mind-expanding and imagination-stimulating only in the hard-science sense. The insights and concerns are strictly into the field of space flight, travel and communications. The human implications tend to be ignored, and the justification for space expenditure (despite valiant attempts to list the 'spin-off' benefits that have already accrued) remains in the vein: "where would we be if Columbus had been stopped from discovering America by the expense of the trip?" I am not sure that this kind of analogy is entirely fair.

This is a great book for sf readers. I doubt if anyone but Clarke could have combined such authenticity, detail, clarity, breadth of vision and personal experience. Beautifully illustrated, it forms a good dose of the hard stuff in contrast with our tendency these days to look into inner space and ignore the other kind.

There's more hard science in **Pulsating Stars** (Macmillan 60s.), a collection of reprints from NATURE. But this science is hard in the sense that it's pretty difficult to understand. University graduates, and those who enjoy the texture and language of mathematics, will appreciate the strictly factual approach. Others might do better to keep abreast of the developments as they appear in popularised form in the newspapers, for example through the TIMES-NATURE news service.

This is an up-to-date and timely collection, even if, as yet, there is a lack of any definite overall explanation (as opposed to 'theories') to account for the behaviour of the recently discovered pulsars.

Reading laboriously through **Penguin Science Survey, 1968, The Physical Sciences** (12s. 6d.) inspires the same feeling of frustration well known to readers of the more popular science magazines. There are a lot of long descriptions of experimental work, prefaced by explanations that are verbose and largely superfluous, but pitifully little in the way of actual *discoveries.* The function of scientists should surely be higher than the laborious tabulating of phenomena, in the manner of short-sighted cartographers. Moreover, in a book like this, it is very hard for the layman to tell if the essays have any everyday practical implications. It ought to be the writers' function to make this clear at all times; and it is here that people like Arthur C. Clarke succeed so excellently, and contributors to the **Penguin Science Survey** fail so badly.

James Cawthorn: Next Year in Jonesville

Jones, to quote from Philip K. Dick's **The World Jones Made** (Sidgwick & Jackson, 18s.), is " . . . a man with his eyes in the present and his body in the past." In the post-World War Three America of some decades hence, Jones alone knows what the future holds and knows it with absolute certainty—for twelve months ahead. Relativism is the doctrine of the day, a reaction against the absolutist rulers supposedly responsible for the deaths of millions in past wars; Relativism does not tolerate the imposition of one person's ideas and standards upon others. The society bred of the war (and functioning remarkably well after being blasted with hydrogen bombs and assorted biological weapons) encourages such a doctrine, for a vast increase in genetic freaks has made the terms "normal" and "abnormal" largely meaningless. For Jones, however, there are no choices and no illusion of free will. His strange gift of foresight also includes the knowledge that his future cannot be altered. He sees the arrival of the drifters, titanic spores floating through space, and knows their implications long before the government broadcasts the news. It seems that the universe takes no account of doctrines, however idealistic . . .

The World Jones Made is an uneven book, perhaps weakest where Dick gives specific examples of Jones's minute-by-minute experience of the future, for it is extremely difficult to imagine how anyone can cope with two complete and *different* sets of sensory data simultaneously. At one point it appears that he sees only a partial vision of future events, while at another it is asserted that his experience is total; his memory of things to come is unsparingly complete, so that the act of living through them again in body becomes a wearisome recapitulation—and yet, he does not always remember details. Oddly enough, the novel survives such inconsistencies.

And so to the refreshing simplicities of ANALOG, which is backing, a little awkwardly, into the niche once occupied by PLANET STORIES. Or so the contents of **Analog 3** (Panther SF, 5s.) would suggest. The first of the eight stories, *Hilifter,* by Gordon Dickson, tells how Cully When, armed with an untameable grin and a few gadgets, attempts to hi-jack a spaceship. He reserves the untameable grin for use in really tight corners; the gadgets are expendable. There is a girl, and some talk of interstellar politics, but it is all pretty thin stuff. Poul Anderson, wearing his Winston P. Sanders hat, takes similar ingredients, adds a background of industrial pioneering in the Asteroid Belt, and shows just how this sort of material should be handled in *Industrial Revolution.* Together with Seaton McKettrig, whose witty revenge-fantasy for authors, *A World By The Tale,* shows how a professor inadvertently reaches the Galactic best-seller lists, he takes most of the honours in this collection.

Making up the balance are Clifford D. Simak's sentimental trifle about a retiring legal scholar who finds a fresh career, *New Folks Home; Sonny,* in which Rick Raphael resurrects the notion of hillbillies who possess psi-powers, and merely confirms that Henry Kuttner squeezed it dry in pre-ANALOG days; another angle on the asteroid pioneers v. corrupt Earthlings struggle, *Thin Edge,* by Jonathan Blake MacKenzie; Christopher Anvil's somewhat heavy-footed piece of technological horseplay, *Not In The Literature*; and an examination of the problems involved in repairing communications satellites, *The Trouble With Telstar,* by John Berryman.

Keith Laumer's name is rarely absent from the book review columns, and he is doubly present this month with **Assignment In Nowhere** (Berkley, 60c.) and **A Trace Of Memory** (Mayflower, 5s.). Both are typical Laumer adventure stories, with central characters who are in most respects interchangeable, and potentially interesting themes which are pushed aside to make space for the seemingly interminable slugging, hacking, balcony-scaling and general mayhem. Fast action can cover a multitude of loose ends, as Laumer has often demonstrated, but the technique has its limitations.

The Best From Fantasy And Science Fiction No. 13 (Panther SF, 5s.) opens promisingly with P. M. Hubbard's *The Golden Brick,* the tale of an encounter with a black ship that has something of the utter strangeness found in the sea-stories of William Hope Hodgson; it closes soggily with another helping of goo from the Zenna Henderson "People" series, *Deluge.*

Keeping them apart are eleven diverse pieces varying from the controlled cuteness of *Peggy and Peter Go to the Moon,* by Don White, to the orthodox approach of Felix Martn-Ibanez' *Nina Sol.* Collection editor Avram Davidson includes his own *What Strange Stars and Skies,* a mock-melodrama relating the odd events that befell Dame Phillipa Garreck in gas-lit London, which goes on a little too long. *Now Wakes The Sea* is J. G. Ballard at his obsessive best, creating one man's nightmare of a phantom ocean to which he must return. Alfred Bester reworks the last-man-and-woman-on-Earth situation as it's never been worked before, in *They Don't Make Life Like They Used To,* and Harry Harrison, Jack Vance, Karen Anderson, together with Ron Goulart, Richard McKenna and Ray Nelson make this, if not the best of The Best, a good five shillings' worth.

Devotees of the Isaac Asimov robot series will find eight examples in *The Rest Of The Robots* (Panther SF, 5s.), a sequel to the earlier Panther collection, **I, Robot.** In most of the stories, the United States Robot and Mechanical Men Corporation, aided (and sometimes opposed) by the formidable Dr. Susan Calvin, wrestle with the vagaries of positronic brains, the fears and prejudices of mere flesh-and-blood mortals when faced with several hundredweights of sentient metal, and the problem, as portrayed in *Satisfaction Guaranteed* and *Galley Slave,* of the robot which succeeds only too well.

Harry Harrison has edited a fascinating mixture of fiction and comment in **SF: Author's Choice** (Berkley, 75 cents), composed of thirteen stories selected by writers from their own work together with their reasons for writing (apart from money) that particular story at that particular time. Philip José Farmer's comments upon *Sail On! Sail On!* are little shorter than the story itself and demonstrate that fictional universes take rather longer than six Biblical days to create. *Sail On!,* set in an alternate medieval world where Roger Bacon heads the scientific section of the Church, reaches its peak with a description of radio transmission couched entirely in theological terms. *Judas Danced,* although written at least a decade ago, is still one of the most memorable things that Brian Aldiss has done; a future society devoted to the interpretation of history in ritual dance form, seen through the eyes of a cripple obsessed by the betrayal of Christ. J. G. Ballard's *End Game* is completely overshadowed by his brief, bizarre picture of the Shanghai internment camp where he spent three years as a

prisoner of the Japanese. Humour in science-fiction is analysed by L. Sprague de Camp and illustrated very satisfactorily with *Proposal,* while Frank Herbert provides a neat piece of problem-solving, *Missing Link,* for readers who aren't seriously irritated by characters who unravel the secrets of the universe during their coffee-break. Poul Anderson and Mack Reynolds touch upon some of the remoter possibilities of the East-West conflict, in *The Last Of The Deliverers* and *Retaliation,* respectively. Fritz Leiber integrates fact and fiction so skilfully as to make *Myths My Great-granddaughter Taught Me* and the accompanying account of his discovery of Norse mythology seem like halves of a single narrative. Add to the above list Isaac Asimov, Frederik Pohl, James Blish/Damon Knight, Katharine MacLean and Theodore Cogswell; this collection by no means represents the cream of their output, but it does offer a glimpse, retrospectively, of the author at work.

Space allows only a mention of **Orbit 3** (Berkley, 75 cents), edited by Damon Knight and featuring nine stories, and **A Far Sunset** (Berkley, 60 cents), Edmund Cooper's thoughtful novel of a space-travelling psychiatrist marooned upon a world ruled by a god-king.

Books Also Received:

Games People Play by Eric Berne (Penguin, 5s.) concerning the psychology of human relationships, is a sequel to his book *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (1961).

The Second IF Reader of Science Fiction edited by Frederik Pohl (Doubleday, 4.95) anthologises stories by ten authors, including Brian W. Aldiss, Asimov, and J. G. Ballard.

The Plateglass Universities (Secker & Warburg, 30s.) in which Michael Beloff considers England's seven new universities: Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, Lancaster, Kent and Warwick.

Brother Beserker (Macdonald) is another in the 'Beserker' series by Fred Saberhagen. Reaches his usual standard.

Hanoi by Mary McCarthy (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 25s.): a rather literary essay chiefly about Miss McCarthy's problems of sentiment in North Vietnam. Hanoi appears to be a place where American lady writers go to discover the extent of their compassion.

Mainly Academic by Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (Asia Publishing House, 45s.). Professor Iyengar is chiefly known as literary critic, but these lectures, delivered at various Indian Universities in recent years, are on more general topics, from Yoga to Agriculture, from Space Exploration, Racial Prejudice to Optics and the teaching of Law in Indian Universities.

The Bomb and the Computer by Andrew Wilson (Barrie & Rockliff, 30s.) charts the history of war games, and looks specifically at post-Bomb games involving computers.

Time Out (Secker & Warburg, 30s.) is a collection of stories by David Ely. In the title story, America and Russia attempt to restore to her original state a Britain accidentally destroyed by a nuclear explosion.

D.R.B.

A book's appearance in this column does not preclude its review in a later issue.

Apple Records Presents
Two Virgins
Yoko Ono – John Lennon
(Unfinished Music No. 1)
on Track Records

NEXT MONTH

Jerry Cornelius encounters Bishop Beesley, author of *Heroin: A Cure for Cancer?* and Doktor Karen von Krupp, the beautiful but sinister German dentist, duels with a helicopter in Derry and Toms Famous Roofgarden, keeps eminent personalities prisoner in a Ladbroke Grove convent, runs a blockade of American Navy Pirate Radio ships in his Phantom VI convertible and sees Zhazda of Okharna in a flooded Paris. This latest thrill-packed adventure of our ubiquitous hero is written by Michael Moorcock and is entitled, aptly enough:

A CURE FOR CANCER

J. G. BALLARD'S latest story shows Britain in the Vietnam situation with a brave band of Britons battling the braggardly might of the Yankee Imperialists.

THE KILLING GROUND

GEORGE MACBETH'S long poem describes the Horrors of Hiroshima in

THE HIROSHIMA DREAM

KENNETH COUTTS-SMITH, eminent art critic, discusses milleniarianism in art (among other things) in his article

THE FUTURE OF ART

Other contributors will include Charles Platt, Carol Emshwiller, Ron Padgett, J. J. Mundis, Marek Obtulowicz, Alan Passes, Leo Zorin, Graham Charnock and James Sallis with the second part of his long essay on modernist fiction.