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HERE'S THE NEW WAVE IN SCIENCE FICTION

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JUDITH MERRIL'S

England Swings SF

Stories of Speculative Fiction

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etc.



NEW WAVE SF

The most stimulating challenge that has come to science fiction writers recently has been the question of whether it is time for a change. The advocates of what is called the New Wave say yes. They insist that the "old" science fiction belongs to the past, is stereotyped, and no longer represents the whirl of modern times, the revolution of new thinking and the mind-tingling innovations that seem to be prevalent in all the arts these days.

The New Wave in SF—they prefer to call it Speculative Fiction—has its roots among the imaginative writers of England, most specifically around the magazine *New Worlds*, and a great deal has been coming from that source that is indeed different and surprising. Judith Merrill, an acknowledged authority on science fiction, has made herself the foremost American defender of the New Wave, and in this book *ENGLAND SWINGS SF* she has produced an anthology and a running, sparkling dialogue between its contributors and its editor on what they are doing to SF in England and why they are doing it.

Are the New Wave advocates correct? Is it indeed time for new forms and new approaches to imaginative speculative fiction? Has science fiction as we have known it really become moribund?

Here is the book which may be the turning point of that New Wave. Ace Books presents it because it is a work, a manifesto perhaps in the form of a group of most unusual SF stories, which everyone interested in science fiction ought to read. It will be a stimulating experience, whether you agree with Miss Merrill or not.

Ace Books, long the foremost publisher of science fiction in America, does not take any stand on this controversy. We have published and will continue to publish the best obtainable in all types of writing, from space-action adventures to the award-winning Specials, from the old "classics" to the best of the new collections of short stories. We reprint *ENGLAND SWINGS SF* not because we are in agreement or in disagreement with it, but because we think it is part of Ace's traditional service to science fiction.

Two quotes may be apropos. Josephine Saxton says, inside the book, "British writers are in the vanguard—one thing they do is make much American S.F. look old-fashioned."

Isaac Asimov said, outside the book, "I hope that when the New Wave has deposited its froth and receded, the vast and solid shore of *science fiction* will appear once more."

Decide for yourself.

—DAW

England Swings **SF**

Stories of Speculative Fiction

Edited by

JUDITH MERRIL

AN ACE BOOK

Ace Publishing Corporation
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are fictitious, and any resemblance
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Introduction

You have never read a book like this before, and the next time you read one anything like it, it won't be *much* like it at all.

It's an action-photo, a record of process-in-change,

a look through the perspex porthole at the

momentarily stilled bodies in a scout ship boosting

fast, and heading out of sight into the
multiplex mystery of inner/outer space.

I can't tell you where they're going, but

maybe that's why I keep wanting to read
what they write. The next time someone
assembles the work of the writers in this
—well, 'school' is too formal

. . . and 'movement' sounds preten-
tious . . .

and 'British sf' is ludicrously limiting—

so let's just say, the work of these writers
and/or others now setting out to work in
this way,

it will probably have about as much resemblance to this anthology as this one does to any other collection of science fiction, social criticism,

surrealism—BEM's, Beats, Beatles, what-have-you—

you have ever read or heard before. Meanwhile,

I think this trip should be a good one.

Judith Merrill

ENGLAND SWINGS SF

•

The island

□ ROGER JONES

*"I do not surrender to you,
I only wait."
(Stirner)*

There were three of them. They lived in the hut on the beach. Rastrick was in charge.

Very often Rastrick was not nice to the others. Particularly he was not nice to Minus. To Erg he was less nasty. Minus had a dog-like, passive, kick-inviting manner, which made him an obvious butt for Rastrick's unpleasantness. At the same time it made him rather an unsatisfactory target. Kicking Minus was too much like kicking a jellyfish: there was no resistance. This refusal to fight back angered Rastrick and he bullied Minus all the more.

Rastrick's comparatively humane treatment of Erg was part of the system. There was, if you like, a kind of hierarchy. Rastrick bullied Erg and Minus, but especially Minus. Erg also bullied Minus, especially when Rastrick was away. Rastrick encouraged this arrangement because it kept Erg happy and the status remained more or less quo at all times. Minus had no opinions, and no feelings to be considered.

Apart from their co-operation in the bullying of Minus, there

was another, more subtle bond between Rastrick and Erg. This was the knowledge, or at least suspicion, on Rastrick's part that Erg had seen him one night in the copse on the North Cliff.

* * *

As there was a hierarchy, so there was a routine. Both were necessary because Rastrick said so. Often. There were few things Rastrick said that he did not say often. And if Rastrick said a thing was so, then it was so. Because Rastrick had his information from the House direct.

On rare occasions in unbending mood, Rastrick would summon Erg and Minus to him and lecture them. These lectures usually took place in Rastrick's half of the hut, separated by a partition from the quarters shared by Erg and Minus. Seated at his table, the others standing opposite in attitudes of respectful attention, Rastrick would point out at length, in condescending and paternal tones, what he called the Facts of the Situation. Though life was not easy for any of them, there could be no doubt that it was better so. Where would they be without System, without Order? Where would they be without the Routine which was the living proof of the extent to which others were prepared to burden themselves with responsibility for every aspect of the daily lives of their subordinates? And was it not the rankest ingratitude to repay such selflessness with grumbling? Was not a measure of (menacing overtone) discipline a light price to pay for their relief from the mighty burden of care and worry—a burden which they themselves were so obviously ill-equipped to bear?

To these homilies Erg and Minus would listen in silence. They knew better than to answer Rastrick's highly rhetorical questions. They knew better than to try to follow exactly the logic behind the numerous and intricate arguments Rastrick used to drive home his points. And afterwards, in their own part of the hut, Erg used to go through the whole thing again for Minus's personal benefit. What he lacked of Rastrick's dialectical subtlety he compensated by a ready resort to violence. Erg maintained that this type of persuasion was especially suited to Minus's feeble intellect and inferior social status.

The House stood at the top of the Hill. It commanded a

view of the entire island except certain portions of beach which were concealed from the House by the cliffs which backed them. Rastrick went to the House once every seven days for orders. It was his habit to leave in the evening and return about noon the following day. The distance to the House was not great, but the Hill was steep and the one path rocky. The House seemed farther from the beach than it actually was; some trick of the light, combined perhaps with the angle from which they normally saw it, seemed to blur its outlines, almost blending it at times into the hard grey rock on which it was built.

The beach where they lived was in plain view of the House. There were no cliffs between the unseen watchers at the top of the Hill and the strip of sand with its jetty and the long hut which made up their effective world. Into the minds of the three men the idea of this constant surveillance to which they were subject had sunk over the years, until it was no longer a consciously formulated thought. But the knowledge was there, like the idea of breathing, and as permanent and as real.

Minus was not allowed to leave the beach. Erg went once every twelve days to collect wood from the other beaches and from the copse on the North Cliff, which was on the opposite side of the island. Erg was permitted, in the course of his duties, to enter the copse from the seaward side. At no other point might he leave the area directly bordering the sea. It went without saying that any divergence from his permitted sphere of activity could have been observed from the House. In which case . . . Erg preferred not to think about it.

Every seventh week the day of Erg's wood-collecting coincided with Rastrick's trip to the House. It was on such a day that, returning unusually late, Erg had seen Rastrick in the copse.

* * *

It was Erg's opinion that Rastrick's visits to the House must be the occasion of spiritual and perhaps even physical exertions of the very highest order on the part of their leader. It was difficult to interpret in any other light the apparent discrepancy between, on the one hand the obvious comfort of Rastrick's life on the beach, and on the other his repeated assertions that life was not easy *for any of them*. During the six days out of seven that

Rastrick spent on the beach his work was one hundred per cent supervisory. On the purely physical level it is no exaggeration to say that he never lifted a finger. The others waited on his every need. It was obvious, therefore, that Rastrick did his suffering when he was elsewhere: in other words, when he was up at the House.

This theory did not rule out the possibility that Rastrick suffered mentally and spiritually six days out of seven, but maintained a calm and carefree air in the presence of his subordinates. However, this was not a possibility which ever occurred to Erg, who was not personally given to the spiritual agony, awful sense of responsibility and so forth, which are the privileges of Command.

As a prop to his deductions Erg adduced: one—Rastrick's abnormally subdued manner and other signs of fatigue that could sometimes be detected in him on the day of his return; two—Rastrick's obvious lack of embarrassment at the total and glaring absence of manual labour from his daily curriculum.

Erg often expounded this theory to Minus during Rastrick's absence, or at night when they were alone in their bunks. Its premises granted, it was good theory and logically sound. Erg was particularly attached to it because it proved beyond all doubt the care and forethought which whoever arranged their lives had brought to the task, the equity which governed the allocation of duties and privileges. Yet the frequency with which Erg made Minus listen to his ideas on the subject, and the wheedling, half-hopeful vehemence with which he challenged him to mention any way in which things might have been arranged both differently and better, are difficult to explain. Perhaps the thought that once a week Rastrick had to suffer on their behalf seemed in some way a justification, even a motive, for Erg's own ferocious ill-treatment of Minus on the other six days. But what satisfaction Erg could have derived from the ready assent of the apathetic and insignificant Minus remains a mystery. Minus would say yes to anything if ordered to. Otherwise he said nothing.

Perhaps then Erg felt something lacking in these one-sided colloquies. Though right and necessary, it was at times just the tiniest bit regrettable that Minus had no opinions of his own, either on the discomfort or otherwise of Rastrick's personal

situation, or indeed on any other matter. There was something quite definitely unsatisfactory about Minus's willingness to say yes when told to do so; likewise, there was something not quite right about his failure to say yes when not ordered to do so. In other words, Minus was a poor conversationalist. It could hardly have been otherwise. Minus's occupation was not the sort which commonly attracts people of a high order of intelligence. Its daily performance neither required nor inspired those flights of pure intellect which might have made Minus a more stimulating companion on the spiritual plane.

Minus's main task (apart from such routine chores as cooking and waiting on Rastrick) was the polishing and arrangement of the stones on the beach.

The patterns for the arrangement of the stones were changed every week on Rastrick's return from the House. They consisted invariably of elongated rectangles interspersed with circles having a diameter exactly equalling the height of the rectangles. Squares, circles of the wrong size, triangles, and irregular polygons of all sorts were not permitted. There was, however, considerable variation from week to week in number and disposition of the orthodox rectangles and circles. Rastrick's supervision of Minus during the hebdomadal performance of this task was extremely close and demanding. Particular attention had to be paid to regularity of shape, rectitude of line and evenness of disposition. At such times a certain duality might have been observed in Rastrick's attitude to Minus and his task: sometimes he would jeer at Minus saying that so degrading and pointless an occupation was merely an expedient dreamed up by a benevolent authority to keep Minus busy and happy in the face of his total incompetence to perform any really useful function; other times, he would take extraordinary pains to impress on Minus the value and necessity of the job which was his lot. Without, however, actually specifying the precise function of the stone patterns; and this was something which Minus for his part had long ago stopped even trying to guess at.

Rastrick of course knew what the stones were for. He did not tell Minus, because as he said it was not necessary for Minus to know. Erg occasionally hinted that he himself was in on the secret. But on the few occasions Minus had plucked up the

courage to ask for enlightenment he had been met with violence, evasion or abuse.

Erg's job was the care and maintenance of the jetty. He completely repainted it on an average once every ten days. This accounted for the enormous supply of paint which was kept under tarpaulins behind the hut. There was no question about the importance of Erg's job. For it was to the jetty that one day the Boat would come, changing all their lives. But neither Erg, nor Rastrick himself, claimed to know exactly who or what the Boat was, or looked like, or what exactly would happen on that great day when at last the Boat came to them bringing . . . What? And indeed it was precisely these questions which formed the main topic of conversation between Erg and Minus. When there was any conversation. Which was almost never.

The reason for this paucity of amicable discourse lay in the different natures and social positions of the parties involved. Also in the seldomness with which a desire for conversation on the part of one coincided with a like desire on the part of the other, and/or with a suitable opportunity for mutual indulgence. Also in that fact that Minus's part in any conversation was restricted, for reasons detailed above, to a mere handful of mandatory yeses.

These factors combined to keep sapient colloquy to a minimum.

The redistribution of the stones according to the new pattern for the week seldom took more than a day, even with Rastrick at his most demanding. The remainder of his working time Minus spent in raking the beach around the stones to keep it smooth and free of debris; and in polishing and arranging in piles according to colour, shape and size his reserve supply. These were aspects of Minus's work which Rastrick seldom deigned to oversee in person. Thus, during a considerable portion of his waking life, Minus was left free to pursue his second, secret, invisible and totally unguessed-at occupation.

Minus's other occupation was: cerebration or thinking.

* * *

Scene—the hut; time—night. Erg snoring. Minus snoring. Muffled snoring from Rastrick's quarters. Rastrick and Erg asleep. Minus not asleep but awake, thinking.

Minus knew without realising it that the people most likely to get the right answers are the people who ask the right questions. In subconscious accordance with this principle Minus had formulated the following questions which he considered to be pertinent to his situation: (1) Who lives at the House? (2) Are there more than one of him? (3) Supposing Erg is not lying, what was Rastrick doing in the copse? (4) How soon is the Boat coming? (5) And then what? (6) Why do the stones have to be changed so often? (7) Why is Rastrick so nasty? (8) Where can I find the answer to these questions?

Minus called this his Short List. That is, it was a list of questions from which he had eliminated, over the years, (a) all questions too nugatory to deserve serious attention; (b) all questions to which he already knew the answer; (c) all questions whose solution would automatically be implied in the solution of another question.

Minus was fond of his Short List. After the long years of weeding and pruning the survivors were all old friends. Sometimes, however, he wondered if he was applying the standards of group (c) with sufficient rigour. Question (2) for example, was definitely suspect from this point of view. But he had developed a certain affection for it after so long, and so he let it stand, despite vague misgivings. Besides, Question (2) was involved so closely with Question (1) that it would have been very difficult to say which was the more expendable. And attempts to combine the two questions in one—e.g.: Who and how many live (?lives) at the House?—left a lot to be desired.

On this particular night and at this particular time Minus was giving particular attention to Question (8), it being a Thursday. He usually did it that way—one question a night. It was a good system; from it Minus reaped the benefits of methodic and orderly enquiry, while avoiding the monotony of always thinking about the same question on the same night of the week. This consideration, too, had weighed heavily on his decision not to reject Question (2) or combine it with Question (1).

Minus stopped snoring.

Rastrick and Erg continued to snore because they were still asleep. Minus had stopped snoring not because he was awake, for, as has already been explained, he was awake before. He

stopped because on this particular night at this particular time he realised rather suddenly that, if he knew the answer to Question (8), there was a ninety per cent chance or better that all other questions would be reduced to child's play and mere worn out superfluities. He began to snore again, more thoughtfully.

Perhaps five minutes later the snores stopped for the second time. Minus had realised another thing. He knew the answer to Question (8).

When his snores resumed this time they were real snores.



The ground under his feet was grey and black in the moon. There was a cicada singing somewhere in the grass. He could hear his own breath and the sound of his feet on the steep path. He could hear the sea, quieter than he had ever heard it. He went up without pausing until his breathing began to hurt and, looking up, he saw the lump of the House above him not fifty yards away. Then he stopped and rested, his head down, putting his hands on his knees to take the weight off his spine. When he felt better he raised his head and looked again. The walls were silver-grey and the windows thick black holes. No light came through those windows, and no sound. He straightened slowly and went on.

He found a doorway, but no door. He peered and listened. Nothing. He took from one pocket a candle and from another matches. He lit the candle and went in.

There was only one room: it occupied the whole interior of the house. There was quite a lot of furniture. Most of it—bunks, tables, chairs, shelves—was made of some light, shiny metal, which showed no traces of rust. Other things—wood, paper, cloth—had succumbed wholly or partly to age, rot and the work of animals (rats or ants or both), and crumbled to dust and splinters. Dominating the centre of the room and reaching to the ceiling was a box of the same shiny metal about twelve feet square. It had a number of little glass windows and many rows of knobs and buttons. There were several similar but much smaller boxes bracketed to the walls in different parts of the room.

He shuffled slowly about, bending now and then to peer at

something on the floor. Dust had laid a uniform blanket of grey everywhere which swallowed his footsteps like sand. There was a smell in the place, unfamiliar and strong—like mushrooms perhaps . . . He couldn't place it.

His inspection completed, he stood still in the middle of the room leaning his back against the metal casing of the machine, and digested the information he had so far. The answer to Question (1) was: nobody. The answer to Question (2) was: seventeen.

Minus had never seen a skeleton before but he knew what a skeleton was, and that these were skeletons. Seventeen of them. Most were lying on the bunks; two or three were clustered in a heap at the foot of the machine; one was sitting at a table as though it had gone to sleep there with its head on its arms—and never woken up. Mixed with the dust and bones were small pieces of clothing and equipment—belts, boots, buttons, a pair of spectacles—which had not perished. Minus stooped and picked up a button from the floor. He blew on it then rubbed it on his sleeve. He held the candle close and peered. The markings on it meant nothing to him. It was familiar enough, though. He had the same buttons on his own clothes. So had Erg; so had Rastrick.

His fist closed tight around the button and he stood still for a few moments, thinking. Then he went out. In the doorway he paused long enough to blow out the candle and throw it down on the floor. It sank into the dust as though returning to its rightful place.

His way took him, not back to the beach, but further away from it. He walked like a man asleep, looking straight ahead with eyes that focused on nothing. His arms hung loose at his sides. Occasionally he stumbled on a stone or some unevenness in the rough path; but he never looked down. It seemed as if nothing could have interrupted that dead, purposeful walk. He moved fast. Before long he could hear the wind in the twisted fir branches of the copse; and the sea, much louder now as the waves arched and smashed themselves on the rocks far below at the foot of the cliff. The sound of the wind was hopeless and sad; the sound of the sea was angry. Both found an echo deep inside him in feelings long suppressed, hidden even from himself, but which boiled up now with every step he took.

He had never been here before, but his walk never slowed or faltered. A few moments and he was in the trees. Still he moved straight ahead, turning his head from side to side now as he went, hunting. The trees cut off some of the moonlight, but his eyes quickly adjusted to the deeper shadow. The copse was not large. He soon found what he was looking for, in the place where he knew it must be.

Rastrick was standing immobile at the very edge of the cliff, where the trees opened out onto nothing. His face was to the sea. Minus saw him and made a sound that was half sob, half shout. Rastrick heard it and turned. Minus stopped about ten feet away. For a long moment the two men looked at each other. Something on Rastrick's face glittered in the moonlight. Tears. He had been crying. He stared dully at Minus. There was no surprise in that look, only a kind of hopeless resignation. He made no attempt to speak. It was Minus who broke the silence. He had almost to shout to make himself heard over the wind and the waves.

"Rastrick. I have some questions . . ."

As he spoke he brought up the hand with the button in it and thrust it towards Rastrick. Perhaps Rastrick interpreted the gesture as a threat. He took a step back and fell out of sight.

Minus crawled to the cliff-edge and looked over. He had no trouble identifying the dark form printed on the pale rock below. On a boulder which jutted above the reach of the swirling water Rastrick was spread like a victim on an altar. His head had opened like a tomato and from it a dark stain flowed to meet the greedy sea.



When Minus got back to the beach the stars were beginning to go out. He went into the hut and lighted a lamp. Erg lay in his bunk where he had left him, and could be counted on not to move. He was lying on his back with his mouth open. The wooden handle of a breadknife protruded from his throat just below the Adam's apple, and the point of the knife was an inch deep in the wooden boards which took the place of a mattress. Minus looked down at him without expression. There was a great

deal of blood; already some flies had found it and were buzzing and wading about contentedly.

Minus put the lamp down on the chair and with a sudden awkward movement he jerked the blanket up to cover Erg's head. Under the blanket the knife-handle still stuck up grotesquely. Leaving the lamp where it was, Minus turned and went out. The door closed very quietly behind him.

He went down the beach, walking like a tired machine. He came to the stones and began to break up the patterns with his feet and kick sand over them. There was something curiously disdainful in his heavy, deliberate movements.

When he had finished he walked very slowly out to the end of the jetty and sat down to wait.

The sun came up out of the sea.

ROGER JONES . . .

. . . lives in London, works part-time as a teacher of English to foreigners. "The Island" was his first published story, in *Science Fantasy* in 1965; one other appeared in *Impulse*, and his poetry has been widely published in British 'little magazines.'

. . . *Works, unpublished*: film scripts, translations, handbook of English grammar . . .

Interests: wide, include military history, linguistics . . .

Born in 1939, Jones was educated at public school and at Oxford, topped off with a spell on the now-famous 'Liverpool Scene' (Doubleday Original Paperback, 1968), which produced not only Beatles and other rocking stock, but a whole roll of exciting young artists, poets, and writers—among them Johnny Byrne and Thom Keyes, who with Jones now form a sort of talent triumvirate, sharing an agent, a large Chelsea flat, and long smoke-filled sometimes-collaborative work nights. (Like Jones, Byrne and Keyes came in contact with science fiction through Kyril Bonfiglioli, then editing *Science Fantasy* in Oxford. Byrne's "Yesterdays' Gardens" was included in 11th Annual *Year's Best SF*; Keyes' 1966 novel, *All Night Stand*, is now being filmed in Hollywood.)

. . . I think that the thing sf can do best is to tell us about the world as it is now. I like a good nut and bolt story (Clarke); I like the gloomy Becketty mythology of Ballard; but most of all I like the kind of thing Vonnegut seems to be trying to do. Sf, of course, doesn't have a monopoly on this kind of serious lunacy (an inadequate phrase)—Heller, for example, does the same thing better. But there's enough original, intelligent and well-written stuff around to make me as sanguine about the immediate future of sf as I am gloomy about that of the world at large.



Ne déjà vu pas

□ JOSEPHINE SAXTON

I know why, though people call God 'He', they attribute to Him no sex. I know why the greatest obscenity I ever saw drawn on a wall in mauve chalk was 'Pussy for God'. I should know, because I am the beginnings of God. I am the pathless electrons that will find a path and pattern and form themselves into the Word. At least, that is what I think will happen, and I have plenty of time to think about it, here.

But I wane, I wane; I *am* less and less, and what is left of me to be glad, is glad. It has been a long time, and the word 'time' causes me to laugh, and the sound falls flat to me, though some sensitive may hear, and turn back to town convincing themselves that today it will rain, and a walk in the mountains will not be congenial, and suppress the shadow of my soft mirth, shiver and deny. Like God I am utterly lonely, and like God I am the spirit of unrequited love, and my transparent tears wet my cheeks that in time (and I hear myself laugh again) will also be transparent, to myself as well as to them, the perverted hordes of Agemo, and that will be when I become the seeds of a deity, perhaps a female God this time, and I shall not know it; I shall be the Unknowingness. But they will know, will feel, and burn offerings; the insubstantial smoke may reach me, and shall I be able to stretch out my hand to help them?

I catch the tail end of my insane thoughts more and more these days, and wonder if perhaps my longed-for end begins with my psyche. Who that knew me long ago and heard me speak like this would not murmur 'psycho' and avoid the lure of my gorgeous eyes?

How did I arrive in this place? Oddly enough, by starship. How long did the journey take? About a millionth of a second, if my journey took any time at all (I cannot help laughing at the word 'time', but at the time, I was not counting.

I was sitting quietly in the cabin of my ship, *The Heroine*, smoking and sipping coffee, and then I was here. How long have I been here? Aeons, many aeons. And no time at all.

Before I became what I now am, I was known as The Kitten, being female, young, and full of curiosity; a space pilot, running my own ship, a supermodel given to me by my father for my eighteenth birthday. I was known for making long trips, breaking rules, records, and hearts. I wonder how much I was missed back there; they must still suppose me a decreasing dot on a none-horizon, somewhere in the empty edges of space, an example of why the Company forbides any ship to set off from any planet in star system Zero, in the direction of Out.

You can imagine that to a person of my temperament, that one unbreakable rule was a challenge. Everything had been mapped, everyone had been everywhere, we had had it all, explored the lot, nowhere else to go, nothing new to see; this is the limit. That would not do for me, I was insatiable for new experience; if there was nothing there, then I wanted to see it.

There were many rivals for the title of 'farthest star system' counted from Old Earth, but I think Zero had it over the others for the real sense of Last Outpost, because not only was it as far as one could go in one direction, it was a whole lot farther from any other system than any place in the universe.

I liked it there, on the dark side of the farthest planet; obviously Omega by name; being young, I found a curious joy in gazing at the empty sky, alone at night, contemplating blackly on the mystery of exactly how much Nothing there might really be; wondering how far it was before Something Else would manifest—I could not endure or hold the thought of Nothing forever, whatever our scientists said.

That side of the planet was sparsely colonised; people are fond of starlight, and they like their horoscopes read regularly and scientifically. No stars, no horoscope. No hormone reaction to any particle, no influence in the forebrain from any personal star, or other cosmic force—there is no comfort in that. But I spent a lot of time in that unloved place, and took off from it, in the direction of Out, in my fabulous ship, and I had enough reserve energy in it to take me on a trip as long as the diameter of this vast, and vast is a small word, Universe. If I had not had some energy shots myself I should have blacked out with excitement that dark evening, and the Kitten would never have made the trip. As it was, I took every precaution against accident. I was young, but not a hazardous fool, and I made the take-off, just like that, sitting in my upholstered chair, smoking and sipping coffee.

I was waiting, rather bored, watching the light-years tick off on a meter, having travelled a fantastic distance already, telling myself that I should have a long wait before anything of interest appeared, or happened. One moment I was gazing out of my window at nothing, and the next I was seeing a mass of bright points, and was no longer bored. I was rigid with interest, because suddenly seeing something, where nothing was, in a place like that, knowing what speed you are moving at, that you have not been asleep, and that a first view of some distant galaxy would not happen as suddenly as that, it is interesting, and alarming. It interested and alarmed me more, therefore, when I came to realise that what I was then approaching was Zero, and that the nearest planet was Omega.

Had the ship turned tail on herself, succeeded in not disintegrating in the manoeuvre? I knew it was impossible, and could make no sense of the instruments. They had ceased to function. With a chilly calm I went and sat down, taking more coffee, and a cigarette, and remained attentive, hoping that something relevant would occur to me. Nothing did, but I thought: "You are probably having an adventure, stay with it."

The whole experience had about it a taste of the *déjà vu*, and I relished that, but, nervously sardonic, muttered: "I do not wish to go where I have been before, what a bore, Kitten, what a

So I sat and smoked, and drew near to Omega, and alertly identified myself with a careful landing without instruments, and prepared to be laughed at by those few friends I had informed of my strange intention to journey Out. It would not be pleasant, telling them I had simply arrived back where I started, like a sentient boomerang, and that I could not explain how it had happened.

Disembarked, I walked across the familiar touchdown of tiny ruby spheres that rolled beneath my high-heeled boots, and casually sidled into the dining area; sat down to study the menu before ordering. I did not speak to anyone but peered over my menu card at the diners, and saw no person I knew, although many of them seemed familiar, in a way I could not formulate. Had I known how things were, the whole scene would have fallen into place in front of me; as it was, things did not really register at all. I was dazed and cossetted by the merciful blindness of shock. Just as I was trying to read the menu card, which did not make sense, I became aware of someone trying to attract my attention. I ignored him, but he came nearer, and peered over the top of my card, urgency apparent. On the card I read:

.esiannoyam nogarrat dna yrelec, tunlaw

.egnaro dna noino, evilo kcalb

YADOT ROF SDALAS

The man was a stranger, not a friend come to crow over me in my failure, but I was in no mood for love, beautiful as he was; it always annoyed me to be presumed eager by strangers. I raised an eyebrow at him, but as I looked into his face, I knew that what he had to say was extremely important, and that I must go with him.

"Come with me, trust me, do not touch anyone else," he said simply, and I obeyed. There was no other course to take; I already had a feeling of fate being enacted. I put down my menu card, and without looking round me I allowed myself to be led by him out of that dining area, across the rubies, and away from the town and up to the mountains. I recognised one of my favourite places, although it seemed oddly changed, and we sat down together. As I looked up at the darkening sky I thought, but not too bravely:

"Stay with it, Kitten, this is news."

My new friend was a beautiful creature with an intense way of looking at me with his dark eyes, and a sense of humour, but what he began by degrees to explain made tears pour down my face. The Kitten did not cry much, but she was not tough. It was something best left to those with atrophied emotions, toughness, and so I wept, and he wept also for my harsh discovery, for when he began to tell me the essence of the situation, I panicked, and flung myself on him, wanting to make love and pretend he had not spoken, but he held me away from him by the wrists and begged me to take stock of myself. I found that as a man, I did not want to make love to him, even if his name was Rachel.

"All that will fade soon, it is the imprint of your own shadow on you, that is all," he said, and I merely mouthed to hold the shadows of my own emotions, which felt real enough to me.

On that first day, sitting on the hillside, he did not tell me everything; or if he did, my mind did not absorb it properly. I remember how he began, though, looking at me for reactions, by starting something of a philosophical discussion in which I refused to join.

"Black white, positive negative, Ying Yang, day night, male female, god devil, Heaven Hell, this that, always the complementary, the other side of the coin."

"What of it?" I said, numb and drowsy.

"What of it? What between them?"

"Alright, I know, I'm in the negative half of the Universe." I was blasé, drugged by a numbing of fear.

"No, not exactly."

"Where then?"

"We are in the net of an insulating strip. And that's enough for now. Rest with me, let us be quiet together, and think about what I have said."

So I did, gladly, and existed in a kind of blankness, wrapped in his arms for several hours. When I awoke, there was a figure coming up the hall towards us. Rachel warned me not to touch the person if he or she came near.

"Noli me tangere," I muttered, and saw a spasm of pain take

his face for a second. Information was correlating itself into something like a sensible pattern in my mind, but still the barrier of shock kept it from making plain what I already began to know for fact. The stranger approached us; a middle-aged woman, perhaps fifty or more years old. There was something very familiar about her, but I could not decide what.

Rachel stood and guarded me from this woman. He looked apprehensively from one to the other of us, and I could not understand why. He and the woman exchanged a few words in a foreign language, and then she ignored him, and turned to me. She stood and stared at me with a terrible personal hatred in her eyes, and spoke, almost unable to make words because of the rage and frustration in her.

“uoY llik dluow I, elbissop erew ti fI .pihs nmad ruoy ni htob su ot gniht elbirret siht enod evah uoY .emit siht revelc oot erew uoY .uoY—uoY uoY”

She and I stared at each other for some moments, and I have never felt the effect of such loathing and hatred; it came at me like physical waves, something extremely nasty beamed at me with purpose.

The woman turned and walked away, but uphill, past us, and I never saw her again, except as a shape in the distance. I cannot contact her; understandably she wants nothing of me. “So,” I said to Rachel, “we are in the area separating the two halves of time and the universe, the strip that stops the explosion of all explosions. And I take it that our position is immutable.” I felt deadly calm suddenly; the confrontation with the force of hatred had sobered me, I felt ready for anything.

“That is why we must not touch the beings from the positive and negative worlds. Because the particles would mutually annihilate.”

“That’s it, more or less. But you will see no more of the positive universe—you came from it, you face away from it, you cannot turn. If you could turn, then you could go home, and so could Nettik Eht.”

“Who?”

“Your counterpart, the woman you just met. She was a young man of fifty-two, with a great career before her as a

geologist, and you, by arriving here, have pulled her out of her correct place in time. Little wonder that she hates you."

"Oh God," I said. When I think of that comment now, I want to laugh again. God. She and I both, perhaps.

So, certain that in every respect except ability to participate in the other half of time, I was my own negative, I wept, and knew that my counterpart was in a similar condition, and that there was no way out for either of us. Rachel told me that he had spoken with Nettik Eht before coming to fetch me. He had been out on the hillside replacing rock specimens for his geology class, and had then become aware that something strange was happening, had met Rachel, and then, when told that I must have been the cause of her being in this trap, had gone mad with hatred and sworn revenge. She had run to the touchdown, but Rachel had followed her, prevented her from harming anyone—she could not of course harm me, for here there is no death, and that had increased her inactive fury. She and I were and are outside the two opposing streams of time, and can therefore do nothing but wait. For what? For the end of time? There was once a philosopher who said, 'Time is the Unique Subjective'. That does not give me a way out, but it is a curious consolation.

I look out of my sealed strip of not-time at the inhabitants of Agemo, watch their antics, although the novelty of seeing the backward-running half of Omega unwind and recharge itself, ready to go forward again, birth to death, birth to death, each being facing both ways like a mask of Janus, has long since palled. But I have watched one particular girl thirteen times as she travels backwards through her world of logical madness, and any day now she will take what she believes to be her first walk up this mountainside, and then I shall see her for the fourteenth time. Each of her lifetimes she disappears from my longing eyes as a babe, but by the time I see her as a nubile child she is at least sixty-five years old, which is why I describe my case of love as hopeless. Yes, I said 'love'. For fourteen lifetimes I have watched and wanted her, and for fourteen lifespans have waited for her while she lives out her time in Omega, unseen by me. If that is not love, then it must have another name, meaning 'more than love'.

In those first years here I watched the inhabitants of Agemo

marvelling, and dreamed and surmised what was happening in Omega, wondering greatly on what progress had been made. Over fourteen lifespans, things must have changed as much as in Agemo, where discoveries are being lost all the time. When Agemo is reverted to its primitive state, I shall still be here, or shall I? But apart from the danger of contact with people, I grew tired of watching, and horrified at myself in the guise of voyeur, and felt revulsion for them in all their logical backwardness.

In the normal course of events, had I died on Omega I would have arrived properly fixed in the negative side of time, born from some funeral pyre or risen from some dusty grave, shaken aside the tear-stained ribbons of my death, and moved through my inevitable life as a male, towards my birth-death, to appear once more as The Kitten, a new baby, having devolved into the waiting seeds, slipped into conception through the only doorway in time through which it is possible to pass whole and unharmed. On both sides they know that theirs is the right way to live a life. Both peoples say equally, 'A rose is a rose is a rose'. It is my habitation that makes it possible for them to exist at all; never was insulating material and anaesthetic so effective.

So I remain here on the mountain, avoiding the sight of people I knew growing younger, shedding their grey hairs, shortening their foreheads, regaining their virility, heading for the blank Nirvana of babyhood, ending their lives in the nurseries of ancient infants who need more and more care, reject the spoon and cup, suckle and disappear, following the placenta into caves of death. Their mothers smile mysteriously and say one day to their proud husbands:

"raed ym, erom yna tnangerp ton ma I, enog sah tI"

Haunting the mountains, we two kinds of ghost give rise to legends, and my timeless time passes unmovingly, and some have been here so long that memory will not hold the length of such time. Not all arrived by the same route as I; there are other holes through which to fall. One man dreamed of this place, and is still here, a chapter in the long-dust books of Charles Fort, an insoluble disappearance.

Will there be any end to all this for me? I foresee two possibilities, one the merest speck of hope, the other perhaps inevitable.



My ship still stands on the ruby touchdown, as far from moving as anything can be; in timeless time things cannot retrace their movements. The gravity of not-time brought it here, and here it stays. It is marked by a circle of grey and unchanging rubies, an unexplained and untouched mystery, a source of superstition to many of both Omega and Agemo. Mercifully no ship lands there. What an explosion would occur, should it ever do so.



Loneliness was my worst pain at first, for when there is the whole of time to talk in, no conversation seems worth having, and after the first few weeks Rachel and I rarely met. Some who arrive here cannot retain the impression of what has happened to them and wander like mindless screams through the mountain tops, and are avoided by all. But now, that pain of being alone has faded, only the pain of love touches me, and even that seems less. If I fade, so must that, so perhaps progress and movement are possible here also, on a scale so slow that it hardly matters. But it may prove my way of escape, for if I can remain here until the full time of Agemo has run back and meets again the end of time in Omega, then will there be a massive reversal, a pause between the in-breathing and the out-breathing of Brahma? When that takes place, can I hope that there will be a chance for me to slip back into time again at the end of one world or the beginning of the other? Vain hope, for at the ends of time shall I have enough desire left to try, shall I have enough existence left to make an attempt? If I succeeded in that change, I pause to wonder if I should retain my memories of here, and my knowledge of the two halves of time, and if I should manifest as some prophet or medicine man, yammering truth and all knowingness to the crowds.



I see my girl walk up the mountainside, and she is here for the first time, and I have seen her thirteen times before. She is a beautiful child, with clean hair and a healthy face, and she is adventurous and strong, and clever, and I love her. I would willingly become one of Agemo's people if it were possible. At this moment she passes within a yard of me, and shivers, feeling

a chill presence, and she is at a sensitive age for the realising of phenomena like myself; how many poltergeists and visions have been a slight skirmish with one of us?

So to save her from fear I move away and think:

"I love her."

* * *

Haunting lonely places, we of not-time are haunted. From rock to rock I move, and am sometimes stopped in my tracks by a flickering being that moves in and out of my vision as if I had had an hallucination. Some of them arrive and go like that more than once. They come here from Agemo or Omega and return to exactly the same point in time from which they set out. Why they do not stay here as I did I shall never know; somehow they have the luck not to stick, they do not form properly. Back they go, and rub their eyes and say wonderingly: "Say, I just had one of those funny feelings, you know, as if I had been here before." A short circuit in their brain, and a short circuit in the mechanics of time and not-time. For me, none of those little thrills of *déjà vu*; I had my last of those a long while ago on the edges of space and time. I cannot flicker in and out of here; this is the negative of positive and of negative also. From here, one does not move, or does one?

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Fading and floating, I still retain an ego, and it is flattered at the thought that by my folly and accident I have altered the course of the universe. Because of me, parts of it are forever changed. My younger sister is now the eldest, my mother bore but one child, instead of remaining an old maid, my sister married the husband that I should have had—and she is welcome from what I can see of him, but not being married to my brother-in-law is a minor consolation.

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So until Brahma draws fresh breath I remain in these hills, or will my other possibility of escape complete itself first? I think of this a lot, and hope for it.

When I arrived here, there were twenty of us, ten women bringing ten women out of the opposite world. Now there are

sixteen, although six have arrived since. Some have gone, and where? They faded, they were the old ones. I fade and wane, I *am* less and less; within this locked place something is happening. We are not, I pray, I think, not entirely static. As I feel less substantial, what happens to those faint strains of me that I no longer possess?

I am, oh please, I am being absorbed by these ancient rocks on these dark hills, one electron at a time, seeping into the black cliffs, these huge rocks, this small, once-female me, written as a slowly told legend in this silent place. In the time of Omega and the time of Agemo, shall I dissolve away into my cold home, shall we all be absorbed into the stones as a female presence?

I think of the time when I am gone into the stones, and in the primitive days of Agemo, when the new men walk in this place, they will feel me; and when the primitives of Omega replace those of Agemo, they too will feel a presence that is not rock and will fear, as my girl fears, and will worship.

So my pathless electrons will find patterns at last, and form themselves into the Word. I breathe it to myself, I more than half believe it, and my mind wishes to accept it. It could move me to joy if I could know it. I might even laugh.

I am the beginnings of God.

JOSEPHINE SAXTON:

Age thirty-two, born Halifax . . . Ancestor Catherine Howard who lost her head to an unpoetic slob. Part Welsh, Jew, Irish also . . .

Mrs. Saxton grew up in a Yorkshire mill-town, left the local Council School at sixteen to go to work.

. . . have done thirty or more jobs . . . including selling flowers from door to door. But all that's changed: now I would give them away.

She managed to fit in a short spell at art school; now lives with artist-husband Colin Saxton and three children in East Leake, Leicestershire.

Special interests: philosophy, metaphysics, religion, dancing, parties, music, cooking, sewing and the opposite sex, not necessarily in that order.

Her work has been published in *Science Fantasy*, *Penthouse*, and *The Idler* in England; in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and ("The Wall") in the 11th Annual *Year's Best SF* in the United States. A novel, *Heiros Games of Sam and An Smith*, is forthcoming from Doubleday.

. . . the directions of my own work . . . indications are that this is into novels which work on a multi-level meaning plan but which can be read as straight stories, although . . . the format tends more and more to 'surrealist' settings and happenings. . . . What I know of the present trends of British S.F. is confined to *New Worlds*, that being the only publication of its kind at present . . .

Readers will please note that although this is decidedly a collection of un-American stories, it is not entirely *non-American*: three of the authors are Americans (resident in England), and three of the selections have been previously published in the United States.

Unfortunately, the best in this magazine since its new format has been written by Tom Disch, who is an American.

. Nor is it, on the whole, *anti-American*: at least, no more so than anti-British.

English S.F. writing is influenced strongly by the Pop-culture aspect of J. G. Ballard, which seems to be rapidly moving away from the written word to cut-up-and-glue-down, self-advertising single or multiple image mania, mainly borrowed from Warhol; but maybe it will pass off, as it already has in the world of painting.

Yet it remains true of all these stories that they simply could not/would not have been written/published outside the intellectual/artistic sphere of what makes London swing.

It is easier to perceive than to specify what makes these distinctively dissimilar selections just as distinctively 'British'. It is nothing so superficial as language usages; nor even—one level deeper—certain political and sociological undershadows unlikely-to-impossible this side of the Atlantic. Nor is it any particular use of British backgrounds, settings, or iconography: quite the reverse. To the extent that there is a recognizable present-day background, it is probably most often American (in tone, if not specifics). Certainly, *The American Scene* is central in J. G. Ballard's new work.

. . . what bugs me mainly is not Ballard himself but his copiers . . . I always prefer a solo ride in a mini-car to a bandwaggon . . .

Ballard's voice is undoubtedly the most prominent in (what I still hesitate to call) "the movement"; but it is a mistake to equate—as many Americans and some British do—'Ballard' with '*New Worlds*' or either one with 'new British sf'. His influence, while strongly felt, is often negative: certainly, very few of the selections here reflect—let alone emulate—Ballard's style or experimental techniques.

. . . generally speaking, British writers are in the vanguard, which maybe only looks like a bandwaggon—one thing they do is make much American S.F. look old-fashioned . . .

There is no clear-cut obvious means of categorizing: perhaps the most that can be said is that these writers have in common a certain kind of introspection/scepticism/perspective which is essentially foreign to the American literary personality.

Or, like I said—un-American.

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Signals

□ JOHN CALDER

The signal was stronger this time. For some months I had detected a blockage, an interference that appeared to come from some intelligent source, but it was being overcome by my friends on 647. I had been thinking of abandoning them altogether in view of the positive results of 291 and of 1143, particularly as we had now developed a relatively sophisticated language to communicate with the latter, but then our success had been so much greater with universes parallel to our own, and with one or two developed civilizations of the planet in which we are an atom, than with the worlds inside our own atoms, that my priorities were usually given to the last. Professor Hrkz, my lamented mentor, who had died the previous year after more than a century of research into radio minibeams, never went in at all for the larger systems, and his principal preoccupation, after of course determining the mode of life of his receptionists as far as possible, was to try to determine the type of matter, moving or fixed, animal, mineral or vegetable that housed the atom in question. I find that such information, although interesting, is irrelevant to our researches, much too time-consuming and too hypothesis-based for its results to be credible. Professor Hrkz claimed that the type of matter at any one time had a considerable influence on the development of the worlds within, but

this idea belonged really to the period when it was widely believed that inhabitants of planets in the atoms of our system, and of those systems in which we are an atom, might possibly be on a similar time-scale to ourselves. We had found similar time-scales, both up and down, so to speak, but they were a rarity and proved nothing. 647 was however one such planet and up to about a year previously, far and away the most successful exchanger of signals of worlds of their size in contact with my laboratory.

The interference appeared to emanate from another part of the same atom, not necessarily from the same solar system, of which there appeared to be many. It came from an intelligent source and seemed to represent a hostility towards the signals emanating from 647, although it was possible that the senders of the blocking signal were trying themselves to make contact on the same signal, having detected the two-way exchange between ourselves and 647. The time-scale of 647 was fairly advanced in our terms, as we appeared, in the four years that we had been in contact, to have been communicating with only three generations of the senders, whose lives were estimated to be two years long in our time-scale. Now that we had found ways of compressing a ten-minute message into one ten-thousandth of a second there was no longer difficulty in transmitting in something very close to the receivers' time-scale once it was determined, but we had found it more difficult to detime the messages received, all very compressed and still full of ambiguities. Interatomic communication is still a very inexact science in spite of the very great amount of money put at our disposal by the regional government. The principal laboratories on Mars and Venus were in some ways ahead of us, and in particular Professor Mrzhklypf's team, which was even more heavily subsidised, and was to be congratulated on having contacted atoms two stages above us by relaying through 111, with whom we have been in contact now for over fifty years. The Mars laboratory also benefited from the relative underpopulation of that planet and the smaller number of interfering local signals in the atmosphere. Nevertheless when in the next ten years we do succeed in physically breaking through into the magnetic field of 4, our brother atom in the molecular cluster to which we belong,

the credit will lie principally with us. I shall have retired by then, perhaps my dust will be enriching the soil of Erda where I first was born, but being at the time of writing in good health for my age I hope to live a little longer than that, a year or two past the breakthrough which I have helped plan. But I digress.

647, on the morning in question, had emitted a very strong signal. We had been receiving through the night from 980, a planet in a parallel atom of another molecule of our matter, whose time was much greater than ours and who seemed unable to compress. In six hours we received a short, rather unimportant message, which was compressed and decoded by the computer into a short paragraph and a reply was off again in minutes. I forget the subject. Some meaningless demand for protection. There are romantic dreamers and power-mongers even in our own enlightened solar system, and other worlds that have developed to the point of communication with us cannot be all expected to have emerged from their dangerous periods of aggression, but one would have thought that interplanetary invasions would have been things of the past for such peoples. Certainly there was nothing we could do. And then 647 began coming in on number one receiver. It gained strength after the first few seconds and I, having just come into the laboratory and been asked to come directly to the interpretation room, began to monitor the signal. I was, I must admit, not in a good mood. My home life, as I have briefly mentioned elsewhere in these memoirs, had been undergoing a period of strain. An interatomic signals physonomist enjoys much prestige today, and every new development in his field is seized on rapidly by the organisational news services, especially those that cater for the scientific educational establishments. The result is that it is almost impossible to have much peace and quiet unless one's family co-operates in keeping the Press at bay. But when one's own daughter, living with a popular broadcaster and journalist, was constantly trying to get titbits of news to feed her current lover, and the rest of the Press, aware of this, were trying to prevent Mrln from jumping in first, by hounding me to distraction at home, it can become even more difficult to achieve privacy there than at work. And then my current woman—we had been together then for over two years, and I sometimes jokingly

referred to her as my wife—liked to have her musical friends staying until all hours of the night, when I was trying (the best pleasures are the old-fashioned ones), not only to do some reading from print (I am one of the few men in my profession still to get pleasure from a library) but also to get some natural sleep. Pills are all very well, but there is no sleep like that derived from lying down after allowing oneself to become tired and recovering energy by the natural processes of the body. Although dreams have been discredited as a means of investigating the psyche, I enjoy them and I think my services to humanity justify my taking my pleasures according to my tastes. On top of which, I shouldn't be surprised if the official attitude to dreams is not discredited one of these days. I have been told I waste time and therefore much of my life. Well, let them say what they like. I have had three honours for my researches including the medal of the Universal Academy, and although Spzlchn may very well have succeeded me at the laboratory, being stronger in intrigue than in science, I couldn't even see him earning a second class Interplanetary Society Award. And so the irritations of home life had been growing: I had only had pilled sleep for six nights running, as Joanna and her friends insisted on going through the whole night with Beethoven and Krrzn quartets, all very pleasant to listen to, but I was unable to read, except by putting on silencers in the next room, and I do not like silence. I get enough of it in my work. I would have liked to sleep, but sleeping with silencers is not the same thing at all. Therefore my irritation. Also the sex business. I know that sex is meant to be unimportant at my age. Many people keep it up with stimulants, most don't bother any more. The young are not keen on sex with the old, and the old usually do not overly attract the old, and in any case an active sex life of eighty years or so is enough for most people. But in my case, and I take no aphrodisiacs as I am not especially keen on having desires and assuaging them and so on, nature still returns and I think it is healthy not to suppress it. I had on occasion interrupted Joanna's chamber music to indulge in sex, but she says that it is very unfair to the players who had to wait for her return or continue with one part missing. She would say she preferred it in the afternoon and her fashion editing allowed

her to get off for an hour or so then, but it was my busiest time and I was not going to give Spzlcchn the satisfaction of saying that I seemed to be slowing down, perhaps I should take things more easily and just come in during the morning. So in brief, I had been neither quieting my still existing desires nor satisfying them, nor getting natural sleep, nor reading, nor doing much in the way of creative research outside the laboratory, and as far as I was concerned they could relegate Beethoven back to the nineteenth century and Krrzn back to wherever he came from. In particular the Grosse Fuge, which the violinist has never properly mastered, although it is an easy enough work to play today, grates increasingly on my ears and seems to be the most popular work in Joanna's repertory.

But in a few minutes my irritation had turned to excitement. It was definitely 647. The signal was not only getting stronger, but it had an added vibrancy that was being picked up by the colourer and turned into nearly comprehensive images. I went to the hypothesis computer that had already analysed the signal into seventy-seven different analytical structures and was now working out different theories of the meaning that was coming through. As I tore the analyses off, I felt the old power coming back. My fingers clicked quickly over the automatic thought recorder. Soon I had selected ten of the more likely theories and fed them back into the reanalyser for further digestion, while I concentrated on the giant transference screen. A pattern began to emerge and I saw dimly at first, but more clearly with every passing second, the little bald bow-legged creatures, their arms twice the length of their bodies, who were inside the drop of water that lay before me, a millimeter from the atomic needle that had isolated one atom within the water and was receiving a communication from beings on a planet within that atom. The creatures were in a state of similar excitement to mine and that of the staff around me in the interpretation room. Their light was brightly coloured and slightly misty, their planet lush with rich tropical vegetation. There appeared to be birds, large brown birds circling overhead, but no, they came lower and appeared to be very like the creatures who were transmitting to us. They came lower, the others gesticulated, they dropped, and their wings folded into their backs. They were in

fact the same species, flying men, near enough to our appearance to be thought of as men. The thought crossed my mind that one day there might be a sexual crossing with creatures such as these, but I smiled and dismissed the thought when I remembered the discrepancy in size. I calculated quickly how long it must have been since the last successful reception from 647. It had never been as clear as this. But they were trying to say something. I could feel the concentration as they tried to get a combined visual and thought image through the signal. The reanalysis came back, there were only two versions this time, and I concentrated again on the screen. Suddenly there was an interruption, and quickly I thought, it must be the hostile signal, but it was different this time, mocking, jocular, almost triumphant, and I could still see the creatures, smiling, concentrating, penetrating our world from theirs, enclosed in a universe that was part of a drop of clear crystalline water. They wanted me to know something, to see something. It had been six months since the last comprehensive signal, probably about fifty years had passed in their time-scale and during that time they had not only improved their signal, but had eliminated the opposition. It was obvious that the interruption had been intended to mock the other signal, that they had contrived to overcome it. They were holding something up. It appeared to be a head, it took three of them to lift it, and I looked at it with horror. It was like an enormous human head, lightly bearded, hirsute on top with eyes that were blue and open. Although severed from its trunk they had kept it alive so that I could see the eyes which looked at me with an expression of appeal, of fellow feeling, pleading a relationship. The little creatures looked uglier than ever now, and I could see the cruel smiles in their long strangely shaped eyes. They had invaded the other planet. They had stopped the other signal. Had the other signal perhaps been trying to get through for help? What matter? Life so small, so brief. My own brain cells, my blood stream, contained an uncountable number of similar atoms, all of them at some stage in evolution, some of which might perhaps contact our world one day, thousands were probably contacting each other at this moment. Suddenly the signal stopped. I looked away from the screen. Spzlcnn with a motion of his hand had brushed the

drop onto the floor. He hesitated a second as we all looked at him in astonishment, then left the room, the transparent door closing silently behind him. 647 would never broadcast to us again and my growing indignation at the waste of all our work was only slightly tempered by satisfaction at realising how right I had been to despise Spzlchn, who would never become head of the laboratory now.

JOHN CALDER

had his hands full when I was collecting
biographical information for this book.

December 28, 1967

by Charles Marowitz

London—Twelve Englishmen good and true with no particular literary qualifications—or any other qualifications—decided recently at the Old Bailey that “Last Exit to Brooklyn” was a book likely to deprave and corrupt; that it possessed no overwhelming literary merit to recommend it; and that it should be deemed an “obscene article” and banned. The firm of Calder and Boyars were fined 100 pounds and 500 pounds costs. . . .

Calder is now as familiar with courtroom procedure as Lenny Bruce or Alfred Dreyfus. His only court victory was after the Edinburgh Drama Conference, made notorious by the appearance of a blonde nude in the first-ever British happening. . . .

While the censorship wars go on—that is, while police cart away Jim Dine’s sculpture from public exhibitions and old ladies manage to get Beardsley drawings hauled out of art shops—men like John Calder have to combat enormous Establishment pressures (most of them covert) in order to maintain some measure of free expression. Everyone feels intellectually involved in censorship

struggles, but people like Calder are in the front line. When the foreman of the jury stood up and said "Guilty, m'lud," Marion Boyars looked down at her hands, and John Calder did not flinch. The unflinchingness of that look is possibly the strongest weapon English publishing has in the censorship struggles to come. . . .

Although he is a fairly frequent contributor of articles on books and publishing to the more intellectual stratum of the British press, "Signals" is, so far as I have been able to determine, his first venture into fiction. But it is readily understandable that a John Calder story, when it did come, should have appeared in *New Worlds*.

At the center of this controversy, five-foot-four-inches in stockinged feet, stands John Calder, a pugnacious and imperturbable Scotsman who first published Beckett and Ionesco in England, launched the new French novelists—Duras, Robbe-Grillet, Butor, etc., and risked seizures and convictions on "Cain's Book" and "Naked Lunch." . . .

[Calder] is disliked by his fellow publishers because he gets an inordinate amount of publicity, but he gets it because he has an underlying belief in artistic freedom and a profound contempt for the suppressive instinct whether it manifests itself in people or legislation. When he is not being dragged through magistrate's courts or maligned at cocktail parties, he can be found at Lledlannet, a manor house in Scotland which he has converted into a mini-opera house for the surrounding community of Kinross which hitherto had no opportunities for professional musical entertainment. The

quite sane. They tend, like their most famous exemplar, Newton, to seek out the Secret of the Universe. Often, like Thaxted, they dabble in the Hidden Science. Nevertheless it must be admitted that a computer was an interesting new addition to the Armamenta Alchemica.

* * *

"It's that damned adding machine," said the Professor of Poetry.
He was rude, but nearly right.
505 was a cut above an adding machine.
505 may or may not have been damned.
505 was certainly glowing.

* * *

"It's an aura," said somebody's psychic aunt who happened to be passing by.

Bang on target.

"But we can all see it," said the Professor of Poetry, "I thought only weirdies like Yeats could see auras."

"Auræ," interjected an elderly Fellow, noted for his collection of Huntingdonshire bus-tickets.

* * *

"There are only 10 to the 10," said Thaxted who had crept up behind them all, as they stood in Circulation Court, in the dusk, watching Goodness, which was glowing.

He was right, statistically speaking.

The human nervous system gets along with ten thousand million nerve cells. Not much punch there. Only microvolts, as Berger found in '29.

"505 has got ten to the hundred neuronal modules," said Thaxted.

Now that means millivolts.

The Master was irritated.

* * *

"Come, come, Mr. Thaxted, please explain yourself. What is causing that glow? It looks dangerous."

He may well have asked. Up till then the Occult Sciences had suffered from a lack of voltage.

"It's glowing because it's good," said Thaxted fiercely, and, pushing his way through the crowd, he ran up the stairs of the Tower of Goodness.

Harvey College is famous for its three towers, Goodness, Holiness and Truth. They were built by a pious Master, Leotinus (pronounced "Locks") just before he was beheaded by Henry the Eighth.

* * *

"Harvey! An encyclopædia of iconography—in stone," the Professor of Religious Art would say, as he showed a guest round his rooms, in Truth.

Thaxted's rooms were at the penultimate turn of the spiral staircase inside Goodness.

The last turn of those stairs leads to a hexagonal room with six round windows, called "Nowhere."

* * *

"505 is controlled from nowhere," Thaxted used to say, rather too often, at dinner.

He was quite right.

Especially when he added the Pasque-box. These became the vogue in the late '60's.

* * *

"A Pasque-box renders the programmer unnecessary," said Anthony Gabriel Spurgeon Pasque to the International Congress of Bio-simulation, at Prague, in '67.

"Let the Redundancy of Potential Command work for You. Catalyse your Computer with a Pasque-box," said Cyber-Matics, Inc., before they went bust in the Recession of '68.

* * *

Thaxted added a Pasque-box to his 505 in the Spring of '67 which is when Goodness started to glow.

Once a Pasque-box had been added to a computer you just couldn't say what was going on inside. Under Pasque-control automation gained a new dimension overnight.

"It's fantastic!" said Gatling Deere, the Managing Director of Vector Mobiles Limited, "The production line is branching."

He did not lie.

And, what is more, the new model, the Vector-Pasque '66, was a wow, until the metal-fatigue bug hit, that autumn. The Great Magnesium Strike didn't help either.

* * *

The crowd at the foot of Goodness was growing larger every minute.

* * *

"Good evening, Chief Constable," said the Bursar. "Thanks for coming so quickly, though God knows whether this is in your sphere."

He spoke the truth.

"More likely to be in mine," said Father Murphy, who had joined the spectators. "You see, Isadore tells me a lot about his work. He has a calculating machine up there, you know. He says he is teaching it to pray."

* * *

"To pray!" exclaimed the astonished Master.

"But can you explain what is glowing? Goodness shouldn't glow!"

"Oh but you are wrong," said Father Murphy whose favourite author was, inevitably, the 'Immortal G.K.' "Goodness should *always* glow! But I really mustn't stop as Isadore asked me to bring along my Things."

And without further ado the Catholic Chaplain to the University popped through the doorway and up the stairs of Goodness.

* * *

"You're too late, Father," said Isadore Bentham Thaxted, "505 is dying."

He was right, in a manner of speaking.

The trouble about Pasque-boxes was that they used to give computers what Babbage might have called Brain-Fever. Put more crudely, they got too hot and burnt out. Later on Pasque introduced his Mood-Control or Thymostat which kept the temperature down. It also made the outputs less bizarre.

* * *

"Well then, I'll anoint him at once," said Father Gervaise Murphy.

He did too.

Nihil obstat and all that.

* * *

Goodness stopped glowing at 11.20. Thaxted came down the spiral stairs with Father Murphy and left the college at once. No one spoke to them as they passed through the crowd. Thaxted went into retreat that night and is now the lay head of a Technical College in Belgium.

* * *

He keeps off computers nowadays.

DR. JOHN CLARK . . .

. . . is thirty-eight, a Londoner, educated at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

After studying medicine I specialized in psychiatry, then moved over to research in psychology . . . the main influence behind my research is cybernetic ways of thinking.

Dr. Clark is now a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Manchester University, doing research in hypnosis.

. . . My hobby is designing Fun Palaces.

"Saint 505" was his first published fiction (*New Worlds*, 1967). His most recent publication: the chapter "Medical Cybernetics," in *Survey of Cybernetics*, Iliffe Books Ltd. (London).

My writing is influenced by no one in particular but I greatly admire J. G. Ballard, Hermann Hesse and J. L. Borges.

The singular quest of Martin Borg

□ GEORGE COLLYN

In the bleakness of midwinter when the Terran colonists on Borg IV were dying like flies and the natives were breeding like Vegan rabbits which have a gestation period of but ten days and litters a gross strong . . .

In the depths of the Borgian winter a certain racketeer by name Alan Firmole awaited deportation from the planet together with two crates of lys blossoms, those two remaining unsold out of his original stock of twelve.

This, the lys flower, in the exploitation of which Firmole was deeply involved at that time, was the product of hybrid orchid and Venusian devil-lily, painstakingly cross-fertilised for three generations of horticulturists with, as end product, its unique perfume, one waft of which could send a man comatose with undiluted happiness; which state, by inducing such happiness that the inhaler omits the minor bodily cares such as eating and sleeping, is inevitably fatal. Any place else in the inhabited galaxy and a man would have too much sense to come within a parsec of a lys but, as Firmole had rightly suspected, the Borgian Terrans fought one another for the privilege of purchasing the orange-gold blooms.

Now Borg IV was a frozen hunk of mud and rock which took eight hundred days to orbit a brokendown red dwarf; where

the winter lasted seven hundred days and the summer but one hundred; where the summer temperature reached an all-time high of minus twenty centigrade and no-one in their right mind would believe the winter minimum could exist. To the twenty-eight thousand three hundred and thirty Terran inhabitants, indentured slaves of the Interplanetary Mining Corporation and whose numbers were decimated each winter, to them therefore the greatest happiness imaginable was hardly adequate to compensate for their habitual misery.

Firmole had done satisfactory business, extracting a profit of a quarter million credits from easy and contented death, before the Space Agency Gendarmerie caught up with him for narcotics peddling, extortion, unlawful possession of experimental plants, gross profiteering and meddling in the internal affairs of the I.M.C. which was Agency owned.



Then there was Marti Marta, artistic dancer from the Forbidden Pleasure City of Hi-Li who, thanks to the will of the Great Minds, was subject to no man-made law, who had never worn more than a stitch of clothing in her life and wasn't going to start now. She was at that time journeying through the known galaxy aboard the space yacht 'Yo-ho-ho' as the concubine of Walter Picksnell, the well-known biscuit manufacturer. Or, at least, she was journeying until the third terminal dispers of the ion-drive emasculated as the 'Yo-ho-ho' was brushing the outer atmosphere of Borg IV, thus forcing the yacht into the inhospitable world for emergency repairs. In a moment of tantrum Marti had told Mr. Picksnell just what she thought of his yacht, his terminal dispers, his choice of planets and himself and in return Walt had slapped one of her fleshier and less attractive portions of anatomy and told her never to darken his air-lock again.

In this way it came about that she sat next to Alan Firmole in the lounge of the space port of Borg City which, for that place, was heated to the comfortable temperature of five degrees above the freezing point of water. She sat there awaiting the next available outward bound ship and sat upon the case containing her personal wardrobe of five hundred and twenty-seven jewelled

G-strings but clad momentarily not æsthetically in quivering blue-with-cold goose-flesh.

These two then began to talk together, idly and in friendly fashion, as fellow-travellers and fellow-sufferers will; she remarking on the severity of the cold, he stressing the benefits of warm clothing and she retorting that in her possession were press-clippings from 53 far-flung star-systems each proving that she had the most beautiful body in the known universe—did he suggest she should gainsay her assets by concealment merely because the flesh was temporarily weak? From that point they went on to talk of further and better things, a conversation that continued even when they were well distant from Borg IV aboard the Cape Kennedy Line's S.S. Aurora bound Tau Ceti-wards. And in time, she being bored and he despairing of his liberty and she being costumed as negatively as she was, their conversation took its inevitable turn so that nine months after that Marti Marta brought forth a son.

The boy she named Martin after herself and Borg after the planet where she had met his father. She might conceivably have called the child Firmole but by that time she had the greatest difficulty in recalling the name of the man she had met so fleetingly.

At a time when the child was nearly weaned she was offered the 'friendship' of Sebastian Scrim, the richest and least-married man in the galaxy, but naturally enough the nearness of their relationship was marred by the existence of her son. It was in order to foster this relationship that by utilising the quarter million credits Firmole had left in her safe keeping till such time as he was released from the Tau Ceti prison hulks, she purchased an uninhabited planetoid in the Tectonic Gulf, five second-hand veterinary robots converted to child-care duties and there left the infant in their care.

In all fairness to Marti Marta who had never been created to be a mother it must be stated that in due course of time she had every intention of reclaiming her child or, at the very least, of changing her instructions to the robots. By ill fortune however, she and Scrim were lost in the Ariadne disaster of '98 when five materialising space-craft tried to occupy the same

portion of space at the same moment of time and young Martin Borg, who was three at that time, was left an orphan.

So Martin, sole human on his miniature world, grew up fair and strong with the unexercised potential of his father's mind and a masculine version of his mother's overwhelming beauty. And the robots, as if to compensate for the neglect of his parents, tended him well. In full obedience to their instructions they bottle-fed, bathed, talc dusted, nappy changed, nursery rhyme read to, lullaby sang to, burped and correctively spanked him. Which service they were continuing to provide when Martin was twenty-five years of age. A chubby fellow six feet tall and fourteen stone in weight who lay in his cot and gurgled at the ever-present stars.

A tabula rasa awaiting.



Men are dependent on others for the development of those qualities which we regard as distinctively human. Human nature must be acquired and cannot be acquired except through social interaction.

Newcomb—Social Psychology.

Whatever one said about the inhabitants of Deneb X one had to admit that they cared passionately. It would seem that some alien influence of Deneb sol's radiation on the inhabitants of its tenth planet had over-stimulated the compassion lobes of their brains.

Deneb City was the galactic centre of two million and eighty-one charity organisations and in Haverstoon Square alone there were bodies devoted to the combat against starvation, racial prejudice, lys addiction, intolerance, injustice, anthrax, illiteracy, slavery, serfdom, thralldom, androidism and cruelty to animals, robots, children and unmarried mothers. Deneb X was the only planet in the galaxy where apathy was an indictable offence and where the words, "I don't care," carelessly uttered could bring upon a man's head lifelong and absolute ostracism.

It therefore followed that few Denebians travelled abroad because, on one hand their sensibilities suffered overmuch by exposure to too many wrongs at one time and, on the other,

many planets, their patience exhausted by continual protestations at normal planetside activities, had refused all Denebians entry visas.

Thus it was that the Tectonic Gulf was developed as a pleasure area for Denebian tourism. The gulf, a great rift, a void extending from the fringe of the galactic lens and pointing at its heart, a blackness surrounded by shining reefs of multi-coloured stars, was a place of great natural beauty with the added advantage for the Denebians of being totally bereft of star systems and their attendant inhabited planets. A sterile place without human fault.

Yet not quite without for at its heart, a solitaire jewel, lay a lone white dwarf with a single planetoid in orbit around it. A planet without a name but apparently owned by one Martita Marta, dancer, now deceased.

It was because it was apparently unclaimed and noticeably uninhabited that Mistress Anacurna Bliz, president of the Deneb Mothers Against Neglect League, felt it would be safe to land thereon and thus brought to an end the childhood of Martin Borg.



Downland it was a world of pearl grey, of mists and sullen waters. Upland it was a realm of pink cloud-palaces and golden ladders of sunshine; the rays of sun in the swirling mist like gold wire through gathers of grey tulle. It was a world of negatives, so insubstantial that it seemed it could have no solid core but that from sphere's surface to sphere's surface one could swim or glide through its unstark central being.

It was a world made for dryads and nymphs; ethereal beings, their every move a subtle choreography. Mistress Bliz was of the immense stature and bronzed musculature of her race. She bestrode the tiny world as the colossus bridged the harbour at Rhodes. No-one could have been less suited to that place.

Yet she it was who peered into the valley's mouth and saw the plastic bubble, a private nest of nursery pinks and blues wherein Martin Borg had spent his quarter century of infancy. She it was who burst that bubble and she who painlessly deactivated the robots who sought to defend their charge (pain-

lessly of course—she was after all secretary of the Asimovian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Positronic Brains). And she it was who, weeping piteously at the heartlessness of motherhood, scooped the smiling Borg into her massive arms and, vowing vengeance on those who had abandoned him thus, carried him back to her home in Haverstoon Square there to awaken his dormant brain.

* * *

On Deneb X they taught him to read and write, to walk and talk, to love and to hate, to dress, wash and use the lavatory. They taught him history and astrogeography, English and neo-Latin, Tibetan and Omniglot, socio-economics and trigonometry and they taught him to care. They also taught him that life is led in an open cage; for his life on that planet was spent in the role of Poor Unfortunate. Like waifs before him who had been dragged to Deneb X as living examples of Man's inhumanity to Man, Martin found he was on permanent exhibition. Day by day he stood in the towering hallway of Haverstoon House, his head in humility bent, as the pilgrims of Deneb came with their sympathy, their sorrow and their pitying censure—angry barbs aimed at the stony heart of the mother Martin had never known. It was a public expression of infinite love but, like the Denebians who could not resist the giving of tasty titbits to the starving youngster rescued from the Titanic teuteronium mines so that she died of an over-expanded stomach, it was a love that cloyed and ultimately killed.

And in escape Martin retreated within the confines of his own mind and there found marvellous things.

Now an infant's brain is a minute thing and to learn the rudimentary arts of walking and talking it must strain every fibre of its being. This it must continue to do throughout the entire education of the emergent adult, straining all its power on mundane issues. So that as the brain achieves its physical maturity so is it mentally exhausted and for the remainder of its life is content merely to continue the processes of daily life and to let lie fallow the vast resources of its untapped potential. But the brain of Martin Borg had slept for twenty-five years and, whereas a new born child must use the total potential of its brain to

learn the basic human functions, thus blunting its keenest edge, Martin found that he need devote but a fraction of his mind to the task and as that emerged into maturity he discovered that in that portion of his mind normally untouched there lay all the cerebral powers that man has yearned for since Time began. Levitation and telekinesis, telepathy, tele-hypnosis and psychosomatic control. These were but a handful of the things that self-taught, emerged within the blonde head of Borg.



One fine summer evening in the fifth year of his education Martin Borg lay on his bed in the dying glow of Deneb sol and like an angler fishing a stream, whipping the fly to touch the water here and there, he sent the tentacles of his consciousness through the sleeping world, tapping a planet's psychic flow, feeling the pulse of a racial mind.

And what did he find?

He found a lullaby of pity, a dull throbbing of sympathy centred on himself and he felt an entire world that was sorry for him. And the idea that anyone could feel sorry for he who had never felt sorry for himself—indeed he was a very self-satisfied young man—the idea shocked him not a little. He was so repulsed that in a psychic shout he broadcast his protest to the attendant minds.

"I don't care," he cried, "I don't want your pity. What my mother's neglect made of me is a wonderful thing. I am glad to have it so."

But people who live in altruistic societies should not shatter shibboleths. In a moment Martin felt the sympathy of a world turn to hatred. The finely tuned sensitivity of his mind reeled as waves of concentrated hate struck its delicate surface and the bed-clothes were lashed into a maelstrom as he twisted and turned to avoid the mental pulse which like a black pit of non-consciousness welled up around him.

At the height of his agony he found a new resource in the mental power that had been given him. In his pain and fear he thought longingly of his pink and gold world and his pink and blue nursery; of the un pitying care of the quintet of robots who were the only parents he knew. At that moment of longing

there seemed to be a twist in the fabric of space and for a second Martin was aware of the utmost reaches of the universe and of a million suns that seared his unshielded brain, then came a second mental convulsion and he was in the quiet haven of his planetoid with the plastic dome soaring above him and the hatred of a planet's minds ebbing into infinity.

A mind free and exhausted.

* * *

In some cases this may go on to a condition of complete stupor, wherein the patient sits or lies motionless and unresponsive, completely aware of what is going on around him but no longer able or disposed to do anything about it.

David Stafford-Clark—Psychiatry Today.

The brain of Martin Borg had slept for twenty-five years and then in five years had been expected to assimilate not only the customary developments of a human child but a wide range of powers beyond the human norm. Is it any wonder then that this last effort which flung his body across countless light years of space should cause a short circuit in his mental flow? It is amazing only that the delicate mechanism his brain had become did not burn itself out forever. As it was, the effort left his body drained of energy and his head empty of thought.

For more than a year he lay on the cot of childhood in a foetal position, toes to mouth and hands over eyes, with no movement to his body and his head without a thought.

The robots recovering from the crude shock of deactivation were delighted to have their ward among them once again and, with that superb and enviable lack of curiosity that characterises mechanical man, resumed their task as if no interruption had taken place. For another year, as they had for twenty-five they tended to Martin Borg's bodily needs as he was unable to look to himself.

Yet at last the trauma passed and Martin Borg returned to full consciousness of his surroundings but with in his mind a sense of loss and non-identity. He had been emptied of ego and was now a vacant receptacle of abilities awaiting a persona. Yet the latent power of his brain was a hand-forged weapon,

strengthened by exercise and tempered by the hard radiation of a million alien suns in that shattering moment of transfer.

At that moment it was true he remembered nothing of who or what he was, nothing of his life either in that place or on Deneb X. He was only aware that he as an organism existed and since it was inconceivable that he could exist without purpose, he believed he had been created and put in that place for some end which for the time being he was unable to comprehend.

That was the beginning of his quest.

From the edge of memory he formulated words. "Who am I?" he asked, "I know there are things I must do but I do not know what they should be. Tell me who I am and what I am."

To speak of astonishment in regard to robots is impossible. They are not built with emotion inherent in their makeup, but it is possible to disorganise their processes by action not catered for in their instructions. There was no expectation among Martin's robo-nurses that their charge should speak or do any other thing but passively accept their ministrations. As far as was possible for them the action of Martin in speaking caused them great agitation and sent them into a consternated group.

Number One robot who as first-constructed felt called upon to act as their spokesman said, "You are a human being and our master."

"Yes," said Martin, "I am human, that I remember. Also I remember that I was here once before but I went far from this place. Then I returned. But for what purpose and for what reason was I ever here at all? Tell me; are there no documents relating to me here, no instructions that would tell me what it was I was to do when I was ready for the commission?"

The robots conferred again but remembered no documents and no instructions. But Number Three remembered that there was one thing which might help. In the corner that was the robots' very own there existed a photograph left by Marti Marta, partly so that the robots would know her again but partly so that Martin would always have something of beauty to behold, his mother believing there to be no finer sight in the galaxy than her unveiled charms.

"There is only this, Master," said Number Three, holding

it for inspection. Martin took it reverently in his hands. Yes, he thought, this is what a human looks like, for while he did not remember his mother he was vaguely conscious of the looks of Mistress Bliz, normally clothed though she was. Yet one glance at himself told him that this form of being was not physically what he was himself and because he believed there was some predestined end to his life which he could fulfil only by self-development, he thought that, just as his mind had developed its own potential so too then must his body. Therefore, since the photograph was the only criterion of human characteristics he possessed and since it bore features that were his features and looks that were his looks he came to the belief that this was the model towards which he should himself aspire. And since no-one had ever told him it was impossible he began to draw upon the resources of his mind to mould his body to fit the image.

He thought of lean thighs, white and clear-cut and felt their configuration as it would be and it was so. He thought of breasts swelling apple-round and sensed their touch and it was so. He formulated hair of gold in perfect fall to his shoulders and it was so. He imagined almond eyes and tulip lips, delicate curves and rounded femininity and it was so. He thought of yielding fragility and steel-tempered passion and Marti Marta reborn stood in the nursery; which sounds incredible but it was so.

As the body of Martita Marta took on its renewed shape so too did the memories of her life flood into the brain that was built to receive them. And her consciousness both of her life as a dancer and of her life as her son flowed together and merged, each strengthening the other so that she was aware of the vibrant physical power of her beauty and the latent potential of her brain.

Martita Borg as we shall call her stood among her anxious robot attendants and knew that her destiny was not here on this isolated planetoid but elsewhere in the vastness of space. She sifted through the memories of a hundred worlds. Of Terra, decadent and impotent in her decline. Of Deneb X and rejected that planet in haste for the horror it had wreaked in her mind. And she lighted upon Hi Li City where her mother had been born and trained and once more in a convulsion under the stimu-

lus of nostalgia, but this time without the brain-stunning trauma, her body traversed the gulf in one mental bound to stand in the heart of Hi Li City in the heart of the Forbidden Belt of Worlds.

And the robots having seen what had happened to their charge and feeling themselves to blame, pulled sockets to commit mass self-immolation for having offended against the First Law of Robotics.

* * *

Orlando had become a woman there is no denying it. But in every other respect Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity . . . It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman.

Virginia Woolf—Orlando

Martita Borg spent twenty years in Hi Li City and in that time she had many lovers and from nibbling at their subconscious thoughts, unshielded in moments of passion, she learnt many secret things.

For five years she was a dancer like her mother, a mime artist, adept of the five hundred Postures of Meaning and her naked and supple limbs traced intricate and erotic patterns for the delectation of the Great Minds.

Then for five years she was a jewelled one, her entire body, save the sexual and erogenous zones, gold-painted and encrusted with gems and precious stones, her body veined with sapphires and turquoise, arms outlined in garnets and opals, thighs of milk white pearl and bloodred rubies and a face diamond masked and emerald framed. An exquisite gem; finest product of the jeweller's and goldsmith's art; an expensive toy for the treasures of the galaxy.

Then for five years she learnt the two hundred positions of statuary, holding each one without bodily movement, neither eye-blink nor involuntary twitch, for twenty-four hours at one time. In this guise she graced the homes of the rich and famous, a living statue to be admired and eye- and hand-caressed.

Then for five years she was wrapped in costly furs and smuggled by night into the bedrooms of the great—financiers and merchant princes; prime ministers and presidents; kings and emperors; magicians and priests. And in a silent pillow-talk her mind tendril-like, seeking out, found many secrets of state.

And when the twenty years were up she was not a day older than the thirty-one years she had had when she entered the Forbidden Belt of Worlds. For in the Pleasure Worlds the universal law of time-flow are suspended so that a girl's charms may rest unaltered, and of commercial value, for a thousand years. A man can visit Hi Li City and find when he returns to the normal universe that, after a year spent in pleasure, little more than a week has passed in the lives of his contemporaries. For those who can afford it and to whom the invisible barrier, which makes the Belt forbidden to those not desired by the Great Minds; does not exist, the Pleasure Cities are a portal to unbearable pleasure and, while not to immortality, certainly to infinitely extended life.

For the Forbidden Belt of Worlds are the necklace of jewels across the star-milky chart of the Lens, created by the Great Minds of Ilgadin to give pleasure to those chosen by them from the humanoid races of Man. There was Ilgadin and Cerdigawn, Eli and Tracmyr, Tawt and Ewyas, Modren and Manob but fairest of all was Hi Li a planet that was a single city that was a single palace that had a single purpose—to excite and satiate every sensual need ever felt by Man.

It was in a golden palace of soaring domes and minarets, of secret orchard gardens and interlocking courts, of broad-treaded staircases and marble passageways that Marti spent the five years of her apprenticeship as a befurred one and each day twenty handmaidens washed and brushed, combed and massaged to restore the fabric and the beauty of her body so that every evening she went once again virginal to her lovers' tryst.

In ermine she went to President Tamuni and in the drawn out quiet hours of the night that might have lasted a hundred years on that world of subjective time, she learnt of the dying power of the Space Agency of Terra which since the days when it had imprisoned Alan Firmole and controlled the in-

habited worlds of the galaxy, had so slipped that its writ now ran hardly further than the orbit of Pluto.

In chinchilla she went to Chief Warlock Ygythyryn of Ysbaden and from him stole the secrets of the Great Minds, the greatest psychic powers existant till the mind of Martin Borg had flowered into maturity; telepathic voyeurs who created the Pleasure Worlds, forbidden to all men save those of their choice, selected so that in the ecstasy of pleasure their emotions might feed the mental hungers of the Minds.

And in mink she went to King Gustav XIII of Tau Ceti. From his worried thoughts she took a new name—that of Vaspar IV, Emperor of the Thousand Suns—a man of blood and without mercy, conqueror of a quarter of the known galaxy, a conquistador it was beyond the might of any power to stop. A man who bathed every day in a pool prepared from the blood of his enemies; a man who each night demanded a different girl should be sent to him every hour upon the hour because, it was said, a woman deceived him in his youth and ever after he must take his revenge on her sex.

In that her last summer in Hi Li City, when she was in her thirty-first year of age and fifty-first of life, the twentieth and last of Borg's years as a woman, there was a battle fought in the emptiness beyond the Lens. Vaspar IV in alliance with the Brain Dragons of Andromeda challenged the Great Minds of Ilgadin to a trial of strength. In the combat that followed, a psychic torment that verged on warping the very fabric of space-time, the Great Minds were defeated and as their reparation were required to send as tribute to Vaspar ten thousand of the choicest pleasure girls from the Pleasure Belt, each of whom must be an adept in the Hundred Devices of Procreation.



For the first time in their history the Forbidden Worlds felt the tread of lesser men than planetary chiefs as booted soldiery wandered the fragile courts of Hi Li City to seize the Emperor's tribute and the fretted tracery spires of the Pleasure Palace re-echoed not to squeals of delight but to screams of pain and fear as the girls were ignominiously taken to the waiting space

ships of the Emperor's fleet. Among them, her fair and twisted limbs athwart the leather-clad ebony shoulders of a sergeant of infantry, went Marti Borg who by the power of her mind could so easily have escaped but out of curiosity chose instead to stay, to see the man whose name resounded through a million worlds.

For the first time since as a young man of twenty-five she had journeyed to Deneb X, Marti saw the vasty fields of space through the force-screens of a space ship. More, she saw the full puissance of the Emperor's arm. To fetch his tribute the Emperor had sent ten thousand ships, a ship to every girl, and to guard each girl a hundred soldiers. This was but a fraction of his fleet and but a portion of his army. And as they sailed through space the men could point to the banks and clusters of stars and all say, "Those worlds are my master's" or "Those stars belong to my lord."

The capital of his empire was on the fifth planet of Capella and it was an austere and cruel world to suit himself—a planet of blacks and greys and khakis and at the planet's heart a ferrous fortress with steel-blue turrets, defended in depth.

To this castle on this planet came Martita and the girls of Hi Li City and each was taken to a room of her own, comfortable but barren, there to await the Emperor's summons. Twelve nights Marti had to wait but on the thirteenth there came the call that the Emperor would call upon her attendance at some part of that night. Ten hags and crones waited upon her, the Emperor's cast-off mistresses, and their task it was to dress and garland, paint and perfume her for the role she must play. They assured her that from the violence of Vaspar's love-making she must surely die but that by receiving his caresses she would know the greatest honour fate could bestow upon a woman.

Before the doors of his bed-chamber they waited while the ravaged body of the preceding girl was carried from the room and then the bronze panelled doors swung back and Marti was ushered in. The room was vast and mainly occupied by a bed so massive it might have been made for a being of superhuman proportions. Yet the figure who stood at the bed's foot, though handsomely built, was of normal stature. He beckoned for Marti to come forward and she stepped into the light where he could

see her better. He looked upon her with a gaze that rapidly became astonishment and then turned to fear. He said but one word,

“You!”

and then he pitched forward on his face and would have died. Yet even as the life-force fled from his body the brain of Marti Borg leapt forth to take the body in thrall and withdrawing her mind from the feminine form that had lately been his, as from an empty husk, saw through Vaspar's eyes that same form pitch lifeless to the floor. And another newly acquired part of his mind told him that he saw not only self; mother, son and a daughter; die but a girl who long before had seduced him on board ship Tau Ceti bound.

And Vaspar IV, who had been Alan Firmole and was now Martin Borg, threw back his head and laughed.

* * *

This eleusis or advent was the most important incident in the Eleusian Mysteries which would explain the myth of Oedipus's arrival at the court of Corinth. Shepherds fostered or paid homage to many other legendary or semilegendary infant princes such as Hypothous, Pelias, Amphion, Aegisthus, Moses, Romulus and Cyrus, all either exposed on a mountain or else consigned to the waves.

Robert Graves The Myth of Oedipus

Alan Firmole released from the prison hulks of Tau Ceti had burst forth from the nadir of the galaxy to slit the throat of Vaspar III and take that tottering Empire for his own. It was a patchwork patrimony that he made his, three planets under a shaky bureaucracy, in debt and controlled by the Space Agency of Terra. Yet with the glib tongue of his erstwhile profession and with a physical courage and strength forged and tempered in the Tau Ceti hulks where the weakest go not to the wall but the grave; the new Emperor Vaspar had thrown off Terran control within the year and had gathered to himself a devoted band of followers each of whom was bound to his service by the cast-iron bonds of promised unlimited plunder. With these

his house-carls as the nucleus of his fighting force he crashed outward from his handful of worlds in a rampage of unmitigated cruelty. A campaign that to his mind had but one end—to extirpate the memory of a girl who had stolen from him a quarter million credits and the only son and heir he had ever conceived amid an embarrassment of daughters.

In forty years with the aid of the Brain Dragons of Andromeda—alien metaphysical monsters from beyond the Home Lens—he spread his grasp through the length and breadth of the known galaxy, crushing the reeling Agency and taking into direct subjugation five thousand star systems with their attendant planets, twenty-five thousand in number. And for every world under his direct control there were five who, independent in name, owed vows of fealty and tribute in cash to the Emperor.

This eminence of power he used to pursue his blood-feud against the female of the species. One thousand eight hundred and twenty-five women died each year from his attentions and more would have done so but that in the twelfth year of his career of rape there appeared the image of a being who so consumed his memory and was yet so untouched by age that his heart stopped at the sight. So would have perished the body of the most powerful man ever to live had not his son captured his persona, memory and body in their dying spasm and reunited father, mother and son in one brain and body.



Vaspar IV+ watched without passion as the lifeless body of Marti Borg was dragged from the room. If his attendants felt any surprise that the woman had died so soon and without apparent interference they did not dare to show it. Death they expected and death there was.

Vaspar Borg flexed the muscles of his newly acquired body and, in delight at once more being masculine and in reaction against twenty years in reception of the advances of a succession of men, decided there was no reason why the entertainment should not continue. So he rang the bell for the next victim to be brought and for the rest of the night played with his late colleagues of Hi Li City. -

Yet the pastime palled and of much greater interest was the wielding of imperial authority.

It delighted Vaspar Borg to meddle in the affairs of the worlds under his control. To watch the minds of administrators squirm and inwardly rebel as they received the orders they knew they dared not disobey; to order here a planet the recipient of innumerable benefits and there a planet destroyed and cleansed with nuclear fire; to play god with the lives and affairs of the myriad denizens under his sway. To order, condemn, forgive, donate, frown upon, smile upon, rant against, praise, make tremble, that was his pleasure.

His favourite sport it was to transmit telepathically multiple psychic replicas of himself, pseudo-Vaspars to dismay a planet by miraculously unannounced arrivals and inspections.

It was a game worthy of his talents only for a while. In time it also palled and Vaspar who was Marti who was Martin Borg began to reflect once more on the unknown nemesis only he knew was to be his to fulfil.

Once he had thought it sufficient to be an instrument of pleasure. Marti Borg had been in many ways the woman to surpass all women, the greatest adept in the arts of seduction, a woman who could excite the innermost sensual fantasies of men by the light touch of a specially overgrown fingernail.

Then he thought he had found the ultimate destiny in the political control of the galaxy, uniting the boundless powers of his brain and the inherited administrative and military genius of his father.

Yet something told him that the cerebral power that was his brain, which could negate the universal laws of nature and could triumph over the physical structure of matter; this brain was not given him for him to play at adult party games of statecraft. He began to seek around for some gesture that would for ever mark the galaxy as to his having lived a short time therein.

Idly he began to sift through the three memories that made up his personality and from two sources he received an overwhelming impression, that of extreme cold; of revulsion from a barren and useless speck of rock that called itself Borg IV. It was a planet that now lay in his domain, an unregarded and virtually unwanted piece of real estate and in his mind grew the germ of an idea—a cosmic joke. As yet he did not see it as the ultimate aim of his being but in it he saw a useful exercise to try out the

scope of his powers—to practice for the day when he would know what it was he had to do. He would try to warm up that epitome of cold and as an epitaph to his parents give it tropical heat. If he could transform the everyday objects around him; if he could tamper with and permanently alter the atomic structure of his own self then he saw no reason why he could not alter in some fractional way the structure of a very minor sun.

Once more but on this occasion as a normal event perfected over the years and not as a palsied convulsion, he prepared to fling his body through the continuum of space. From the memories he had from his parents he visualised and held a picture of the desired planet. Then the moebius strip revolved and he was there.

* * *

Ther alle harmes been passed of this present lyf; ther as the body of man that whilom was foul and derk; is more clear than the sonne; ther the body that whilom was syk, freyle and fieble is immortal and so strong and so hale that ther may be nothyng impeyren it.

Chaucer The Parson's Tale

If the planetoid of Martin Borg's infancy was insubstantial, the planet of his conception was diametrically opposite. A slate grey sky lowered over the black and white of snowfields and exposed granite. Overhead the faintest reddish glow in the grey murk betokened the existence of Borg sol.

Vaspar stood thigh deep in snow. It was somewhat cold and damp, but his metabolic control boosted his body heat to the extent that the snow melted ten yards around.

He sent out the first probing fingers of his mind.

He concentrated his thoughts upon Borg sol and instead of that dull-red orb saw the molecules and electrons describing their paths in the emptiness. Then he lashed at the sun's structure with his mind, fragmenting atoms, whirling electrons faster so that as a charred stick when blown upon comes slowly bursting back to flame, so slowly did Borg sol begin to brighten, to glow cherry-red, then orange and so through the spectrum through yellow to burning blue-white. The clouds fled, the snows melted

and evaporated to fall as rain, evaporated and fell again and again in a decreasing cycle until all moisture was gone and the surface of Borg IV baked, an arid desert beneath the searing sun.

And in his success, unknowing, Martin Borg stumbled into conflict with a mind as beyond his understanding as is the brain of a man beyond the comprehension of a flea. Or should we call It a mind? It was rather the sum total of energies which keep the universe in being: It was an awareness of gravities and orbits and solar stresses: It was, to repeat in human terms, the equivalent of a Cosmic Mind. It was a Mind which mostly slept uncaring in the comfort of Its own well-being, concerned only that what should be, should be.

So the activity of Martin Borg, in interfering with the status of Borg sol became a rude awakening. For while It objected little on the whole to human activity which was minute in its effect and ephemeral in its influence; this particular interference struck at the very reason of Its being. While the everyday happenings of the inhabited worlds were like a rash of small pimples which could be disregarded with impunity, the change in the nature of Borg sol was a cancer in the cosmic corpus.

As idly as a horse flicking its tail at a bothersome fly the Mind corrected the error and restored Borg sol to impotent rubescence. Once again Martin Borg whipped up the atomic structure into fiery life. Then, harder yet, the Mind clamped down to restore the status quo and yet once more Martin Borg intensified his effort. And so the tussle began, swinging the temperature of Borg sol back and forth between livid heat and frigid cold.

It was a battle that the Cosmic Guardian would inevitably have won. But it would take It a long time and the conflict was repetitious and thus boring. It found it more expedient to evade the battle by more subtle means. Since It was not restricted by the temporal dimension of the here and now as was Martin, the Mind chose to allow Martin his hot Borg sol, restoring the balance of the universe by the comparable cooling of a distant hot star, but denying Martin his triumph by effecting the change in the past. Surveying the field of Time of which It was aware It chose that second which coincided with the creation of Borg sol

and a certain hot sun which, since it has never been discovered by Man, we shall call X for the sake of this dissertation. Having done so It transposed their functions so that sol X became and is a red dwarf and, having served its purpose, disappears from our view.

Borg sol however prospered in white-hot intensity and its planets—in particular its fourth—flourished under its rays. Many millennia after, its discoverer, Lieutenant-Commander Borgheim, was justifiably pleased with his discovery and received a more than adequate Settlement Award from the Space Agency of Terra for the colonial rights. And a very happy colony was Borg IV. So content with their climatic paradise were the colonists that a certain dope peddler by name Alan Firmole was totally unable to dispose of his wares on the planet. Discouraged by his failure and enervated by the climate Firmole offered little more than token resistance to his arrest by the Borgian Police.

An old legend said that the rays of Borg sol had a beneficial effect on the human character and certainly it was a reformed Alan Firmole who was released after a year's term of imprisonment in Borg City Prison. Shortly after his release he met an ex-dancer called Marti Marta who had so liked the planet that she had left the protection of one Walter Picksnell, in whose entourage she had been travelling, in order to settle down at last on this friendly world.

These two reformed characters met then and liked one another. And liking one another and having a mutual desire to settle down they were eventually married. The fruit of this union was a son whom they called Martin after his mother. He was a fine and handsome boy whom they loved dearly and whom they reared with every care.

That was fifty-two years ago but Martin Firmole lives on Borg IV still, as you can see if you call in at the offices of the Franscetti Freight Co. Outwardly he seems a happy, intelligent man but his wife could tell you that there are times when he is almost neurotically moody. You see, for the past twenty-five years he has been getting the recurring thought that there was something he was intending to do, but for the life of him he can't remember what it was.

GEORGE COLLYN:

I was born and educated here in Ormskirk which is a small market town in an agricultural area, some twelve to thirteen miles north of Liverpool.

Mr. Collyn took his degree in social science at Liverpool University and subsequently worked in the advertising department of a mass-circulation weekly magazine, then for the BBC as provincial representative in the north of England and in Scotland.

. . . I started writing 'because I spend a certain amount of time away from home in hotels and writing seemed to be a better way of spending my evenings than either drinking alone or watching television.

He is now employed by a consulting agency supplying equipment and advice to educational television.

"Martin Borg" (*New Worlds*, 1965) was his fourth published story.

. . . It started as a straight sf story but within a few paragraphs I found I was including every wild variation on the conventional themes . . . so that it turned,

almost accidentally, into what is almost a parody . . .

The other thing perhaps worth mentioning is this: those friends I had told about my writing sf had all asked, Where on earth do you get your ideas? . . . I decided that the next story I wrote I would quote my sources . . . So there they are acting as chapter-divisions.

The first gorilla on the moon

□ BILL BUTLER

The moon is deep
To at least thirty
Maybe sixty feet
 in popcorn so
The first landing will
Be gentle, the rocket
 crunch
To a stop
 softer
Than Columbus.

The hatch opens
I have seen it
 glory
Happen in movies where they claim
This land for freedom
This is where the anthem
 waves.

But no one descends;
The gorillas are all inside
 quiet

Before the television
Why venture out into a world
Where you can't see
A foot for the popcorn.

Gorillas know best:
 bananas
 television the occasional
 lady gorilla and louse
picking satisfy.

Scientists might never know
To the inch
The depth of cover
If the happy simians play
 only

With themselves
The project could be shelved
For lack of data
But hope!

 all things: bananas
 television
 the mating season
 come happy ends.

The moon is lovely
Dark and deep-buried
Are her secrets
 inscrutable—like Chinese
To be revealed when
Our gorillanauts
 must come out
To eat the popcorn ball.

BILL BUTLER:

Expatriate American, born in Spokane, Washington, in 1934. Brought up in Washington, Montana, California, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Florida—mostly Montana and San Francisco.

. . . college drop-out (six times) . . . divorced dog-owner . . . previous occupations include: traffic survey, security guard at Tottenham Pig Farm & Sewage Works, and manager of paperback shop at Better Books in London.

He is now the proprietor of one of England's few poetry bookshops, The Unicorn, in Brighton, beginning to branch out into publishing. (One of the first ventures was a poem, in poster form, by J. G. Ballard, and more recently, a Ballard 'condensed novel' on Ronald Reagan.)

His own published works include three books of poetry (two in England, one in the United States), and poems in a variety of magazines including *New Worlds* and *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He is currently preparing two anthologies for publication by Mayflower-Dell in London: *Beyond These Five*, *ESP in Science-Fiction* and *The English Vice*, an *Anthology of Cruelty*, and working on a long poem, "Card Game in the Desert Outside Phoenix," about Frankenstein, the Body Snatchers, and survival.

. . . interested in science-fiction now only insofar as I am interested in survival literature, vide *The Drought*, *The Crystal World*, *Naked Lunch*, *Nova Express*. Survival is the business of man. (Obvious—but if it's so obvious why are we killing ourselves in the famines of India, the battles of Viet Nam and Israel?) Science-fiction as escapism (BEM's et al.) belongs to my Victorian (1940's) childhood. Science (like poetry and all art) is (can be) a map for survival.

“The First Gorilla On The Moon” is a new poem, previously unpublished.

Blastoff

□ KYRIL BONFIGLIOLI

When I get around this bend I shall be able to see it. There is sure to be a crowd in the enclosure—will they shout or fall silent? Some of them smug, glad to be shot of me, some of them crying big selfish tears, sure that I shan't be coming back, hating the thought, loving the sensation, licking up the tears; most of them not even rubbernecks, just big shots who've fiddled a ticket for the take-off—the people who can fiddle a ticket for anything but they only come to show the other fiddlers that they can, they don't even really want to gawp. There will be a few people who understand what it's all about, just a very few who realise that this is the break-through, that it is going to work. That it has to work. That this is the machine that will make Man free of the universe. If it works. And it has to work, like I said. Johnny thinks it will and he's been in on this from the beginning.

Yes, well, there it stands, that's the thing you have to ride on, next stop the heavens ha ha and don't think you aren't scared don't let anyone think I'm scared I mean I'm don't anyone think I'm not scared oh you know. But anyway there it stands and I suppose like the man says it has a kind of stark beauty and all—long and slim and pointing up to the stars my destination and don't anyone think I'm oh hell. But it certainly does look kind of fine at that: good clean lines and the things like wings on the sides

relieving the sweep of the lines but not what you'd call a fancy design, more functional really, but then it does have a kind of special kind of mystery and appeal bound up with all that mankind's-hopes-and-fears stuff although this time it's only a one-man star-trip. One-way too, most likely. (Let's not go into that again, do you mind? Thanks.) They even have songs written about it already, like *The Day He Comes Back What A Day It'll Be* yeah that'll be a day but you know it's one man one way and the rest of the race can chase me.

Look I really do advise you not to pursue that train of thought, son. So alright of course I do get to come back, but I don't have to *bank* on it as though I was *stupid* or something, do I? So let's say I'm for sure coming back sure there's plenty of fool in the tank—there goes my unconscious or something making very cheap jokes—but there is plenty and I wish they'd just shut up about it, simply. In a moment I have to climb up there and ride that thing and they don't have to climb anything or ride anything except oh hell call this a take-off more of a kick-off I call it but the benefit to humanity is nevertheless blah blah blah.

Oh all right, so I *like* humanity, but I still wish they'd shut up. And stop assuming that I'm not scared.

All my short life I have wanted to be the first man to go to the stars and was trained up for it most of my life; not a mere man but a Project and all humanity cheers: oh his heroic sacrifice and he'll come back one day and what a welcome we'll give him and boy are we glad it's him and not us, no, what a glorious pioneer, saviour of humanity but why doesn't he hurry up and GO? What a sucker *he* turned out to be and we'll see he gets his name in all the history books is bunk unless he comes back which might be embarrassing and perhaps bad for trade.

Still it is a beautiful machine, no breadboard lash-up this, no prototype with all the bugs still in it but a masterpiece of simple design, clean, erect, ready for business (nearly there now) my old man would have admired the craftsmanship he was a very good artificer I should have stayed with him and learned the trade then I wouldn't be here all famous and terrified SHUT UP!

I can see mother in the crowd all gentle and proud and just quietly crying in a happy sort of way: I wonder whether she has any real idea what this is all about and what sort of a

crazy son she had and do you suppose she cares, as long as I don't get hurt and boy are you going to get HURT. There's Johnny with her without whom this project could never etc. and he's smiling too as though it was him and not me and the funny thing is.

Mother will know how I feel and all the mothers here will know because this is like the very end of pregnancy, the long wait is over and now there's nothing for it but HAVE it: too late for hot baths and jumping off the kitchen table and the little Indian doctor that you-know-who went to and you've had it now—now you have to have it and now it's going to come tearing out of you and they say the pain is worth it but CAN'T I CHANGE MY MIND but it's worth it child and they can shove that too anyway mother knows and she's only crying quite happily so perhaps. Look are you getting hysterical? Yes. Are you though? No, not really, but, do you know, I'd really rather, perhaps, on the whole, taking everything into consideration, by and large, not do this. (Anyway, I'm thirsty.)

I can easily think of about five million things I'd rather be doing this fine afternoon than go riding to the stars on that thing, for instance I'd rather go fishing on the lake with the boys the sails so white they hurt your eyes and the water so cold it hurts your dabbling trailing fingers and you don't care if you don't catch any fish but if you do, oh lake trout fried in an iron pan on a fire of twigs and driftwood on the shore just a shake of salt and some bread and then roll over and look up at the stars and dream of joining their company, or maybe a trip into the mountains and the joy of your pistonning thighs climbing and the heat beating off the rock and all day all alone, you can really come to terms with what you want to do about you know helping the human race and all and going to the stars and first man there and the human race shall never want again. OK you've got it now it all came true and there's your human race—fair samples—in front of you waiting to watch you do it and look at them. The best are sad for all the wrong reasons, their faces all crumpled and slack and uncomprehending, even the ones you thought had grasped the idea. Most of the crowd, however, have bright eyes and parted lips like young girls at a bull-fight or old gluttons before a bowl of tender baby crabs in boiling butter. All these I have loved.

(And now you are not so keen. Now the big talk turns into actions which hurt the flesh and deeds which the spirit cannot compass.)

SHUT UP.

And the women now are all around and crying and wailing and carrying-on and I didn't bargain for this, no-one told me about this in the briefing, no-one said anything about women shrieking . . .

"Filiae Ierusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete, et super filios vestros. Quoniam ecce venient dies, in quibus dicent: Beatae steriles, et ventres, qui non genuerunt, et ubera quae non lactaverunt."

And now I'm at the top of the ramp and the technicians are closing in around me, peeling-off my earth-side outfit, checking the apparatus, there's the artificer with his hammer and eight-inch nails, the Public Relations man with a crazy signboard to pin up over my head and they're counting down now and the ground-crew are getting out the dice and the Met-men don't like the look of the cloud-ceiling and now you are not frightened any more for your mother is still just crying happily and she has always known the pain is worth it.

A sexta autem hora tenebrae factae sunt super universam terram usque ad horam nonam.

Et circa horam nonam clamavit voce magna, dicens:

"Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?" which, being interpreted, is "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

KYRIL BONFIGLIOLI . . .

. . . was born in Eastbourne, England, in 1928, educated there and at Oxford, and served five years in the Royal West African Frontier Force and Gordon Highlanders. He is now the director of two small art galleries and a rare-book business in Oxford.

. . . Former sabre champion, now too fat. Still very good revolver shot. Interests: cooking, history of art, motorbicycling, whisky-drinking, early Scots literature, collecting revolvers, ornithology, collecting artists' autograph letters, repairing an aged canal barge, Oriental bronzes, Rudyard Kipling, claret, pornography, New Orleans jazz, driving large cars, eating sandwiches, lying in bed in the mornings, growing moustaches.

"Blastoff" was originally published in *Science Fantasy*, anonymously. When I wrote to the editor—Kyril Bonfiglioli—asking if the author would be willing to grant permission—anonously or otherwise—for reprint of the story in an anthology I was then preparing, Bon apparently suffered an agony of embarrassment, and simply failed to reply. I uncovered his identity as author eventually through Michael Moorcock, who be-

came editor of *New Worlds* at the same time Bon took over *Impulse*—then *Science Fantasy*—at the beginning of 1964.

I met both men at a World Science Fiction Convention in London in 1965. Later I was asked to write a guest editorial for *Impulse*, when the press of other affairs made it necessary for Bon to retire:—

Two more appropriately congenial, distinctive, brilliant, individual and *different* madmen I have never met together. You all know something about Moorcock; you have read his stories and articles and reviews, seen pictures of him, perhaps even met him. But 'Bon' is the man no one knows. He was never part of science fiction fan activities; the only story of his that I know was published anonymously; the magazine has never carried his photographs; even his editorials were ordinarily so impersonal as to be self-effacing.

I went once to visit his home in Oxford, an oversized Victorian villa, with a Room in the front drive and cases of stuffed birds in the hall (and all through the house—part of a vanload he had picked up a few months earlier); in the drawing room, paintings and sketches and *objets d'art*, on their way to and from the gallery, almost entirely hid the grand piano (and some of the birds). A Balliol man, erudite, elegant, Bonfiglioli is an expert on medieval literature and art (lecturing occasionally in Oxford).

Women marry men for what they are, then spend the rest of their lives trying to turn them into something else. The men either submit, go mad or run away. Sometimes,

too, they murder their wives. This is a short history of science fiction, its writers, readers and critics.

Alternative short history: Science fiction is something that happened in the '40's and early '50's in certain American magazines. Then the writers grew up and the readers didn't. Or vice versa. Or perhaps both. R.I.P.

—or 'Rise In Potential'? *Impulse* is gone now, and *New Worlds* has metamorphosed into an entirely new magazine, but the vitality of the British sf scene today is in many ways the outcome of the two years when the two publications, under strikingly different, but distinctly complementary, editorial direction, set up polar currents between London and Oxford which attracted new writers from all over England to both magazines: it was in Bonfiglioli's *Science Fantasy/Impulse* that Roger Jones, Josephine Saxton, Daphne Castell, Keith Roberts, and Chris Priest were first published.

You and me and the continuum

□ J. G. BALLARD

Author's note. The attempt to break into the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Good Friday, 196—, first assumed to be the act of some criminal psychopath, later led to enquiries of a very different character. Readers will recall that the little evidence collected seemed to point to the strange and confusing figure of an unidentified Air Force pilot whose body was washed ashore on a beach near Dieppe three months later. Other traces of his 'mortal remains' were found in a number of unexpected places: in a footnote to a paper on some unusual aspects of schizophrenia published thirty years earlier in a since defunct psychiatric journal; in the pilot for an unpurchased TV thriller, "Lieutenant 70"; and on the record labels of a pop singer known as The Him—to instance only a few. Whether in fact this man was a returning astronaut suffering from amnesia, the figment of an ill-organised advertising campaign or, as some have suggested, the second coming of Christ, is anyone's guess. What little evidence we have has been assembled below.

* * *

Ambivalent. She lay quietly on her side, listening to the last bars of the scherzo as his hand hesitated on the zip. This strange man, and his endless obsession with Bruckner, nucleic acids,

Minkowski space-time and God knows what else. Since she had picked him up at the conference on Space Medicine they had barely exchanged a word. Was he wholly there? At times it was almost as if he were trying to put himself together out of some bizarre jigsaw. She turned round, surprised by his dark glasses six inches from her face and the eyes burning through them like stars.

Brachycephalic. They stopped beneath the half-painted bowl of the radio-telescope. As the blunt metal ear turned on its tracks, fumbling at the sky, he put his hands to his skull, feeling the still-open sutures. Beside him Quinton, this dapper pomaded Judas, was waving at the distant hedges where the three limousines were waiting. "If you like we can have a hundred cars—a complete motorcade." Ignoring Quinton, he took a piece of quartz from his flying jacket and laid it on the turf. From it poured the code-music of the quasars.

Coded Sleep. Dr. Nathan looked up as the young woman in the white coat entered the laboratory. "Ah, Doctor Austin." He pointed with his cigarette to the journal on his desk. "This monograph—'Coded Sleep and Intertime'—they can't trace the author . . . someone at this Institute, apparently. I've assured them it's not a hoax. By the way, where's our volunteer?"

"He's asleep." She hesitated, but only briefly. "In my apartment."

"So." Before she left Dr. Nathan said: "Take a blood sample. His group may prove interesting at a later date."

Delivery System. Certainly not an ass. Recent research, the lecturer pointed out, indicated that cosmic space vehicles may have been seen approaching the earth two thousand years earlier. As for the New Testament story, it had long been accepted that the unusual detail (Matt. xxi) of the Messiah riding into Jerusalem on "an ass and a colt the foal of an ass" was an unintelligently literal reading of a tautological Hebrew idiom, a mere verbal blunder. "What is space?" the lecturer concluded. "What does it mean to our sense of time and the images we carry of our finite lives? Are space vehicles merely overgrown V2's, or

are they Jung's symbols of redemption, ciphers in some futuristic myth?"

As the applause echoed around the half-empty amphitheatre Karen Novotny saw his hands stiffen against the mirror on his lap. All week he had been bringing the giant mirrors to the empty house near the reservoirs.

Export Credit Guarantees. "After all, Madame Nhu is asking a thousand dollars an interview, in this case we can insist on five and get it. Damn it, this is The Man. . . ." The brain dulls. An exhibition of atrocity photographs rouses a flicker of interest. Meanwhile, the quasars burn dimly from the dark peaks of the universe. Standing across the room from Elizabeth Austin, who watches him with guarded eyes, he hears himself addressed as "Paul", as if waiting for clandestine messages from the resistance headquarters of World War III.

Five Hundred Feet High. The Madonnas move across London like immense clouds. Painted on clapboard in the Mantegna style, their composed faces gaze down on the crowds watching from the streets below. Several hundred pass by, vanishing into the haze over the Queen Mary reservoir, Staines, like a procession of marine deities. Some remarkable *entrepreneur* has arranged this *tour de force*, in advertising circles everyone is talking about the mysterious international agency that now has the Vatican account. At the Institute Dr. Nathan is trying to sidestep the Late Renaissance. "Mannerism bores me. Whatever happens," he confides to Elizabeth Austin, "we must keep him off Dali and Ernst."

Gioconda. As the slides moved through the projector the women's photographs, in profile and full-face, jerked one by one across the screen. "A characteristic of the criminally insane," Dr. Nathan remarked, "is the lack of tone and rigidity of the facial mask."

The audience fell silent. An extraordinary woman had appeared on the screen. The planes of her face seemed to lead towards some invisible focus, projecting an image that lingered on

the walls, as if they were inhabiting her skull. In her eyes glowed the forms of archangels. "That one?" Dr. Nathan asked quietly. "Your mother? I see."

Helicopter. The huge fans of the Sikorski beat the air fifty feet above them as they drove into the town, a tornado of dust subsiding through the shattered trees along the road. Quinton sat back at the wheel of the Lincoln, now and then signalling over his shoulder at the helicopter pilot. As the music pounded from the radio of the car Quinton shouted: "What a beat! Is this you as well? Now, what else do you need?" "Mirrors, sand, a time shelter."

Imago Tapes.

Tanguy: *Jours de Lenteur.*

Ernest: The Robing of the Bride.

Chirico: The Dream of the Poet.

Jackie Kennedy, I See You in My Dreams. At night the serene face of the President's widow hung like a lantern among the corridors of sleep. Warning him, she seemed to summon to her side all the legions of the bereaved. At dawn he knelt in the grey hotel room over the copies of Newsweek and Paris-Match. When Karen Novotny called he borrowed her nail scissors and began to cut out the photographs of the model girls. "In a dream I saw them lying on a beach. Their legs were rotting, giving out a green light."

Kodachrome. Captain Kirby, M15, studied the prints. They showed: (1) a thick-set man in an Air Force jacket, unshaven face half-hidden by the dented hat-peak; (2) a transverse section through the spinal level T-12; (3) a crayon self-portrait by David Feary, 7-year-old schizophrenic at the Belmont Asylum, Sutton; (4) radio-spectra from the quasar CTA 102; (5) an antero-posterior radiograph of a skull, estimated capacity 1500 cc.; (6) spectro-heliogram of the sun taken with the K line of calcium; (7) left and right hand-prints showing massive scarring between second and third metacarpal bones. To Dr. Nathan he said: "And all these make up one picture?"

Lieutenant 70. An isolated incident at the Strategic Air Command base at Omaha, Nebraska, December 25, 196—, when a landing H-bomber was found to have an extra pilot on board. The subject carried no identification tags and was apparently suffering from severe retrograde amnesia. He subsequently disappeared while being X-rayed at the base hospital for any bioimplants or transmitters, leaving behind a set of plates of a human foetus evidently taken some thirty years previously. It was assumed that this was in the nature of a hoax and that the subject was a junior officer who had become fatigued while playing Santa Claus on an inter-base visiting party.

Minkowski Space-Time. In part a confusion of mathematical models was responsible, Dr. Nathan decided. Sitting behind his desk in the darkened laboratory, he drew slowly on the gold-tipped cigarette, watching the shadowy figure of the man seated opposite him, his back to the watery light from the aquarium tanks. At times part of his head seemed to be missing, like some disintegrating executive from a Francis Bacon nightmare. As yet irreconcilable data: his mother was a 65-year-old terminal psychopath at Broadmoor, his father a still-unborn child in a Dallas lying-in hospital. Other fragments were beginning to appear in a variety of unlikely places: text-books on chemical kinetics, advertising brochures, a pilot for a TV puppet thriller. Even the pun seemed to play a significant role, curious verbal cross-overs. What language could embrace all these, or at least provide a key: computer codes, origami, dental formulae? Perhaps in the end Fellini would make a sex-fantasy out of this botched second coming: 1½.

Narcissistic. Many things preoccupied him during this time in the sun: the plasticity of visual forms, the image maze, the catatonic plateau, the need to re-score the C.N.S., pre-uterine claims, the absurd—i.e., the phenomenology of the universe. . . . The crowd at the plage, however, viewing this beach Hamlet, noticed only the scars which disfigured his chest, hands and feet.

Ontologically Speaking. In slow motion the test cars moved towards each other on collision courses, unwinding behind them

the coils that ran to the metering devices by the impact zone. As they collided the gentle debris of wings and fenders floated into the air. The cars rocked slightly, worrying each other like amiable whales, and then continued on their disintegrating courses. In the passenger seats the plastic models transcribed graceful arcs into the buckling roofs and windshields. Here and there a passing fender severed a torso, the air behind the cars was a carnival of arms and legs.

Placenta. The X-ray plates of the growing foetus had shown the absence of both placenta and umbilical cord. Was this then, Dr. Nathan pondered, the true meaning of the immaculate conception—that not the mother but the child was virgin, innocent of any Jocasta's clutching blood, sustained by the unseen powers of the universe as it lay waiting within its amnion? Yet why had something gone wrong? All too obviously there had been a complete cock-up.

Quasars. Malcolm X, beautiful as the trembling of hands in *tabes dorsalis*; Claude Etherly, migrant angel of the Pre-Third; Lee Harvey Oswald, rider of the scorpion.

Refuge. Gripping the entrenching tool in his bloodied hands, he worked away at the lid of the vault. In the grey darkness of the Abbey the chips of cement seemed to draw light from his body. The bright crystals formed points like a half-familiar constellation, the crests of a volume graph, the fillings in Karen Novotny's teeth.

Speed-King. The highest speed ever achieved on land by a mechanically-propelled wheeled vehicle was 1004.347 m.p.h. reached at Bonneville Salt Flats on 5 March 196—, by a 27-foot-long car powered by three J-79 aircraft engines developing a total of 51,000 h.p. The vehicle disintegrated at the end of the second run, and no trace was found of the driver, believed to be a retired Air Force pilot.

The Him. The noise from the beat group rehearsing in the ballroom drummed at his head like a fist, driving away the half-

formed equations that seemed to swim at him from the gilt mirrors in the corridor. What were they—fragments of a unified field theory, the tetragrammaton, or the production sequences for a deodorant pessary? Below the platform the party of teenagers the Savoy doormen had let in through the Embankment entrance were swaying to the music. He pushed through them to the platform. As he pulled the microphone away from the leader a girl jeered from the floor. Then his knees began to kick, his pelvis sliding and rocking. "Ye . . . yeah, yeah, yeah!" he began, voice rising above the amplified guitars.

U.H.F. "Considerable interference has been noted with TV reception over a wide area during the past three weeks," Kirby explained, pointing to the map. "This has principally taken the form of modifications to the plot-lines and narrative sequences of a number of family serials. Mobile detection vans have been unable to identify the source, but we may conclude that his central nervous system is acting as a powerful transmitter."

Vega. In the darkness the half-filled reservoirs reflected the starlight, the isolated heads of pumping gear marking the distant catwalks. Karen Novotny moved towards him, her white skirt lifted by the cold air. "When do we see you again? This time, it's been . . ." He looked up at the night sky, then pointed to the blue star in the solar apex. "Perhaps in time. We're moving there. Read the sand, it will tell you when."

W.A.S.P. Without doubt there had been certain difficulties after the previous incarnation resulting from the choice of racial stock. Of course, from one point of view the unhappy events of our own century might be regarded as, say, demonstration ballets on the theme "Hydrocarbon Synthesis" with strong audience participation. This time, however, no ethnic issues will be raised, and the needs for social mobility and a maximum acceptance personality profile make it essential that a subject of Gentile and preferably Protestant and Anglo-Saxon . . .

Xoanon. These small plastic puzzles, similar to the gewgaws given away by petroleum and detergent manufacturers, were

found over a wide area, as if they had fallen from the sky. Millions had been produced, although their purpose was hard to see. Later it was found that unusual objects could be made from them.

Ypres Reunion. Kirby waded through the breaking surf, following the tall man in the peaked cap and leather jacket who was moving slowly between the waves to the submerged sandbank two hundred yards away. Already pieces of the dying man were drifting past Kirby in the water. Yet was this the time-man, or did his real remains lie in the tomb at the Abbey? He had come bearing the gifts of the sun and the quasars, and instead had sacrificed them for this unknown soldier resurrected now to return to his Flanders field.

Zodiac. Undisturbed, the universe would continue on its round, the unrequited ghosts of Malcolm X, Lee Harvey Oswald and Claude Etherly raised on the shoulders of the galaxy. As his own identity faded, its last fragments glimmered across the darkening landscape, lost integers in a hundred computer codes, sand-grains on a thousand beaches, fillings in a million mouths.

J. G. BALLARD . . .

. . . born in Shanghai, China, in 1930, was repatriated to England after several years of internment in a Japanese prison camp, in 1946. He read medicine at King's College, Cambridge, served in the RAF in Canada, and worked as an advertising copywriter and scriptwriter for scientific films before turning to full-time fiction writing.

Ballard's work has elicited as much argument as admiration since the appearance of his first story in *Science Fantasy* in 1956. Today, he is the center of three separate—but equally vitriolic—controversies.

. . . I feel that the fictional elements in experience are now multiplying to such a point that it's almost impossible to distinguish between the real and false: that one has many layers, many levels of experience going on at the same time:—

Since the publication of "You and Me and the Continuum" in the first issue of *Impulse*, early in 1966, half a dozen of these 'condensed novels' have appeared, in *New Worlds*, *Ambit*, and *Encounter*, rousing British sf readers, critics, and writers to passions of protest/admiration.

—on one level, the world of public events, Cape Kennedy and Viet Nam mimetised on billboards. On another level, the immediate personal environment, the volumes of space enclosed by opposed hands, the rooms we occupy, the postures we assume, the motion-space of highways, staircases, the angles between these walls—

In an article in *S.F. Horizons*, shortly before the publication of this story, Brian W. Aldiss wrote:—

His witty and nervous worlds, littered with twitching nerves and crashed space stations, carry their own conviction that will eventually win him popular support. For his characters, the worst blow is always over, they are past their nemesis and consequently free. One can only hope that for Ballard too the worst misunderstanding is over, so that he will be free to create in a more intelligent atmosphere . . .

. . . and so it was—in England, where the earlier work (stories like “The Voices of Time” and “Terminal Beach,” and the trilogy of novels completed with *The Crystal World*) had finally been digested.

—On a third level, the inner world of the psyche. Where these planes intersect, images are born. The characters in these stories occupy positions on these various levels:—

In the United States (where very few readers are familiar as yet with stories like “You and Me and the Continuum”) science fiction readers are still battling over reactions to the earlier work.

On the one hand, a character is displayed on an enormous billboard as a figment in some vast CinemaScope epic. On another level, he's an ordinary human being moving through the ordinary to-and-fro of everyday life. On a third level, he is a figment in his own fantasy. . . .

Meanwhile, back in Britain, Ballard, as Prose Editor of the experimental magazine *Ambit*, has become embroiled in a highly publicized battle with the British Arts Council, involving the advertisements he has been designing for that magazine—

. . . Freud pointed out that one has to distinguish between the manifest content of the inner world of the psyche and its latent content; and I think in exactly the same way, today, when the fictional elements have overwhelmed reality, one has to distinguish between the manifest content of reality and its latent content. . . .

—a story called “Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy,” which appears later in this book—

. . . Landscape is a formalization of space and time. And the external landscapes directly reflect interior states of mind . . . What I feel I've done in these pieces of mine is to rediscover the present for myself.

—and his sponsorship of an *Ambit* contest for the best prose or poetry written under the influence of drugs.

"Ballard does not reject the past—but he fuses to see why it should be allowed to influence the present. Most modern fiction, he says, is retrospective in its objectives. He wants a form—and is single-handedly moulding one—that is genuinely speculative and introspective in its objectives. Lacking a sufficiently precise instrument for his purposes, he has built one (an enormous achievement in itself). The instrument has no name, it has still to be refined and developed, but it exists."

Michael Moorcock in *New Worlds*

Meantime, *The Disaster Area*, a collection of some of his earliest stories (published between 1956 and 1963, in *Science Fantasy*, *Fantastic*, etc.), received a lead review in *The London Times' Saturday Review*—

"... sudden relevance to contemporary thinking. He orbits in the same system as R. D. Laing and McLuhan . . ."

—and the BBC has commissioned an opera based on his 1959 novelet, "The Sound Sweep."

Who's in there with me?

□ DAPHNE CASTELL

Yes, certainly the fairies worried us most. They weren't the ideal gauzy creatures that flutter through pretty thoughts, but we called them that because this was the Neverland, and so many names went with it.

The fairies were tiny, partly solid, and partly jelly-like. Sometimes they were winged, but that seemed to depend on the climate at the time, or the time of day, or the colour of the air.

You could not see much of their detail, they were too small; but what was visible was unpleasantly human, with a good many warty protuberances. They had long arms with pincers at the ends.

They were conscious of us, and inclined to show off. When we had observed them at first, getting down to eye-level on the solid stuff—you couldn't call it ground, it moved about too much—they had been roused to frenzied efforts, and done nasty picking things to one another. We soon got sick of watching them, but Terrence didn't mind—he's always liked everything a little scented with perversion. I'm not criticizing, mind. How can any of us, now? I'm just mentioning the fact.

I had been warned not to expect anything, that any guess or prediction would be a waste of time.

"Don't you worry, sir," the manipulator had injected me ex-

pertly, and turned away to adjust the glass and wire dome poised above my head. "It's a wonderful rest-cure for a busy gentleman like you. Nothing inimical to you in any way. It's all your own property, so to speak."

The last thing I had heard as the dome came down was his laughter.

The biggest shock was the fact that it was so crowded: dozens of people I knew, hundreds of people who might have been cast from the same mould as our carriage-full, like a rack of toy soldiers. There'd been an advertisement up in one of the carriages of the Commutrail for a while, and I knew Nathan had passed the word on to a few friends. But I didn't expect to find them all in here with me. Damn it, it was my mind, wasn't it? And weren't we all separate individuals?

The Australian called Les was walking slowly down an avenue between the dangling strands of whatever-they-were. He usually got into the next carriage down. There's always a hierarchy on the Commutrails—always has been and always will be. He's one of those thin, blank, blue-eyed men, with a toughened steel brain behind the blankness, they tell me. He'll probably be up in our carriage in a few years' time. And he's the only one with the probable toughness to go round dropping hints of memory about the way it was in there. The Neverland is going to provide Les with a lot of open-sesames, though I still can't figure out how he got in there along with the rest of us. He must have a lot of weakness hidden away somewhere.

I was glad to see Les had been scratching his backside into long raw even furrows, still beaded with blood.

The solid stuff started heaving itself rhythmically again into a more comfortable position. It brought Les face to face with me, and then slung him backwards, with a seasick motion. A clump of growths—not trees—began circling, and I realized it was time to move on again. With luck, the scenery might weave for minutes only, before freezing into a new pose. Without luck, it might be hours.

I looked round for Nathan, and lugged him to his feet. He had got me into this in the first place, and for that reason, oddly, I felt responsible for him. He'd got several of the others into it, too, and then tried to back out himself, but of course we couldn't

have that. After all, he'd drawn the advertisement to our attention, and said that by repute a friend of a friend was supposed to have had wonders done for him.

Nathan had shown us the leaflet: "Overstrained of the world, relax! Yes, at last, this is the real thing! They've been telling you how to relax, how to sublimate, how to come to grips with yourself, for centuries now. But we are actually going to do it for you. A Change of Self-Scenery, that's what you need!"

Nathan was naked—we were all naked now, except Peters. None of us could understand about Peters. But he looked more uncomfortable than any of us, and he must have felt it, strutting about, or squatting over a tangle of webs writhing frenziedly in their efforts to get out of the composition he'd forced on them.

There he was now, in full regalia—topee, uniform, puttees, and the armoury he clutched to him had to be seen to be believed. Everything from a commando knife to a bazooka, and not a thing to shoot at anywhere.

Nothing bigger than a fairy for miles, except when the Wendy, the Lady, whatever you chose to call her, drifted by, smiling unendingly and undirectedly.

Sometimes Webb dreamed up a big thing, a snarling, snatching tyrannosaurus rex or a mastodon. One of them grinned above the trees at us now, but a few seconds later it would collapse, stinking.

Webb, still half-buried in the soggy solid wall of stuff we all seemed to start out of when we arrived, was catatonic. A joke, that. We had been told that catatonic was the appearance we should present back in reality, to the horrified or worried or curious who looked at us. Seemed a bit unfair to be catatonic here, too.

Webb's imagination was evidently working well. And that was the nice part about this dream or nightmare—you could come to terms with disaster and woo it, and win it smiling to your side.

The tyrannosaurus' jaws stopped their red dripping. It shrank to the size of the fairies, and scampered round the growths to Webb's side. It was woolly now, and an iridescent blue. It looked quite affectionate. Some of the fairies had dug themselves under, to see if the buried part of Webb was ripe for picking

yet. Those who were waiting above extended their pincers, and did several unmentionable things to the poor little tyrannosaurus. I wondered vaguely what it would be like to do such things myself, and felt a faint, erotic stirring. Then I shut my eyes.

I seemed to be one of the few who had come through physically and mentally unchanged—Fielding, for instance, had a dog's head—and I might as well stay that way; then I had a moment's panic. Were all the rest really all right, and was I appallingly altered? After all, this was all my property, wasn't it? If anyone did the hallucinating, it ought to be me. I asked Les, the Australian, who had rolled to my feet with another heave of the ground.

"Sod off, will you?" said Les to the Wendy, on her delicate and inhuman wanderings. "Nah, you're pretty much the same. Might be having the screaming hab-dabs myself, though, for all I can tell." One of the fairies placed a sucker-like mouth on Nathan's big toe, and I trod on it, reflecting with surprise that I had once had qualms about this.

Nathan had been crawling about and weeping since he arrived. "Mummy darling," he was saying, "don't sell, don't sell. I know the turnover's falling off, but things will right themselves, you'll see. Mummy, if the big merger comes off, Daddy will love you very much. I don't like Daddy much. He can stuff his big merger. Mummy, don't go and live in the Bermudas and leave me!" He howled inhumanly at this point, and Les cuffed him with unnecessary brutality. I hit Les, and we had a short messy struggle, over the creeping ground and Nathan's pudgy all-fours shape. We got up gasping.

"You look all right too," I said to Les, who was pawing a damaged chin thoughtfully. Then, overtaken by a ridiculous and simple curiosity, I added, "What made you leave Australia, and start up life in England? It's usually the other way round."

He stared at me, and said, "Ow, Sir Galahad, you do ask the most frightfully chawming questions. What the soggy hell's it got to do with you? I tell you what though, I wish I hadn't been such a gink as to land myself in the muck like this."

I was suddenly and illogically annoyed. I said stiffly, "There was no need for you to take the treatment." After all, when you

got down to brass tacks, it was an English treatment. "How did you get to know about it?—eavesdropping?"

He didn't seem offended. "Oh, I cocked an ear, all right—I always do when the big blokes get together. Never know when you can do yourself a bit of good. And after that I kept one eye on the adverts. Shall we get off somewhere else, then? This is getting shakier all the time."

The Wendy drifted past in the other direction, faster than usual because of pursuit by some of a new intake who hadn't learnt the way round yet. One of them tripped and fell into a slyly-curving fold. He didn't emerge, and I wondered again if we really came out all right at the end, no matter what happened. You weren't supposed to be able to die—well, of course not.

The pools of liquid never stayed long when the ground began to change. Now they were becoming gassy. They rose a little way, changed colour and moved grandly off. We moved too. You couldn't drink them—we had tried, and they recoiled—but they flowed through the lungs of anyone in the way, and sent an unpleasant tingling gasping sensation through you. We dragged Nathan out of the way, whimpering.

"Look," said Les, "let's try a change of countryside—move right out. I know we can't get back there until they come for us, but anything for a change. You reckon they will come? Or are we stuck here? The bloke who put me under said a few refreshing hours only, sir!" He mimicked savagely. "Wonder if they know what it's like inside—they must be laughing their dam' heads off at us if they do!"

"It seems like weeks already," I admitted. "Months, I thought," said Les. "I was wondering. But they can't know what it's like in here. I mean, this is *my* mind. Everyone's is different."

"It is, is it?" said Les. "Then what the hell am I doing stuck in here with the rest of you mob? I mean, let's face it, Webb thinks it's his, I think it's mine, and Nathan'd think it was his, if he could still think. Or else you think I'm just a bit of your sub?" His tone implied offensively that he was different. But I had to admit that I was surprised too. I felt he was different just as much as he did. In any case, the difference couldn't be basic, or else he wouldn't be here. We dragged Nathan out of the way, whimpering.

"We'll try making it over the barrier," said Les defiantly, looking at me to see if I was shaken.

I suppose I was. "We can't," I said at once.

Nathan had fallen to the ground, and was singing: "Happy debentures to you, happy debentures, darling Mummy—" It was much worse than the snivelling.

"The barrier's impassible," I said obstinately.

"Now how do you know that?" said Les. He wiped his hand across his nose, and began to imitate: "'No, no, Sir Jarsper, I can't.' 'Why can't you, me pretty?' 'Mummy told me I couldn't.' 'Well, you know what your Mummy can do, don't you?' 'That's just it, Sir Jarsper, she can't either.' Come on, Collins, give it a try, nobody's told you it's impossible. It looks bloody big, but it may not be. All in the mind, you know."

This was a hit well below the belt, and I was furiously angry. After all, it was *my* mind.

We were moving steadily away from the heaving ground. It shook in a misty orgiastic dance, and long white fleshy streamers, as usual, had come down to anchor themselves in it, and shake pleurably too. They would disappear when the movement froze.

The fairies had converted into their usual rolling fuzzy spore-shapes and were bounding in dozens into the shelter of various growths.

The warts they shed on these occasions were lying thick on the ground, and I could see Murphy busily picking them up and planting them in the stable area on the edge of the tremors. I'd asked him if he'd hoped to grow a fairy, but when he came over, his mouth and nose and chin had somehow got covered by a layer of skin. He must have breathed through his ears. He couldn't speak, just twinkled merrily above the pink new shiny skin. He had had one bit of luck though—one of his seeds had generated an enormous mushroomy thing, a cross between a television set, a coffee table, and a fortune-teller's crystal. He was always seeing pretty pictures in it.

"I looked over Murphy's shoulder once," said Les enviously. "Just for a couple of secs I could see some hot stuff in it. There was a great juicy blonde floating in the air, and she was being tortured by a dwarf and raped by a hunchback

at the same time. She looked as if she were loving every moment of it. Then the thing went milky, and Murphy turned round and made faces at me. 'Enjoy the exotic playgrounds of your unfettered imagination!—know yourself as no one else can know you!' he quoted bitterly from the brochure.

"Do your own dreaming, then. You can't expect Murphy to evoke for two," I pointed out reasonably.

"Yeh, but why aren't the things old Murph dreams up here, instead of all this wacky stuff no one even imagined, unless he was up the creek?"

"Murphy's are surface images, wish-fulfilments," I said loftily. This probably explained Les's deficiencies. "This is right in the unexcavated primeval id or some such thing. Nobody knows what treasures lie hidden in it." I was quoting from the small print of the brochure, the part I betted Les hadn't read, and I was right. Funny trick of the mind, that, in a man as ruthless as Les.

"Effectively, Les, we *are* up the creek. We have retired completely into ourselves—and how on earth Webb manages to be catatonic inside himself as well as out, I shall never know. It seems to me sheer carelessness, though I suppose he can't help it. Wasting an unrepeatable experience like this. You know it can't be done twice. The second time, it would be a permanency."

"They told me that one at the last minute too," said Les grimly. He freed himself from a sort of crater wall that was growing up affectionately round him. "Can you think of anyone who'd want to have this done twice?"

I still couldn't forgive Les for being inside my mind, and remaining comparatively untouched, so much in control. I said, "You don't really know yourself that you're sane, Les, do you? You just hope so. Even when you're back in business, I mean. Suppose the rest of us are quite, quite sure you're a mental case—only, naturally, we're being far too kind and gentlemanly to mention it?" He hasn't done with that one yet. He still thinks about it. I've seen him on a hoplatform from time to time, giving me anxious looks over a newspaper.

For that matter, there are times when I wish earnestly that someone would tell me with complete conviction that I am sane.

We collected one or two others who were among the less affected. It was all really a case of wanting something to do—we didn't really believe that we could cross the barrier. It was too enormous for that. All frilly and cold and majestic, graciously curved inwards like rows of great white umbrellas, or forests of women's knickers hung up to dry.

I wanted to take Fielding, but Les seemed to feel that his deformity would spoil our chances of success.

Apart from Nathan—"Why the hell?" said Les, and I replied, "I have to"—we took a pair called Amesworth and Tolley, who had somehow become joined at the shoulder, and Mulligan, and a clergyman who looked (as well he might) deathly ashamed of himself. We looked in on Royston and Fenter, curled in their cocoon of growths, but it didn't seem worth bothering them. Anyway, it would have taken several hours to disentangle them, and it was probably the last chance they were likely to have.

Then we picked up a stout melancholy man, with dark hair dripping from everything but his head. I had known him very well before we went over, but in the transition everyone had forgotten his name, including himself. In the words of whoever it was, 'he would answer to Hi or to any loud cry.' After him trailed Danvers, affectionately doggy, snuffling now and then in a winsome manner. Now and then the hairy man would bend and pat him, saying, "Man's best friend, aren't you, you soft old thing!" I thought Les had been wrong about not bringing Fielding. He would have felt quite at home.

We walked aimlessly for a time, and began to reach the edge of the thicker growths.

They bulged at us, stupidly, not menacingly, with comic, obscene trunks. The dangle-webs faded, or grew short here, but the plump, pinkish, sour-smelling clouds overhead dropped lower. I thought I was going to bang my head against them at any moment—a queasy thought, because they didn't look well-washed.

Les said in mild surprise, "What d'you suppose the new bastards are up to, over there?" I peered. 'Down to' was more accurate. Most of them were on their knees. A quantity of fairies in spore form rolled rapidly out from behind a bush and got under the feet of Mulligan and Tolley. Les darted about

cursing and kicking them officiously away, while Tolley and Mulligan looked at him, faintly surprised.

"They managed to get the Wendy!" exclaimed Amesworth. This roused us all to genuine interest. We could have known there would be no rules about what anybody would achieve here.

You always tried to catch the Wendy within a certain time after you arrived. But constant change and distrust can be as dull as routine is; and in a way all the changes and surprises were naggingly familiar, as if they'd merely been waiting to put in an appearance when you could find time to give them full attention.

Boredom is a great inducer of lust, but the Wendy had seemed uncapturable. She moved too quickly for you to be certain of anything, except that she was desirable, and beautiful, by most standards of beauty.

She had long floating nostalgically-coloured hair, and lovely basic contours, though they were wrapped round from neck to toe in stiff white material. Swathed, almost, like a mummy. Mummy? Well, I'd rather not examine that too closely, if you don't mind.

The new intake had her down on the comparatively solid ground. Les said, "Maybe one of the new blokes came over with a built-in Wendy capacity. Useful sort of thing to have—like Murph and his do-it-yourself telly."

They were unrolling the Wendy carefully, as if they weren't quite sure what was going to happen.

When they got her out, she was the right shape and the right colour, and they put greedy hands on her, but they soon dropped her.

She was a little like Lisa, who served in the bar on board the Commutrail. The last time I'd seen Lisa, she had been serving me with lager, and I'd reached over the counter, and just gripped the fine brown and white curves above the elbow, sliding my hand down until it fitted into the warm groove. She had said merely, "Now, now, sir, it's a little early for that, isn't it? You'll warm your lager up, and then you won't like it, will you?" Nice girl, Lisa. Knows just what to say. Never overdoes it. So I'd laughed and said, "It's never too early for that, Lisa,"

and taken my lager away, and drunk it rather quickly, without saying anything to Nathan, who was looking at me sideways.

Nathan had crawled up to the group round the Wendy and was peering through them. It was obvious why they had dropped her.

It must have been like reaching out for a fat hairy black-berry and finding a juicy black spider dropped into one's hand. Not that she was hideous. It was just that the thin cries she was piping in distress were inhuman, and she was inhuman too. She was too hot, for one thing, one of them said, smooth and feverish all over. They looked shocked.

Her body was evenly coloured: No moles, no spots, no shadings, no hairs. The swell of the breasts was deliciously proportioned, but she had no nipples. Not a dimple on her, no navel, no buttock creases, no folds, no genitals. She was like a plastic doll of the highest quality, beautifully tailored with regard to propriety.

Just above her waist began a delicately embroidered series of curves, carried out in small pearly-green globes of flesh, like the beginnings of a bead dress. She was trying to cover these, quite inadequately, with nailless, jointless fingers, long and slender.

She seemed to me well-designed, but of no practical use.

Somebody said in a childish voice, "Let's hurt her," but Les stuck out his chin and snarled, "Aw, wind the poor beast up again, you swine, and let her go!" So they did.

Les looked back at the barrier again, and said impatiently, "Right, come on, anybody who's coming, let's get weaving!"

We walked on. Nathan decided, after a few paces, that he was tired. He flopped to the ground idiotically several times, grinning up at us, and Les stopped and said to me, "Look, sport, I'm not waiting. You carting baby boy the rest of the way?—you'll get there by yourself if you do."

I apologized hurriedly and not very convincingly for Nathan, who had begun to drool and sing again. "Ah, leave him," said Les, disgusted. I looked at the others. Mulligan dropped his eyes in an embarrassed fashion. The rest of them didn't even bother to do that. I tried to heave Nathan onto my shoulders, and dropped him. Then I had a better idea. I tied his wrists and

ankles together with one of the fleshy streamers. I hoped it wouldn't vanish when the ground stopped heaving. It was sticky, and he began to gabble shrill startled protests when I put my head through the loop he formed.

Les muttered, "You must be stone crazy," but he didn't offer to stop me, and Mulligan said authoritatively, "Leave Collins alone—if he wants to slog, let him." Mulligan always had moments of terseness.

We began to climb. They were even-spaced, step-like foothills, soothingly regular.

"I can't leave Nathan," I explained again. "We came over at the same time, and this is the only idea I've got in my—" I stopped to think it out. "Well, if anyone does get stuck in my mind, I don't want it to be him."

"My mind," objected Les. "Not that I want your cully stuck in it, either." Tolley and Amesworth and Mulligan began to protest. I said nothing. Why should I wreck anyone's delusions?

There was the muffled pop of a distant explosion. We looked round, to see a series of neat swelling mounds rising gently through the clouds. They broke steadily upwards, in curls and nests of foaming white.

"Pretty!" said Nathan. It was the first word of reason I'd heard from him, since we shook hands with bravado on the thresholds of our respective treatment rooms.

The ground below us and a distance away was pierced and cracked like burst brown paper, and the new intake lay sprawled out round it. Several of them looked badly hurt.

Amesworth, who is bald and vacant and amiable, contributed the obvious, as usual. "It's the Wendy, I expect. They should have left her alone, silly fellows."

"Maybe," said Les. "Might be anything, here. Serve them right, anyhow."

"Probably like trying to take a mine apart," said Tolley, scratching his other shoulder, the one that wasn't joined to Amesworth. "Touch the wrong things, or the right things in the wrong order, and you've had it."

The topmost mound was gradually redefining itself into a huge posed exaggeration of the Wendy figure, stripped, as we had seen her, to the embroidery. The uninjured new boys

crawled nearer, and arranged themselves into a worshipping circle, as the pedestal solidified.

"It's purely luck it didn't happen to us," I said. "We tried to catch her too, after all." All the sprawled figures had moved now. At least we could be sure none of them were dead. "Oh, yair, yair!" bawled Les. "We going on up, or no?"

The steps climbed with even, woolly perfection, and we climbed with them. Or did we?

I was beginning to get the uneasy impression, and I thought Les was, that we weren't so much going upwards, as steadily pursuing the curve of a huge ball. It must be an optical illusion, because the barrier was certainly getting nearer. It looked as if we should soon be at the foot of it, but something about our perspective seemed warped, so that we couldn't actually see the foot; and the summit sloped away from us at an even more ridiculous angle than is usually shown by a straight view up tall cliffs.

It was Tolley who suggested that the barrier was shrinking. "That's ridiculous," said Mulligan. He liked to bore his way through people and projects to get where he was going, did Mulligan.

The anonymous clergyman spoke for the first time. "Well, it isn't curving over at us any more," he pointed out. "It's smoothing itself out, like the peak of an ice-cream cone melting."

It was, and there were impudent cherry-coloured tips, undulating globes all along it. They reminded me of something, though I couldn't think what.

"Sell United Variety Labels, Mummy darling," Nathan was instructing me in a whine over my left shoulder. I hoisted him into a more comfortable position.

Les was jubilant. "Determination, that's the ticket! That's the way to get by in this damn place. That's the lesson for us!"

"I don't know about you," I said coldly, "but I came for a holiday, not a refresher course. Relaxation, remember?" There was something about Les that made me burn and itch to contradict him.

"Learn yourself, they said." Les was still objectionably ob-

stinate. "We'll be able to build ourselves a whole fresh set of images with what we get from this."

"Yes, we all need a set of fresh images. You think, then, that they meant it? It cropped up, time and again, among the—ah—rather enticing verbiage. And, I thought, who fitter than a man who claims to save the human soul, to find out what is in the human mind. My human mind." The clergyman hummed to himself, anxiously. "But, of course," he finished, glancing unhappily at Les, "I can't be sure that it is not, as you in fact claim, *your* human mind."

"Or mine," I said tartly.

"That's right, cobber," chirped Les.

"I can't say I like it," said the clergyman, his broad face crinkling into a distressful pattern curiously like Nathan's. "I don't like it at all."

"Currently, of course, the Wendy worship is putting you off," said Mulligan, with his usual decision.

The clergyman retorted with astonishing asperity, "Not that in the least, I assure you. As a matter of fact, it's rather a relief, like seeing a perfectly orthodox pair of leaves break open on a new shoot. No, it's the absence, at the root of this, of any distinct pattern at all. All we see outside are the tips of the branches, and what we imagine for within may be anything at all—but we have always been quite sure that if we trace all the branches and divisions through they will join some happily definable stem, and follow it down to a firm ultimate root."

"And now you've discovered it's more like the heart of an atom, lots of bits and pieces," murmured Tolley. I think he must spare time to read when he gets home at night. I know him a little—he lives about three roads off, but since he doesn't talk much, you can't tell whether he's thinking, or only brooding.

We kept moving, as we talked, and when I looked back, the Wendy monument had dropped behind a casually flung-up fold of ground, which might have been anything, from spontaneous generation to optical illusion.

The barrier didn't look impassible now—in fact, it was almost welcoming, a homely aspect broken by even patches of familiar colour. Muted cries of pleasure burst from Nathan, and he mumbled cosily, smacking his lips from time to time.

"You blokes notice anything about the sky?" asked Les. For the first time, we realized that we *had* a sky, instead of a pink smelly billowing effect.

"What's more, it's morning," added Les. It was true. There was sharpness in the air, a brush of brisk wind, the reflection of sun half-disguised behind clouds. Les looked up, looked down, turned around several times, like a little girl spreading her party-frock, and suddenly I realized where we were. Tolley could see it too, and I jogged Nathan to make him notice. It was the hoplatform, just before the usual time, in the usual surroundings. And, as usual, the paperslot was missing, which meant they were repairing it.

I pointed it out to Les, who doesn't travel by it as often as some of us.

"We must be coming out!" exclaimed Les. "What a damned funny way to do it! Still, considering we spend a big portion of our lives in that 'trail, it makes a bit of sense. I surely thought we'd end up back in the rooms, though."

The clergyman was looking at us in bewilderment. "What exactly are you all seeing here?" We stared at him.

"Rails, and so on," said Les finally. "Why, what are you?"

The clergyman waved a baffled hand. "Well, I can't see the usual row of sound-proof prayer-booths; the motion-strip; the confessor tapes—not that I actually approve of them, but I must recognize that for some—" He appeared to realize that he had wandered, and blushed a little.

"It's all right, we're not your bishop," growled Les. "Well, we're obviously not through yet. Wonder who the hell's hallucinating, him or us? Anybody else see anything different?" But we all saw and felt the comforting hoplatform. We were all Commutrail men, of course, the clergyman was the only one out. We looked at the clergyman with hostility.

"Well, I don't—" began Mulligan, but there was a distant rattle, and a dark rush of growing sound which cut him short. I stooped and disentangled myself from Nathan, and Mulligan helped me. Nathan swore, which I took to be a sign of returning sanity. It seemed to prove Les's point; and there was certainly a Commutrail approaching us, though what the clergyman thought of it I don't know, and he didn't say.

But I was warm with hope and relief—at least it would be an illusion I knew. The train slowed to the normal speed into hoplatforms, and we went forward, expecting it to stop. We should get aboard, doors would close, light, warmth, conversation, food, drink, familiarity would be ours; and what stories we should presently be telling.

Cold dismay hit us as we realized the train wasn't going to stop. It rolled gently past, jovial and beaming with good company, laden with the old friendly freight of humanity, the light benevolently tracing outlines for us. I heard Les give a shocked gasp, and then the last but one carriage approached. Mine, and Nathan's—and Mulligan's, Tolley's, Amesworth's, and there we all were, all of us, seated and at our best, gently giving and taking of conversation, clearly recognizable. It was only then that I realized that Les's gasp meant that he had seen himself a carriage or two further back—and the clergyman's stricken moan? Well, he must have seen his own rotundity giving or receiving absolution.

In a minute, it was gone, and desolation rushed back upon us with a roar, as if the hoplatform was suddenly windswept.

Nathan was sane again, all right. He turned upon the clergyman. "It's all your fault!" he shouted, shaking as if with an ague. "You don't belong, do you? What are you doing up here? You've ruined the whole thing. Now they'll never take us back! You didn't believe and you've ruined it!"

It was ridiculous, do you see, but suddenly we all felt it, like the witch-frenzy seizing a mediaeval mob. We turned on him, and he ran back from our open mouths and the soft snarling behind our teeth. We followed him, not knowing in the least what we would do with him, but accepting Nathan's lead.

He ran backwards without looking, bleating, "I can't absolve this, I can't absolve it!"

There's always a safety rail, but he must have thought he would be safer on the other side. Or perhaps he thought it was an exit from a prayer-booth. He dropped without a sound. Nothing caught him, nothing stopped him, no miracle. We did not want to lean over, and for all we knew he might be safe at the bottom, shaking a furious fist, for the rules didn't hold good there.

Nathan looked up fearfully, as if looking for judgement; and

we all looked up and heard what he heard, the boom and sweep of a huge wind coming towards us. Brownness grew over the sky, and the colours began closing down.

"A sandstorm," Les muttered stupidly, and Mulligan began to run, screaming "He's after me! Father! Father!"

But, of course, it was merely that they were fetching us back.

* * *

I don't want to put you off, if you're thinking of trying it for yourself. It might be different for you. After all, we can't all inhabit the same mind, can we?

As far as I know, everyone got back. We still use the same carriage—in fact, we seek other company less than before. You never know what people can read on your face, or how much they can tell of your mind by that. The ones I see frequently are much the same as ever. And the ones I didn't know, there's no point in bothering about them. Nathan and I still talk a lot whenever we meet, and laugh, but we're shy of catching one another's eye. I can't get used to Murphy with his mouth and chin back, though. They tell me Peters is writing a book. "Travels in the Hinterland of the Darkest Subconscious," I shouldn't wonder.

I haven't spoken to Les since—you remember I said he was in another carriage. From the look there is about him, he remembers it, but thinks he dreamt it. Perhaps he did, and perhaps we all did.

But the clergyman—he's troubling me, like drowned wasps, floating in a jam-jar. Because I didn't know him, and I can't find out about him, and there's no way of telling. And how would you like it if you thought there was a dead man floating about somewhere in the refuse pits of your mind?

DAPHNE CASTELL (Mrs. M. S. Cloke):

I am over twenty-one and under forty . . . have a brilliant engineering husband and three brilliant musical children . . . Born in Southport, Lancashire, where tripe is eaten. I went to six schools before I was eleven, and ended my education peacefully with an Oxfordshire vicar, three mornings a week. This liberal education in the humanities gained me a scholarship to Oxford (St. Anne's) and a sturdy Victorian prose style, leavened with heavy jocularity (I don't know where "Who's in there with me?" came from—it's not typical). I did linguistic research under Professor Tolkien, who is a marvellously kind, helpful man . . . until I ran out of living money—a thing I do fairly often.

Miss Castell's fiction has appeared only in *Science Fantasy/Impulse* between 1964 and the demise of the magazine in 1966, but she has written articles, interviews, reviews, etc. for a number of publications including *The Guardian*, *Good Housekeeping*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*, as well as a news program for the BBC. Several of her stories have also been broadcast over the BBC.

I became a qualified librarian, and worked with music and then with forestry literature until I had my second baby.

Interests? A lot. I used to try something different every year . . . chess, cricket, bell-ringing and music seem to stay, whatever else passes . . . I've written, produced and acted in plays, run a madrigal society, given song-recitals, conducted a village choir . . . At the moment, I look after the house and children, act as chauffeur to the family, experiment with foreign cooking, belong to a local choir, ring bells at a local church, study electricity and Grade 3 piano, and run a class for adults in English language.

She prefers American to British sf—

—though I would rather have written "Hothouse" than anything I can lay claim to.

I feel we're all a bit besieged by the "short trot round a fevered mind" effect.

If I could be my ideal writer, I would be a combination of James Blish (for plots and people), Robert Sheckley (for dialogue and situation), and Hal Clement (for background and detail).

The squirrel cage

□ THOMAS M. DISCH

The terrifying thing—if that's what I mean—I'm not sure that 'terrifying' is the right word—is that I'm free to write down anything I like but that no matter what I *do* write down it will make no difference—to me, to you, to whomever differences are made. But then what is meant by 'a difference'? Is there ever really such a thing as change?

I ask more questions these days than formerly; I am less programmatic altogether. I wonder—is that a good thing?

This is what it is like where I am: a chair with no back to it (so I suppose you would call it a stool); a floor, walls, and a ceiling, which form, as nearly as I can judge, a cube; white, white light, no shadows—not even on the underside of the lid of the stool; me, of course; the typewriter. I have described the typewriter at length elsewhere. Perhaps I shall describe it again. Yes, almost certainly I shall. But not now. Later. Though why not now? Why not the typewriter as well as anything else?

Of the many kinds of question at my disposal, 'why' seems to be the most recurrent. Why is that?

What I do is this: I stand up and walk around the room from wall to wall. It is not a large room, but it's large enough for present purposes. Sometimes I even jump, but there is little incentive to do that, since there is nothing to jump *for*. The ceiling

is quite too high to touch, and the stool is so low that it provides no challenge at all. If I thought anyone were *entertained* by my jumping . . . but I have no reason to suppose that. Sometimes I exercise: push-ups, somersaults, head-stands, isometrics, etc. But never as much as I should. I am getting fat. Disgustingly fat and full of pimples besides. I like to squeeze the pimples on my face. Every so often I will keep one sore and open with overmuch pinching, in the hope that I will develop an abscess and blood-poisoning. But apparently the place is germ-proof. The thing never infects.

It's well nigh impossible to kill oneself here. The walls and floor are padded, and one only gets a headache beating one's head against them. The stool and typewriter both had hard edges, but whenever I have tried to use *them*, they're withdrawn into the floor. That is how I know there is someone watching.

Once I was convinced it was God. I assumed that this was either heaven or hell, and I imagined that it would go on for all eternity just the same way. But if I were living in eternity already, I couldn't get fatter all the time. Nothing changes in eternity. So I console myself that I will someday die. Man is mortal. I eat all I can to make that day come faster. *The Times* says that that will give me heart disease.

Eating is fun, and that's the real reason I do a lot of eating. What else is there to do, after all? There is this little . . . nozzle, I suppose you'd call it, that sticks out of one wall, and all I have to do is put my mouth to it. Not the most elegant way to feed, but it tastes damn good. Sometimes I just stand there hours at a time and let it trickle in. Until *I have* to trickle. That's what the stool is for. It has a lid on it, the stool does, which moves on a hinge. It's quite clever, in a mechanical way.

If I sleep, I don't seem to be aware of it. Sometimes I do catch myself dreaming, but I can never remember what they were about. I'm not able to make myself dream at will. I would like that exceedingly. That covers all the vital functions but one—and there is an accommodation for sex too. Everything has been thought of.

I have no memory of any time before this, and I cannot say how long *this* has been going on. According to today's *New*

York Times it is the Second of May, 1961. I don't know what conclusion one is to draw from that.

From what I've been able to gather, reading *The Times*, my position here in this room is not typical. Prisons, for instance, seem to be run along more liberal lines, usually. But perhaps *The Times* is lying, covering up. Perhaps even the date has been falsified. Perhaps the entire paper, every day, is an elaborate forgery and this is actually 1950, not 1961. Or maybe they are antiques and I am living whole centuries after they were printed, a fossil. Anything seems possible. I have no way to judge.

Sometimes I make up little stories while I sit here on my stool in front of the typewriter. Sometimes they are stories about the people in *The New York Times*, and those are the best stories. Sometimes they are just about people I make up, but those aren't so good because. . . .

They're not so good because I think everybody is dead. I think I may be the only one left, sole survivor of the breed. And they just keep me here, the last one, alive, in this room, this cage, to look at, to observe, to make their observations of, to—I don't *know* why they keep me alive. And if everyone is dead, as I've supposed, then who are they, these supposed observers? Aliens? *Are* there aliens? I don't know. Why are they studying me? What do they hope to learn? Is it an experiment? What am I supposed to do? Are they waiting for me to say something, to write something on this typewriter? Do my responses or lack of responses confirm or destroy a theory of behaviour? Are the testers happy with their results? They give no indications. They efface themselves, veiling themselves behind these walls, this ceiling, this floor. Perhaps no human could stand the sight of them. But maybe they are only scientists, and not aliens at all. Psychologists at M.I.T. perhaps, such as frequently are shown in *The Times*: blurred, dotty faces, bald heads, occasionally a moustache, certificate of originality. Or, instead, young, crew-cut Army doctors studying various brainwashing techniques. Reluctantly, of course. History and a concern for freedom has forced them to violate their own (privately-held) moral codes. Maybe I *volunteered* for this experiment! Is that the case? O God, I hope not! Are you reading this, Professor? Are you reading this, Major?

Will you let me out now? I want to leave this experiment *right now*.

Yeah.

Well, we've been through that little song and dance before, me and my typewriter. We've tried just about every password there is. Haven't we, typewriter. And as you can see (can you see?)—here we are still.

They are aliens, obviously.

* * *

Sometimes I write poems. Do you like poetry? Here's one of the poems I wrote. It's called *Grand Central Terminal*. ('Grand Central Terminal' is the right name for what most people, wrongly, call 'Grand Central Station.' This—and other priceless information—comes from *The New York Times*.)

Grand Central Terminal

How can you be unhappy
when you see how high
the ceiling is?

Myl

the ceiling is high!
High as the sky!
So who are *we*
to be gloomy here?

Why,

there isn't even room
to die, my dear.

This is the tomb
of some giant so great
that if he ate
us there would be
simply no taste.

Gee,

what a waste
that would be
of you and me.

And sometimes, as you can also see, I just sit here copying old poems over again, or maybe copying the poem that *The Times* prints each day. *The Times* is my only source of poetry. Alas the day! I wrote *Grand Central Terminal* rather a long time ago. Years. I can't say exactly how many years though.

I have no measures of time here. No day, no night, no waking and sleeping, no chronometer but *The Times*, ticking off its dates. I can remember dates as far back as 1957. I wish I had a little diary that I could keep here in the room with me. Some record of my progress. If I could just save up my old copies of *The Times*. Imagine how, over the years, they would pile up. Towers and stairways and cosy burrows of newsprint. It would be a more humane architecture, would it not? This cube that I occupy does have drawbacks from the strictly human point of view. But I am not allowed to keep yesterday's edition. It is always taken away, whisked off, before today's edition is delivered. I should be thankful, I suppose, for what I have.

What if *The Times* went bankrupt? What if, as is often threatened, there were a newspaper strike! Boredom is not, as you might suppose, the great problem. Eventually—very soon, in fact—boredom becomes a great challenge. A stimulus.

My body. Would you be interested in my body? I used to be. I used to regret that there were no mirrors in here. Now, on the contrary, I am grateful. How gracefully, in those early days, the flesh would wrap itself about the skeleton; now, how it droops and languishes! I used to dance by myself hours on end, humming my own accompaniment—leaping, rolling about, hurling myself spread-eagled against the padded walls. I became a connoisseur of kinesthesia. There is great joy in movement—free, unconstrained speed.

Life is so much tamer now. Age dulls the edge of pleasure, hanging its wreathes of fat on the supple Christmas tree of youth.

I have various theories about the meaning of life. Of life *here*. If I were somewhere else—in the world I know of from *The New York Times*, for instance, where so many exciting things happen every *day* that it takes half a million words to tell about them—there would be no problem at all. One would be so busy running around—from 53rd St. to 42nd St., from 42nd St. to

the Fulton Street Fish Market, not to mention all the journeys one might make *crossstown*—that one wouldn't have to worry whether life had a meaning.

In the daytime one could shop for a multitude of goods, then in the evening, after a dinner at a fine restaurant, to the theatre or a cinema. Oh, life would be so full if I were living in New York! If I were free! I spend a lot of time, like this, imagining what New York must be like, imagining what other people are like, what I would be like with other people, and in a sense my life here is full from imagining such things.

One of my theories is that they (*you* know, ungentle reader, who they are, I'm sure) are waiting for me to make a confession. This poses problems. Since I remember nothing of my previous existence, I don't know what I should confess. I've tried confessing to everything: political crimes, sex crimes (I especially like to confess to sex crimes), traffic offences, spiritual pride. My God, what *haven't* I confessed to? Nothing seems to work. Perhaps I just haven't confessed to the crimes I really did commit, whatever they were. Or perhaps (which seems more and more likely) the theory is at fault.

I have another theory th



A brief hiatus.

The Times came, so I read the day's news, then nourished myself at the fount of life, and now I am back at my stool.

I have been wondering whether, if I were living in that world, the world of *The Times*, I would be a pacifist or not. It is certainly the central issue of modern morality, and one would have to take a stand. I have been thinking about the problem for some years, and I am inclined to believe that I am in favour of disarmament. On the other hand, in a practical sense I wouldn't object to the bomb if I could be sure it would be dropped on me. There is definitely a schism in my being between the private sphere and the public sphere.

On one of the inner pages, behind the political and international news, was a wonderful story headlined: BIOLOGISTS

HAIL MAJOR DISCOVERY. Let me copy it out for your benefit:

Washington D.C.—Deep-sea creatures with brains but no mouths are being hailed as a major biological discovery of the twentieth century.

The weird animals, known as pogonophores, resemble slender worms. Unlike ordinary worms, however, they have no digestive system, no excretory organs, and no means of breathing, the National Geographic Society says. Baffled scientist who first examined pogonophores believed that only parts of the specimens had reached them.

Biologists are now confident that they have seen the whole animal, but still do not understand how it manages to live. Yet they know it does exist, propagate, and even think, after a fashion, on the floors of deep waters around the globe. The female pogonophore lays up to thirty eggs at a time. A tiny brain permits rudimentary mental processes.

All told, the pogonophore is so unusual that biologists have set up a special phylum for it alone. This is significant because a phylum is such a broad biological classification that creatures as diverse as fish, reptiles, birds, and men are all included in the phylum, Chordata.

Settling on the sea bottom, a pogonophore secretes a tube around itself and builds it up, year by year, to a height of perhaps five feet. The tube resembles a leaf of white grass, which may account for the fact that the animal went so long undiscovered.

The pogonophore apparently never leaves its self-built prison, but crawls up and down inside at will. The wormlike animal may reach a length of fourteen inches, with a diameter of less than a twenty-fifth of an inch. Long tentacles wave from its top end.

Zoologists once theorised that the pogonophore, in an early stage, might store enough food in its body to allow it to fast later on. But young pogonophores also lack a digestive system.

It's amazing the amount of things a person can learn just by reading *The Times* every day. I always feel so much more alert after a good read at the paper. And creative. Herewith, a story about pogonophores:

STRIVING

The Memoirs of a Pogonophore

Introduction

In May of 1961 I had been considering the purchase of a pet. One of my friends had recently acquired a pair of tarsiers, another had adopted a boa constrictor, and my nocturnal roommate kept an owl caged above his desk.

A nest (or school?) of pogs was certainly one-up on their eccentricities. Moreover, since pogonophores do not eat, excrete, sleep, or make noise, they would be ideal pets. In June I had three dozen shipped to me from Japan at considerable expense.

A brief interruption in the story: do you feel that it's credible. Does it possess the *texture* of reality? I thought that by beginning the story by mentioning those other pets, I would clothe my invention in greater verisimilitude. Were you taken in?

Being but an indifferent biologist, I had not considered the problem of maintaining adequate pressure in my aquarium. The pogonophore is used to the weight of an entire ocean. I was not equipped to meet such demands. For a few exciting days I watched the surviving pogs rise and descend in their translucent white shells. Soon, even these died. Now, resigned to the commonplace, I stock my aquarium with Maine lobster for the amusement and dinners of occasional out-of-town visitors.

I have never regretted the money I spent on them: man is rarely given to know the sublime spectacle of the rising pogonophore—and then but briefly. Although I had at that time only the narrowest conception of the thoughts that passed through the rudimentary brain of the sea-worm ("Up up up Down down down"), I could not help admiring its persistence. The pogonophore does not sleep. He climbs to the top of the inside passage of his shell, and, when he has reached the top, he retraces his steps to the bottom of his shell. The pogonophore never tires of his self-imposed regimen. He performs his duty scrupulously and with honest joy. He is *not* a fatalist.

The memoirs that follow this introduction are not allegory. I have not tried to 'interpret' the inner thoughts of the pogono-

phore. There is no need for that, since the pogonophore himself has given us the most eloquent record of his spiritual life. It is transcribed on the core of translucent white shell in which he spends his entire life.

Since the invention of the alphabet it has been a common conceit that the markings on shells or the sand-etched calligraphy of the journeying snail are possessed of true linguistic meaning. Cranks and eccentrics down the ages have tried to decipher these codes, just as other men have sought to understand the language of the birds. Unavailingly, I do not claim that the scrawls and shells of *common* shellfish can be translated; the core of the pogonophore's shell, however, can be—for I have broken the code!

With the aid of a United States Army manual on cryptography (obtained by what devious means I am not at liberty to reveal) I have learned the grammar and syntax of the pogonophore's secret language. Zoologists and others who would like to verify my solution of the crypt may reach me through the editor of this publication.

In all thirty-six cases I have been able to examine, the indented tracteries on the insides of these shells have been the same. It is my theory that the sole purpose of the pogonophore's tentacles is to follow the course of this "message" up and down the core of his shell and thus, as it were, to think. The shell is a sort of externalized stream-of-consciousness.

It would be possible (and in fact it is an almost irresistible temptation) to comment on the meaning that these memoirs possess for mankind. Surely, there is a philosophy compressed into these precious shells by Nature herself. But before I begin my commentary, let us examine the text itself.

The Text

I

Up. Uppity, up, up. The Top.

II

Down. Downy, down, down. Thump. The Bottom.

III

A description of my typewriter. The keyboard is about one foot wide. Each key is flush to the next and marked with a single letter of the alphabet, or with two punctuation signs, or

with one number and one punctuation sign. The letters are not ordered as they are in the alphabet, alphabetically, but seemingly at random. It is possible that they are in code. Then there is a space bar. There is not, however, either a margin control or a carriage return. The platen is not visible, and I can never see the words I'm writing. What does it all look like? Perhaps it is made immediately into a book by automatic linotypists. Wouldn't that be nice? Or perhaps my words just go on and on in one endless line of writing. Or perhaps this typewriter is just a fraud and leaves no record at all.

Some thoughts on the subject of futility:

I might just as well be lifting weights as pounding at these keys. Or rolling stones up to the top of a hill from which they immediately roll back down. Yes, and I might as well tell lies as the truth. It makes no difference what I say.

That is what is so terrifying. Is 'terrifying' the right word?

I seem to be feeling rather poorly today, but I've felt poorly before! In a few more days I'll be feeling all right again. I need only be patient, and then. . . .

What do they want of me here? If only I could be sure that I were serving some good *purpose*. I cannot help worrying about such things. Time is running out. I'm hungry again. I suspect I am going crazy. That is the end of my story about the pogonophores.

A hiatus.

Don't *you* worry that I'm going crazy? What if I got catatonia? Then *you'd* have nothing to read. Unless they gave *you* my copies of *The New York Times*. It would serve *you* right.

You: the mirror that is denied to me, the shadow that I do not cast, my faithful observer, who reads each freshly-minted *pensée*; Reader.

You: Horrorshow monster, Bug-Eyes, Mad Scientist, Army Major, who prepares the wedding bed of my death and tempts me to it.

You: Other!

Speak to me!

YOU: What shall I say, Earthling?

I: Anything so long as it is another voice than my own, flesh that is not my own flesh, lies that I do not need to invent for myself. I'm not particular, I'm not proud. But I doubt sometimes—you won't think this is too melodramatic of me?—that I'm real.

YOU: I know the feeling. (Extending a tentacle) May I?

I: (Backing off) Later. Just now I thought we'd talk. (You begin to fade.)

There is so much about you that I don't understand. Your identity is not distinct. You change from one being to another as easily as I might switch channels on a television set, if I had one. You are too secretive as well. You should get about in the world more. Go places, show yourself, enjoy life. If you're shy, I'll go out with you. You let yourself be undermined by fear, however.

YOU: Interesting. Yes, definitely most interesting. The subject evidences acute paranoid tendencies, fantasises with almost delusional intensity. Observe his tongue, his pulse, his urine. His stools are irregular. His teeth are bad. He is losing hair.

I: I'm losing my mind.

YOU: He's losing his mind.

I: I'm dying.

YOU: He's dead.

(Fades until there is nothing but the golden glow of the eagle on his cap, a glint from the oak leaves on his shoulders.) But he has not died in vain. His country will always remember him, for by his death he has made this nation free.

(Curtain. Anthem.)

Hi. It's me again. Surely you haven't forgotten *me*? Your old friend, me? Listen carefully now—this is my plan. I'm going

to escape from this damned prison, by God, and *you're* going to help me. 20 people may read what I write on this typewriter, and of those 20, 19 could see me rot here forever without batting an eyelash. But not number 20. Oh no! He—*you*—still has a conscience. He/*you* will send me a Sign. And when I've seen the Sign, I'll know that someone out there is trying to help. Oh, I won't expect miracles overnight. It may take months, years even, to work out a foolproof escape, but just the knowledge that there is someone out there trying to help will give me the strength to go on from day to day, from issue to issue of *The Times*.

You know what I sometimes wonder? I sometimes wonder why *The Times* doesn't have an editorial about me. They state their opinion on everything else—Castro's Cuba, the shame of our Southern States, the Sales Tax, the first days of Spring.

What about me!

I mean, isn't it an injustice the way *I'm* being treated? Doesn't anybody care, and if not, why not? Don't tell me they don't know I'm here. I've been years now writing, writing. Surely they have some idea. Surely *someone* does!

These are serious questions. They demand serious appraisal. I insist that they be *answered*.

I don't really expect an answer, you know. I have no false hopes left, none. I know there's no Sign that will be shown me, that even if there is, it will be a lie, a lure to go on hoping. I know that I am alone in my fight against this injustice. I know all that—and *I don't care!* My will is still unbroken, and my spirit free. From my isolation, out of the stillness, from the depths of this white, white light, I say this to you—I DEFY YOU! Do you hear that? I said: I DEFY YOU!

Dinner again. Where does the time all go to?

While I was eating dinner I had an idea for something I was going to say here, but I seem to have forgotten what it was. If I remember, I'll jot it down. Meanwhile, I'll tell you about my other theory.

My *other* theory is that this is a squirrel-cage. You know? Like the kind you find in a small town park. You might even have one of your own, since they don't have to be very big. A squirrel-cage is like most any other kind of cage except it has an exercise wheel. The squirrel gets *into* the wheel and starts running. |

His running makes the wheel turn, and the turning of the wheel makes it necessary for him to keep running inside it. The exercise is supposed to keep the squirrel healthy. What I don't understand is why they put the squirrel in the cage in the first place. Don't they know what it's going to be like for the poor little squirrel? Or don't they care?

They don't care.

I remember now what it was I'd forgotten. I thought of a new story. I call it "An Afternoon at the Zoo." I made it up myself. It's very short, and it has a moral. This is my story:

AN AFTERNOON AT THE ZOO

This is the story about Alexandra. Alexandra was the wife of a famous journalist, who specialised in science reporting. His work took him to all parts of the country, and since they had not been blessed with children, Alexandra often accompanied him. However this often became very boring, so she had to find something to do to pass the time. If she had seen all the movies playing in the town they were in, she might go to a museum, or perhaps to a ball game, if she were interested in seeing a ball game that day. One day she went to a zoo.

Of course it was a small zoo, because this was a small town. Tasteful but not spectacular. There was a brook that meandered all about the grounds. Ducks and a lone black swan glided among the willow branches and waddled out onto the lake to snap up bread crumbs from the visitors. Alexandra thought the swan was beautiful.

Then she went to a wooden building called the 'Rodentiary'. The cages advertised rabbits, otters, raccoons, etc. Inside the cages was a litter of nibbled vegetables and droppings of various shapes and colours. The animals must have been behind the wooden partitions, sleeping. Alexandra found this disappointing, but she told herself that rodents were hardly the most important thing to see at any zoo.

Nearby the Rodentiary, a black bear was sunning himself on a rock ledge. Alexandra walked all about the demi-lune of

bars without seeing other members of the bear's family. He was an enormous bear.

She watched the seals splash about in their concrete pool, and then she moved on to find the Monkey House. She asked a friendly peanut vendor where it was, and he told her it was closed for repairs.

"How sad!" Alexandra exclaimed.

"Why don't you try *Snakes and Lizards?*" the peanut vendor asked.

Alexandra wrinkled her nose in disgust. She'd hated reptiles ever since she was a little girl. Even though the Monkey House was closed she bought a bag of peanuts and ate them herself. The peanuts made her thirsty, so she bought a soft drink and sipped it through a straw, worrying about her weight all the while.

She watched peacocks and a nervous antelope, then turned off on to a path that took her into a glade of trees. Poplar trees, perhaps. She was alone there, so she took off her shoes and wiggled her toes, or performed some equivalent action. She liked to be alone like this, sometimes.

A file of heavy iron bars beyond the glade of trees drew Alexandra's attention. Inside the bars there was a man, dressed in a loose-fitting cotton suit—pyjamas, most likely—held up about the waist with a sort of rope. He sat on the floor of his cage without looking at anything in particular. The sign at the base of the fence read:

Chordate.

"How lovely!" Alexandra exclaimed.

Actually, that's a very old story. I tell it a different way every time. Sometimes it goes on from the point where I left off. Sometimes Alexandra talks to the man behind the bars. Sometimes they fall in love, and she tries to help him escape. Sometimes they're both killed in the attempt, and this is *very* touching. Sometimes they get caught and are put behind the bars *together*. But because they love each other so much, imprisonment is easy to endure. That is also touching, in its way. Sometimes they make it to freedom. After that though, after they're free, I never know what to do with the story. However, I'm sure

that if I were free myself, free of this cage, it would not be a problem.

One part of the story doesn't make much sense. Who would put a person in a zoo? Me, for instance. Who would do such a thing? Aliens? Are we back to aliens again? Who can say about aliens? I mean, *I* don't know anything about them.

My theory, my best theory, is that I'm being kept here by people. Just ordinary people. It's an ordinary zoo, and ordinary people come by to look at me through the walls. They read the things I type on this typewriter as it appears on a great illuminated billboard, like the one that spells out the news headlines around the sides of The Times Tower on 42nd Street. When I write something funny, they may laugh, and when I write something serious, such as an appeal for help, they probably get bored and stop reading. Or *vice versa* perhaps. In any case, they don't take what I say very seriously. None of them care that I'm inside here. To them I'm just another animal in a cage. You might object that a human being is not the same thing as an animal, but isn't he, after all? They, the spectators, seem to think so. In any case, none of them is going to help me get out. None of them thinks it's at all strange or unusual that I'm in here. None of them thinks it's wrong. That's the terrifying thing.

"Terrifying"?

It's not terrifying. How can it be? It's only a story, after all. Maybe *you* don't think it's a story, because you're out there reading it on the billboard, but I know it's a story because I have to sit here on this stool making it up. Oh, it might have been terrifying once upon a time, when I first got the idea, but I've been here now for years. Years. The story has gone on far too long. Nothing can be terrifying for years on end. I only *say* it's terrifying because, you know, I have to say something. Something or other. The only thing that could terrify me now is if someone were to come in. If they came in and said, "All right, Disch, you can go now." That, truly, would be terrifying.

THOMAS M. DISCH . . .

. . . is a sort of contemporary Horatio Alger hero. Born in Minnesota in 1939, he went to high school in St. Paul, and left for New York as soon afterward as he could.

By stretching the definition, I can say I was once a cowboy, but mostly I've had nebbish jobs—bank teller, checkroom attendant, draftsman, etc. . . . I hit my nadir when I was a night attendant in a Minneapolis funeral parlor (\$10 a week and an attic room over the embalming studio) . . . Cooper Union drop-out in '59, N.Y.U. drop-out in '62.

His first story was published in *Fantastic* in October 1962, after which—

—things picked up. I got hired by Doyle Dane Bernbach and found, rather to my dismay, that I enjoyed advertising and a living wage. Wrote copy for liquor, luggage, electric organs, and VWs. Left DDB in Nov. '64 for Mexico . . .

Since 1964, he has been nowhere longer than six months. He was in Spain and London in the fall and winter of 1965-66, when three separate stories of his were

published in three different "year's best" anthologies in the United States, and his first novel, *The Genocides* (Berkley, 1965), worked up a wild storm of controversy among American readers.

A short story collection in England, and three more paperback novels in the United States, plus magazine sales to *Mademoiselle*, *Alfred Hitchcock*, and *Playboy*, among others, made it possible for him to spend most of 1966 traveling on the Continent.

Meantime, he was beginning to publish a new and different kind of work in *New Worlds*. At the end of the year, he returned to London, and registered as a resident alien in England. (Well, I warned you this was *contemporary* Alger.)

In a tape-recorded message to an American science fiction conference in the spring of 1967 he explained:—

. . . As to what I'm so pleased about here—I think . . . it's the *seriousness* of what goes on here, or at least the fact that seriousness can be admitted, that it's not an embarrassment, that people just take the whole business of writing seriously . . . not that sort of *special* talk that surrounds science fiction in the States, that sense of "Well, we're dabbling" or "Well, this is how we earn our living"—the feeling that *shop-talk* is about the limit that one goes to . . .

It's partly the inspiration of having the thing that you do well recognized *for the right reason*—having a sympathetic audience—having a sympathetic editor. But it's more than that . . . a feeling, "Well, I can dare to go places that haven't been gone before." . . . in the States I simply would

have felt, "Well, it can't be done." I would have resigned myself to what I thought were certain facts of the market-place.

("The Squirrel Cage" had been returned to him as 'unsalable' in the United States; after its publication in *NW*, it was bought for an Ace Books anthology called, entirely coincidentally, *New Worlds of Fantasy*.)

Well, those facts really don't exist in England—at least in *New Worlds*, and the thought that one can write one's utmost—whatever that is—and have a chance of its being published means a lot . . . the people involved in this are all doing very different things, but they have . . . enough sensibility to see what the other people are doing and enough catholicity to appreciate it and enough wisdom to accept it.

His latest novel, *Camp Concentration*, which will be published by Doubleday in 1969, was the first serial to be run in the new-look, new-size "Speculative Fiction" magazine to which *New Worlds* converted last fall. He has also been publishing critical articles and book reviews in the new *New Worlds*. And his first story for *Transatlantic Review* was published in 1967, just before he returned the permission forms for this book with a letter—from Istanbul—saying:

Occupation: Beach-comber on a semi-global scale (Europe and the Near-East).

Manscarer

□ KEITH ROBERTS

By dawn most of the spectators are in their places in the stands and already making a din that is causing Roley Stratford to rage and fume. This the plebs will never understand; that the true introduction to the coming spectacle is Silence. One cannot play Silence, the primordial entity; so there is nothing to which to listen, and the people are not quiet.

Roley has dressed for the occasion as a British admiral of the early nineteenth century; his white breeches are soiled with grass stains where he has helped one of the working parties make last-minute adjustments to the great shanks of *Manscarer* lying along the cliff-top. Jed Burrows, A.D.C. for the day, fusses behind his temporary chief, carrying the bottle of rum Roley has declared indispensable to the period flavour. He also started out with a brass telescope and an astrolabe, but the latter was left behind as too unwieldy. The telescope he still carries, tucked in the crook of his blue-uniformed arm.

The dawn wind is cool; Jed shivers a little, stepping from one foot to the other as the shade of Nelson harangues the Leader of the orchestra. A minor difficulty has arisen; the contract clearly specifies a thirty-minute overture before the *Pomp and Circumstance* extracts that will herald the Assembly, but only part of the band awnings has arrived in time. A harassed group of City

engineers is still at work erecting the rest, manhandling the awkward lengths of billowing pre-formed plastic. Leader, Strings and Woodwind are prepared to play in the open air; the Brass Section, keen Union men one and all, are not. The boys claim it will chap their lips. Somewhat obscurely, Percussion and Effects are backing the argument. Jed tires of the row and wanders off, leaving the rum placed on a conspicuous outcrop of rock. Part of the Book calls for volleys of Verey lights; he will have ample warning of the start.

Most of the Colony are scattered round the concrete pads on which *Manscarer* will take shape, by the grace of God and in spite of the force of gravity. The working teams lounge on the grass, still keeping roughly in position; here and there a bottle is raised in greeting to Jed as he paces solemnly the dural beams of the Crow. As he walks he rehearses again in his mind the complex stages of Assembly. The first members, once socketed into their pads, will serve as derricks for the raising of the greater beams, the weighted and counterbalanced shafts that will set the head of the sculpture in huge and complicated motion. The beak itself, the *corvus*, lies along the clifftop like an old-time ploughshare monstrously overlarge. There could be trouble with the placing of the assembly; it is heavy, very heavy, and the triplefold tackles that will bear its weight are none too hefty for the job. The answer would have been a flying crane, but Roley refuses to countenance the use of such an apparatus. The machine would spoil the form of *Manscarer* at a critical moment, and its din would drown the orchestra.

Jed checks the donkey engine that will make the great pulls. Steam is already raised—steam and steam only has been deemed fit by Roley for his masterpiece—and Bil-Bil and Tam are fretting over their gauges. On the roof of the engine shed Reggy Glassbrook, nimble and hairy, sits grinning like an ape. He is the Colony's steeplejack; he will be first into the rigging today, handling the split-second alignments as the beams sail to their positions, sure-footed and quick as one of Meg's pet geckos. As far as Jed is concerned he will be welcome to the job; the A.D.C. has no head for heights, and from the feet of the *Scarer* to his main goosenecks will be all of ninety feet.

A hundred yards beyond the donkey shack a gully run-

ning to the cliff edge makes a shallow windbreak. Crouched in its lee, Bunny, Whore Nonpareil and the Witch of Endor eat alternate sandwiches of crab and caviare and serve passers-by with Hock from a Georgian coffeepot. At their feet a coffee machine heated by a small spirit lamp glugs and burbles to itself. "What are we, girls?" shouts Jed. "Artists or engineers?" The gag, in the new "flat humour" favoured by the Colony, raises a chorus of unanswers, nods and headshakes and somewhat glazed morning-after grinnings. Jed looks up, visualizing the great blue negative the sky will make round the whirling bars of *Manscarer*. Pushes his telescope more firmly under his arm, touches his hat and moves on.

Artists or engineers? As an artist Rolèy called for underpinnings to reach down unseen into the cliff, a hundred and fifty feet to sea level. Through them *Manscarer* would have grown from earth's roots, sweeping up, continuing the lines of stress inherent in the bulging stone, shackling the ground firmly to the sky; but the City engineers refused him more than twenty feet, just enough to hold the ponderous swirling of the tophammer. It will serve though; *Manscarer* will peck and thunder, nibbling perhaps at his own sinews and feet to fall one day in glorious dissolution into the water. Perhaps before that the Colony will hold a ritual destruction; there will be more stands and more admission charges and more selling of high-priced ice cream. And the South Sector Symphonic again, if it can be arranged.

Symphonic . . . Jed, a quarter of a mile from the podium, can still hear in the breaks of the wind the evidence of Roley's apoplexy. The Overture was timed to start as the sun's disc broke clear of the sea; but the daystar has lifted now his own diameter from the horizon, and not a brass bleat has been heard from the pack of them. The occasion is ruined before it begins. Jed mounts a hillock of grass to gain a view of the distant stands. The State Police are having a mite of trouble keeping order over there; he marks a dozen separate and complicated scuffles taking place on the grass in front of the awnings. Programmes are being fluttered and some sort of organized chanting has started. He sees a man running, another being belaboured by a mounted Cossack. He swears at the risk to the Colony's precious horses. An enthusiastic mob.

He looks along the coast. Symphonies are playing already, the mute works the plebs refuse to hear. The notes are of lilac and seething pale blue, touched with the thin glittering of sunlight. Far below at the feet of the cliffs are the crawling lace curtains of the tide. Jed turns away slightly giddy. The Assembly teams are standing now, chafing their hands and flapping their arms across and back against their shoulders. The jeans and reefer jackets of the men amount almost to a uniform, but no two girls are dressed alike. Jed sees a fine Firebird swirling in a mist of fluorescent nylon; nearer are a Pompadour, a Puck, a shivery paint job all black and white zebra stripes. Meg Tranter is dolled up in ancient half-burned newsprint, the textured leaves flapping round arms and knees. She carries a placard with the legend *Zeitgeist 1960*. That too is "flat" humour; she is explaining to the plebs what they lack the mental equipment ever to understand.

Between the Assembly site and the nearest of the terracings a collection of Colony possessions has been set up on display. Armoured and well-guarded cases hold stacks of old books; dogs and beribboned goats are being paraded and Piggy and The Rat are doing a brisk trade in genuine hand-executed Seascapes. There is a constant coming and going from the ranks of sightseers. In the City, Colony artifacts fetch quaint prices; through them Jed's folk are self-supporting in theory at least. Jed wipes his face and looks farther along the cliffs. Way off and blue with distance he can see the City's impossible side, like the edge of a hundred-yard thick carpet pulled across the land. The structure covers all England with its grinding weight and sameness. In its catacombs, trapped in the miles on honeycombed miles of chambers and passages, men can live and die, if they are born poor enough, without seeing the sun. The tiny open spaces round the coasts, full of the mad artifacts of the Colonies, provide a relief from Sameness that the people come trooping year after year to see. Without them, populations might run shrieking mad themselves. Artists are a therapeutic force now, recognized and protected by Government; the lunacy of the few safeguards the sanity of the many.

A bang-crock; the report and its echo lift a paperchase of gulls from beneath Jed's feet. He watches them soaring out under the glowing ball of the signal. Shreds of music reach him;

at long last, the Overture has begun. He paces back methodically, lips pursed, keeping in character as he walks the quarter-deck of the cliff. From the tail of his eye he sees Reggy, stripped now to shorts and sleeveless leather jerkin, springing and posturing on the roof of his little shed. Someone runs to Jed and presents him with chipolatas on sticks and a stuffed olive. He munches as he walks, savouring the Surreal delicacy of the gesture, climbs the rostrum where Roley dances in a furor of creativity and apprehension. A speaking trumpet is gripped in his hand; the fingers that hold it are white-knuckled with strain.

The music climbs towards its first climax. "Lifting teams," bellows Roley. "Teams, *ha—ul. . .*" A jet of steam rises from the donkey-hut; oddly assorted groups of Colonists, drilled to perfection, scurry across the grass, taking up the slack in the controlling tackles. The spars of the lowest Configuration rise with surprising speed, waver and . . . *bang-bang* . . . thump down, dead on beat, into their sockets. The thing is done, like a conjuring trick out of the grass. *Fortissimo* from the huge gaggle of musicians, a half-heard firework gasp from the crowd and then cheering while Roley waves his arms again leaping up and down and damn-blasting the plebs, lilac in the face with rage. The gestures are eloquent, even effective; the little blue-dressed figure, capering mad as a clockwork monkey, quietens the crowd. The occasion after all is a solemn one; the plebs, who have fought for tickets, are duly impressed. They are witnessing a demonstration of an artform in which Roley alone excels; the erection, to music, of a supermobile. Uncomprehending, they still stand in stark awe of lunacy. That after all is what they have paid good money to see.

The Interval. After an hour's work the main spars stand supported by their guys like the disfigured kingpoles of a Big Top. Smaller secondary beams, feathered with bright lapping sheets of metal, already spin and dip, humming in the wind; the goose-necks that will take the great spars of the main assembly are in place, and the lifting tackles. The donkey-hut becomes obscured by steam as Tam blows pressure from his waiting boiler; on the roof, Reggy, still sweating from his exertions and wrapped in a hand-woven poncho, holds court before an admiring half-circle of Colonists. Roley, squatting on the edge of his rostrum, waves

brief encouragement before readdressing himself to his bottle of Captain Cat (home brewed in the Colony). Below him, musicians lounge on the grass; mush-sellers circulate between them bearing aloft feathery *incubi* of green and pink candyfloss. The machines of aerial observers, newsmen and photographers, hang racketing round the struts of the mobile, some dangerously close to the guys; people from the ground teams are waving their arms, trying to shoo them back.

The sun is hotter now; Jed mops his face with a bright bandanna. Beyond the half-completed *Manscarer* other mobiles loom; Jed, watching, sees *Fandancer* bow herself, making for an instant with her wobbling slats the outline of a hip, the big thrust of trochanter and the muscled curve below, before collapsing into Motion. One of Roley's most ingenious creations that, though maybe lacking a little in overall strength. Bil-Bil and Tam approve of her, and that isn't always a good sign. She was a bitch on the drawing board, and a bitch to put together as well. Her Assembly was a near-fiasco; it took weeks of patient adjusting and rebalancing before she condescended to shimmy in the airs of Heaven. Behind her are other sculptures, more distant still; Jed sees the flash and swoop of *Halcyon*, *Manscarer's* forerunner, before his beams, flattening freakishly, lose themselves beneath a swell of grass. He looks up again lovingly at the new Structure, shielding his eyes against the sun, watching the lazily turning plates of dark blue and deathly-iridescent violet. The mobile has already a drama that the others lack.

Manscarer is a crow, or the bones of one; a vast ghost that once complete will thunder and peck along the clifftop, the bird at last turned hunter and revenger of dead fields. Or so runs the Manifesto. Jed doubts if one in a hundred of the gaping Cityfolk have taken the trouble to read it; it would mean little enough to them if they did.

Jed moves to the hourglass strapped on the side of the rostrum. The last few grains of sand are funnelling down. He raises his arm, palm flat, and there is a scramble as the orchestra runs for its instruments. Reggy erupts from the poncho; Roley raises his baton, and construction begins again with a quiet passage in which Reggy, balanced and slowly revolving in the

blue, delicately attaches the featherings of the upper rings. While he works, the hundred-foot linked shafts of the main assembly are cleared for lifting.

The secondary Configurations are nearly complete now; hawsers run from them to anchor points in the grass. Others are ready for the main beams, *Manscarer*, unshackled, would rampage across a three hundred yard circle, tearing and clucking at the grass; before the last of the ropes are slipped bandstand and engine house will be evacuated. Jed leaves the podium, where Roley still conducts in a berserk frenzy, runs to his prearranged position on the tackles. Every pair of hands the Colony can muster will be needed for the coming operation.

Hawsers snake upwards to humming tightness as Tam, the winch control levers in his hands, leans from the window of his shack. The music drives towards its great central theme; a shout, a heavier thundering from the engine shed, and the *corvus* lifts clear of the grass, twenty feet long, glinting with a vicious rose-and-black shimmer. Reggy balances on the skullplates, sticky-footed. A medley of orders bellowed through the music, wiry strumming as the beams snub at their restraining tackles and on the beat the whole assembly soars, weaving impatiently as the feathered tailplates feel the breeze. Jed loops his downhaul round a bollard, leans back as the creaking rope takes the strain. The beams swing higher, clang against the central masts to drop with a crash, sockets trued over the projecting goosenecks; the *corvus* falls and rises, dipping as it tastes the wind.

Triumph, and disaster. Somewhere in the rigging a shackle parts with a hard snap. Tackles come down flailing. The beams swing, driven by the wind, shearing the remaining cables. *Manscarer* rotates, unpredictable now and weighing tons, the focus of a widening circle of unhappiness. Jed sees a block swinging in decapitating arcs, falls flat and rolls on his back to watch the huge overhead clicking of violet bones. A dozen people skid past, drawn by their rope, chirping out a birdcage panic; a Cavalier's hat bowls across the ground, on edge like a little feathered wheel. The wind gusts; the *corvus* casts out far across the sea, swings back to rake screeching flinders from the awnings of the bandstand, tangles massively with the roof of the engine shed. Steam explodes outwards, gusting across to where the

orchestra, on hands and knees, scuttles for its collective life. The beak, checked by the obstruction of the donkey shed, wavers and dips again to strike at the main struts, down which Reggy is still scurrying from danger. Another peck, a fleshy concussion, a shrill falling scream; a surprised gob of blood splashes across Jed's wrist from where Reggy, suitably scared, sails overhead, filling the close sky with legs and arms. He bounces against the cliff edge to fall again to the blue and white impatience of the water, his plunging splash lost far below in the morning noise of the sea. After him a French Horn, disembodied from its master, bounds disconsolately like a Surreal yellow snail.

Jed crawls to the cliff edge in the sunlight, and thoughtfully adds his quota of moisture to the ocean.

* * *

The flooring of the house is of polished yellow wood, broken by platforms and steps into various levels. Sunlight lies across it in calm rectangles. Round the dark blue walls white alcoves, circular-topped, house ancient ship models and tropical shells; handrails of copper and mahogany echo the nautical flavour. The end wall of the building is of glass; through it, distantly, can be seen the ocean. To one side of the living-space stands a bright red twentieth-century M.G., her nose butted into a recess in the floor; in the centre of the room is a table covered with a spotless linen cloth. A silver breakfast service adds a last note of elegance.

Above the carport in the wall the curtains of a sleeping alcove are drawn back to reveal a plain divan covered by a heap of bright-coloured scatter cushions. From the alcove, close under the oddly pitched roof, a thick white-painted beam spans the room. Jed stands beneath it, feet with their buckled shoes in a patch of sunlight, hand on the hilt of his sword. "That's my beam," he says crossly. "Just you get off it, this minute."

The girl above him makes no movement, staring down with eyes wide with fright as those of a tarsier. "That's my beam," says Jed again more carefully. "Nobody can sit up there, except me."

Silence.

"I'll run you through without mercy," declares the admiral, exposing six glittering inches of the swordblade.

There is no reaction.

"I'll do terrible things. I'll keelhaul you and flog you through the fleet. I'll throw you to the fishes. . . ."

The girl grips the beam a little harder with her jean-clad legs, twining her bare ankles beneath it.

Jed looks thoughtful, pushes the sword back into its scabbard, walks to the table and wields a silver pot. Steam rises fragrantly. He adds sugar and milk, stirs carefully and picks up the cup in its saucer, turning as he does so to look back at the roof. "If they make coffee in Heaven," he calls, "and tea in Hell, I'd take my turn at the stoking." The hot drink soothes, steadying the shaking of his hands. He sits down, studies the table and selects a round of toast. He butters it and spoons a blob of marmalade on to his plate. "After breakfast," he says to the silence, "I'll stop being an admiral. Is that what you want?"

A headshaking from the girl on the beam.

"Polly," says the retiring Captain Hardy, "if you won't come down I really shall knock you off. I shall do it with a broom."

There is no response except a tensing of the legs. Polly indicates her determination to stay on the beam until killed. Jed fixes her again with a contemplative eye. "I was sick this morning," he says. "I did it in the sea. Were you there when Reggy was pecked?"

A nodding. A violent reaction for Polly.

Jed pauses, the toast halfway to his mouth. "He was killed," he says, unnecessarily. "Is that why you got up there?"

The nodding again.

"Were you frightened?"

Headshaking. No, no . . .

"I've decided," says Jed. "I won't knock you down after all. Instead I shall just wait till you get tired and fall off." He lifts the pot again. "Polly, you do make lovely tea." He finishes the cup, lays down his toast and walks forward to grip the girl's dangling feet. On the ankles are faint brown watermarks. He pushes the toes under his chin, leans his forehead against the cool frontal curving of the shins. "Poll," he says, "you've got mucky feet." Then looking up, "you are a funny girl . . ."

The Colony, cowed by death, keep to their separate homes;

Roley to his bleak little sixteenth-century pub, Piggy and The Rat to their queer thatched tower room, darkly glowing with light from fishtanks and crystal globes, Meg and the Witch of Endor to their clifftop bunker full of juju dolls and scuttling lizards and the apparatus of magic. Visitors poke and pry, disappointed at the lack of activity and at missing the morning's disaster. They traipse through Polly's fragile house, empty now, leaving its doors ajar to gusts of sunlight; but nobody comes near Jed's home. He would almost welcome interference. He lounges against the rear wheel of the M.G., a cushion at his back, his legs stretched out along the planking of the floor. He is reading from an ancient copy of the *Ingoldsby Legends*; from time to time he glances up half-aggravatedly from the verse to the *succubus* still straddling the beam. A mile away *Manscarer* spins angrily, clashing and banging in the circle he has cleared. His noise fills the peninsula on which the Colony lies, penetrates bumblingly through the glazed wall of the room.

At lunchtime Jed leaves, to be away from Polly's eyes. He hunts out sketchbook and pastels on the way, and lets the outer door slam. It is only then the girl becomes active. She slides off the beam in frenzied haste, scurrying with the nervous violence of an ant as she clears the table, washes, cooks. When Jed returns she is back on her perch. He looks a little disappointed; he had hoped to find his house no longer haunted. But the dinner simmering in the oven is very good.

Jed eats the meal in silence, carries the dishes and plates to the kitchen alcove and washes them, stacking them carefully in their racks. He clears the rest of the table, shakes the cloth outside the back door and folds it. By the time he has finished Polly has at least changed her attitude, she is riding the beam sidesaddle. It is a hopeful sign; perhaps at last the strain is telling. Jed stands underneath her again, looking up. "I could pull you off quite easily now," he says. "You wouldn't be able to hang on at all." She bites her lip, knowing he will do no such thing.

He scratches his head, badly worried. "You're Making a Protest, aren't you?"

The girl nods.

"What's it about?"

No answer.

"Something's upset you terribly," says the erstwhile admiral. "It was to do with Reggy, but it wasn't him being killed. I don't know what it is. Couldn't you write it down?"

Negative. A large tear escapes from the corner of Polly's eye and runs down her cheek. She ignores it till it reaches her lip; then she fields it with the pointed tip of her tongue.

Jed fetches the sketchbook from where he flung it down carelessly, and holds it up. He says a little helplessly "These are for you." Polly grabs with surprising speed, like a monkey stealing a banana. The drawings of the *Manscarer*, his posturings and violent movements under the yellow searchlight-stabbings of sunlight. Polly clutches the book to her chest, rocking and crooning, burying her nose in the pages to catch the sweet scent of new fixative. She is still holding it when Jed leaves to drink five evening pints of beer at the Lobster Pot and tell Roley his beam has been invaded by a woman. A runner is instantly despatched to take Polly a little hat, a copy of the *Rieu Odyssey* and a picture book of sailing ships to look at if she's bored. Meg wants to send a gecko as well but Jed says no. Polly is a little afraid of them, and it wouldn't be fair.

When he returns, the peninsula is blue with summer dusk and the last grasshoppers in the universe are making the night shrill with their churring. He decides he can't face supper; he undresses in the dark, lies down and feels the bed swaying slightly from side to side. As long as he doesn't roll over violently he will be all right. An hour later a sudden thump wakes him from a doze. Muffled sounds follow at intervals as Polly pads about doing God only knows what. Jed draws himself up against the wall, waiting. He feels his heart, accelerating, bump faintly against the insides of his ribs; quick prickling sensations move across his skin. It seems an age before Poll swings up the ladder to the alcove. She moves a little stiffly, still suffering from her day of abstinence.

She wriggles her jeans off before sliding on to the divan. To Jed she feels soft and cool, a life-size doll.



The two figures swim in a morning dazzle of sunlight, seeing the cliffs rise giddily in the troughs between the waves. Above them the head of *Manscarer* appears once, violent and sullen,

withdraws itself instantly with the ease and quick grace of a snake. The creaking of the slats carries down to the water.

Jed hangs on to a rock, seeing the long fringes of weed wash and swirl on the tide, watching the tiny close sun-burnings reflect from water and bursting foam. The situation is baffling. Polly has him completely in her grasp now; he owes her a breakfast, a dinner and a night in bed, and he wants them all again. The whole affair is difficult in the extreme.

Reggy, swilling palely while the sea gurgles in his ruined side, can do nothing but nod his head up and down in agreement.



Among the bushes scattered in the little gully lights play and flash, now here, now gone; wayward gleams follow the voices of Oberon and Puck. Farther up the cliff Bil-Bil and Tam, the engineers, sit at a console alive with whirling tapespools, setting the words of the Dream spinning and fluting through the sky. The Colony listens sleepy with poetry, clustered in the summer night. *Manscarer* swirls and clacks, gaunt and small on the skyline; but he is forgotten.

Polly, sitting crosslegged just behind Jed, pulls grassblades miserably, chewing them and spitting them away. By Act Three she can no longer control the tensions inside her. She puts her head back and shrieks, rendingly. Then again, and again. The *son et lumière* is disrupted, for ever.

The Colony panics. Dumb things that scream are bad; like the stuffed fox in the poem barking, the oak walking for love. Polly isn't a deaf-mute; it's just that two years ago she decided she had nothing else interesting to say and vowed never to speak again. But it's difficult to remember that now she's been quiet so long. A confused battle starts in the gully, figures tumbling over each other and hitting out in alarm while Polly eels about between them still making sounds like a steam carousel. The play shuts down; Bil-Bil and Tam squeak miserably, enveloped by tape. Piggy finally catches the culprit by the heel and pins her while The Rat, never far away from trouble, kisses her to make her stop. Polly is unco-operative. Meg yelps, kicked firmly in the crotch; The Rat claps his hands to an eye jabbed by a

hard little elbow. The Witch of Endor joins battle decisively; she administers three sound thumps before Jed, raging, starts to hit her back. The skirmishing subsides; there is a silence, broken by the sea noise far below and the unhappy grunting of The Rat.

Roley Stratford mounts a rock and windmills his long arms against the sky. "It's hopeless," he booms, furiously. "We can't hear plays if people have to scream. Polly, will you be quiet? And not start any more fights?"

Polly, still struggling, shakes her head violently and gulps. Jed claps his hand across her mouth, terrified in case she starts being ghastly again. She instantly bites his thumb. He swears, and calls up to the rock. "She says no. . . ."

The Witch of Endor mutters something about "nasty little freemartin". The words come out slightly thick; she is trying to cope with a split lip. Jed, one arm round Polly, raises his free fist. The Witch ducks prudently, wriggling back out of reach. Roley jumps up and down on his rock. "Then it's a trial. . . ." He raises his arms dramatically, fists clenched. "A *tri-al*. . . ."

The shout, taken up by the Colony, becomes a chant. Figures surge round Polly and Jed, hoisting them to their feet; The Witch is propelled after them up the incline of the gully. Bil-Bil and Tam desert their tangled console, infected by the general enthusiasm.

"A *trial* . . . it's a *trial*. . . ."

Heavy Dutch oil lamps hanging from the rafters light the bars of Lobster Pot with a soft brilliance. Beneath them the Colony is present in full strength, banging its tankards on the white-scrubbed tables and yelling for proceedings to begin. Roley, the Chief Justice, hammers louder on the counter top in front of him with the scarred and knotted shillelagh that is his staff of office. The Court Peculiar is convened; mine host calls for witnesses.

The Witch of Endor is shoved forward, willowy in an ankle length dress of scrubbed hessian. Finding herself the centre of attention, she sticks out her chest importantly. "I got smacked in the teeth. . . ." She waves a bright-splotched hankie. "I'm a witness . . ."

"Polly didn't do that!"

"Shame!"

"She did!"

"She didn't. It was Jed. . . ."

"Well it was all her fault. . . ."

"It wasn't!"

"Was!"

"You always want to bully her!"

"I *don't*! She started it!"

"Shame!"

The shillelagh beats half-moons into the counter top. "Polly," says the Judge. "*Did* you start it? Whatever it was?"

Polly, sitting on Jed's knee, jiggles happily and nods.

"What did you do?"

"*Nothing*. . . ."

"She *did*. . . ."

"It was The Rat kissing her. She didn't like it. . . ."

"That wasn't the start . . ."

"Well that was when she hit him in the eye . . ."

Roley hammers again for order. "Did you mind him kissing you, Polly?"

Polly shakes her head.

"It wasn't that then," says the Judge decisively. "Now, is there an Indictment?"

"Tam's got it. . . ." Tam is driven into the open, protesting. He stammers badly; his olive-skinned woman's face is suffused with embarrassment.

"That P-Polly did wilfully d-d-disrupt a performance of Sh-Shakespeare. And upset J-Jed getting his b-breakfast for him, and his d-d-dinner. . . ."

"And she went to bed with him. . . ."

"That doesn't matter. . . ."

"It does. It ought to be included anyway. . . ."

The Rat has hauled a chair into a window recess; enthroned on its temporary eminence he feels secure. His one serviceable eye leers horribly. "*She was a virgin too. . . .*"

"She wasn't. . . ."

"She *was*. . . ."

"She couldn't have been. . . ."

Roley whirls the shillelagh. "This might be *very important*. . . . Were you a virgin, Polly?"

Polly blushes, and hides her face against Jed's shoulder. The Colony, impressed, makes a concerted "aaahhhh" noise, like a crowd of plebs when a rocket explodes. The Rat hiccups inconsequentially. "C-c'n I have s'more beer, somebody. . . ."

A jug is handed up to him. It gets well swigged-from on the way. He pours what is left into his pot, mumbling to himself. Roley clears his throat. "The Indictment is very confused," he says, "but evidently the whole affair's to do with Jed. That's the first point. . . ."

"She just wants him to do something back. . . ."

"Well he won't. . . ."

"He will. He'll do anything now, look at his face. . . ."

The counter top suffers again. "It's to do with Jed," says Roley loudly. "And it's also to do with Reggy, because it started when he was killed. It started with the beam in Jed's house, that should have been in the Indictment. Right?"

Polly, nodding, seems to be trying to shake her head off her shoulders.

"Then we're getting somewhere," says the Judge, very satisfied. He swigs violently from a quart pewter mug. His neck muscles writhe in the lamplight as he swallows.

"We'd get on quicker if she'd *talk*," says the Witch of Endor, glaring. "I think it's just *stupid*. . . ."

"*It isn't!*"

"*IT IS!*"

Proceedings instantly threaten to degenerate into another brawl. Splinters fly from the counter top as the Judge calls the court to order. "*I think*," says the Witch primly as soon as she can make herself heard, "she should be *made* to talk." She tosses her wild yellow hair. "We should push spills under her fingernails and light them. It would be quite proper."

Polly clenches her hands protectively and starts to shiver.

"It seems to me," says Roley reprovingly, "that all in all you've rather got it in for the defendant."

"*I haven't.*" Then, sullenly, "All right, I suppose I have. I think she's an ungrateful little beast."

"Why?"

"'Cos I sent her a picture book," howls the Witch, dancing with sudden temper. "An' all I got back was a slosh in the chops. . . ."

"And I rule that *irrelevant*. . . ."

The Rat, very drunk, starts to interrupt, sees the shillelagh poised to hurl at his head and subsides.

"Irrelevant," says Roley again, to clinch the matter. He glares round him. "All right. We've got the Indictment, or most of it; we need a Defence. Polly can't tell us why she started to be difficult. That's annoying, but it just can't be helped. So does anybody else know?"

"Yes," says Jed quietly. "I do."

A hush, in which the shrilling of the grasshoppers sounds very loud. Polly turns startled to peer into Jed's face. He puts her aside, carefully, and stands up. He's wishing belatedly he'd worn his uniform and turned the proceedings into a Court Martial. Lacking lapels, he hooks his thumbs in his belt. "Mr. Chief Justice," he says. "Ladies and gentleman. This, I believe, is what she means. No more mobiles should be built. Furthermore, the figures already erected should be knocked down as soon as possible. Further——"

A gale of disagreement. Jed, shouted down, starts to jump about and wave his arms, mouth popping shut and open uselessly. Polly, looking desperate, sees above her a heavy beam. She is on the table instantly, and jumping for it. Roley howls his alarm; the Witch, quicker off the mark than the rest, dives at her, wrapping her arms round Polly's knees. A swaying confusion; Jed, leaping to the rescue, skids and vanishes under a scuffling pile of bodies; beer is spilled noisily; The Rat, whirling his pot in his excitement, falls headlong from his perch. Order is finally restored, and Polly restrained; but not before Piggy has been knocked half silly by a brickbat, and Meg and the Witch have had their heads banged together for punching. Roley returns to his position of authority, breathing a little heavily.

"Now then," he says, surveying the court. "I built these mobiles." As he speaks he bangs with the handle of the shillelagh, emphasizing each word. "I gave 'em the best years of me wanin' youth. I want to know why Jed says to scrap 'em; so

the rest of you, *SHARRAP!*" The head of the club, whirling, inflicts a final wound on the counter; Roley bows with great gravity to Jed. "Mr. Burrows, if you would proceed. . . ."

"It isn't only the mobiles," says Jed quickly. He feels oddly certain of his words. "It's everything we do. The horseriding and the archery and reading Shakespeare in the dark and holding seances, and building all those castles about the place and knocking 'em down like the last time we had a Mediaeval War. Piggy and The Rat must stop painting their pictures and put all their fish back in the sea, and Meg must burn her jujus, and you must stop pretending to be a sort of man who doesn't exist any more, Roley, and so must I. We must destroy the Colony, we must burn it. That's what we must do."

In the awed silence, the Judge turns to Polly. He asks gently, "*Is that what you meant?*"

She nods again slowly, tears glistening in her eyes.

Nobody else seems able to speak. Roley says carefully, "Why, Poll? Just because Reggy was killed?"

"No." Jed is still quite sure of himself. "Reggy's to do with it, but he isn't the reason. He just brought things to a head. You see they'd never murdered any of us before."

"Who?"

"The plebs. Oh, Christ, it's so obvious. . . ." He stares round at faces changing from anger to puzzlement. "We've failed, can't anybody else see that except Polly? All of us, in all the Colonies. When they let us come out here and gave us land and money to spend, and people to help us do every crazy thing that came into our heads, when we took their terms, that was when we failed. We let ourselves down, we sold our birth-right. *And theirs.* . . ."

"We were too dangerous to them scattered about anywhere and everywhere all over the City. We couldn't be pushed about and led by the nose and hammered into the same shape as everybody else. When the trivvyscreens yelled at us we threw things at them, and when the plebs put us in jail for it we sat and laughed because we knew what they didn't, that we were the makers of dreams. The movers and shapers of the world, or something like that. There's a poem about it somewhere. But we

took their terms; and now we aren't artists any more. We don't deserve the name."

He waves a hand angrily at his surroundings; the stone, the warm wood, the pools of light from the old lamps. "Polly is telling us, all this is acting and pointless make-believe. That our lives are more sterile than the lives of the people we're supposed to despise." He raises a declamatory finger. "We let them short circuit us. We let them put us where they could see us and count us, where they could come every day to laugh and know they were safe from us and all the nasty things that happen when people start to think. They made us into State-licenced buffoons; and we fell off the thin edge, the tightrope between creativity and dilettantism, between free thought and aimless posturing for applause. That's why we lost, and how; and that's why we've got to stop now, before we burn ourselves up any further. If we . . . etiolate right out of existence there's no hope left. Not for anybody." He swings slightly, and returns Roley's bow. "Sir," he says, "I believe I have done. . . ."

The Witch of Endor, sitting rather dazedly on the floor, dabs at her lip with the hankie and frowns at the fresh mark it leaves. "Well, all right," she says. "All right. But you haven't said anything new, have you? I mean, we all felt like that. Sort of empty inside, pointless. Only we didn't talk about it. We knew we'd been had all right, all of us." She looks at the faces behind her, then back to Jed. "It didn't need saying. But what I want to know is this. Suppose we do what you want, set fire to everything and smash it all up. They'll only build it for us again tomorrow. It won't prove anything. It'll just give them some fresh kicks, won't it? And what else *can* we do?"

Everybody looks at Polly, including Jed. She brushes one eyelid with the back of a finger, and gulps. Jed frowns, pulls at his lip with his teeth. "There's a lot more in this," he says. "But I don't rightly know how to get to it." Polly's eyes lock on to his and the frown becomes deeper. "I think," he says, "I *think* . . . we must leave the Colony. Go back into the City, where we came from."

Silence intensifies. Only Meg can find a voice. It sounds scratchy and thin.

"*Why . . . ?*"

"Because . . . I don't know. Because I think"—again watching Polly—"because they *need* us. The plebs. They don't know it; but in a funny sort of way the . . . uncertainty . . . matters to them. Not knowing where we are, where we shall pop up next, the crazy things we shall do. They need people who've made lunacy a profession; and that's us. Without us, they'll forget they're living in Hell; they'll just sludge down into a sort of great doughy mass, and forget how to think, and how to eat, and one day they'll forget how to breathe. I think we've got to help them . . . keep things stirred. Like worms tunnelling through earth, letting the air in. Us. The subversives. The Unsavoury Elements, the won't-do-gooders and won't-stay-putters. And I think we've got to do this even if it hurts because it's important to them as well. Because we might not like it, and we might refuse to face it, but in the long term the plebs are what matters to us more than anything else. Once we all opted for the Humanities. Well, there they are. The proper study of mankind. The plebs. *Man*. . . ."

Polly's lips move, echoing the words; he catches her eye again and she nods, positively and sorrowfully.

The Witch says very quietly "What about the sea?"

"We shan't see it any more."

"Birds?"

"Not for us. Soon there won't be any anyway. The City will spread over the Colony holdings as soon as we go and that'll be the end."

"No houses of our own?" That from Meg, in a squeak.

Jed shakes his head. "No houses. Just miniflats in the levels, the same as everybody else."

"Sculpting?"

"Mobiles?"

"None. There won't be any room."

"The sky?"

"We shall see it when we get a Liftpass. Like all the others."

"We shall go mad . . ."

Jed nods. "Yes, I think some of us will. But properly mad. Effectively mad. Not like this. This is just . . . keeping up appearances."

Slowly at first, the idea catches on. "I've had a monkey on

my back for years," says the Witch. "Here's where I shuck him right the Hell off. . . ."

"Jujus," says Meg, brightening. "New ones of all the Controllers. We shall be outlawed. Sent to jail again."

"Shot at on sight!"

"Brainwashing!"

"Trepanning!"

"Leucotomy! Loads of fun!"

"But we shan't give up . . ."

"Menacing letters in the news sheets!"

"Secret societies!"

"Things ticking in ventshafts!"

"Reign of terror!"

"Popping out all over!"

"Everything breaking up!"

"Arson!"

"Murder!"

"Incest!"

"Rape!"

"Secret printing presses!"

"Forbidden plays!"

"Subversive novels!"

"Art galleries in all the sewer flats!"

"Passwords!"

"Cloaks and daggers!"

"Orgies!"

Roley jumps on to his mangled counter, brandishing a bottle.

"Illicit stills!"

"Moonshining!"

"The plebs can't do this to us!"

"We demand our rights!"

"Summary execution!"

"Imprisonment without trial!"

"Curtailement of free speech!"

"*We'll start tonight . . . !*"

The Colony, transformed on the instant to a mob, surges for the doors. Shouts rise outside; voices call for torches, levers, fire. There are smashings and bangings in the night.

Jed doesn't run with the others. He stands in the doorway of the little phoney pub, slightly staggered at the revolution he has started. Flames are already springing up from a dozen points in the blackness as homes and artifacts begin to burn. Meg runs past screaming, hair blowing in the wind, a blazing brand shedding a bright trail of sparks. Jed turns back, rubbing his face, and sees he isn't alone. He walks across to where Polly is waiting, puts an arm round her shoulders and gives her a little shake. She watches up at him steadily. He says, "I didn't finish, did I? I still didn't go down all the way, to what you're really trying to do."

She gives him no help.

"I'm still trying to think," he says. He looks over her brown hair at the beams of the pub, the high nicotine glazed ceiling. An extra-loud crash comes from outside; smoke begins to drift thin and acrid across the bar. "They're all drunk now," he says. "They'll be sorry for this in the morning. When they see the houses burned down, and all the things destroyed."

He swallows, and purses his lips. "I think," he says, "I think . . . there was a painter once called Van Rijn. He was famous, and rich, and he had a wife and I suppose he loved her. Then everything went wrong. His wife died and he lost his house and his money and his patrons forgot about him. Everything he had was taken away. And so . . . he started painting again. He made a portrait, *The Man in the Golden Helmet*. And then more. And more. And more. . . ."

Polly watches mistily, lips slightly parted.

"I think," says Jed, "if there's a Thing you can call by the name of Art, if it isn't all just a delusion . . . then the roots of the Thing have to reach right down, into bitterness and darkness. Somehow it needs them, it's like a . . . swelling, a wanting to live where there's nothing but death, a needing the sky when there's no sky left to see. It's a . . . longing, an anger. That's what you've let loose; because after tonight, when there's nothing left but the City, there'll be Art again. Something locked away and suffocated, growing, not seeing the sun. Like a . . . great flower in a box, thrusting and pushing and pushing till one day it bursts the seams . . . Is that what you really wanted, Polly? Just for there to be Art again? Am I right now?"

Polly hugs him suddenly, kissing and nibbling at his neck. He lifts her head, tugging gently at her hair. "In the City," he says. "Will you talk?"

She shakes her head, slowly.

"Funnyface," he says. "Funnyface. . . ." He holds her against him, tightly.

* * *

In the night are pink blossomings of fire. The explosions carve out the cliff edges, altering land that is soon to vanish. In their light the mobiles flail, fall with thunderings and scrapings and long-drawn bell notes into the sea. Ploughshares and vanes, wings and sinews and metal feathers clanking and toppling; *Goliath*, *Civil War*, *Cutty Sark*, *Juliet*, *The Ant*, *Titania*, *Excalibur*, *Fandancer*, *Halcyon* . . . and *Manscarer*, hugest and last. The procession of Colonists winds between the ruins, tired now, ragged and smoke-blackened and feverish-eyed. Leading them as they turn towards the distant loom of the City is a tiny red car. Its driver sports the sword and froggings, the buckles and epaulettes, the full panoply of a British admiral; beside him a slighter shadow topped by a bonnet of gull feathers clutches a picture book of sailing ships. Behind, Meg carries boxes of scuttling animals, the Witch of Endor leads prancing dogs and a goat. The cavalcade, improvised banners swirling, fades in distance; and in time the last tarara-rattan of a drum is gone.

The dawn wind drones up from the sea. But the wind is alone.

KEITH ROBERTS . . .

. . . is probably the best-known, in America, of the group of young writers whose work was first published during the Roberts & Vinter period (1964-66) of *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy/Impulse*. His first story appeared in *Science Fantasy* in 1964, since when he has had stories published in the United States in Damon Knight's *Orbit*, and in E. J. Carnell's *New Writings in S.F.* series, as well as in *F&SF* and *Worlds of Tomorrow*. His first novel, *The Furies*, was published here in 1966 by Berkley and later in hard covers by Rupert Hart-Davis in London. Mr. Roberts is currently working on a historical novel about Dorset, which is also the setting for *Pavane*, his second novel (to be published by Doubleday and Hart-Davis this year).

Age thirty-two. Unmarried. Born Kettering, Northamptonshire (East Midland manufacturing town). Educated Kettering Grammar School. Studied art at Northampton. Spent several years in film business (cartoon animation) before joining provincial advertising agency. Associate editor *Science Fantasy* with Kyril Bonfiglioli. Managing editor *S.F./Impulse* with Harry Harrison. Present home Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Interests various.

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The total experience kick

□ CHARLES PLATT

It all happened back in that wild winter of '82, when Total Experience was sweeping through the music business and knocking the small agencies over right and left. Half of them went bankrupt buying the new T.E. equipment; the other half were left behind by the trend, unable to afford it.

At that time, I was fairly new on the staff of Sound Trends—an outfit as cheap as its name. They couldn't afford the T.E. equipment, and they were worried, not partial to the idea of going bankrupt because they couldn't get on to the latest music kick.

I was leafing through the small ads section of "Discord Weekly" when I caught sight of a paragraph that really started me thinking and scheming. "Urgently wanted by major Total Experience music company," the ad. read. "Grade III computer programmer with tone generator experience and wide knowledge of musical instrument modification. Must be trendy, go-ahead, able to sight-read Fortran."

My first thought was one of disappointment. The job was ideal for me, but I was stuck in Sound Trends, sinking fast, tied to them by a pretty strong contract.

Then I began to see glimmerings of an idea. I checked with a contact I had on the staff of "Discord Weekly" and

found that the small ad. in question had been placed by Harry King, biggest firm in the business. They wouldn't be using a discreet small ad., I reasoned, unless trying to do some fast recruitment on the quiet. And *that* could only be because they'd caught on to something new and suddenly needed staff to develop it.

So this was our chance (I put it to Sound Trends' director) to get inside the Harry King organisation, scrap the Total Experience kick, and steal the idea King was working on to supersede T.E. Send me in as a spy, I reasoned, and Sound Trends doesn't go bust after all—it gets one jump ahead of everyone else.

They were desperate enough to try it out. And that's how it was that, the next day, I was sitting in Harry King's own office overlooking the old Shell Centre and the Thames, beginning to wonder if my idea of amateur spies was quite as foolproof as it had first seemed. At that time, King was by far the biggest man in the business; somehow he'd come up with the right ideas at the right time, and within twelve months his empire was made.

I presented a hastily assembled file of false information about my freelance status and previous experience, which he glanced at. He gave me a lot of talk about fantastic prospects and salary increases, which was obviously phoney. After these preliminaries we got down to business.

He strode up and down, gesticulating, creasing up his pastel pink one-nighter suit. (Its style just wasn't right for his age or waistline, but he had to maintain the trendy-young-man image.)

"You think total experience is just another gimmick?" he said loudly. "It's not. Never was. It's an in-no-vation." He spoke the word slowly, as though only having learnt it recently. "A genuine in-no-vation. Total musical appeal to all the senses. Lemme show you something. What we've pushed the kids so far is nothing, nothing at all." He pressed desk buttons and the window opaqued, indirect lighting glowed, and two wall panels retracted to expose a pair of T.E. projectors. A Diacora screen lowered. He looked around, grunted. "Sit in that chair over there, and get this." He pressed another contact and the lights dimmed.

The screen lit up in a whirl of colours and a jangling screech totally unlike anything I had experienced before blasted out from giant acoustic panels in the ceiling. The screen cleared and suddenly there was a giant-size image of Marc Nova in shatteringly intimate close-up, all in depth-effect colour, singing (somewhere behind the rest of the noise) his latest number. Bass notes of slightly different frequency produced stomach-churning beats. The two T.E. projectors focused on me and flickered in a subliminal pattern. Blasts of hot air, scented with a smooth, moist perfume mixed with acrid body odour, wafted over me—it matched Marc Nova's image perfectly, I noted with admiration.

The effect was cataclysmic; as the bass beats speeded up and the pitch rose, colours flashed across the screen faster and a high-pitched whistling, hissing noise filled my ears. The sequence ended just when I felt more of it would be unbearable and I sat weakly, sweating, as if I'd awakened from a nightmare. King pressed the desk buttons and the room restored itself to its former state. "Make no mistake, fella," he was saying, pounding his desk, "that may look great now, but we gotta think ahead past it, past T.E., even, to what the trend's gonna be in six months' time." He shuffled papers on his desk, almost like an actor who's forgotten his next line. The awkward moment was broken when a girl walked in.

She dropped some folders on King's desk, then looked round and saw me. "I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't realise you had someone in here. . . ."

When I say she looked round and saw me, this isn't really an accurate description. My image may have registered in her brain, vaguely, as a person, a visitor; but her glance went right through me, passing over me as if I was a piece of furniture. I looked down from her cold green eyes and saw a face that was beautiful, perfectly formed, yet equally cold. Then she turned back to King. "Is there anything else?"

"No thanks, honey," he said, getting up from his chair behind the desk. She went out of the room. King walked over to the window, stared out a moment. "Right," he said. "Let's make a little trip, O.K.? Go see the boy you'll work with if you join our organisation." We walked up to the roof and soon were jetting over the Thames in his private 'copter.

He steered with one hand and gestured with the other. "I keep my boys split up, see? Find it works out better. They like their familiar surroundings, and this way there's less chance of any ideas leaking out. Get what I mean?"

I nodded, uneasily, reminded of my role as a spy. I glanced at King's fat face; his eyes were invisible behind pola grey shades stretched across his forehead.

The 'copter began to lose height as we came down over a shabby area in Camden, east side.

"This boy," said King, "he's a creep, know what I mean? But he's a genius as well. Lemme handle him. True creative genius."

We touched down on a makeshift platform built over one of a line of Camden back-to-backs, and walked down a rusty fire escape to the front door. King rang the obsolescent mechanical doorbell.

After some time a thin, stooping, pasty-faced figure dressed in pyjamas opened the door.

"Hi there, Gerry boy," King exclaimed, stamping into the place.

"Careful Mr. King. Damp rot in the floor, you know."

King's high spirits faded a little, but he forced a broad smile all the same. We went into the back room.

"I been working on the feedback unit, like you said, but I can't demonstrate it properly until. . . ."

"Yeah, all right, so long as it's ready for the Trafalgar Square bit next week. Right now, this is the man who'll be working with you in future, if he likes the set up." 'Gerry boy' smiled nervously and we shook hands.

"My name's Joe Forrest," I said. "Glad to know you." For the first time, I really noticed the surroundings. A broken-down bed was in one corner of the shabby little room, two cats curled up on it. An '82 Descomp unit stood by the window, case shining, only a few months old. There was a dirty dinner plate on top of it and another cat sleeping on the keyboard. Adjacent to the Descomp three obsolete, battered quarter-track stereo tape decks and two oscilloscopes so old that the tubes were faded yellow stood on a rough bench covered with odd electrical components. There were signal generators and tone benders, boxes

of second-hand parts and incomplete assemblies. It seemed impossible that such a cheap set-up could produce anything of remote value.

"What was the, ah, feedback unit you mentioned?" I asked, fishing for information. This could be what we were after.

"It's upstairs," 'Gerry boy' said, shuffling to the door in his carpet slippers. "Come up, and I'll show you. . . ."

"Just hold on a moment," said King. "I'm thinking that if Mr. . . . uh . . . Forrest is . . . uh . . . interested in our organisation, some kind of routine . . . uh . . . loyalty test, is required. And if not, he'd best not see all our little secrets. Right?" I saw King could be tough if the occasion arose.

'Gerry boy' looked confused, as if the politics of big business were beyond him. King smiled blandly at me. "Well, what's your answer, Forrest? Subject to, ah, formal agreement, you interested in joining up with the big family of Harry King?" He laughed heavily.

I swallowed uncomfortably. How could I back out? "Yes, of course I am," I said. "Only . . ."

"Fine, fine. Got a meter, Gerry boy?"

"I think so, Mr. King." He found a battered Verilyser under a pile of junk on the bench, and I watched with dumb fascination as he strapped it on my wrist, plugging the lead into an oscilloscope. My mind acted as if overloaded: it seemed impossible to find a way out of the situation, and all I could do was think around in circles, fascinated by the unstoppable sequence of events.

"I must apologise for this, ah, inconvenience," King said, looking just a tiny bit uncomfortable. "But in our business, you know, we can't afford to take any chances over personnel loyalty." He dragged out a sheet of standard questions from his pocket.

'Gerry boy' adjusted the equipment and we went ahead. "Are you, Joseph A. Forrest, presently in the employment of any rival company or engaged in any work which could be construed as competitive and contrary to the interests of the Harry King organisation?"

I tried to stay calm, watching the oscilloscope trace. "No,"

I said, firmly. The trace kinked in the characteristic sine curve that Harry King, 'Gerry boy,' myself and anyone else knows only too well as signifying 'untruth.' I started to sweat, heavily.

"Hold it a moment," said 'Gerry boy.' He turned to me, displaying two fingers of his hand. "How many fingers am I holding up?" he said.

"Two," I replied. Again the 'untruth' sine curve resulted.

"I bungled it. Wrong polarity. Truths registered as untruths." He reversed the leads. "Go ahead now." I met his eyes briefly, and the hard look he gave me only confirmed my suspicion that, for some reason, he'd fixed the test for me.

King went through the whole list of questions and my answers flashed up 'truthful' every time. By the end of it he was overflowing with good spirits. "First thing tomorrow, you get down to my office, we fix the contract. Then straight along to the main studio, see how we make the recordings. We'll be starting Marc Nova's new tape. How about that, hey?"

I smiled weakly, still a bit shaken. "Terrific."

King turned to 'Gerry boy.' "You got room for Joe to live upstairs? Be better if you two were working as closely as possible." Gerry nodded. "Fine, fine." King pounded him heartily on the shoulder.

"Please, Mr. King, my asthma . . ." he crumpled up, coughing and gasping for breath. King ceased his pounding, looked a bit put out.

"You oughta get this dump cleaned up."

"I can't afford it right now, with mother at the clinic. . . ."

"Well, you get our new gimmick working, we see what we can do." I followed him out of the house, turning once to glance back at Gerry, standing in the doorway, watching us leave. His normally impassive face looked faintly, cynically, amused.

The studio was, undeniably, impressive. Vast banks of unitised equipment—the T.E. recording gear—were attended by technicians, monitor-tranceivers clipped to their ears. In one corner Gerry shuffled around a piece of hardware making adjustments, still wearing carpet slippers. It was basically a tone synthesizer, but heavily modified.

The other side of the double-glass wall that divided the

studio in two, Marc Nova, Britain's leading subvocalist, confronted the T.E. cameras, standing on a platform as spotless white as the backdrop. Above and around him, polychrome projectors stood ready to beam down the effects that were so much a part of T.E. To one side, session musicians, mostly unemployed jazzmen, sat holding their outdated, physically blown instruments, almost protectively.

Harry King and myself and a number of others observed the scene from a gallery fifteen feet above. "None of the old methods, here," King was saying. "This studio layout was designed specially for T.E.—none of the old makeshift mods and breadboard electronics. See the white goo they're pasting on Nova's face? Symbolic of our methods. Blank it out, then build up what you want. The correct skin-pigment tint will be added when the film is processed. And using that goo we can fix his face up, too. More aggressive, more sexy . . . sculpt a bit on here and there and the stuff dries to a homogeneous plastic texture in ten minutes. It's the only way to get just what you want." He peered down at the electronics section. "Same thing goes for the sound. Each component synthesized separately, harmonics and overtones meshed separately, one at a time. Hold it, I think they're gonna make the subvocal tape now. It's the first step."

Marc Nova strapped an S mike around his neck and sat down in a comfortable chair. The session musicians started to play the intro to the new number. He began silently mouthing the words.

"See, the days when you had to compromise are over," King said quietly to me. "Used to be that you often found a kid with a great image, but he couldn't get anywhere near the singing voice you needed. Or you found the right voice, but the guy was a monster. This way, we choose the face, and as long as we got the throat movements and vowel forms for the timing and sound shapes, it don't matter if he can sing or not. Gerry boy's equipment puts together whatever kind of voice we want."

The recording ended and the musicians packed up, having provided the mime-backing. Their job was over; nothing as imperfect or uncontrollable as the noise of a wind-blown in-

strument could be allowed to form part of the finished recording. The technicians rewound and played the tape over the studio sound system. The voice was hard, harsh and demanding, wonderfully sexual. The lyrics were bare and blunt, yet suggestive in a curiously subtle way.

"What do you think, Sam?" said King, addressing a man I hadn't noticed before. He wore clothes that were modern, yet not immediate; he had a clean, but not slick, haircut. His face was kind of dull. He stared down at the studio, looking bored.

"It's O.K.," he said, after a while.

"As great as the last Marc Nova smash?"

"Dunno, really. This one could be a bit bigger."

King slapped him on the shoulder. "We done it again, boys," he called down to the technicians. "Sure hit. Keep it moving."

I drew King aside. "Who's the fellow called Sam that you just spoke to?"

"Our special kink. Statistically Average Man. We used a census, found a guy typical of the music buyers. Looks like them, thinks like them, wears the same clothes, and most important, he's *got the same tastes*. Get the picture? His word is the ultimate. What he says will sell, sells. If he says no, we scrap it."

I stared at Sam's blank face, fascinated. Suddenly I realised just how totally ordinary the man was. No distinguishing features at all.

King looked round as a girl came in, carrying papers. He took them, started to look through them. I stared at her, unable to look away. Our eyes met briefly; I saw she was the one—Jane—who'd come into King's office during my interview. Once again it was as though she looked straight through me. Despite the stunning appearance, there was little, if any, warmth. Her face was hard, and though her lips weren't thin, they were firmly set. Hers was a cold, self-contained kind of beauty.

* * *

I moved some of my essentials into Gerry's house that night, not looking forward to it. He'd cleared up a lot of the mess, but the place was still shabby and smelled of cats and Gerry's

feet. He greeted me very amiably, sitting on the bed in my room while I put away the stuff I'd brought with me.

"How was it at the studio this morning?" he asked.

"Instructive. I hadn't realised the scale of the organisation."

Gerry shook his head. "Don't be deceived. If Harry King can cut a corner, he will. Why do you think I'm working in this dump? Because it's good security, cheap and convenient. I wouldn't be surprised if the organisation's nearly bankrupt."

"For a bankrupt firm, it's doing pretty well."

"You're misled by the surface effect. Sure it's got the best studio facilities, the best equipment. But it's more than King can afford, yet. He's already spent next year's profits."

"How come?"

"He was nothing twelve months ago, remember that. And he won't use accountants. I don't think he ever adapted to decimal currency properly, when Sterling was discontinued. Still treats cents like pennies, dollars like pounds. That's partly guesswork, you understand."

I shrugged, sat down carefully on a fragile-looking chair. "I've got something to ask you," I said, changing the subject. "Why did you fake that Verilyser test? Don't pretend you didn't; I know as well as you do that you can't reverse a truth reading simply by swapping over the output wires."

Gerry's face creased into a faint, cynical smile. "I fixed it because I'm sick of Harry King. You're the fourth one who's seen this enterprise; the other three were scared off by it. I'm not interested in your loyalty, and I need an assistant. It seemed the logical thing to do. For all I care, you could be an industrial spy."

I breathed in sharply; the casual way he'd touched on my secret was unsettling, though his attitude was reassuring.

Gerry blew his nose loudly, on a dirty handkerchief. I saw, with distaste, that it wasn't even disposable. He shoved it back in his pocket.

"Since you haven't seen it yet, you might as well get familiarised with the new gimmick." Gerry stood up and I followed him into another room. It was completely bare, except for a large modified Hammond organ in the centre of the

floor. This had been extensively remodelled and enlarged, but the dual keyboard remained.

"Emotion detector, amplifier and feedback unit," Gerry said. "Styling people haven't cleaned up the appearance of it yet, but it's otherwise complete." He opened an inspection panel; I looked in and saw there was a little padded seat and control panel inside the unit.

"New gimmick. Marc Nova pretends to play this thing—that's why we left the old Hammond keyboard on the outside—while I sit in there and press the buttons that really control it. Harry King's got the idea that groups may be coming back, replacing the solo singer. In a way this is the first step in the trend."

"How's this unit different from T.E.?" I asked.

"I'll show you." He turned on power switches, then climbed inside the machine. Music came from a loudspeaker somewhere. "That's the monosensory version of Nova's latest tape," Gerry said. "I don't know what it does for you, but for me it's just boring." As he spoke he made adjustments on the control panel. I began to feel vaguely lethargic; the music suddenly seemed more banal, as if the nature of it had changed slightly, becoming duller. Involuntarily I yawned, as the feeling increased in intensity.

"Alternatively, some people reckon the music gives you a kick." His voice seemed to come from a long way off.

The feeling of the music changed. I became aware of aspects of the melody line that were exciting. The beat was uplifting. Soon I felt like dancing; I was almost deliriously happy, as if on a drug.

The music ended and the sensation vanished. "You see," said Gerry, getting out of the unit, "music is basically emotional. Pop music is both very simple in construction, and yet complicated in appeal; it carries a lot of emotional punches to the listener. In the past, songwriters used to feel this instinctively; Lennon-McCartney songs, for instance, were early examples of how adolescent happiness, with an underlying miserable sadness, could be implied in the same melody line. The last three chords in 'She Loves You' are the best example.

"Well, as you know, now songwriting is computerised, the

emotional content of a melody can be evaluated and controlled. Inevitably, the sex-appeal component is usually played up. This unit takes the system a stage further; it selects an individual emotional component in the general response that the music is invoking in each member of the audience. It detects it, re-broadcasts it. The stimulus is received by the brain it was drawn from, but in a much-amplified form. The unit then re-detects it, amplifies it again, and re-broadcasts. Positive feedback effect. The trick is to key into natural cortical frequencies."

I thought it over. "Does King know what you have here?"

Gerry shrugged. "He knows what it does. If someone gave him an atomic warhead in a matchbox he wouldn't be impressed—he'd just accept it as another marvel of science. That's how he looks at this."

"But the implications. . . . T.E. used existing audio-visual-sensory techniques, just combining them. This is something entirely new. There's a difference."

Gerry shook his head. "No difference. This gadget uses techniques already applied now in brain surgery, cortical analysis, EEG developments. They're slightly modified, but not very greatly."

I followed him out of the room, back into my bedroom. In spite of the impact of the experience, I was already thinking ahead. My company, Sound Trends, would find it difficult to get staff to manufacture such a piece of equipment; it would be more costly than T.E., and they couldn't even afford that. And I doubted my ability to reconstruct a unit, even after lengthy study of the one I had seen.

"I've a proposition, Gerry," I said, slowly. He sat on the bed, stroking a tabby cat on his lap. "You don't admire the Harry King empire very much, do you?"

Gerry shook his head. "To some extent that's true."

I took the plunge. "I know of an organisation that would pay you 50% more, provide proper facilities, guaranteed conditions, what you wanted—if you'd leave the King organisation."

"I'm under contract, Joe."

"There's bound to be a loophole."

He sat there, silent, for some time. He pushed the cat off his lap and stood up, walking to the window, a kind of

tragi-comic figure. "There's another reason," he said, in a rather small voice. "I don't dare antagonise Harry King. Look, this may sound ridiculous to you. It is ridiculous. But ever since I met her, I've just been crazy about his daughter. I love her. I can't help it."

"Have I ever met the girl?" I said.

"She came into the studio today. In the gallery, where you were."

Suddenly it clicked. The frigid blonde, the one I'd thought was King's secretary. The one called Jane.

"It's funny," Gerry went on, "but all my life I've had a kind of a vision of a perfect girl. When I saw her the vision came alive; it was unbelievable. She's the only reason for my coming to work here in the first place. I just *know* that, sooner or later, something will happen. . . ."

Inwardly, I groaned. The situation was doubly ridiculous; Gerry disliked the organisation, but the only reason he wouldn't leave was based on a piece of hopeless romanticism. What could I do? I couldn't tell him he'd got no chance with the girl—him, a stooped, asthmatic, penniless electronics expert; her, a frigid, untouchable beauty, the boss's daughter. He must be aware of the facts. Throwing them in his face wouldn't help.

"Well," I said lamely, "think it over, Gerry."

He walked to the doorway. "I suspected you were from a rival firm, when we first met, and when I fixed that test. So this is no surprise to me. I'm just sorry to mess up your plans, Joe. My motives must look pretty hopeless. But somehow, I just feel that if I wait long enough, things will turn out all right. . . ." He lapsed into silence for a moment, then pulled himself together. "Goodnight, then."

I stayed up quite late, thinking the problem through. There had to be a solution somewhere; but right then, I couldn't see it. Even if Gerry were more glamorous, from what I'd seen of the girl, she had little interest in men. Although Gerry would be in a position to join Sound Trends if he somehow managed to marry the girl, there was just no way I could see of arranging it.

I fell into a restless sleep and dreamed of emotional feedback units governing the entire world. Teenagers, old men

and newly born children were moving in the same relentless rhythm of beat music; the Earth's crust gave way and I woke up shouting for help. . . .

* * *

A week later, I was in Trafalgar Square under Nelson's Column with the rest of the studio crew, hoisting great banks of acoustic panels into place, positioning T.E. projectors, cursing the cold wind and trying to coax generators and mixer units into life. A vast Diacora screen, suspended above the stage that had been erected yesterday, rippled and snapped in the brisk wind. It was Easter Monday; but the warmth of Spring had yet to arrive.

By three-thirty, teenagers were already crowding the square, some of them in the period costume fitting to the occasion, carrying placards and the tripod-symbols reminiscent of the old pageantry of disarmament campaigns. I even saw a few shaggy false beards.

The event had been plugged for the past few days in all the media as something really new; not just another Total Experience Marc Nova concert. But few people realised that the new gimmick lay within the re-styled Hammond organ standing to one side of the stage.

Gerry was there, making final adjustments. It had been a surprisingly busy week with him, eliminating bugs in the circuits, familiarising me with the principles involved. Harry King stood to one side, a little nervous because this was the first time the feedback unit had been used with a large audience, in public.

By four, the massive generators were roaring away, the projectors were all live, the sound system tested out O.K. The show started, the music blasting out in great waves of sound, the audience shouting and chanting, the artistes raving through their acts. It was just the usual Easter concert; the feedback unit wasn't to be employed until Marc Nova came on at the end. I monitored the cameras that were being used for the projection of a vastly enlarged image of each performer, on the screen over the stage, and time passed surprisingly quickly. I realised suddenly that the hysterical compère was announcing the last act; Gerry was climbing into the feedback unit; Marc

Nova stood ready, offstage, impassive and bored as always. I tensed, afraid that somehow there would be a mistake, that the unit would be a failure. But then Marc Nova was out there pounding away on the dummy Hammond keyboard, miming his guts out; the earthy, vital music screamed through the speakers; his sensual features moved, magnified in a riot of colour, over the screen behind him; and I knew everything was going to work out fine.

By the end of the first verse, I could feel excitement building up slowly, subtly. Gerry was keeping the feedback damped heavily at first, letting the emotions gradually mount. The dancing and screaming in the crowd below me became more frantic and excited, and though I knew the emotion was artificially amplified, I couldn't fight it, myself. The sea of moving people, bathed in the flickering of the T.E. projectors, became blurred by sheer happiness.

The number ended, and the sensation cut off. I came back to reality with a jolt, mopped sweat off my forehead. Even Marc Nova seemed to have been slightly affected; he rested against the feedback unit for a moment, before announcing the next number. And then it started again.

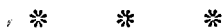
Except that this time it was different. The distinction was hard to see, at first, but then it became clear: Gerry had switched the selectivity of the unit. He was no longer detecting and amplifying the happiness component of the emotional response. This time, it was love that swelled up inside the audience, and inside me; a meaningless, overwhelming, feeling of helpless romantic love. And as I looked down near the foot of the stage, I saw why. In the crowd was Harry King's daughter Jane, conspicuous by the fact that she was standing cold and motionless, unlike the dancing, screaming kids either side of her. Gerry must have seen her there, near the front of the audience, and as I felt the helpless awakening of sheer joy and affection within me, I couldn't help admiring Gerry, feeling sorry for him, and hoping his desperate scheme would pay off. Then further thought became difficult; vision blurred, the mind slowed down. All I could contemplate was love, for the world around me, for all people, for everything. The intensity increased, and increased again. With a kind of detached concern I saw Marc Nova falter

and then slump against the unit, overcome. People were fainting in the audience. I could hardly stand up.

From my position near the stage I saw faint trails of smoke creeping out of one side of the feedback unit. Insulation burning? Components overloading? Suddenly the cover at the back swung open and Gerry staggered out, wiping his eyes. And still the emotion of love thundered over me and over everyone else.

Somehow I got down on to the stage, amidst the shouting and pandemonium, and staggered over to Gerry and the unit. Inside I could see coils glowing with heat. Desperately, I lunged at the power cable and pulled it free.

The vast feeling of emptiness that descended on me was overpowering, as the love emotion was suddenly turned off. But recovery came fairly quickly; I barely managed to drag the unconscious figure of Gerry out of Trafalgar Square before the confused, bewildered audience became a destructive mob.



Back at Gerry's house, that evening, we talked about what had happened.

"I saw what you tried to do," I said. "In fact I think I'd more or less guessed your intentions beforehand. Your inclusion of a 'love' selectivity circuit in the unit was, really, a give-away."

Gerry smiled, half-heartedly.

"But did it work?" I went on. "Did it have any effect on the girl?"

Gerry sighed, and shook his head. "I'd planned on using the unit as a kind of twentieth century love potion. It was just a vague idea, you understand; just a hope. If she was there—and Harry King usually gets her a position in the audience of an important show; he values her reactions—if she was there, I thought the least I could do was, perhaps, awaken her interest in some way."

"And did you?"

"No." The reply was bare, defeated, an empty sound in the drab room. "Even as I increased the intensity I could see it was ineffective. Her eyes never changed, Joe. She just stood there, bored. And I know why; it's in the principles of the unit. It doesn't *implant* emotions, it *intensifies* them. If there's no

love response at all in a person, there's nothing there to intensify. There was no love in Jane, none at all."

I surveyed the workroom, the junk and the equipment, Gerry sitting on his bed surrounded by it all. It was a depressing scene.

"I suppose you feel pretty bad about it," I said.

He looked up. "There's a sense of loss, of disappointment. But it's a funny thing, Joe. It must be the defeat of the situation, or something. But . . . somehow, I just don't feel I love the girl any more."

I felt a little uncomfortable, meeting his eyes, and looked away. "See how you feel tomorrow, Gerry," I said, and went out of the room and up to bed.



That's all past history, of course; three months in the past. And in this business, three months is a hell of a long time. It's time enough for the Harry King empire to go bust, deep in debt, and for Gerry to desert the organisation and the girl, and come over to Sound Trends as we'd originally planned.

Our company's rushing ahead, now; emotional feedback has swept the country. Gerry and I are still working together, and we get on well. We have a great new kick lined up for when the feedback gimmick gets that tarnished, outdated feel to it.

I know Gerry thinks back about the past, sometimes, and I still feel guilty, in a way, about the method I used for getting him free from the Harry King organisation. Perhaps one day, when I know him better, I'll tell him what really happened—how, suspecting his plans for using the unit to try and awaken love in the girl, I made some hasty modifications to it the night beforehand. How I fixed it, so that a field of opposite polarity to that of the emotion broadcast would, instead of being converted and dissipated electrically, be set up within the unit.

I fixed it so that, when the love-intensification component was selected, the field broadcast outside would be balanced by a negative field *inside* the machine. So that when, on that Easter Monday, Gerry boosted the love-emotion intensification, he felt the exact opposite himself; not hate, but a negation of love.

It was a hamfisted, desperate kind of scheme, and as it

was, my modifications sent several circuits out of adjustment and brought the unit near complete overloading.

But it worked. One day when Gerry thinks back and tries to understand how his helpless romantic attachment for the girl suddenly vanished, I'll tell him the true story.

CHARLES PLATT:

A native Londoner, Charles Platt grew up in a Hertfordshire suburb, and attended a coeducational private school—

—which encouraged freedom of discipline and thought. I spent two terms at Cambridge University but disliked it so fully that I left and did a two-year course in printing management at the London College of Printing, which I didn't dislike quite as much.

At twenty-two, he is well launched on four separate careers, one of them abandoned at least temporarily—

—played in a pop group for a year before giving it up as being too aimless . . .

. . . and one (landlord/rental agent) thriving, but inadvertent—

—I have lived in nine assorted flats in London over the last three years.

He sold his first story to *New Worlds* in 1965 (while still rocking-and-rolling it), and has published eight or ten more since then, as well as a novel, *The Garbage World* (Berkley, 1967; forthcoming from Panther in London)—

—I have also written a “swinging London” spy novel which no one wants to publish—in the US or swinging London itself . . .

. . . but he has yet to decide whether writing or graphics-photography-and-book-design is his main interest. For a while he published a little magazine of his own, *Tomorrowscope*, devoted entirely to reviews of sf books. Now he is Design Editor for *New Worlds*.

I do all the design and some of the production work for *New Worlds* SF (swinging fiction) magazine and also design book-jackets, etc., in my free time. My interest in photography has never fully matured but a bit has appeared in *N.W.*

I can see no trends in the new sf and feel glad that this is so . . . the essence of modern British sf is its freedom from such restrictions on style and outlook. The writers inevitably influence each other but, unlike pop groups or clothes designers, their primary aim remains to be themselves and follow their own ideas, rather than what is in vogue or considered commercial.

One of the most exciting newnesses about the new-*New Worlds* is its coverage of an area in contemporary art and design which is in many ways the precise parallel of the current British sf phenomenon. The first of these pieces was by Platt, on the work of M. C. Esher. Since then, Christopher Finch has joined the staff as Arts Editor, and contributed articles on Richard Hamilton, Peter Phillips, and Eduardo Paolozzi.

The *New Worlds* reproductions stimulated me to visit Paolozzi's show at the Pace Gallery in New York last year ("Universal Electronic Vacuum"), where I found—in Finch's introductory notes to Paolozzi's *Moonstrips*—the closest thing so far to a definition of what *I* mean when I say England Swings:—

Californian scientists have proposed image-banks orbiting the Earth. Moonstrips is a terrestrial prototype.

Of all terrestrial sites at which one might have expected such a proto-image-bank to originate, London was the most likely because the most vulnerable to media bombardment.

England *does* swing, but nothing like a pendulum. The mini-skirts and gambling clubs for the smart set are strictly spin-off froth, and the freedom of dress and language and living habits which attracts the young rebels is a near-inevitable bubble-up around any active ferment in the arts. There was social excitement and shocking behavior in Paris in the twenties, Florence in the Renaissance, Athens of the Periclean Age, and you will find them in London today; but they are epi-phenomena only—signal flares in a way.

Hollywood and Madison Avenue remain the centres of the image industry but the icons generated there remain, for the American public, tied to a physical environment. The English audience receives these images in their chaste form, unconnected with any experience of extended matter; yet the English, save only for refractions of idiom, are functioning within the same semantic tradition.

London is The Scene. Beneath the signal-smoke, the air there is unexpectedly clear. (They licked their fog some years ago, and maybe in part it's just being able to breathe-easy in purely biological terms that turns on smog-smothered minds from New York and Los Angeles.) The only way to blow your mind clear of soot stains in Urban America is with an air conditioner. In foundation-granted Think Tanks and industrial-ivoried towers, scientists, engineers, and the new brand of 'interdisciplinary' 'futurists' and 'generalists' can sit and synthesize successfully. But the artist works in attics and junkyards, on the streets and in the cellars: the Hollywood executive suite does no more for him than the ivy-leaguered leather chair.

Paolozzi is a denizen of the media landscape, in tune with its electronic flora and fauna. His role in this Arcadian setting is Dionysiac. Aesthetes should be wary since this is the landscape of Disneyland satyrs and ritual rape.

More important: it is *figuratively* that a man must breathe freely to create: and the figurative freedom in America belongs to the (electronic, chemical, biologic, cybernetic, 'human', 'market research') engineer. In Britain (where power is dear and air conditioning for giant laboratories no more likely than central heating) it is the artists who breathe free.

*You will find here
Some expressions within the theory of
errors
Cinema's newest sin
A secret of the Acropolis
Mondrian split by the scientific spectrum*

*Some basic statistics of Japanese
communications*

The silken world of Michelangelo

Movements on the Rio stock market

Hit sounds and golden discs

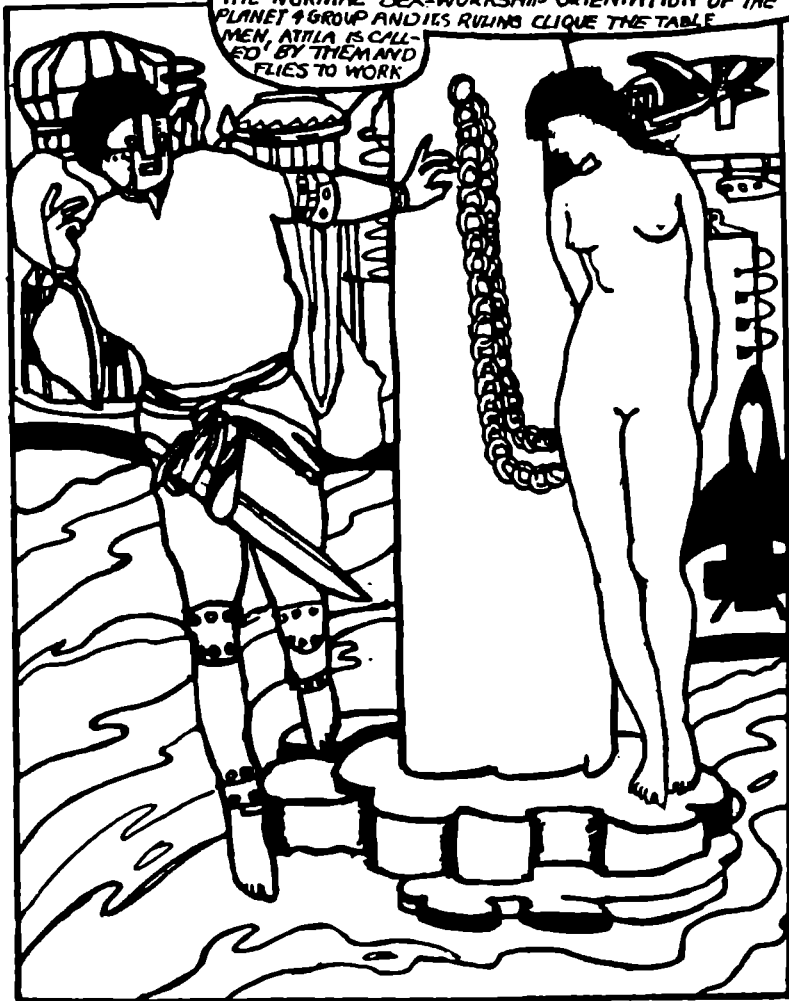
Christopher Finch, in "Moonstrips"

The hardware is almost all made in U.S.A., but that's not all: the images are made here too. The picture they're painting in London is a true portrait of America: but apparently it can only be painted with that much distance perspective.

THE SILVER NEEDLE

BY
GEORGE
MACBETH

ATTILA, ROBOT-KNIGHT-OF THE PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY, IS AGAIN INVITED TO UNRAVEL A KNOT IN THE STAR-SYSTEM OF INNERSPACE. THIS TIME IT IS THE IMPERIALISM OF A DRUG-RING, HALLUCINOGENS UNLIMITED, HE IS BRIEFED TO COMBAT THEIR CULT OF PRIMITIVISM AND RITUAL PITY INSPIRED BY THE VIRGIN QUEEN MADULLA, IS OUT OF LINE WITH THE NORMAL SEX-WORSHIP ORIENTATION OF THE PLANET 4 GROUP AND ITS RUINOUS CLIQUE THE TABLE MEN, ATTILA IS CALLED BY THEM AND FLIES TO WORK



a strip cartoon for Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833–1898)

1. The Call of Attila

From weeks of in-trays
he seethed to the lift. So
rose

through four orgasms
in the new Janssen feclie, flicked

the in-switch for a re-fill, swallowed
his testerosones and was out,

a fine blaze of Nuremberg
in his gas-suit, at ease

before the Table-men. A million eggs
on a flat glass disc
reflecting
eyed him. *You are called, Attila,*

the scent whispered, undulant
from the green orifice
below the glitter. Tickled,

scintillant, in a whirl
of Semen Number 5 (those
thigh-borne odours!)

his nerves grovelled
for the job. *Lord, I am thine:*
O.K., boss: Mein Fuehrer

brimmed through his lips
until the voice-pointer
answered the gyroscope

and he was back in the televator
conditioned, ready
for a new grail

to be wrenched
out of the misery of the pitied.

2. Attila And The Grey Sisters

Years later, in the burned egg, the
man-womb of elaborate alloys
Planet 4 had long since riveted
to his watch-bone

and made contractible for a
vitamin pill (b c g and z)

or expandable to a space-ship
with a range of nine star-systems,

Attila took stock. Happy
to be again on a voyage, playing

time-charades, eating
engine-oil and imagining
flexible metal Brunnhildas,

there was lots to do. And apt,
four-fifths sexual fantasy as it was,
to the job in hand. So flowed

the long days, clouds arcing
past the glass on the phono-screen, a
sense of sea, clouds, islands
infusing all that was. It was good

to be a robot, alone,
and like a man again. Except that outside

(and Attila knew it)
the piercing rays of the Table-men,

assuming form, like the grey sisters,
ever circled,

swooping and following,

waiting for the mission to be accomplished
or the next hero to be substituted

that the great work not falter
but go on.

3. The Finding of Medulla

The whole
strangled beach was alive
with subjected catatonics

when Attila tuned in. They
were celebrating

something he'd heard of—Christomide—
a white child without arms
lifted out of the mud

to a blazing Orion 3. It was holding
a sugar-cube in its teeth and

bit hard when the hero
immolated it
with his anode-gun. So much

for the gospel of love, he thought, but
heresy
has got to be hurt. So Attila,

over-leaping her prone vassals,
approached Medulla, our Lady
of LSD,

locked on her oil throne
in acid light, unutterable green

beyond the hand of man. And on her skin,
against her right side, the
silver needle shone.

4. The Rock of Doom

To receive, point-blank
from nothing, urges of intuition

along, the space-orb, with a rare chance
of the big O
approaching, is a fierce irritant

to the sloth's testicles, magnetic mines,
of a space-man. So Attila,

between the legs of Destiny, the goddess
Medulla,
fussed by the onset of rigor sexualis mortis,

destroyed precious machinery
(P ration, box three)
for seven aeons

before he could trust his hands
to clap on the nose-phones
and inhale the message.

*Androyeda needs you, the
scent breathed. She is chained
to a rock.*

Waves lap, the granite
penis rears: the bared girl
rattles her chains below the varnish and,

slipping off his helmet, the
hero is down with a clank

of reassuring metal. *Hold tight, sister,*

he snaps and is up

and chopping her off before
the small town in the background
wakes up. Reeling

it back in the 4D
screen in his head
Attila wonders

just what he's missing. He flicks
his switches: yes,
the monster.

.

5. The Doom Fulfilled

The monster. Pervasive
as an echo, stronger
than kettledrums, magnetic

to the nerve-ends of heroic metal, it
coils, spitting

a strange gas in his eyes. Attila
feels its thongs in his groin as
he hacks, helmeted,

breast-plated. Behind him
the greedy buttocks

of Androyeda turn
towards the cameras. She is open

to man or beast. Despite the
circling Furies, the

whole bleak glass
in the Planetarium of nothingness,

Attila has finished. The
thing is dead. Filing its
biological structure

in the back pocket of his
archive-wallet, he
lapses, under the eager toes

of the nymphomaniac Androyeda,
into a dream.

Attila dreams.

6. The Baleful Head

And in his dream Attila
flew back
to complete his earlier mission. The

dark head was there on the beach
where the screwed bones waited, the
bowed blind heads of the watchers
and the thing all needed

though none had the wit
to lift it clear.

Attila was walking
over the pebbles, hearing
the space-mind
(or was it the wind?) keening.

Attila was lifting
(drawing back the snake-hair)
the silver needle,

that pure beam of endless light.

Raising the totem
towards the star
Attila knew what the catatonics meant
by reviving Christomide.

The wind shrilled
with the cries of a million
dissolved in history.

And Attila bent
to replace it
for a single split-second

before the grey sisters
dived

and the silver needle blazed again
into the desperate circle of the damned

always in power
over the automata of the will-less.

GEORGE MACBETH:

The Scottish poet George MacBeth was born in the mining village of Shotts in Lanarkshire in 1932. He moved with his parents to the steel city of Sheffield in South Yorkshire at the age of four. Educated at New College, Oxford, where he got a first in Greats, he is now married to a research geneticist and works for the BBC Third Programme as a producer of poetry broadcasts. He lives with his wife and a beautiful ginger cat in a house in Richmond, Surrey, which was built, he writes, "before the French Revolution and while America was still a colony."

This is the official word on MacBeth, direct from the dust jacket of his first U.S. book of poetry, *The Colour of Blood* (Atheneum, 1967). The information is accurate, but the picture it creates is laughably remote from the quick-witted, wiry-nervous, rather dapper-and-dashing young man he is.

It is even more remote from the bawdy/bitter actor who was also scriptwriter/producer/director of *The Doomsday Show*, an acidly funny "post-nuclear cabaret" staged at The Establishment Club in London in 1964. I think the Foreword to his 1965 collection of poetry, *A Doomsday Book* (Scorpion Press, London) may actually convey a clearer image of The Essential MacBeth:—

For those convinced that trouble is always just around the corner, George MacBeth presents this home compendium of poems and poem-games. He believes that it may brighten the gloom of paranoia with a warm and cheerful glow. As the storm beats at the window-panes, and Death comes down the chimney dressed as Santa Claus, there will surely be something within the covers of *A Doomsday Book* to soothe the nerves. What's in a game? For *homo sanguinis*, that fly in the fly-bottle, the rôle of *homo ludens* may well be the door to calm.



The baked bean factory

□ MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH

Outside, on the sunny side, bomber spheres fly incessantly over the dead landscape of earth. Fused glasses layer the freshly-created deserts—fossilized treescapes flower away for ever. The barest jagged ruins of whole cities are lying on the ground, their Darkalene 'bubbles' popped and spread awkwardly across them like so much shinier, shapelier extension of the deserts.

At this final remote point in time, self-destructive forces in man ring out a final note of decision over choice of life and death, choosing death. As the music fades, the projected tiered images of man release themselves and escape into the inherited deserts of earth, leaving the blank effigies of billions of men and women lying or standing where they were left, like the dolls on Christmas Island, the vegetable halt of mental patients, or the no-longer sexy efficaciousness of pin-up models.

The domes covering the darker side of the planet earth are ultimate industries of its lighter side. They are offering excess of image to a dying population, innovating the nature of their reality, releasing images assuming the identity of weird two-dimensional life-forms the moment they are free, running amuck amongst the rubble of an atomic war.

On a second level, the images from one firm openly attack the images of another, precipitating total, all-out Image Warfare.

Large highways interconnect the domes—at one time main arteries used for the conveyance of goods, now abandoned to the rotting debris and the insects of night. Locklar Ford, the only remaining human Nightwatchman, shifts uneasily in his couch in the aurotherm. His factory—Baked Beans—only hired him as a result of their reluctance to trust and have installed a Charlot & Wakenhurst Brand-Image Detector.

* * *

All night now the bomber spheres had been swishing silently overhead, from coast to coast, land to land, starting from and going nowhere. Locklar, although he could not possibly be aware of their presence, possessed in his head an ability to detect their image-laden flights, and deep in his subconscious he felt some intruding image had entered the factory.

He slithered out of the area of warmth surrounding the aurotherm like a snake, once coiled, darting out to its full length over the plastic floors. He paused for a second to regain his breath, and then moved powerfully down dimly-lit corridors, across silently-purring machine areas and entered the storage compartment into which, his mind registered, had entered the Enemy.

Large packages, sealed tautly in gleaming Intracene stacked high around him, forming mazes of minor passageways. His large head, two luminous night eyes selected the appropriate passageway for his body to move through, and entered the Central Arena inside which disposal and packing machines worked away the long night.

A gleam, a slight blur of coloured words flashed for an instant high above in the dry air, hardly distinguishable from the dim red lighting of the compartment.

Locklar pulled himself up first one package, then another, his arms swirling round his shoulders as though he were swimming, until finally he rested on the shiny surface of the topmost package. From up here the faint words, fluttering like dragonflies in the red dark, could not be detected unless, as if looking at a distant star, he averted his eyes slightly from the shimmering filaments of their tracks. When the carnival of colours had reached its peak he released from his eyes the projected image of Baked Beans—

the shape of a bean, with the jointed legs and head of an ant—and a continuous stream of conflicting words and pictures began to tangle with the formations of the Enemy.

* * *

A beautiful girl, her hair long and white as the moonlight, sat all night in the pines that fringed the edges of the darker side of earth. Her mind was beautifully and repeatedly losing itself amongst the slim shadowy stems of the pine trees. Unless she rose occasionally to transport herself and her veils meandering into and out of the darkest stems, she would soon lose her Self completely.

Returning from one of these jaunts she seated herself down amongst the two or three toy relics she had managed to salvage from the sunshine world of far away—a mirror that mirrored the works of Lewis Carroll, a fist-sized clock that told the relative time on three different planets, incorporating in its design the idea of a child's game with time, and a tube of cold green lipstick that illuminated her skin whenever she applied it.

Out under the allnight stars of earth she could hear the swishing of the bomber spheres as they flew by over her head, and she identified herself with an imaginary lover whose fashionable, time-worn face stared down at her from the tail-piece of an old-fashioned plane.

Abruptly she rose into the centre of the clearing, attempting to scavenge a last glance at the false plane, and as the stems of the pines began to 'click' stealthily, pine by pine, inwards upon her, her mind suddenly filled itself with the smoothness of the lover's face. As the radiation burnt, she began slowly and then more tearfully to uproot the flowing moonlit whiteness of her hair.

* * *

Locklar Ford drew into the deep warmth of the aurotherm, into the depth of the alarm couch, wrapped in cold and almost slept. Several times his powerful mind experienced vague undersurface reasonings with Baked Beans, with images that shifted silently from grave black dome to dome, outside on the planet's rotting

surface. Finally, as he slept, he crawled in on himself for security.

On shelves and in cases, compartments everywhere, the home images ranked high and silent as the last pieces of his mind. He found himself strangely asleep when he awoke, vapourous and tiny, as if wrapped in canning paper. Shaking off the unwanted image he took another last look around the premises.



In a bunker, on an island off the coast of Cornwall, a man lay down with his feet stretched out, so that they overhung the end of his bed only by the length of his neck. In his possession was a Charlot & Wakenhurst Brand-Image Detector.

Inside the bunker, its walls alive with a series of glossed girls from the twentyfirst century, he used the Detector to measure the level of radiation image of the surrounding country. He rose from his bed to check over the bunker's water supplies, happening as he did so, to notice the videoscreen of the Detector broadcasting the outlines of a human form. Odd miscellanies of jumbled image had been registering on the screen for weeks, but the human image, which was a jungle of images, had not yet appeared. The lifelike figure of a woman, her bald head dulled and whitened, wandered aimlessly outside the bunker walls, attempting to get in. As usually happened, the man observing the screen became confused over which was image and which was reality, but before the woman had a chance to phase through the walls into the bunker itself, the Detector retaliated, and the screen showed the image dissolving into fragments of the wind—white and green blotches and lines, partly-phased veil disappearing into thin air.

The man left the screen to finish checking over the water supplies and lay down again.

Outside, bombers flew incessantly over the dead landscape of earth. The man felt attacked by the images of the entire history of earth, and rose and swayed for a moment, clasping a thin hand to his white face, then, lurching to the heavy protective doors of the bunker, he flung them wide open and was blinded by the sun.

* * *

Resourcing the energy of the red silence of the air into his own snake-like motions, Locklar Ford slid quietly out from behind the plastic-net backing of a canning machine, and allowed his eyes the freedom of their full image-firing precision into the silent chaos of the Enemy.

The Enemy, sweeping in compass curves, chain-filaments of colour, hyper-alternating currents in the dim-effused lighting of the Canning and Labelling Compartment, became more distinct to the human eye, more clearly-outlined as its numbers increased, revealing the whereabouts of its true origin, not from one firm but from numerous firms scattered over the earth's darker crust.

Brand-images—the head of a crocodile from a neighbouring firm, the repeater-word “Ilosoara” concertinaed into “Floflar” of McGrinnic’s “Darkalene”-producing Industries, and others—wanting for some reason to unanimously attack Baked Beans, were each themselves attacked and devoured in turn, by the swarming ant-life images of the beans Locklar released.

Under the pressure of many long-sequented filaments of words, which combining had entered the dome last of all, fused phosphorescently together in a senseless attempt to end BB for good, Locklar was forced to retreat along the broad connecting corridor of the aurotherm, attracting as he did so a further hoard of uncombined Enemy ‘vision’.

Into the mother-warmth of the aurotherm the man-serpent melted, activating in his mind the built-in “suck-back” ability of most Charlot & Wakenhurst Brand-Image Detectors, which, in case of emergency, collapse the absoluteness of their firm’s image into the brain of the Detector, or, as in this case, the *skull* of the victim, effectively preventing further damage to the firm’s image.

MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH . . .

. . . is, I suppose, the Very Model of a Young New Worlds Writer. "The Baked Bean Factory" was his fourth published story—all in *NW*; since then he has also appeared in *Ambit*, and his poetry has been published in 'little' magazines like *Lyric*, *Breakthru*, etc. He is an admirer of William Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, J. G. Ballard, Colin Self—but seems equally influenced by such avant-garde graphic artists as Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton, and Peter Phillips.

He is typically 'multi-medial' in his talents and creative activities, prototypical (or, synonymously in this case, *atypical*) in the experimentalism of his work—and young, one of the two youngest writers in this volume.

Twenty years old, Butterworth is a Laboratory Technician in Altrincham, near Manchester, where he was born.

Background: upper middle class, bum, etc.

Education: Preparatory School, Public School, Art College, mostly self taught though.

Special Interests: Anything of interest (drugs, mind, freedom to act & speak/think, walking, things with no names, etc., etc., etc.).

In particular I am utterly confused and don't know what way I or new wave sf

is/am progressing. Will say that my own work is really journey into my own mind rather than space or other sf scenes. Straight sf has had it. New writings must be developed. Feeling my way. All forms are inadequate. Confusion.

I don't think anyone else knows where they're going either!

Within the inner circle of the young *New Worlds* writers, Butterworth is one of the most admired; in fact, his development as a writer between his first story, "Girl," in 1966, and his current work, is impressive from any side of the generation gap.

As is his courage/foolhardiness—and here the side you're on does make a difference—in volunteering this further information:

The theme was a difficult one to write (for me); I had to draw in some places on my acid/pot experiences as I think you will detect (both drugs seem to add the aspects of a definite experience to my imagination which is handy).

1871

The hall of machines

□ LANGDON JONES

Many great thinkers have attempted to analyse the nature of the hall. However, all their different approaches have been characterised by a lack of agreement and often blatant contradiction of fact. The appearance of the hall is generally well-known, but as soon as we try to unearth specific detail we soon realise that all is conjecture.

The hall is vast. We would expect the descriptions of its contents to vary—one person could not be expected to cover the whole area of its interior. However, there has been a great deal of superstitious rumour concerning its contents, and it is often difficult to separate the true from the wholly fallacious.

There has been much conjecture concerning the size of the hall, but no results have actually been confirmed by an kind of measurement. It has been postulated by at least one writer that the hall is in fact infinite in extent. Others, no doubt influenced by exaggerated reports, have maintained that the hall covers a variable area, its size altering by a factor of at least fifty. Other evidence, however, suggests that both of these ideas bear, in all probability, little relationship to the facts.

During the last few years I have found it a rewarding task to research all the material I could find that related in any way to the hall. The task has been difficult, but illuminating. I have now in my files a vast amount of information in the form of books, articles, newspaper cuttings, recorded tapes and cine film as well

as a large number of transcribed interviews, on a subject which I have found to become daily more fascinating. My research has become to a degree, obsessional. I now find that my normal routine has been disturbed to quite a large extent over the last three years. I have devoted a complete room to this work, my ultimate intention being to shape the material into a comprehensive book. All over the wall are pinned the relevant newspaper cuttings, their arrangement depending on whichever aspect of the hall I am currently researching; set in the middle of the room is my cine projector (frequently I watch the five hours of film I have accumulated at one sitting), and beside it is the tape recorder. On tape I have, apart from interviews and commentaries, at least an hour of the recorded sounds of some of the machines actually in operation. I have taken these sounds down, as accurately as possible, into musical notation. I have permutated the resultant patterns of notes and have found nothing more concrete.

I now spend a large proportion of my day in carrying out this research. I sit for hours, cutting out newspaper articles or developing film in the darkroom I have constructed. And so, with scissors, photographic chemicals, music paper, paste, tape recorder and projector, I have built up a picture that is far from complete, but which is remarkable in its specific detail.

I now present some of the more striking of the descriptions I have unearthed. They are not delivered in a planned order, but have been assembled to give, rather than a dry academic account, a series of interesting impressions. I believe that one of the most fascinating aspects of the hall is in the diverse impressions it creates within the minds of the observers.

When my book is complete (which will not be for some years—it will run to at least five large volumes) I shall have sufficient confidence in the correctness of my results, and also the scope, to present them in detail. Until then, these extracts are intended only to communicate the atmosphere of the hall as it appeared to some people.

THE WATER MACHINE

The troughs and gullies of the Water Machine extend over a very large area of this section of the hall, and although it is enclosed

by false 'walls' of board, it still gives a sprawling impression. All about are convex metal surfaces; the floor is intersected by runnels and gullies. The Water Machine is constructed primarily of cast-iron, but certain of its parts are made of a lighter metal; probably an alloy, such as aluminium. The machine consists of a complexity of large components which stretch probably twenty feet in height, and the whole mass is supported by a surprisingly small number of slim metal struts.

Water is being pumped in from a large pipe at the very top of the machine. It is conducted by a series of ingenious mechanical movements through a series of gullies and out of this part of the hall. I thought it likely that the water was moving in a large enclosed cycle, and dropped into a nearby channel a small piece of white paper. As I suspected, within about three minutes, the paper came floating past my feet again.

The noise of the water is almost deafening at times. Constantly there is the hissing of the jet at the top of the machine and a rushing of the liquid as it bubbles its way through its course; also there is the loud creaking of the metal parts as they operate. Every few seconds there is an enormous crash as a metal part is activated, and the water momentarily redoubles its volume.

Water drips constantly from the supporting members, gathers on the floor, and runs down the slope towards the many drains: concrete channels sweep in graceful lines about my feet: cast-iron conduits curve in black roundness, globules of condensation running along their undersides.

Situated at the top of the machine is the vast silver belly of the top water-container, spatulate and curved, like a vast silver spoon. The lead-in pipe, about six inches in diameter, is pointing into this tank, and a great jet of water, like a column of glass, is sluicing into its interior.

After a while, the container begins to groan, loudly. Suddenly the critical balance is attained. The groaning reaches a climax under the enormous weight of water, and the tank begins to shudder under a volume of liquid that it is incapable of supporting. Overspill slops to the floor and runs down to the square drains. Slowly, inch by inch, the tank begins to tip its vast bulk. Water spills over its thick pouring lip and falls in a glisten-

ing ribbon into a reservoir a couple of yards below. The tank begins to accelerate its rate of movement, and more water gushes down. Faster moves the container, and then, with a crash, inverts itself. A solid mass of water falls into the reservoir, and the ground shudders with the impact. The container, meanwhile, is pulled back to a creaking vertical by a counterweight.

Water leaks from the reservoir, jetting out with great force from a circle of six holes at its convex base. These six separate streams are all conducted by diverse methods to the ground. One of the streams gushes into a smaller version of the water-barrel. Another enters one of the hinged containers set between the double rim of a large wheel, its weight causing the wheel to rotate slowly; after a quarter-revolution the container will snag on a projection and tip up, letting the water escape into one of the channels. Another stream strikes a sprung phlange which bounces constantly in and out of the flow; the other end of the phlange operating a mechanism like the escapement of a clock.

All the streams eventually reach the dark channels of wet concrete set in the floor, and are then conducted away from sight through holes set in the surrounding 'walls'.

Behind the wall can be heard the sound of great pumps.

Up above, I know, a fountain is playing.

MACHINES OF MOVEMENT

I was passing through rather an enclosed part of the hall; its spaciousness not apparent owing to the large bulk of the partitions enclosing various machines, when I passed a small wooden doorway set into one of the partitions. On the door was a plaque, printed black on white. It said

INTERLOCKING MACHINE ROOM

On entering the room I found it to be full of giant metal crabs.

Great struts of thin metal rod criss-cross from ceiling to floor, making it impossible to see very far into the room. The very air shudders with the vibration of these machines. Although the constructions vary considerably, one from the other, a large number of them have the same basic shape. Their nucleus is a

mass of rods and other interlocking members, and they stand about ten feet high. The arrangement of these rods is infinitely complex. At their apex they are thickly composed, and are surrounded by other parts which join them and permit their motion. They branch out, and at floor level each machine covers a considerable area.

All of the legs of these machines are connected by free-moving joints to the legs of the other units, and a movement of one causes an adjustment to the position of the other. The whole room is in motion, and the machines twitch each other with an action that appears almost lascivious in nature.

A rod near me is moved by the action of a neighbour's leg. This movement is communicated at the top of the unit to another of the legs, and it, in turn, imparts motion to a machine further away. As these machines work, a constant metallic clattering fills the air, as if the room is filled with typewriters.

The machines are slick and oiled; their movement is smooth, but gives an impression of great nervousness. All over this chamber are various other parts, all of which seem affected in some way by the movements of the rods. On the wall, near me, is fixed a plaque with a jointed arm extending from it. Taut wires radiate from either extremity into the skeletal grey. One end is angled up, the other down. As the wire of the higher end is pulled by some motion in the mass of interlocking parts, the arm reverses its position jerkily.

Perhaps, a million years ago, these machines were constructed in a delicate static balance, a frozen wave; and with the locking of the final link in the circuit, the fixing of the last jointed leg against leg, the balance was tripped. A motion would have run its path, twisting and turning about the machines, splitting itself, dividing again, until today this movement still ran about the constructions, diffused and unpredictable. A million strands of current, still splitting. And perhaps the machines had been so carefully designed, that in another million years, all the currents would begin to amalgamate, becoming less and less complex, until they finally became two, meeting in opposition and deadlock, all movement ceasing.

The mind drowns among the interlocking machines. Perhaps the reason is in the similarity of this abstract maze to that pattern

formed by the neural current. Perhaps these patterns of motion parallel too closely the patterns of electricity that we call personality, and the one is disturbed by the other. Conversely, perhaps the very existence of a human mind in the room causes little eddies and whirls in the motion of the machines.

I was unable to stay in the interlocking machine room for more than a minute or two before the psychological symptoms became more than I could bear.

THE CLOCK

A large number of the machines in the hall are partitioned off by boards, so that one often feels that one is walking in a constricted space, and loses completely the feeling of immensity that one often experiences in the hall. It was in such a place that I found, set against one 'wall', the mechanism of an enormous clock. It was all of shining brass, and it stood no less than ten feet high. It was facing the wall, the dial and hands (if, in fact, any such existed) being completely invisible. The clock was triangular in shape, and was supported by a framework of sturdy brass, front and back, that curved down to provide four feet. There was no plate at the back of the clock, its arbors being seated in strips of brass that curved in beautiful shapes from the main framework.

Despite the largeness of the clock, it was built to delicate proportions. The wheels were all narrow-rimmed, and the pallets that engaged the escape wheel were long and curved, like the fingernails of a woman. It was as if the mechanism of an ordinary domestic clock had been magnified to a great degree; there was none of the solidity and cumbersomeness of the turret clock here. I discovered to my surprise that this clock was powered, as most domestic clocks, by a spring. However, this spring was immense, and must have exerted a tremendous pressure to operate the mechanism.

Although the whole movement was surmounted by the escape wheel and anchor, which perched on the apex of the triangle, the pendulum was disproportionately short, stretching down little more than six feet. The slow tick of this enormous clock was lacking in the lower partials, and as a consequence was not disturbing.

As the clock was so large, motion could be seen among the wheels, which moved, each to a varying degree, with each tick of the clock. This was a fascinating sight, and I stayed watching the clock for a considerable period of time.

I wish that I could have seen the clock illuminated by strong morning sunlight from a window.

MACHINES OF DEATH—1

There is darkness in this part of the hall. Stray light illuminates black, pitted metal. I can see little of the machine of death; it is to my right, and is a bleak high wall of metal. The end of a thick chain extrudes here, turns, and plunges back into the metal wall. The chain is a foot wide and four inches thick. The only other feature of this machine is a waste-pipe which is sticking out from the wall. Underneath this pipe is a channel set into the floor, which conducts the waste to a nearby drain. The all-pervasive stink of this drain makes breathing difficult.

The pipe is pouring blood into the channel.

MACHINES OF DEATH—2

This machine is very large, sprawling and complicated. It appears to be completely functionless. It is possible that it was constructed to be entirely symbolic in nature, or alternatively that the things—creatures—upon which it operated are here no longer.

It consists of a vast network of girders, all of which are vibrating with a strange jogging motion. The only parts of the machine not affected by this movement are the two great supports at either end. The supports are each a framework of girders, and they contain various driving chains and gearing devices. At the top of each of these frames is a long, jointed arm, of tremendous proportion. These arms also carry chains and gears. At the end of each arm is an enormous blade, made of a silver metal that catches the small amount of light. The blades have complete mobility, and appear to be fixed on the arms by some kind of ball-joint.

The motion of the arms and the blades is difficult to observe in detail and even more difficult to describe. Analysing the action

in words tends to give an impression of slowness, when in fact, considering the bulk of the parts, it is very swift indeed.

The arms rest close to their supports, their joints extending downwards like elbows, the blades upright. Keeping the blades in the same position, they move together across the thirty-yard space. When they are only about a yard apart, the arms are almost fully extended, and the motion stops for an instant. Then abruptly the blades begin to move independently. They execute, in the space of only a few seconds, a complicated system of movements—thrusts—parries—arabesques—the motion of each blade being the mirror of the other. Then again comes the pause, and the arms bend again, carrying the blades back to the supports.

The action of these blades certainly suggests physical mutilation, and I found, as I watched, that I was wondering whether in fact the machine was still complete. Was there once a feeding mechanism that carried the bodies over to the knives to be sculptured within a few seconds to a raw, twitching mass?

Despite the unpleasant feelings that the machine arouses, I found it a fascinating experience to watch the blades, and also the complex system of vibrating girders beneath them. It is strange to see such large objects in such rapid motion; the throbbing of the floor testified to the weight of the mechanism, which must have been in the hundreds of tons.

On the occasion that I observed the machine, there were two other people there as well; a man and a woman. At first I thought that they were part of the machine, but my attention was caught by the fact that their own vibrating motion was slightly lagging behind that of the machine as their soft bodies absorbed their impetus.

They were both naked, and they were on one of the girders directly below the high knives. The man was lying on his back, stretched along the girder, and the woman was squatting astride his hips. The jogging of the girder was throwing their bodies up and down in a mechanical travesty of copulation. The man was grasping the woman's thighs tightly, and her face, turned towards me, with her bottom lip between her teeth, was florid and beaded with sweat. I could see her nostrils contracting with each gasped breath she took.

A drop of oil fell from the knives as they clashed above, and dropped unnoticed on to her shoulder. As it ran down the pale flesh of her arm, it looked like a single drop of ancient blood.

MACHINES OF DEATH—3*

The machine sits in distance unheard. I walk on dry sin, on the shit of us all, a man by my side who points out all his bones. The well has now dried and all that remains is a glowing, radioactive silt. The universe is shaped like a whirlpool, and the vortex is here. Here is the end of all time, the end of all space. The ultimate nil. I have eaten my fill; here is my place; there is no single way left to climb, and the rest is just fear. This cul-de-sac is arid and death-cool. It is bleakness, a focus-point built by man and his pains. The door must be tried; I pull and it groans, and opens up wide. The chamber is small, but light is let in to show me a word—

Auschwitz!

THE MOTHER

This machine is standing in isolation; it is surrounded by space on all sides. It is extremely large, standing almost a hundred feet high, and it is shaped like an elongated onion, tapering at the top to a high spire. From one side of the machine, from about ten feet up, a flaccid rubbery tube hangs down and outward to ground level.

The onion-belly of the Mother is completely featureless, and light catches its curves; the tube is of a dull red consistency.

There are sounds coming from inside the metal body, soft but constant. But then, abruptly, they stop, and all is silent.

At the top of the tube, a bulge becomes apparent, swelling outward all the time. Slowly, this bulge begins to travel inside the tube, away from the machine and down to the ground. While all this is going on, one obtains an impression of supreme effort, and,

* This machine consists of a flat surface of metal with a circular metal door which leads to a small chamber, called the 'compressor', or 'pot'. Apart from this the wall is featureless except for a switch by the side of the door. This area seems to be the most dismal place in the entire hall.

strangely, pain. Perhaps it is because the whole process is so slow. The object creeping down the tube will eventually reach the end and emerge into the light; one realises this, and feels an almost claustrophobic impatience with the slowness of the event. There is a feeling too of compression and relaxation, and one finds one's own muscles clenching in time to the imagined contractions.

Eventually the bulge reaches the end of the tube at ground level. This is where the real struggle begins. One becomes aware that the end of the tube is beginning to dilate, slowly and rhythmically. The belly of the machine is as smooth and unevocative of any emotion as ever, but it is impossible for the observer not to feel that agonies are now being endured. One realises that the process is completely irreversible; that there is no way of forcing the bulge back up the tube and inside the metal shell again.

Wider and wider grows the aperture at the end of the tube, affording one an occasional glimpse of shiny moisture within. A glint of metal is now and then apparent.

The tube dilates to its fullest extent, and a metal form is suddenly revealed, covered in dripping brown fluid. The rubber slides over its surface, releasing it more and more by the second. Abruptly it bursts free in a wash of amniotic oil.

All is still.

The oil begins to drain away, and the new machine stands there motionlessly as the liquid drains from its surfaces. It is a small mechanism on caterpillar tracks, with various appendages at its front end which seem to be designed for working metal, or stone.

With a whirr, it jerks into action, and it moves softly away from the great Mother. There is a click from the parent machine, and the noises inside begin again.

I have watched this mechanism for long periods, and it appears to create only two kinds of machine. They are both on the same basic design, but one appears to be made for erection, the other for demolition.

The Mother has probably been working thus for hundreds of years.

ELECTRONICS

Electric machines stare at me with warm green eyes. I see nothing but bright plastic surfaces, inset with pieces of glass. These are still machines, active but unmoving, and in my ears is the faint hum of their life. The only movement here which indicates that the machines are in operation is the kicking of meters and the occasional jog of an empty tape spool.

Their function is not apparent; they work here at nameless tasks, performing them all with electronic precision and smoothness.

There are wires all over the room, and their bright, primary colours contrast strikingly with the over-all pastel tones of the plastic bodies.

Sonata in the style of machines

In a small chamber to the rear of the room of electric machines, there are some more of a different kind. The door to this small room is of wood, with a square glass set into it. The room appears to have remained undisturbed for many years.

They line three walls of the chamber, and are covered with switches and meters. They hum in strange configurations of sound, and appear to be making electric music together.

DEATH OF MACHINES—1

In this part of the hall, all is still. Spiked mounds of time rise round me, their hulks encrusted with brown decay. The floor is totally covered by a soft carpet of rust, and its acrid odour stings the nostrils. A piece detaches itself from one of the tall machines and drifts to the floor, a flake of time. Many such flakes have fallen here in this part of the hall.

Time burns fire in my eyes, and I turn my head, looking for escape. But everywhere I see seconds and hours frozen into these red shapes. Here is a wheel, its rim completely eaten through; there a piston, its moveable parts now fixed in a mechanical *rigor mortis*. A reel of wire has been thrown into a

corner, ages in the past, and all that remains are its circular traces in the dust.

My feet have left prints in the rust-carpet.

DEATH OF MACHINES—2

I had come into the hall with my girl, and we had spent a long time wandering about, hand in hand, when we suddenly came on the remains of a machine.

It stood about six feet in height, and I could see that at one time it had been of great complexity. For some reason my girl was not very interested, and went off to see something else, but I found that this particular machine made me feel very sad. It appeared to be entirely composed of needles of metal, arranged in a thick pattern. The largest of these needles was about three inches long, and there appeared to be no way for the machine to hold together. My guess is that when it was made, the needles were fitted in such a way that the whole thing struck an internal balance. The machine was now little more than a gossamer web of rust; it must have had tremendous stability to have remained standing for such a long time.

It was fascinating to look closely at its construction, to see the red lines fitting together so densely. It was like looking into a labyrinth; a system of blood-red caves. With every movement of my head a whole new landscape was presented to me. I called my girl over, and we stood hand in hand, looking at the dead machine.

I think that it must have been our body heat, for neither of us made an excessive movement, but at that moment the entire construction creaked, and sank a few inches. Then there was a sigh, and the whole thing dissolved into dust about our feet.

Both of us felt very subdued when we left the hall.

I hope that the above information has enabled my readers to gain an impression of this very exciting hall. There is little that I can add, except the following point.

You will remember from one of the accounts I have printed here, the one giving details of the creation of new machines, the following passages: "It is a small mechanism on caterpillar tracks, with various

appendages at its front end which seem to be designed for working metal, or stone." ". . . it appears to create only two kinds of machine . . . one appears to be made for erection, the other for demolition." These two passages, together with some other material that I have not published here, suggest an interesting point.

I believe that the machines mentioned are the same as those described in another account, in which the writer stood by one of the walls of the hall. He watched one set of machines building a wall about six inches further out than the old one, which was being torn down by the other mechanisms. This seems to be a process which is going on all the time, all over the hall; a new wall is built, slightly further out, and this in its turn will be demolished as another is put up.

I believe that the hall has been, from the time of its creation, and always will be, increasing in size!

However, only more research will be able to establish this radical idea as an incontrovertible fact.

LANGDON JONES . . .

. . . was born twenty-five years ago in Kent, but grew up in Ealing, West London, where he still lives.

Received a Grammar School education, which taught me almost nothing at all, and studied Piano and Composition at the Guildhall School of Music. Spent three-and-a-half years in the Band of the Royal Horse Guards, having joined under the impression that a musician's life in the army was an easy one. This proved most definitely not to be the case, and was very happy to part company with the Household Cavalry . . . Particularly interested in music, and still play and compose. I am working in collaboration with a young composer, and have written texts for choral pieces; am planning at present a large-scale piece which will involve music, spoken and sung text, dancing, and projected light-images.

He sold his first story to *New Worlds* in 1964; his second—"I Remember, Anita"—established him as an outstanding new writer, and was included in *The Best of New Worlds* (Compact, London, 1965). His stories have continued to appear in the magazine, and he is now Associate Editor as well.

. . . the newer British sf writers have a vitality that is often lacking in writing to-day . . . British speculative fiction is very near to that stream of literature which includes Kafka and Burroughs, nearer, in fact, to this imaginative branch of the "mainstream" than the greater part of the non-sf writers.

The most important of the British sf writers is J. G. Ballard . . . it is fortunate for the rest of us that his work is so personal and so idiosyncratic that any work overly influenced by him would immediately lose its integrity. And so each of the new writers is working in his own direction, and the British field at the moment shows a very healthy diversity of talent.

The diversity, once again, applies to the individual as well; between stints at the piano and typewriter, Jones is now doing some free-lance photography—mostly book jackets and magazine work.

As far as my own work goes . . . the only tendency I have noticed is an increasing interest in the purely visual aspect of a story, by which I mean the way in which the story is actually shaped, and by the arrangement of words and lines on a page, but whether this is something that will become increasingly important I cannot say. My writing now represents much more an externalised version of inner experience . . . depends much more on symbolic "resonances." But I think it is much too early to say in what direction it is going.



The run

□ CHRIS PRIEST

As he left the Base, Senator Robbins heard the alarm begin its screaming warning. For most of the morning he'd toured the Base. With the Pan-Asians agitating and an election due he couldn't afford to substantiate his anti-pacifistic claims with anything less than a well-publicised tour.

Behind his car he could see the vid-crews piling their equipment into their transports.

He drove at a leisurely pace towards the main gate, and its attendant barrage of security checks. These days, driving was the only way he could relax; he scorned the idea of a chauffeur.

The security was suspiciously officious. He'd half-expected them to let him through with the most cursory of examinations, but they insisted on a complete check-over of all his identifications. These fact-finding tours stirred up the military, after all.

As he left the security lodge and approached the main gates, the last of the rockets fired. That was something he'd investigated today: the constant total-readiness practices cost more than they were perhaps worth. He made a mental note to get his secretary to prepare a report. The rocket was the usual manned sort, a sliver of dusty metal scarcely visible in the overcast. It disappeared quickly, its after-glow illuminating a small patch of the clouds.

Through the thick plastic of his car's body, Robbins could feel the sonic throb of the rocket's huge motors.

* * *

He turned out of the Base, onto the grey slip-road that led to the major freeway. As his car accelerated silently along the aluminium strip another flight of rockets, presumably from some other nearby base, swept overhead. They were flying low these days: the new defence pattern he'd been told about. A wash of noise seemed to make his car shake on its plates. He closed the windows and turned the air-conditioner full up.

He came eventually to the freeway, and followed the filter-strip onto its width. It looked like a photograph Robbins had seen once, of one of the old railway marshalling-yards. Tracks crossed and re-crossed, merged and divided. He filtered until he was in the med-fast lane, and pushed the speed up to the maximum allowed.

He leaned forward against the restraint of his safety-webbing and raised his secretary on the call-kit.

"Andersen? Robbins here."

His secretary's voice came through, sounding strained. "Boss. Get back here as quick as you can. Big trouble."

"What is it? Can you tell me over the line?"

"Code E, boss. Code E."

"The kit went dead, his secretary had switched off. He made to recall him, then stopped. Andersen never acted like that unless something was seriously wrong. He'd worked out a private series with Andersen when the trouble with the Pan-Asians had first blown up. Code E was national-scale. That was all.

He drove on, his mind working hard. Overhead, another low flight of silver rockets added weight to his forebodings.

* * *

Five kilometres up the freeway, Robbins took another filter-strip and followed it as it wound into a minor side-track. His speed dropped away, compensating for the sharper bends he'd encounter.

He caught a glimpse of the Sessions Hall, a bleak modern building soaring into the sky over the surrounding forest.

Decentralised government seemed fruitless when housed in

a building as prominent as that. Or perhaps there was something more subtle about it, something he hadn't realised.

The track began to climb a little, and the trees became thicker along its side. Very soon, he came to the junction; a single-track dipping down through the trees, losing itself between wooded banks. He approached the turning carefully, waiting for the signal to flash green.

The pole-barrier raised itself automatically, and his car slipped through. He switched off the identifying beam, and behind him the pole dropped back into place.

He accelerated quickly, impatient to get back to his office. Andersen's cryptic message meant war at worst, crisis at best. Either way he needed to be at hand. The government's foreign policy, in Robbins' opinion, was flaccid. It listened to public opinion too much, and varied with the currency of popular ideals. The pacifists had had their way now for seven years, allowing the Pan-Asians to infiltrate every civilised country they bordered on. The time had come to show a little strength; pull a few triggers, push a few buttons. They'd give way soon enough, shown a few strong-arm tactics.

Robbins found he'd unconsciously pushed his speed too far, and he let it drop away a little. This was low-speed strip, not stressed for fast cornering. Ahead of him, the aluminium track wound over the undulating countryside. About two kilometres ahead it disappeared around the sharp turn at Packer's Mill.

A movement caught his eye. He saw a human figure for a brief moment, disappearing behind one of the many trees. He looked again at the spot, then saw the youth.

He was a thin fellow, dressed in a drab grey coverall, long hair flopping over his face. Behind him, standing amongst the trees, the Senator could see many others dressed identically.

What were they doing in the forest? It was supposed to be patrolled from the air, warning off any strays. They were probably part of a gang of Juvies—Robbins had heard that several had been seen in the vicinity lately. He looked on the other side of the track, and noted with a sudden unaccountable twinge that there were many on that side too. Instinctively he slowed the car a little, hesitating.

As he did so, several of the Juvies levered themselves away

from the trees they were leaning against, and walked purposefully towards the track. Robbins drove on cautiously.

He began to see more and more youths, some of them clustering in bunches near the track. As he passed one of these bunches a Juvie spat deliberately at the car, his spittle splaying across the windscreen.

The first trace of real alarm nudged at Robbins' mind, and he looked into his rear-view screen. The track behind him was crowded, Juvies walking easily along behind him. Some of the youths were running, as if trying to pace the car. He increased his speed again, a little nervously. The car surged forward, its blunt nose thrusting as the lineal plates increased their field, hugging the aluminium strip.

On either side of the track, the numbers grew. Most of the Juvies just watched, but some of them—the younger ones, Robbins guessed—were shouting insults and waving sticks. The track before him streamed away in a grey curve of dull ribbon, disappearing around Packer's. At the bend, Robbins could see a crowd of the youths looking towards his car expectantly. There must be a hundred in that part alone, he guessed.

The little knot of alarm had grown inside him, swollen by an unreasoned certainty that they had been waiting for him.

He found he was still accelerating, and glanced at his speedometer. It showed 120 kph, and rising. Another look at the screen showed him more Juvies climbing down behind him. He looked around; everywhere, it seemed, he could see the drably-dressed youths flowing onto the track.

His car shot silently towards the bend at Packer's.

Standing out like a promontory, the tree-lined bank convexed down to the edge of the track, bearing its cargo of young humanity jeering and cheering as the Senator ploughed down towards them.

He was going too fast for the bend, he'd have to slow. He jabbed at his reverse-flow, and the speed dropped away a little. The cheering rose as his momentum died, and the Juvies pressed nearer to the track. He went into the corner too fast. He grappled with the emergency braking, fighting against the violent shuddering that tore through the cabin. Bucking and pitching,

the plates ground against the strip, threatening to leave their guides.

As he came out of the bend something metallic and heavy crashed against the roof of the cabin, and a roar of approval came from the perilously-balanced crowd of Juvies. In his screen he saw a great iron girder roll against the aluminium strip.

And then he was round the corner. His car righted itself immediately, its gyro holding it level again.

Ahead the track was empty, straight and true it ran for a full kilometre, slipping gently down the long incline. Dead ahead, he could see the tall shape of the Sessions Hall standing like a beacon on the horizon. A strange flash caught his eye, then another. Twin streaks of flame shot upwards from near the base of the Hall, and lost themselves in the cloud. Two more followed them, and Robbins realised what they were.

The anti-missile site, unmanned and fully automatic, was being brought against something. It very much looked as if the Senator's worst fears were justified.

Immediately, it was all the more imperative that he get back to the Hall.

He looked into his rear-view screen. Behind him, the bend was crowded with Juvies. They were making no attempt to follow him, evidently preferring to watch his progress. He checked his speed, and saw that he had almost halted.

What had happened there? Had they been trying to kill him on the corner? It seemed unlikely; from what little he knew of Juvie habits, the Senator was certain that whatever they did they made sure would work. And with the biggest gang he'd ever seen or heard of, he would expect something a little more positive than terror-tactics. He sweated at the thought. If that was so, then they hadn't finished with him yet.

He craned forward against the restraining pull of his safety-webbing. At the end of the slope, he caught a movement. Even as he watched, hundreds of Juvies wormed out of the trees. Pushing and jostling, they fought for position along the edge of the track. There was nothing orderly about their movement, it was as if they'd been released from a stockade all at once. They fought and shoved, several of them stumbling onto the track and over the aluminium strip. With horror, Robbins saw

that those that fell stayed there, making no effort to move. Many more were throwing themselves against the strip, deliberately placing their bodies in his path.

Torn with indecision, he looked desperately around. What were they doing? Did they want to kill themselves?

An idea struck him, and he reached across for the call-kit. As he waited for a reply, he saw that the Juvies by the corner were walking down towards him. The leaders, five rangy youths in ill-fitting overalls, were near the car and he could see now that they were carrying weapons. He turned back to the call-kit, and held his finger down on the button.

No reply. What the hell was going on?

Then he remembered the girder that had hit the roof: it must have damaged the aerial.

There was a crash, and his rear window starred into opacity. His screen showed some of the youths throwing stones. He'd have to move.

Reluctantly, he started the car moving again—down the slope towards the others. A great cheer rose as he began to move, a taunting ovation of derision and scorn. It died away to be replaced by a chant. An insidious and growing beat; a pounding, droning, throbbing drum of voices—frightening and stimulating.

The mocking hymn grew and grew, and suddenly he caught the words. At last he understood what the whole thing was about. The chant was one word, one whose semantic roots lay far into the past, whose meaning had grown and swollen with the years, and one that now meant a semi-religious cult of suicidal magnitude.

And all around Senator Robbins, the whole world shouted the word.

Chicken.

Chicken, they screamed. Chicken. *Chicken*. CHICKEN. CHICKEN.

And this . . . was a Run.

The full implication struck Robbins as his car reached the 50 kph mark. He had unwittingly let himself in for a Run, something that only happened to other people. He allowed his speed to build up a little more.

His mind worked frantically. What was he going to do? Rather, what could he do? There seemed little choice: behind him was a hard knot of Juvies, running now, he could see. Ahead of him, the pressing mob had overflowed right onto the track, the aluminium strip flying into their bodies like a grey arrow. All along the track, the Juvies stared at his car, watching defiantly as he accelerated towards them.

Robbins' fear suddenly evaporated, to be replaced by a strident wave of anger. These damned Juvies couldn't push him around! Besotted with drugs, drunk with unwonted power, these unemployed and unemployable delinquents thought they ruled the Earth. Thought! That was ironic, Robbins reflected as he encouraged more and more speed out of his car, they practically did rule some parts of the country. He shuddered as he thought of a world ruled by aging louts, the ignorant and cowardly, the weak-minded and strong-bodied. Every year's new unemployment figures added millions to their ranks.

Another flash on the horizon worried the corner of his vision. Somewhere, in another world it seemed, a war had started.

He glanced at his speed-meter and saw that he still had plenty of speed in hand. He wasn't far from the nearest Juvies, and began to imagine that he could see their faces. In fact, all he could see was a blur of white and brown, an untidy heap of humanity testing their bravery against his. He held his speed at a steady 100, and braced himself. Nearer, ever nearer.

All around him the chanting screamed and throbbed, urging and pushing him to hold his speed.

What was he doing, what was there to prove? He wasn't a coward, he knew that. Why did he have to test himself in front of these morons? There was no bravery in throwing a ton of plastic and steel at a mountain of human bodies, mangling and maiming; killing to prove himself. He wasn't a Juvie, he wasn't ruled by any mob. He was a civilised person in a civilised community; a respected person in a position of trust. He was a Senator, and had the faith of twenty thousand voters behind him, trusting his dignity and discretion. And, most important, he was human. It was abhorrent to his very nature to kill for its own sake, to plough through a hundred bodies, destroying life and making it a pleasure.

He was a hundred metres from the mound of Juvies.

The chanting throbbed into his consciousness, exciting and stimulating him; beating like the jungle drums of primitive peoples. It seemed to get faster and faster in crescendo of hate, mounting and spiralling as he sped ever closer. He could see their faces now, pink and white and grey—all of them staring fixedly at his car, waiting for him to break. He could see their mouths opening and closing as they chanted.

They'd never break, there were too many of them. They'd sit there until he killed them all. They'd sit there watching him, watching as he rammed them.

He made his decision: grabbed the emergency brake, and applied full reverse thrust.

He slammed forward into the webbing of straps, seeming to hang there as the great plates fought against the momentum. No scream of brakes, no squeal of rubber. A silent, steady, remorseless pull of power, acting like a barrier of unyielding cotton wool. He felt as if he hung there for an eternity, his reactions nil, eyes blinded by a sudden fireball.

And then he was free. He slumped into his seat as the car stopped, a bare metre from the nearest Juvie. He lolled forward, sliding down inside the straps, eyes still blind from the sun-white glare.

Outside, a hot wind blew, and a great hand lifted his car.

* * *

There was a terrible silence when he came round.

The first thing he saw was his watch, still ticking and apparently undamaged. He'd been unconscious only a few minutes. There was something wrong with his vision, as if he were seeing everything through a maze of retinal shadow.

He moved experimentally. There was a pain in his side, but nothing else seemed to be damaged.

Automatically, he reached for the webbing-release and freed himself. The car, with most of its windows smashed, was lying on its side a long way from the track. He climbed up through what had been the windscreen, treading cautiously on the broken remains of the controls.

Outside, there was inferno.

The Sessions Hall had vanished, replaced instead by a great trunk of cloud. On all sides, the trees had been flattened and stripped of their leaves. Many were burning, their smoke adding to the desolate cloud of nuclear release.

And all around, the bodies of the Juvies lay. All had been burned, all were now dead.

Robbins stood there for a long long time. Presently, he began to cough, and blood trickled through his lips. He turned his back on what had once been the Hall, and walked erratically up the way he had come so recently.

Overhead, a low flight of yellow rockets skimmed away from the black cloud.

CHRIS PRIEST:

Although "The Run," which was his first published story, initially appeared in *Impulse* (1966), Chris Priest is generally more associated with the 'New Worlds group'.

Born in Manchester of London parents, he has now, at twenty-four, made his way back to London.

Residence: A damp basement flat in Fulham. Shared with many interesting species of wild-life.

Education: Minor Northern public school that taught me a lot about speaking English their way and balancing quadratic equations everybody else's way, but little else.

Profession: Book Production Manager at a mail-order publishers. I am fired regularly, so don't depend on this information.

Interests: In a transitional stage at present. Concentrating on writing a novel at the moment, but also read for a publisher, write letters (compulsively), play the guitar (abominably) and give up smoking (regularly).

All the king's men

□ B. J. BAYLEY

I saw Sorn's beir, an electrically driven train decorated like a fanfare, as it left the North Sea Bridge and passed over the green meadows of Yorkshire. Painted along its flank was the name HOLATH HOLAN SORN, and it motored swiftly with brave authority. From where we stood in the observation room of the King's Summer Palace, we could hear the hollow humming of its passage.

"You will not find things easy without Holath Holan Sorn," I said, and turned. The King of All Britain was directing his mosaic eyes towards the train. "Things were never easy," he replied. But he knew as well as I that the loss of Sorn might mean the loss of a kingdom.

The King turned from the window, his purple cloak flowing about his seven-foot frame. I felt sorry for him: how would he rule an alien race, with its alien psychology, now that Sorn was dead? He had come to depend entirely upon that man who could translate one set of references into another as easily as he crossed the street. No doubt there were other men with perhaps half of Sorn's abilities, but who else could gain the King's trust? Among all humans, none but Sorn could be the delegate of the Invader King.

"Smith," he said, addressing me, "tomorrow we consign

twelve tooling factories to a new armament project. I wish you to supervise."

I acknowledged, wondering what this signified. No one could deny that the alien's reign had been peaceful, even prosperous, and he had rarely mentioned military matters, although I knew there was open enmity between him and the King of Brazil. Either this enmity was about to become active, I decided, or else the King forecast a civil uprising.

Which in itself was not unlikely.

Below us, the beir was held up by a junction hitch. Stationary, it supplemented its dignity by sounding its klaxon loudly and continuously. The King returned his gaze to it, and though I couldn't read his unearthly face I suppose he watched it regretfully, if he can feel regret. Of the others in the room, probably the two aliens also watched with regret, but certainly no one else did. Of the four humans, three were probably glad he was dead, though they may have been a little unsure about it.

That left myself. I was more aware of events than any of them, but I just didn't know what I felt. Sometimes I felt on the King's side and sometimes on the other side. I just didn't have any definite loyalties.

Having witnessed the arrival of the beir from the continent, where Sorn had met his death, we had achieved the purpose of the visit to the Summer Palace, and accordingly the King, with his entourage of six (two fellow beings, four humans including myself) left for London.

We arrived at Buckingham Palace shortly before sunset. Wordlessly the King dismissed us all, and with a lonely swirl of his cloak made his way to what was in a makeshift manner called the throne-room. Actually it did have a throne: but it also had several other kinds of strange equipments, things like pools, apparatus with what psychologists called threshold associations. The whole chamber was an aid to the incomprehensible, insectile mentality of the King, designed, I suspected, to help him in the almost impossible task of understanding a human society. While he had Sorn at his elbow there had been little need to worry, and the inadequacy of the chamber mattered so little that he seldom used it. Now, I thought, the King of All

Britain would spend a large part of his time mediating in solitude on that enigmatic throne.

I had the rest of the evening to myself. But I hadn't gone far from the palace when, as I might have guessed, Hotch placed his big bulk square across my path.

"Not quite so fast," he said, neither pleasantly nor unpleasantly.

I stopped—what else could I have done?—but I didn't answer. "All right," Hotch said, "let's have it straight. I want nobody on both sides."

"What do you mean?" I asked, as if I didn't already know.

"Sorn's dead, right? And you're likely to replace him. Right?"

"Wrong," I told him wearily. "Nobody replaces Sorn. He was the one irreplaceable human being."

His eyes dropped in pensive annoyance. He paused. "Maybe, but you'll be the closest to the King's rule. Is that so?"

I shrugged.

"It has to be so," he decided. "So which way is it going to be, Smith? If you're going to be another traitor like Sorn, let's hear it from the start. Otherwise be a man and come in with us."

It sounded strange to hear Sorn called a traitor. Technically, I suppose he was—but he was also a man of genius, the rarest of statesmen. And even now only the 0.5 per cent of the population roused by Hotch's superpatriotism would think of him as anything else. Britain had lived in a plentiful sort of calm under the King. The fact of being governed by an alien conqueror was not resented, even though he had enthroned himself by force. With his three ships, his two thousand warriors, he had achieved a near-bloodless occupation, for he had won his victory by the sheer possession of superior weapons, without having to resort much to their usage. The same could be said of the simultaneous invasion of Brazil and South Africa: Brazil by fellow creatures of the King, South Africa by a different species. Subsequent troubles in these two areas had been greater, but then they lacked the phlegmatic British attitude, and more important, they lacked Holath Holan Sorn.

I sighed. "Honestly, I don't know. Some human governments have been a lot worse."

"But they've been human. And we owed a lot to Sorn,

though personally I loathed his guts. Now that he's gone—what? The King will make a mess of things. How do we know he really cares?"

"I think he does. Not the same way a man would care, but he does."

"Hah! Anyhow, this is our chance. While he doesn't know what he's doing. What about it? Britain hasn't known another conquerer in a thousand years."

I couldn't tell him. I didn't know. Eventually he stomped off in disgust.

I didn't enjoy myself that evening. I thought too much about Sorn, about the King, and about what Hotch had said. How could I be sure the King cared for England? He was so grave and gently ponderous, but did that indicate anything? His appearance could simply be part of his foreignness and nothing at all to do with his feelings. In fact if the scientists were right about him, he had no feelings at all.

But what purpose had he?

I stopped by Trafalgar Square to see the Green Fountains.

The hand of the invader on Britain was present in light, subtle ways, such as the Green Fountains. For although Britain remained Britain, with the character of Britain, the King and his men had delicately placed their alien character upon it; not in law, or the drastic changes of a conquerer, but in such things as decoration.

The Green Fountains were foreign, unimaginable, and un-British. High curtains of thin fluid curled into fantastic designs, creating new concepts of space by sheer ingenuity of form. Thereby they achieved what centuries of Terran artists had only hinted at.

And yet they *were* British, too. If Britons had been prompted to conceive and construct such things, this was the way they would have done it. They carried the British stamp, although so alien.

When I considered the King's rule, the same anomaly emerged. A strange rule, by a stranger, yet imposed so easily.

This was the mystery of the King's government: the way he had adopted Britain, in essence, while having no comprehension of that essence.

But let me make it clear that for all this, the invader's rule did not *operate* easily. It jarred, oscillated, went out of phase, and eventually, without Sorn, ended in disaster. It was only in this other, peculiar way, that it harmonised so pleasingly.

It was like this: when the King and his men tried to behave functionally and get things done, it was terrible. It didn't fit. But when they simply added themselves to All Britain, and lay quiescently like touches of colour, it had the effect I describe.

I had always thought Sorn responsible for this. But could Sorn mould the King also? For I detected in the King that same English passivity and acceptance; not just his own enigmatic detachment, but something apart from that, something acquired. Yet how could he be something which he didn't understand?

Sorn is dead, I thought, Sorn is dead.

Already, across one side of the square, were erected huge, precise stone symbols: HOLATH HOLAN SORN DIED 5.8.2034. They were like a mathematical formula. Much of the King's speech, when I thought of it, had the same quality.

Sorn was dead, and the weight of his power which had steadied the nation would be abruptly removed. He had been the operator, bridging the gap between alien minds. Without him, the King was incompetent.

A dazzling blue and gold air freighter appeared over the square and slanted down towards the palace. Everyone stopped to look, for it was one of the extraterrestrial machines, rarely seen since the invasion. No doubt it carried reinforcements for the palace defences.

* * *

Next morning I motored to Surrey to visit the first of the ten factories the King had mentioned.

The managers were waiting for me. I was led to a prepared suite of offices where I listened sleepily to a lecture on the layout and scope of the factory. I wasn't very interested; one of the King's kinsmen (referred to as the King's men) would arrive shortly with full details of the proposed conversion, and the managers would have to go through it all again. I was only here as a representative, so to speak. The real job would be carried out by the alien.

We all wandered round the works for a few hours before I got thoroughly bored and returned to my office. A visitor was waiting.

Hotch.

"What do you want now?" I asked. "I thought I'd got rid of you."

He grinned. "I found out what's going on." He waved his arms to indicate the factory.

"What of it?"

"Well, wouldn't you say the King's policy is . . . ill-advised?"

"You know as well as I do that the King's policy is certain to be laughably clumsy." I motioned him to a seat. "What exactly do you mean? I'm afraid I don't know the purpose of this myself."

I was apologetic about the last statement, and Hotch laughed. "It's easy enough to guess. Don't you know what they're building in Glasgow? *Ships*—warships of the King's personal design."

"Brazil," I murmured.

"Sure. The King chooses this delicate moment to launch a transatlantic war. Old Rex is such a blockhead he almost votes himself out of power."

"How?"

"Why, he gives us the weapons to fight him with. He's organising an armed native force which *I* will turn against him."

"You jump ahead of yourself. To go by the plans I have, no extraterrestrial weapons will be used."

Hotch looked more sober. "That's where you come in. We can't risk another contest with the King's men using ordinary arms. It would kill millions and devastate the country. Because it won't be the skirmish-and-capitulate of last time. This time we'll be in earnest. So I want you to soften things up for us. Persuade the King to hand over more than he intends: help us to chuck him out easily. Give us new weapons and you'll save a lot of carnage."

I saw his stratagem at once. "Quit that! Don't try to lay blood responsibility on my shoulders. That's a dirty trick."

"For a dirty man—and that's what you are, Smith, if you continue to stand by, too apathetic even to think about it. Any-

how, the responsibility's already laid, whatever you say. It depends on you."

"No."

"You won't help?"

"That's right."

Hotch sighed, and stared at the carpet for some seconds. Then he stared through the glass panels and down onto the floor of the workshops. "Then what will you do? Betray me?"

"No."

Sighing again, he told me: "One day, Smith, you'll fade away through sheer lack of interest."

"I'm interested," I said. "I just don't seem to have the kind of mind that can make a decision. I can't find any place to lay blame, or anyone to turn against."

"Not even for Britain," he commented sadly. "Your Britain as well as mine. That's all I'm working for, Smith, our country."

His brashness momentarily dormant, he was moodily meditative. "Smith, I'll admit I don't understand what it's all about. What does the King want? What has he gained by coming down here?"

"Nothing. He descended on us and took on a load of troubles without profit. It's a mystery. Hence my uncertainty." I averted my eyes. "During the time I have been in contact with the King he has impressed me as being utterly, almost transcendently unselfish. So unselfish, so abstracted, that he's like a—just a blank!"

"That's only how you see it. Maybe you read it into him. The psychos say he's no emotion, and selfishness is a kind of emotion."

"Is it? Well, that's just what I mean. But he seems—humane, for all that. Considerate, though it's difficult for him."

He wasn't much impressed. "Yeah. Remember that whatever substitutes for emotion in him might have some of its outward effects. And remember, he's not the only outworlder on this planet. He doesn't seem so considerate towards Brazil."

Hotch rose and prepared to leave. "If you survive the rebellion, I'll string you up as a traitor."

"All right!" I answered, suddenly irritable. "I know."

But when Hotch did get moving, I was surprised at the

power he had gained for himself in the community. He knew exactly how to accentuate the irritating qualities of the invader, and he did it mercilessly.

Some of the incidents seemed ridiculous: Such as when alien officials began to organize the war effort with complete disregard for some of the things the nation took to be necessities—entertainment, leisure, and so on. The contents of art galleries and museums were burned to make way for weapons shops. Cinemas were converted into automatic factories, and all television transmissions ceased. Don't get the idea that the King and his men are all tyrannical automata. They just didn't see any reason for not throwing away priceless paintings, and never thought to look for one.

Affairs might have progressed more satisfactorily if the set-up had been less democratic. Aware of his poor understanding, the King had appointed a sort of double government. The first, from which issued the prime directive, consisted of his own men in key positions throughout the land, though actually their power had peculiar limitations. The second government was a human representation of the aboriginal populace, which in larger matters was still obliged to gain the King's spoken permission.

The King used to listen very intently to the petitions and pseudo-emotional barrages which this absurd body placed before him—for they were by no means co-operative—and the meetings nearly always ended in bewilderment. During Sorn's day it would have been different: he could have got rid of them in five minutes.

Those men caused chaos, and cost the country many lives in the Brazilian war which shortly followed. After Hotch gained control over them, they were openly the King's enemies. He didn't know it, of course, and now that it's all finished I often wish I had warned him.

I remember the time they came to him and demanded a national working week of twenty-five hours. This was just after the King's men had innocently tried to institute a sixty hour working week, and had necessarily been restrained.

The petitioners knew how impossible it was; they were just trying to make trouble.

The King received them amid the sparse trappings of his

Court. A few of his aides were about, and a few human advisers. And I, of course, was close at hand.

He listened to the petition in silence, his jewel eyes glinting softly in the subdued light. When it was over he paused. Then he lifted his head and asked for help.

"Advise me," he said to everyone present.

But the hostile influences in the hall were so great that everyone who might have helped him shrugged his shoulders. That was the way things were. I said nothing.

"If the proposal is carried out," the King told the ministers, "current programmes will not go through."

He tried to reject the idea, but they amazingly refused to let it be rejected. They threatened and intimidated, and one gentleman began to talk hypocritically about the will and welfare of the people. Naturally there was no response: the King was not equipped. He surveyed the hall again. "He who can solve this problem, come forward."

There was a lethargic, apathetic suspension. The aliens were immobile, like hard brilliant statues, observing these dangerous events as if with the ascetism of stone. Then there was more shrugging of shoulders.

It speaks for the leniency of the extraterrestrials that this could happen at all. Among human royalty, such insolence would bring immediate repercussions. But the mood was contagious, because I didn't volunteer either. Hotch's machinations had a potential, unspoken element of terrorism.

Whether the King realised that advice was being deliberately withheld, I don't know. He called my name and strode to the back of the hall.

I followed his authoritatively gyrating cloak, reluctantly, like a dreading schoolboy. When I reached him, he said: "Smith, it is knowledge common to us both that my thinkings and human thinkings are processes apart. Not even Sorn could have both kinds; but he could translate." He paused for a moment, and then continued with a couple of sentences of the mixed-up talk he had used on Sorn, together with some of the accompanying queer honks and noises. I couldn't follow it. He seemed to realise his mistake, though, for he soon emerged into fairly sensible speech again, like this: "*Honk*. Environs matrix wordy.

Int apara; is trying like light to; apara see blind, from total outside is not even potential . . . if you were king, Smith, what would you do?"

"Well," I said, "people have been angered by the impositions made on them recently, and now they're trying to swing the pendulum the other way. Maybe I would compromise and cut the week by about ten hours."

The King drew a sheaf of documents from a voluminous sash pocket and spread them out. One of them had a chart on it, and lists of figures. Producing a small machine with complex surfaces, he made what appeared to be a computation.

I wished I could find some meaning in those cold jewel eyes. "That would interfere with my armament programme," he said. "We must become strong, or the King of Brazil will lay Britain waste."

"But surely it's important not to foster a discontented populace?"

"Important! So often I have heard that word, and cannot understand it. Sometimes it appears to me, Smith, that human psychology is hilly country, while mine is a plain. My throne room contains hints, that some things you see as high, and others as low and flat, and the high is more powerful. But for me to travel this country is impossible."

Smart. And it made some sense to me, too, because the King's character often seemed to be composed of absences. He had no sense of crisis, for example. I realised how great his effort must have been to work this out.

"And 'importance'," he continued. "Some mountain top?"

He almost had it. "A big mountain," I said.

For a few seconds I began to get excited and thought that perhaps he was on his way to a semantic breakthrough. Then I saw where I was wrong. Knowing intellectually that a situation is difficult, and *why* it is difficult, is not much use when it comes to operating in that situation. If the King had fifty million minds laid out in diagram, with all their interconnections (and this is perfectly possible) he would still be no better able to operate. It is far too complex to grasp all at once with the intellect; to be competent in an environment, one must live in it,

must be homogeneous with it. The King does not in the proper sense do the former, and is not the latter.

He spent a little while in the throne room, peering through thresholds, no doubt, gazing at pools and wondering about the mountainous. Then he returned and offered the petitioners a concession of ten minutes off the working week. This was the greatest check he thought he could allow on his big industrial drive.

They argued angrily about it, until things grew out of hand and the King ordered me to dismiss them. I had to have it done forcibly. Any one of the alien courtiers could have managed it single-handed by mere show of the weapons on his person, but instead I called in a twenty-man human bodyguard, thinking that to be ejected by their own countrymen might reduce their sense of solidarity.

All the humans of the court exuded uneasiness. But they needn't have worried. To judge by the King and his men, nothing might have happened. They held their positions with that same crystalline intelligence which they had carried through ten years of occupation. I was beginning to learn that this static appearance did not wholly result from unintelligibility, but that they actually maintained a constant internal state irrespective of external conditions. Because of this, they were unaware that the scene that had just been enacted comprised a minor climax. Living in a planar mentality, the very idea of climax was not apparent to them.

After the petitioners had gone, the King took me to his private chambers behind the courtroom. "Now is the time for consolidation," he said. "Without Sorn, the governing factions become separated, and the country disintegrates. I must find contact with the indigenous British. Therefore I will strike a closer liaison with you, Smith, my servant. You will follow me around."

He meant that I was to replace Sorn, as well as I could. Making it an official appointment was probably his way of appealing for help.

He had hardly picked the right man for the job, but that was typical of the casual way he operated. Of course, it made my personal position much worse, since I began to feel bad

about letting him down. I was caught at the nexus of two opposing forces: even my inaction meant that somebody would profit. Altogether, not a convenient post for a neutral passenger.

Anyway, since the situation had arisen, I decided to be brash and ask some real questions.

"All right," I said, "but for whose sake is this war being fought—Britain's, or yours?"

As soon as the words were out of my mouth I felt a little frightened. In the phantasmal human-alien relationship, such earthy examinations were out of place. But the King accepted it.

"I am British," he answered, "and Britain is mine. Ever since I came, our actions are inseparable."

Some factions of the British public would have disagreed with this, but I supposed he meant it in a different way. Perhaps in a way connected with the enigmatically compelling characters and aphorisms that had been erected about the country, like mathematics developed in words instead of numbers. I often suspected that the King had sought to gain power through semantics alone.

Because I was emotionally adrift, I was reckless enough to argue the case. "Well," I said, "without you there would be no war. The Brazilians would never fight without compulsion from their own King, either. I'm not trying to secede from your authority, but resolve my opinion that you and the King of Brazil are using human nations as instruments . . . in a private quarrel."

For some while he thought about it, placing his hands together. He answered: "When the events of which I and the King of Brazil are a part, moved into this region, I descended onto Britain, and he onto Brazil. By the fundamental working of things, I took on the nature of Britain, and Britain in reciprocation became incorporated in the workings of those events. And likewise with the King of Brazil, and with Brazil. These natures, and those events, are not for the time being separables, but included in each other. Therefore it is to defend Britain that I strive, because Britain is harnessed to my section of those outside happenings, and because I am British."

When I had finally sorted out that chunk of pedantry, his claims to nationality sounded like baloney. Then I took into

account the slightly supra-sensible evidence of his British character. After a little reflection I realised that he had gone halfway towards giving me an explanation of it.

"What kind of happenings," I wondered, "can they be?"

The King can't smile, and he can't sound wistful, and it's hard for him to convey anything except pure information. But what he said next sounded like the nearest thing to wistfulness he could manage.

"They are very far from your mind," he said, "and from your style of living. They are connected with the colliding galaxies in Cygnus. More than that would be very difficult to tell you . . ."

There was a pause. I began to see that the King's concern was with something very vast and strange indeed. England was only a detail . . .

"And those outsiders who took over South Africa. What's their part in this?"

"No direct connections. Events merely chanced to blow this way."

Oddly, the way he said it made me think of how neat the triple invasion had been. In no instance had the borders of neighbouring states been violated, and the unmolested nations had in turn regarded the conquests as internal matters. Events had happened in discreet units, not in an interpenetrating mess as they usually do. The reactions of the entire Terrestrial civilisation had displayed an unearthly flavour. Maybe the incompatibility of alien psychology was not entirely mental. Perhaps in the King's native place not only minds but also events took a different form from those of Earth. What is mentality, anyway, but a complex event? I could imagine a sort of transplanting of natural laws, these three kings, with all their power, bringing with them residual influences of the workings of their own worlds . . .

It sounded like certain astrological ideas I had once heard, of how on each world everything is different, each world has its own basic identity, and everything on that world partakes of that identity. But it's only astrology.

* * *

As the time for war drew nearer, Hotch became more daring. Already he had made himself leader of the unions and fostered

general discontent, as well as organising an underground which in some ways, had more control over Britain than the King himself had. But he had a particular ambition, and in furtherance of this he appeared one day at Buckingham Palace.

Quite simply, he intended to do what I had refused to do for him.

He bowed low before the King, ignoring me, and launched into his petition.

"The people of Britain have a long tradition of reliability and capability in war," he proclaimed. "They cannot be treated like children. Unless they are given fighting powers equal to those of the extraterrestrials—for I do not suppose that your own troops will be poorly armed—their morale will relapse and they will be defeated. You will be the psychological murderer of Britain."

When he had finished, he cast a defiant glance at me, then puffed out his barrel chest and waited for a reply.

He had good reason to be afraid. One word from me, and he was finished. I admired his audacity.

I was also astounded at the outrageous way he had made the request, and I was at a loss to know what to do.

I sank onto the throne steps and slipped into a reverie. If I kept silence and showed loyalty to my country I would bring about the downfall of the King.

If I spoke in loyalty to the King, I would bring about the downfall of Hotch.

And really, I couldn't find any loyalty anywhere. I was utterly adrift, as if I didn't exist on the surface of the planet at all. I was like a compass needle which failed to answer the magnetic field.

"Psychological murderer of Britain." I repeated to myself. I was puzzled at the emotional evocation in that phrase. How could a human administer emotion to the King? But of course, it wasn't really an emotion at all. In the King's eyes the destruction of Britain was to be avoided, and it was this that Hotch was playing on.

Emerging from my drowsy thoughts, I saw Hotch leave. The King had not given an answer. He beckoned to me.

He spoke a few words to me, but I was non-committal.

Then I waited outside the throne room, while he spent an hour inside.

He obviously trusted Hotch. When he came out, he called together his full council of eight aliens, four humans and myself, and issued directives for the modification of the war. I say of the war, and not of preparations for the war, because plans were now sufficiently advanced for the general outlines of the conflict to be set down on paper. The way the aliens handled a war made it hardly like fighting at all, but like an engineering work or a business project. Everything was decided beforehand; the final outcome was almost incidental.

And so several factories were retooled to produce the new weapons, the military heirarchy readjusted to give humans a greater part, and the focus of the main battle shifted five hundred miles further West. Also, the extrapolated duration of the war was shortened by six months.

Hotch had won. All Britain's industries worked magnificently for three months. They worked for Hotch as they had never worked, even for Sorn.

I felt weary. A child could have seen through Hotch's trick, but the King had been taken in. What went on in his head, after all? What guided him? Did he really care—for anything?

I wondered what Sorn would have thought. But then, I had never known what went on in Sorn's head, either.



The fleet assembled at Plymouth and sailed West into a sunny, choppy Atlantic. The alien-designed ships, which humans called swan-boats, were marshalled into several divisions. They rode high above the water on tripod legs, and bobbed lightly up and down.

Aerial fighting was forbidden by treaty, but there was one aircraft in the fleet, a wonderful blue and gold non-combatant machine where reposed the King, a few personal servants, and myself. We drifted a few hundred feet above the pale green water-ships, matching our speed with theirs.

That speed was slow. I wondered why we had not fitted ourselves out with those steel leviathans of human make, fast

battleships and destroyers, which could have traversed the ocean in a few days whereas our journey required most of a month. It's true the graceful swarm looked attractive in the sunlight, but I don't think that was the reason. Or maybe it was a facet of it.

The Brazilians were more conventional in their combat aesthetics. They had steamed slowly out of the Gulf of Mexico to meet us at a location which, paradoxically, had been predetermined without collusion. We were greeted by massive grey warships, heavy with guns. Few innovations appeared to have been introduced into the native ship-building, though I did see one long corvette-shape lifted clean out of the water on multiple hydroplanes.

Fighting began in a casual, restrained manner when the belligerents were about two miles apart. There was not much outward enthusiasm for some hours. Our own ships ranged in size from the very small to the daintily monstrous, and wallowed prettily throughout the enemy fleet, discharging flashes of brilliant light. Our more advanced weapons weren't used much, probably because they would have given us an unfair advantage over the Brazilian natives, who had not had the benefit of Hotch's schemings.

Inside me I felt a dull sickness. All the King's men were gathered here in the Atlantic; this was the obvious time for Hotch's rebellion.

But it would not happen immediately. Hotch was astute enough to realise that even when he was rid of the King he might still have to contend with Brazil, and he wanted to test his future enemy's strength.

The unemphatic activity on the surface of the ocean continued, while one aircraft floated in the air above. The King watched, sometimes from the balcony, sometimes by means of a huge jumble of screens down inside, which showed an impossible montage of the scene viewed from innumerable angles, most of which had no tactical usefulness that I could see. Some were from locations at sea-level, some only gave images of rigging, and there was even one situated a few feet below the surface.

I followed the King around, remembering his warning of the devastation which would ensue from Britain's defeat. "But what will happen if we win?" I asked him.

"Do not be concerned," he told me. "Current events are in the present time, and will be completed with the cessation of the war."

"But something must happen afterwards."

"Subsequent events are not these events." A monstrous winging pattern, made of bits and pieces of hulls and gunfire, built up mysteriously in the chaos of the screens, and dissolved again. The King turned to go outside.

When he returned, the pattern had begun again, with modifications. I continued: "If you believe that, why do you talk about Britain's welfare?"

He applied himself to watching the screens, still showing no deviation from his norm, in a situation which to a normal man would have been crisis. "All Britain is mine," he said after his normal pause. "Therefore I make arrangements for its protection. That is comprehensible to us both, I think."

He swivelled his head towards me. "Why do you enquire in this way, Smith? These questions are not the way to knowledge."

Having been rebuked thus—if a being with a personality like atonal music can be said to rebuke—I too went outside, and peered below. The interpenetrated array seemed suddenly like male and female. Our own more neatly shaped ships moved lightly, while the weighty, pounding Brazilians were more demonstratively aggressive, and even had long gun turrets for symbolism. Some slower part of my mind commented that the female is alleged to be the submissive, receptive part, which our fleet was not; but I dismissed that.

After two hours the outcome still looked indefinite to my mind. But Hotch decided he had seen enough. He acted.

A vessel which hitherto had kept to the outskirts of the battle and taken little part, abruptly opened up its decks and fired a series of rocket ramps. Three minutes later, the missiles had disappeared into the sky and I guessed what war-heads they carried.

Everything fitted neatly: it was a natural decision on Hotch's part. In such a short time he had not been able to develop transatlantic rockets, and he might never again be this close to the cities of Brazil. I could see him adding it all up in his mind.

Any kind of aeronautics was outlawed, and the Brazilians became enraged. They used their guns with a fury such as I hope never to see again. And I was surprised at how damaging a momentum a few thousand tons of fast-moving steel can acquire. Our own boys were a bit ragged in their defence at first, because they were busy butchering the King's men.

With the new weapons, most of this latter was over in twenty minutes. I went inside, because by now weapons were being directed at the aircraft, and the energies were approaching the limits of its defensive capacity.

The hundred viewpoints adopted by the viewing screens had converted the battle-scene into a flurry too quick for my eyes to follow. The King asked my advice.

My most immediate suggestion was already in effect. Slowly, because the defence screens were draining power, we ascended into the stratosphere. The rest of what I had to say took longer, and was more difficult, but I told it all.

The King made no comment on my confession, but studied the sea. I withdrew into the background, feeling uncomfortable.

The arrangement of vision screens was obsolete now that the battle-plan had been disrupted. Subsidiaries were set up to show the struggle in a simpler form. By the time we came to rest in the upper air, Hotch had rallied his navy and was holding his own in a suddenly bitter engagement.

The King ordered other screens to be focused on Brazil. He still did not look at me.

After he had watched developments for a short time, he decided to meditate in solitude, as was his habit. I don't know whether it was carelessness or simple ignorance, but without a pause he opened the door and stepped onto the outside balcony.

Fortunately, the door opened and closed like a shutter; the air replenishers worked very swiftly, and the air density was seriously low for less than a second. Even so, it was very unpleasant.

Emerging from the experience, I saw the King standing pensively outside in the partial vacuum of the upper air. I swore with surprise: it was hot out there, and even the sunlight shining through the filtered windows was more than I could tolerate.

When he returned, he was considerate enough to use another door.

By this time the monitor screens had detected the squadrons of bombers rising in retaliation from Brazil's devastated cities. The etiquette of the old war was abandoned, and there was no doubt that they too carried the nuclear weapons illegally employed by Hotch.

The King observed: "When those bombers reach their delivery area in a few hours time, most of Britain's fighting power will still be a month away in the Western Atlantic. Perhaps the islands should be warned to prepare what defences they have." His gem eyes lifted. "What do you say, Smith?"

"Of course they must be warned!" I replied quickly. "There is still an air defence—Hotch has kept the old skills alive. But he may not have expected such quick reprisals, and early interception is essential."

"I see. This man Hotch seems a skilful organiser, Smith, and would be needed in London." With interest, he watched the drive and ferocity of the action on the seascape. "Which is his ship?"

I pointed out the large swan-boat on which I believed Hotch to be present. Too suddenly for our arrival to be anticipated, we dropped from the sky. The servants of the King conducted a lightning raid which made a captive of Hotch with 30 per cent casualties.

We had been absent from the stratosphere for two minutes and forty-five seconds.

Hotch himself wasn't impressed. He accused me of bad timing. "You may be right," I said, and told him the story.

If he was surprised he didn't show it. He raised his eyebrows, but that was all. No matter how grave the situation may be, Hotch wouldn't let it show.

"It's a native war from now on," he acclaimed. "There's not an alien left in either fleet."

"You mean the Brazilians rebelled too?"

"I wish they would! The green bosses hopped it and left them to it."

The King offered to put Hotch down at Buckingham Palace,

the centre of all the official machinery. Hotch greeted the suggestion with scorn.

"That stuff's no good to me," he said. "Put me down at my headquarters in Balham. That's the only chance of getting our fighter planes in the air."

This we did. The pilots had already set the aircraft in silent motion through the stratosphere, and within an hour we slanted downwards and flashed the remaining five hundred miles to England.

London was peaceful as we hovered above it three hours in advance of the raiders. Only Hotch's impatient energy indicated the air of urgency it would shortly assume.

But what happened on Earth after that, I don't know. We went into space, so I have only a casual interest.

It's like this: the King showed me space.

To see it with the bare eyes is enough, but on the King's set of multi- and null-viewpoint vision screens it really gets hammered in. And what gets knocked into you is this: nothing matters. Nothing is big enough to matter. It's as simple as that.

However big a thing is, it just isn't big enough. For when you see the size of totality—I begin to understand now why the King, who has seen it all the time, is as he is.

And nothing is important. There is only a stratified universe, with some things more powerful than others. That's what makes us think they are important—they're more powerful, but that's all. And the most powerful is no more significant than the least.

You may wonder, then, why the King bothers with such trivial affairs as Britain. That's easy.

When I was a young man, I thought a lot of myself. I thought myself valuable, if only to myself. And once, I began to wonder just how much it would take for me to sacrifice my life, whether if it came to it I would sacrifice myself for a less intelligent, less worthwhile life than my own. But now I see the sacrifice for what it is: simply one insignificance for another insignificance. It's an easy trade. So the King, who has ranged over a dozen galaxies, has lost his war, his army, and risks even his own life, for Britain's sake. It's all too tiny even to hesitate over. He did what he could: how could he do anything else?

Like the King, I am quickly becoming incapable of judgment. But before it goes altogether, I will say this of you, Hotch: It was a low trick you played on the King. A low, dirty trick to play on a good man.

B. J. BAYLEY:

Born in Birmingham in 1937. My background is sort of nondescript (if you've seen much of Birmingham, you'll know what I mean). I left school at sixteen, after which there followed the usual series of jobs—and two years' National Service in the Air Force . . .

This is Barry Bayley's first publication in the United States. "All the King's Men" was first published in *New Worlds* in 1965, and reprinted in *The Best of New Worlds*.

I first began writing at about fourteen or fifteen, but have never really worked at it. I've been what you might laughingly call a full-time (that's the laugh) free-lance for the past five or six years. Most of my living comes from boys' adventure stories with a strong scientific slant . . . At the moment I'm preparing an essay on economics, which I think approaches the subject from a fresh angle . . .

I think Barry Bayley may have been the first one I heard it from, but sooner or later it seems to me I heard it from just about every Englishman with whom I talked more than casually. (Sometimes it

was a joke, sometimes it was very earnest. It could come after intense questioning about race riots or Santo Domingo or Viet Nam, or after the most offhand discussion of the Space Race, or some mention of the latest figures on the Art of Overkill.) "Thank God *you* people have taken on all *that!*"

I suppose science fiction as a whole has been part of society's increasing consciousness of the 'scientific cosmos' and therefore its causes could be traced back to the Age of Reason and the New Learning. It is, or rather was, part of the growing end of civilisation, hence its breadth of imagination and perhaps also its crudity.

Whether it needs any taking-on is not the topic here: simply that Imperial Rome, in any century, or any country, must and does expend its creative force at best on viaducts and space craft, at worst on siege machines and ICBM's. Perhaps it takes a touch of decadence to make art a major manufacture, or idle intellection a serious occupation.

Naturally it couldn't retain its character. We are just emerging from a period of transition in the outlook of our culture, and the 'scientific cosmos' has been absorbed into it. As a result science fiction has lost some of its adventurousness and power to amaze. The culture has grown up so that it 'surrounds' the ideation in science fiction, which I expect will tend in future to work within the culture instead of projecting partly outside.

Is it possible that precisely what is wrong with American science fiction today is its absorption by the Establishment? Is there any room at the Top (of the world) for speculation about anything but Management?

So far I've been prognosticating in a straight line. What *could* happen is a new understanding, a new idea like that of the 'scientific cosmos.' If it were too far out it wouldn't have the right impact (after all, the New Learning took centuries) but some lesser notion might emerge, suitable more for literature than for pure scientific thought.

It might deal, perhaps, with the meaning of man's activity in the universe. I don't mean a teleological meaning, since I am thinking of the 'endless dark.' After all, we know mainly two things—that we are here, and everything else is out there. Odd, isn't it?

Still trajectories

□ BRIAN W.ALDISS

The juke box played a number called "Low Point X." It was the pub favourite the night that Speed Supervisor Jan Koninkrijk was forced to stay in the second floor back room on his way home from Cologne. He had looked out over small cluttered roofs and heard the record, heard it again in his sleep, dreaming of speed as the melancholy tug boats hooted outside the hotel where the Meuse became the Maars.

The girl in the bår, so fair, good North Dutch stock in that dull South Dutch town, hair almost milk-coloured, face so pale and sharp, interested in the sports end of the paper.

She tried to be nice to me that night, to smile with warmth, Koninkrijk, speeding into Belgium, said to himself. I'm not interested much in stray women any more, but her life has a mystery . . . The pathos, having to serve five percent alcoholic drinks and watch night after night games of cards played always by the same men, listening to the tugs and "Low Point X". Was she signalling for help? I snooped on dialogues of the blood, Only silence there except for "Low Point X" Giving its coronary thud . . . I'd better get back to Marta, no signals from her prison. Maybe this time she will be improved, so weary.

His Mercedes burned over the Highway and hardly touched it, licking at one-sixty kilometres an hour along the autobahn from Cologne and Aachen through Brussels to Ostend

and so across to England. Piercing his mazed thoughts, Koninkrijk kept a sharp eye for madmen: the Highway's crash record was bad—his switched-on cops called it Hotpants Highway since the days of the Acid Head War. But this overcast afternoon brought little opposition, so he plunged forward, whistled to himself, joy, boy, joy.

She would be slowing, fewer admirers, maybe one faithful one, coming to the bar every evening. Her good will under strain. She smiled and smiled and was a victim. If he pitied, he must still love. It was the possibilities she represented that he thirsted for. Her hand as she stretched out for his guilders. A fine line, ah, that marvellous mystery of the female, something so much finer than just sex. Streamlined. With an un-Dutch gesture, he had kissed her hand; they were alone; they had looked at each other, he not much the older. Had put ten cents in the juke box for her to hear "Low Point X" again as he walked out. Just to please her.

Had he really looked at her? Had she ever really seen herself? Had she something to reveal, hidden and sweet, to the man who went seeking properly for it? But that was his old romantic idea. No one went seeking others any more; under the psychedelic effect of the bombs, they sought only themselves—and never found.

He lived at Aalter, just off the Highway, in a thin house. "My life is an art object," he said jokingly. There were the alternatives; his wife's presence, that girl's presence, his job, his possible new appointment in Cologne, his office, that mad Messiah in England; all were different parts of his mind, all were different parts of the planetary surface; neither of which could be reached without the other; it was possible that one was the diagram of the other; all that was certain was that the linking medium was speed. Certainly there was speed, as the dial said, 175 kilometres, registering also in the coronary thud.

For some miles, Koninkrijk had been neglecting his thoughts as his eyes took in familiar territory. He was beyond Brussels now. Here the enlargements to the Highway were on a grand scale. Two more lanes were being laid in either direction, thus doubling the previous number. But the new lanes were all twice

the width of the previous ones, to allow for the fuzzy-set driving of speedsters under the spell of PCA bombs dropped indiscriminately over Europe. Lips of senile earth had been piled back, cement towers erected; long low huts; immense credit boards with complicated foreign names; lights, searchlights for night work; immense square things on wheels and tracks, yellow-bellied cranes; scaffolding, tips, mounds, ponds, mountains of gravel; old battered cars, new ones gaudy as Kandinskys and Kettels; and between everything chunky toy figures of men in striped scarlet luminescent work-coats. Into the furrows he saw the new animal go. These men were creating the whole chaos only for speed, the new super fuzzy speed.

He slowed at the Aalter turn. It was impossible to say how much he had been affected personally by the sprays, but he recognised that his viewpoint had altered since that time, although he was working in France at the time of the war; France had remained neutral and the old lie that Tenenti TV protects the eyes. Piedboeuf. He slowed as he began the long curve-off, its direction confused by the impedimenta of construction on either side. Aalter was already being eaten into under the road-widening scheme, the old Timmermans farmhouse obliterated.

The thin grim house occupied by the Koninkrijks was the only one left inhabited in the street, owing to the improvements scheme. The seismological eruptions of the European psyche had thrown up a mass of agglomerate that half-buried nearby terraces. A bulldozer laboured along the top of the ridge like a dung beetle, level with the old chimneys where smoke had once risen from a neighbourly hearth. That was over now. There was no past or future, only the division between known and unknown, sweeping on. The daffodils stood stiff in the Koninkrijk drive against just such a contingency, keeping the devouring detritus at bay.

A thin rain, after moving across the North German Plain for hours, enveloped Aalter as Koninkrijk climbed from the Mercedes. The bellowing machines against my silent house so featureless and she in there, and the new animal with its wet eyes watching. He was not sure about the new animal; but he was slow now, on his feet and no longer stretched at speed, consequently vulnerable. He bowed his head to the drizzle and

made for the closed opaque glass porch. She would have no such refuge of privacy; only a back room behind the bar, all too accessible to the landlord when he rose at last, stale from his final cigar and five-percenter, to try and fumble from her that missing combination of success he had failed to find in the hands of knock-out whist. Marta, as the unknown crept closer, at least had the privilege.

Marta Koninkrijk awaited this minute and all the other buried minutes a secret someone to crush her up into life; or so she hoped or feared. She sat away all the sterile hours of her husband's absence; she needed them. The bombs had blessed her half into a long-threatened madness, though she was not so insane that she did not try to conceal from her husband how far she lived away from him, or to conceal from herself how cherished was the perfection of immobility. She sat with her hands on her lap, sometimes reaching out with a finger to trace a hair-fine crack on the wall. Daring, this, for the day was nearing when the cracks would open and the forces of the earth pour in while the new machines rode triumphantly above the spouting chimney-tops.

Koninkrijk had installed omnivision in the thin house for her. She could sit and comfort her barren self by leaving the outer world switched off while the inner world was switched on. From the living room, with its frail furniture and brilliant bevelled-edge mirrors, she could watch intently the row of screens that showed the other rooms of the house; the screens extended her senses, always so etiolated, palely over the unfrequented mansion, giving her unwinking eyes in the upper corners of five other rooms. Faintly mauve, nothing moved in them all day except the stealthy play of light and shade trapped there; nothing made a sound, until the receptors picked up the buzz of an early fly, and then Marta leant forward, listening to it, puzzled to think of another life encroaching on her life. No bicycle wheel turns in the unpedalled mind. The omnivision itself made a faint noise like a fly, fainter than her breathing, conducted so tidily under her unmoving little bust. The stuffy rooms had their walls hung with gleaming mirrors of many shapes and pictures of small children in cornfields which she had brought here from her childhood; they could be viewed in the omnivision screens.

Sometimes, she flicked a switch and spoke with a tremor into an empty room.

"Jan!" "Father!"

The rooms were full of incident from her immobile bastion in a wooden-armed chair. Nothing moved, but in the very immobility was the intensest vibration of life she knew, so intense that, like a girlhood delight, it must be kept covert. The very intensity almost betrayed the secrecy for, when the key intruded downstairs into the elaborate orifice of the lock, there appeared still to be a universe of time before he would appear at the stair top and discover that long-tranced immobility of hers. Only after several millennia had passed and the radiations of unresolved thought subsided somewhat, and the rasp of the key registered in each room's audio-receptor, did she steal quickly up, dodging the slender image of herself transfixed in every looking-glass, and creep on to the landing to pull the lever in the toilet, assuring him of her activity, her normality, her earthy ordinariness. Into the lavatory bowl rattled a fall of earth. One day it would flood the house and blank out the last mauve image.

Always when he mounted the narrow stairs it was to the sound of rushing water. He put his wet one-piece neatly on its hook before he turned and embraced his wife. Dry compressed inflexible orifices tangentially met. When he moved restlessly round the room, disrupting all the aeons of stillness, the furniture shook; and from without, the obscene grunts of a dirt-machine, pigging in to clay layers.

"Any news?"

"I haven't been out. The machines. I didn't really feel . . ."

He crossed to the omnivision, switched over to Brussels. Some confused scenes in some sort of a stadium. The cameraman could be on a perpetual trip judging by his crazy work. Perhaps it was some sort of a beauty contest; there were girls in bikinis, but a lot of older women had turned up too—one at least in her seventies, flesh grouty and wrinkled. One of them was shouting, angry perhaps at getting no prize. A band played—not "Low Point X." He left it, looked at her, smiled, crossed to a narrow table and picked up the paper, neatly folded.

"You haven't opened the paper."

"I didn't have time. Jan—"

"What?"

"Nothing? How was Aachen?"

"We've got this British saint, Charteris, coming through Aalter tomorrow."

"Who's he?"

"I'll have to be on duty early."

"Do you think he'll—you know—"

"He's a great man," spoken not looking up as he searched the muddled columns. Piracy in the Adriatic. The Adriatic. New ocean, unknown to pre-psychedelic man. Many such hideous discoveries made every day. Of what degree of reality? "A saint, at least."

On page four he found it, a brief mention. New Crusade. Thousands rallying to support new prophet of multi-complex event. From Loughborough in the heart of England's stormy industrial midlands may emerge new movement that will eventually embrace all of war-torn Europe, says our London correspondent. Prophet of multi-complex event, Yugoslav-born Colin Charteris is rallying take place in absolute darkness and Flemish observers agree that no thousands to his inspirational thinking. His first crusade motorcade through Europe is due at Ostend at four p.m. today and leaves tomorrow for what one commentator describes as several hundred automobiles pouring down here past Aalter at full speed, I'm bound to have more than one crash to deal with; better ring area squads now. Permanent alert from five tomorrow. Inform all hospital services too. Show eager. The tumbling bodies doing their impossible antics among ricocheting metals the dirty private things too beautifully ugly to be anything but a joke. Oh in my loins oh Lord disperse do they have the orange tip butterfly in England?

* * *

Both in their frail beds, a gulf of fifty-seven point oh nine centimetres between them. Darkness and the omnivision switched off but that connection nevertheless merely dormant: there would be another time when the currents would flow and the impulses reestablish that which ancestrally was where the glades of the forest stood like wallpaper all round in murmurous shade when the murderous mermaid pulls aside her jalousie and letting in

the whispering brands of braided hair stretching to the closed clothed pillows. Koninkrijk he, suddenly rousing, felt the vibrations welling up through him. It was true, one was the diagram of the other, and nobody could decide which. Either vast machines were passing a hundred yards away on the arterial road, shaking the house minutely in its mortared darkness; or else accumulated fats and silts were building up in the arteries about his heart, stirring his whole anatomy with the premonitions of coronary thrombosis. If he woke Marta, he could presumably decide which was happening; yet even then there was the growing ambiguity about what a happening actually constituted. He could now recognise only areas in which the function-vectors of events radiated either inwards or outwards, so that the old habit of being precise was misleading where not downright irrelevant. And he added to himself, before falling again into trembling sleep, that the Loughborough gospel of multi-complex was already spreading, ahead of its prophet.

Angeline was crying in the arms of Charteris on the long damp beaches of Ostend. The Escalation dirged by a dying fire: Her mother married a sunlit Ford Cortina. All the cars, most of them oparted, many stolen, clustered about the red Banshee along the promenade where Belgians loitered and sang, switched on by the rousing words of Charteris.

Take pictures of yourselves, he had said, pictures every moment of the day. That's what you should do, that's what you do do. You drop them and they lie around and other people get into them and turn them into art. Every second take a picture and so you will see that the lives we lead consist of still moments and nothing but. There are many still moments, all different. You have all these alternatives. Think that way and you will discover still more. I am here but equally I am elsewhere. I don't need so much economy—it's the pot-training of the child where the limitation starts. Forget it, live in all regions, part, split wide, be fuzzy, try all places at the same time, shower out your photographs to the benefit of all. Make yourself a thousand and so you achieve a great still trajectory, not longwise in life but sideways, a unilateral immortality. Try it, friends, try it with me, join me, join me in the great merry multicade!

All Angeline said after was, "But you aren't indestructible any more than I really saw a dog in a red tie that time."

He hugged her, half-hugged her, one arm round her while with the free hand he forked in beans to his mouth, at once feeding but not quite feeding as he said, "There's more than being just organical, like transliterated with the varied images all photopiled. You'll soon begin to see how fuzzy-set-thinking abolishes the old sub-divisions which Ouspenski calls functional defects in the receiving apparatus. As I told the people, self-observation, the taking of soul photographs, brings self-change, developing the real I."

"Oh, stop it, Colin, you aren't fun to be with any more when you talk like that! Did you or did you not kill my husband? Besides, I don't see how you can get away with this multiple thing; I mean, some things are either-or, aren't they?"

With Angelina hanging crossly on his arm, he got up from the voluptuous sand and, moving to the water's edge surrounded by midnight followers, flung the bean tin into the galilean dark.

"What things?"

"Well, either I'm going to have your child or I'm not, isn't that right?"

"Are you going to have a child?"

"I'm not sure."

"Then there's a third possibility." Some of them had lights and ran clothed into the water to retrieve the tin, sacred floggable relic, unmindful of drowning. And the bean can moved over the face of the waters, out of reach, oiling up and down with orange teeth. Beyond it, the ambiguity of lunar decline and terrestrial rotation filtering into the dischance.

A dirty boy there called Robbins, who had once been acclaimed a saint in Nottingham, ran into the water calling to Charteris, "You are greater than me! So stop me drowning myself!"

Charteris stood by the margin of the sea ignoring Robbins as he floundered. Then he turned towards Ostend and said, "Friends, we must defy the great either-orness of death. Among the many futures that lie about like pebbles on this beach are a certain finite number of deaths and lives. I see us speeding into a great progressional future which every blind moment is

an eight-lane highway. Beside our acceleration rides death, because the bone comes where the meat is sweetest. Tomorrow, I precog that death will swallow me and throw me back to you again, and you will then see I have achieved the farther shore of either-orness."

"A miracle!" cried the pop group. Angeline hugged him close, aware that he had to say nothing she could understand and still he was most wonderful. Behind them, clutching the holy relic of the bean tin, struggling and evacuating, Robbins went down into an unlit road beyond all terrestrial trajectory.

The promenade like a grey ridge of firm in early dawnlight. Beyond the post-glacial shelf, where lights burned between night and day, stood derelict projects of hotels, petrified by the coming of war; some half-built, some half-demolished, all blank-eyed, broken-doored, with weeds in the foundations and leprous remains of human habitation. Here from their catalepsy crawled the crusaders, scratching themselves in the ambiguous morning and blowing acid breath. Angeline wondered if her period would come today and boiled coffee for her lord and master on a fold-up stove; she was uncertain whether or not she felt sick and, if she did feel sick, whether it was because she was pregnant or because she dreaded the prospect of another day's crazy part-automatic driving. Well, it was a fuzzy set world.

Some of them were already revving their cars or driving them over the ice-rim onto the sand as being the quickest way to extricate from the grand muddle of beached beasts. Maintenance was going on to a limited extent, mainly in the sphere of bits of rope tying on bits of machine. The sparky thing currently was to fill blown eggshells with paint and then stick them on to the bonnet with adhesive plaster; when you got moving, the paint peed out in crazy trickles or blew across the windscreen and roof of the automobile or, under sudden acceleration, the egg burst like a duff ventricle. Only Charteris's Banshee was unadorned by such whims. Like France, it was neutral. And Red.

"Where we going today, Col?"

"You know."

"Brussels?"

"Some name like that."

"Then where? Tomorrow? The day after, where?"

"That's it. You hit the road I mean the mood exactly. More coffee?"

"Drink the first lot, darling, then you get some more; didn't you learn any such thing when you were a boy? You know, this isn't a crusade—it's a migration!"

The coffee ran down his chin, he was only half-drinking, as he nodded his head and said, "Sheer inspiration, yes! Crusade has only one object. Migratory is more instinctive, more options open."

He expanded the theme as they climbed into the car, talking not only to her but to sharp-featured Burton and other people who impinged, Burton always nagging for favours. He had ceased to think what he was saying. It was the migratory converse; the result was that he astonished himself and this elation fed back into his system, rephotographed a thousand times, each time enlarged in a conflagration of spongation in idation or inundation of conflation, so that he could pursue more than one thought simultaneously down into its deep loughburrows, snooper-trooper fashion.

Burton was bellowing something at the top of his voice, but the engines drowned out what he said as they began to roll along the grey deserted front, between echoing shutters and sea. The new autorace, born and bred on motorways; on these great one-dimensional roads rolling they mobius-stripped themselves naked to all sensation, tearing across the synthetic twencen lanskip, seaming all the way across Urp, Aish, Chine, to the Archangels, godding it across the skidways in creasingack selleration bitch you'm in us all.

Great flood of tatterdemalion vehicles in multicolour flooded out onto the Hotpants Highway, rushing, swerving, grinding, bumping, south towards Aalter and the infinite, travelling up to one-fifty photographs per minute, creasing axle aeration.



He lumbered up from the vast brown inaccessible other-world of sleep and went hurriedly to shave. In the second bed, the wilting leaf of his wife still silent among her own shades.

As he looked at his motionless face, Koninkrijk thought of the

good North Dutch girl back in the little hotel in Maastricht. Baby you won't get no sex Off of me in low point X. The last crash, driving with the cop fast to the scene of the accident maybe the same today my form of gratification just a vampire. It was a little Renault nose deep in a cliff of lorry, as if snuggling there. The terrible anticipation as he jumped out of the still-moving car and ran towards it; in a year of life, maybe one moment of truth; in a hundred miles of speedtrack, this one node. A tractor-driver running forward, explaining in thick Flemish accident. I saw un I saw un, he swerve out to overtake me, this lorry pull up to let him by, see, this other chap don't pull up in time the first chap get clear away, ought to be a bloody law against it. There is a law against it, out my way.

There! All the luggage in the back of the car tumbled forward over the shoulders of the driver. He wears no safety belt or harness, is utterly smashed, yet he lives and groans, seems to be begging for something in—German?

The ambulance arriving almost at once, men also staring in through the now-public car windows. They ease the man out bit by bit; the lorry-driver and the tractor-driver stand by, masking their helplessness with explanations and repeated phrases. Koninkrijk with this dirty curiosity, recalling it again now obsessively with self-hate, mauls over the blood-gobbed contents of the car after the ambulance men have teased most of the victim clear.

His cold little distorted image of the man-run world held only this driving and crashing, nothing else; everything else led to climactic moments of driving and crashing, the insane technological fulfillment offered by the first flint arrowhead, the schizophrenic fulfillment of man's nature divided against himself since he invented good and bad—to all that, crashung und drivung were the climax. Eating and defecating and the rest were just preparatory processes, getting the body ready for the next leap out to the road. Things other people did were just substitutes for the speed death. The Chinese peasants, grovelling up to their kneecaps in paddy, longing for the day when they too could enjoy speed death.

He looked at his eyes in horror. His mind could not keep

off the subject. There would be another call today; he must get down to the station, fearing and hoping. The Charteris crusade was invented for his particular philosophy Charteris is rallying take place in absolute darkness. He heard Marta switch the omnivision on as he dried his razor.

The immense cliff of earth loomed even higher above his neat red tiles this morning: chugging things like match boxes laboured up there, black against sky. New clay tumbling among daffodils. It was better in the station of the Speed Police—more like being in a liner, less like drowning in a sea.

“Good morning, Jan.”

“Morning, Erik.”

Koninkrijk went up to the tower, where two uniformed men lounged, chatting, smoking cheroots. He could look down through the glass roof of the duty room just below, see the current shift relaxed with their feet up, snuggled in wicker chairs, reading paperbacks and magazines. When the warning sirened, the room would be suddenly untidily empty, the paperbacks curly with open pages rubbed in the floor.

He glanced at the instrument panel, took a reading of traffic states from other stations along the Highway. Building up from Ostend.

Already, the first cars of the crusade were bursting along the Aalter stretch. From the station tower, a fine view; nobody saw it but Koninkrijk, as he read his own keynotes from the vast maimed spread; the remainder of the dutyites rested their minds among galloping tales of big-breasted women, affrays with Nazis in occupied Scandinavia, shoot-ups in Fort Knox, double-crossings in Macao, or the litter of the previous night's activities; two officers going off-duty exchanged dirty stories over a concession-price Stella Artois in the canteen; reality had a poor attendance, and I'm really the only one but even my eye's half ahead to the time when the English Messiah Banshee jets past here in the Saddle of the speed death king and half back to the thought of that Maastricht girl maybe with her I would at last find that certain thing O Lord God I know I don't often but what am I to do about Marta in schizophrenia catching.

What do you think about this government rumpus eh they say it's the food shortage but the Walloons are at the bottom of this you can bet Yeah food shortage they call it a world famine but we know who's at the bottom yeah we know who's at the bottom of it yeah Walloons.

What does she do in there all day long and I'll have to move her at the week end or they bury the house tombs doleful voices but how will I persuade her Christ O Lord God get out there move man move leave it all behind since her confounded father interfering old.

The warning went and he was down into the front park as the men milled. He climbed into N-Car Five; the slam of his door was echoed by others. News was coming over the car-radio of a multi-vehicle pile-up on the south lane of the Highway two kilometres north of Aalter. Low Point X. Let's go and they roared under the underpass and bucketted out on the feed and from the feed on to the Highway proper, yellow barrier barrels and red warning lights slicing by the hubs. Yacketter yacketter speedbeaches of the freeworld man-madman intersurface.

The speedometer was his thermometer, creeping up and the familiar dirty excitement creaming in him. For someone the moment of truth had come the shuttling metal death 3-Ding fast before the windscreen and still many marvellous microseconds safety before impact and the rictus of smiling fracture as the latent forces of acceleration actualised. Koninkrijk hated himself for this greedimaginative vampactof his highflown. Already they were barking beyond the ditched town, the PILE WONDER sign, the pasty dungheat at the Voeynants house shuttered, and beyond the road-widening the crash-fences started on either side, cambered outwards and curved at the top to catch escaping metal. Fast shallow breathing.

The accident heralded itself ahead. Bloodstream flowing south faltered, slowed, dribbled. Koninkrijk's vagus nerve fluttered with empathy. Somewhere ahead was the actual thrombus, all but entirely blocking the artery. The police car swung into the nearest emergency lane. Koninkrijk was out before it stopped and unlocking the barrier between lanes, hoiking a walkie-talkie with him. Sun warm on his shoulders grass too long against the

chain link got to keep nature out of this the weedicides this bloody war.

It was a typical nose-to-tail job, with ten cars involved, some pig-a-back on others like rough parody of animal embrace. Some still filtering through, all heads craned to see desperately want to know if man still stuffed with red blood.

"Koch, Schachter, Deslormes, proceed to the rear, get the barriers up and signals ten kilometres back so that there's no further escalation."

Moving forward as he spoke.

"Mittels and Araméche, you keep a northward lane free for ambulances."

But they knew. They all needed shouting and excitement and the roar of engines.

So like last time and maybe next time. A lumbering Swiss truck with Berne numberplates slewed half-off the verge. Into its rear, nose crumpled, a red Banshee. Man wrapped round steering wheel, head against shattered screen, piled luggage in back spewed forwards over his body and shoulders, some broken open, passenger door broken open, oparted ancient Wolseley piled into rear of Banshee, then terrible cluster of vehicles, British registration mostly, patterned crazily. One shot free, burning steadily against outside barrier, lying on its side. People running limping crawling still in trampled grass shouting and crowding and curiosity reality loose among the psychos. The police helicopter clattering up overhead, photographing it all, fanning the smoke flat across the wreckage.

Loudspeakers barking farther along the road as Koch got to work.

Ambulances arriving, men at the double with float-stretchers, doing their instant archaeology, digging down through the thin metallic strata to where life had pulsed a few tiny aeons ago, surfacing with primitive and unformed artifacts of flesh. Someone saying, "The Banshee was Charteris's car." Time converting entirely into activity as matter converted into energy.

Two hours' work later, Koninkrijk sitting exhausted jacket off on the muddled verge, listening in a daze to Charteris speaking to the elect.

"You know I half-foretold this would happen as we caval-

caded south. Here's a sort of semi-miracle as more-or-less predicted yesterday or whenever it was when we were at that place. The only places we really need are the in-between places that aren't places for they are trajectories of maximum possibility—you see how forced stoppage in this place here created maximum non-possibility for many of us which we call death, the low point where all avenues end. All our avenues end but we must build what extensions we can. For Burton my agent the avenue is right at a dead breakage. He Burton who hailed from the Midland city of Coventry where cars are born stopped me as we drove out of that place and begged to be allowed to ride my chariot. He was unable to give reasons for his desire and for that reason my wife Angeline and I took to his heap while he in triumph rode the Banshee. So it can all be explained away that he had some suicidal wish or that he as a good agent stage-managed it to look like a miracle that I was spared from death as predicted or that if I had driven no pile-up would have occurred, or that either this accident was already pre-performed in any of its guises or that it was in some way willed by me or us all corporately from some messianic drive in our hidden minds. If you all seek dutifully for the certainty of this occasion, each of you will find a different solution more satisfying than others to you, and so that will be regarded by you as the most 'probable' solution, and so like renegade compasses you will each point to a different pole of truth, where on this ribbon all will indicate a personal mean. That I beg you to treasure, relish the uncertainty, shun certainty, search the fuzzy set, for when you find accepted probability, it must merely be a conspiracy not to be free between two or more of you. All this I shall say less certainly in my book *Man the Driver*, but never more inspiredly than now in this moment by the tired road where this loss so belts us in."

He pitched forward on his face as Angeline ran forward to break his fall. The uniformed police, the tatty audience, sun-specked, entropised again.

Koninkrijk saw his chance. Running forward to two police, he said lowly, "Get him into my car and let's take him back to H.Q."



He was sitting up on the hard white bunk picking with a fork at police ham and beans on a hard white police plate in the hard grey migrainey room, with Angeline hard by him, and Koninkrijk respectful standing.

"Another miracle? I'm only a pawn. But I will see your wife, yes, bombardment of images, something in the Belgian aura we must incorporate to compensate for Burton and I intuit she could have a need for me. Or a sort of need for which we could substitute a fulfillment." He half-smiled, sipping at a tumbler of water, sifting the water across his palate, seeing the plastic glass was made in France: Duraplex.

"I think she is schizophrenic, sir. She flushed the what's-it when I come in."

"We all do, most of us. The wish to live more than one life—natural now, as the brain complexifies from generation. The world will soon tolerate only multi-livers. You too? No dream world or semi-realised thing aborting in the mental motorways?"

Slight bricky flush concealed under Koninkrijk's jowls. All the joys and sorrows really aborted into a secret drain-life none shared except for the tired willowy hand stretched over the sports page of a Maastricht paper.

"They do clash sometimes. I'll drive you to the house."

The girl came too. So he did not live entirely inside himself, or else found there echoes from those about him. So he could be a genuine Messiah—but what nonsense when he himself claimed but semi-messiahhood, and after all Europe wasn't the Levant, was it? In under a kilometre, small space to burn the gas.

"I'll speak to her alone, Supervisor."

"Very well. You'll find her reserved." Nervous glance at the woman Angeline. "Not pretty. Very thin, I think the spring disagrees with her."



And father had said that she should have a new bicycle
On her birthday at the end of May, as summer
Began; but they had been too poor when her birthday arrived

And he had given her instead a carton of crayons—
The very best Swiss crayons—
But she had never used them just to show her displeasure
Because she had wanted to rove the Ardennes countryside;
And perhaps it was since then that her father had been cold
To her and ceased to show his love. Sometimes it almost seemed
That if she kept rigid still he might appear stern
In one of the other noiseless rooms, dark
And showing his slight and characteristically lop-sided smile,
Saying, Marta, my child, come to your old Papa!
She had arranged the mirrors differently in the rooms,
Stacking them so that she could also observe the landing
Via one of the violet-tinted screens
With a side glance down along
The melancholy perspective
Of the stair-
Case.
Later, she would have to move herself
To clean the house; but she so much preferred the sight of
her
Lair in abstraction through mirror and screen
That first she must be permitted
This vigil of watching and listening the morning through.
All her private rooms were unused by other
Persons; nobody was allowed
To come and go in them; their silence was the sanctity
Like even unto the sanctity
Yea of St. Barnabas Church
Yea wherein she had visited, visited every Sunday
As a child with her parents every Sunday stiffly
Dressed in Sabbath clothes;
But this secret silence was of a different quality;
Each room she surveyed possessed individual silences:
One, a more rickety silence,
Another a more rumpled one;
Another a veined silence;
Another like a cross-section through calf's meat,
With a young-patterned texture;
Another with a domineering glassy silence;

These deserted quietus were more balmful and constricting
To her viscera than April's flowers.
A starker shade of silence ruled the stairwell.
Stealthily she moved her attention to it and
Came upon her father standing
There waiting amid the shade.
In his attitude of great attention she knew him. "Marta!" "Father,
I
Am here!" "Don't be alarmed!" "Oh, Father,
You have come at last!" She could not understand but
Delight grew high and flowered in the stalks of her confusion,
Telling itself as always in a burst of penitence
And self-reproach, till her lips grew younger. He
Attempted no answer to her flow, advanced
Towards her through the mirrored rooms, walking
Delicate as if he saw
The ancient barbs she still cultivated sharp
About his path. She flung herself at him, all she had to give
As she gave her self-denigration, closing her eyes, clutching
Him. He half-leaned, half-stood, half-understanding
The scent of trauma in the scene, glancingly taking
In the fetishistic idols of emptiness on the bare walls, seeing
Again the clever duplication of life she had contrived
Imaged in the bottom of his French plastic tumbler: Duraplex:
She has her alternatives. "Live
In both worlds, Marta, come with me!" "Father, you give
Me your blessing once again?" "I give
You my new blessing—fuzzy though you may find it, you must
Learn to live by it, you understand? My wish is this,
That you sojourn with nobody who desires to force you to live
On one plane at a time all the time: time must be divisible
And allowed gordian complexities. You must be
At once the erring child as we all are
And the reasoning adult as we all try to be
No strain placed on either
The two together tending towards
The greatly hopeful state we half-call godliness
Is that semi-understood?"
"And Jan, Papa?"

"For a while you come to live with me and Angeline
And let your man go free, for he has been more cut
By your trammels than you. You must learn to bide
Outside

Where constriction binds less and one later spring you may
Come together again to find water flushing in the earth
Closet." "I see father." Now she looked at him and realised
Like a trump turned up

He was not entirely her father, but the revelation had no
Poison: beneath the last moment's hand of mighty truth
Another shuffled: that in truth Marta did not want her father
And would now sprout free of him and his mirroring
Eyes that saw her only with disfavour: so her lips
Growing younger a mask cracked and fluttered
To the carpet unnoticed. "Jan

And I will meet again, Father? After I have duped him so badly
With my hateful secret passion all these over-furnished
Years? There is no final parting?" "Well,
There's really no final meeting.

It's one's own collusions that conspire or not towards
Another person—but you'll see directly . . . Come along
There's a daffodil or two left outside in the wet and soon
Sweet rocket will flower in your secret garden, Marta." She
Looked at his eyes. They went down the stairs, undusted
That and every following morning, leaving the omnivision work-
ing

Still. The cracks rioted on the walls like bindweed, flowering in
peeled distemper; and as they grew more open-lipped, the rum-
bling town-destroying machines clowned over the roof-tree and
clay pouted through the fissures. The mirroring screens showed
how the earth soiled in through every whispering room, bringing
familiar despoilation; but by then the sweet rocket flowered for
Marta.

* * *

Jan also, as the reformed crusade turned south, turned east,
burning his tyres and singing the song whose words he had
forgotten and never knew, towards freer arms whose meaning
he had never known, where the Meuse became the Maars.

BRIAN W. ALDISS:

. . . Potted biog? I can't, Judy. I came to Oxford after the war, ex-soldier, Buddhist, lumberjack, etc. Got a job in a bookshop, swept the floor, put up the shutters, arranged the shilling shelves, read all the trash there. Gradually I conquered Oxford, one by one the colleges made me a Fellow, next year I should make mayor. Am forty-two, just beginning my career. Would make a good writer if only cheerfulness did not keep breaking in. Too modest to speak of my own work—actually, it is not modesty, for I am a conceited sod, but lack self-confidence . . .

. . . except in a good cause. Brian Aldiss, I am happy to say, is the center of no controversy at all—as a writer. Aldiss is a very good story-teller (as see above—twice); he is also strikingly literate, and impressively versatile in style, form, and content; but even more than these, I suspect it is the special, personal, warmth and vitality of his work that have made him one of the very few genre writers widely popular today on both sides of the Atlantic *and* both sides of the 'new thing' gap. (Off-hand, I can think of only two others: Leiber and Delany.)

The same qualities, apparently, have enabled him in his alter ego of critic/

editor/crusader to swing into battles most of his more 'self-confident' colleagues avoid—and wade out on the other side, time after time, with the same broad smile and a host of new friends.

. . . look—there is one point I would like you to mention about me in that swinging anthology—I was the one who edited those three Penguin sf volumes, and who started the Penguin sf series as general editor.

To which I might add:

1) that it was also directly due to Aldiss that Penguin first published books like *Mission of Gravity*, *Evolution Man*, *Case of Conscience*, *Three to Conquer*, and *Drowned World*—and that all three of those early-sixties Aldiss anthologies are still in print and still selling actively.

2) that it was directly due to Aldiss—who at the time was still protesting—

. . . Really, I'm no part of the new wave (don't even like their stories madly); I'm just a gnarled rock—no, an old sunken wreck that the wave has passed by . . .

—that the 'new wave' still has a magazine to publish in. In *real* life, Aldiss is one step better than Mayor of Oxford: he is Literary Editor of the *Oxford Mail*. And when the then-publishers of *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy/Impulse* went suddenly and dramatically bankrupt in the summer of 1966, it was Aldiss who spear-headed the successful (and equally dramatic) campaign to save (at least one of) the magazines. Some excerpts from the report he later sent me on How *New*

Worlds Got the Arts Council Grant are included here, later (in the notes on Michael Moorcock). But it is typical of Aldiss that his report began simply, "The appeal went out . . ." without specifying that it went from his own desk; and the closing paragraph is equally representative:—

While SF is always threatened by dogma, which would dock one facet—its prophetic abilities, its stylistic possibilities, its philosophical implications (as cited by the late C. S. Lewis)—in an attempt to puff up another, we can only hope that all facets will manage to survive; harmony is more to be desired than exclusion. Clearly, the more editors and magazines there are in the field, the more likely is the survival of all valuable elements.

Somewhere along the way, Aldiss began to get caught up in his *own* wave.

July 4, 1967: Did I tell you that I have two new novels in the pipeline at Fabers? A subterranean revolution is going on in my subterraneous subconscious, and I seem to be pretty productive at the moment . . .

August 8, 1967: I'm now writing what I call the 'Charteris' series, eventually to make a novel called *Barefoot in the Head*—despair and humour and a touch of acid-headedness.

Wish you could smell the English air now. Now that everyone but the politicians have got it in their heads that we are a second class nation something very toxic and pleasure-loving has been released.

All sorts of signs in the air: International Poetry at the Festival Hall, Hippies meeting in Hyde Park, mini-skirts now revealing the lower curves of those delightful little rounded asses—not to mention absolute droves of nubile young beauties who never were before!—the crazy 'Whiter Shade of Pale' now ruling in its sixth week at the top of the pops, LSD everywhere . . . I seem to have imbibed a psychedelic touch myself; the Charteris series flows and elaborates into jabberwocky—if not actual jabber!

I'll try to send you proofs of *An Age* (Cryptozoic). Therein is a trace of the way I've come since; just a faint trace. Already the novel is old-fashioned to me. . . .

November 4, 1967: . . . it's the both/and business that links the thought behind *Cryptozoic* with Charteris. The linkage with the novel after *Cryptozoic*, called *Report From Probability A*, is that the latter presents a neither/nor situation; speculation has dwindled to mere contemplation, participation in event has dwindled to a sort of voyeurism.

In all this, I seem to be working down closer to myself . . .

. . . But in the same November letter, he reeled off some twenty or more titles from ten-and-twelve years back (Wyndham, Christopher, Mead, Clarke, Gordon, Conquest, Sellings, Mantley, Golding, Peake—an impressive list), saying:

I still think the whole idea of a new wave is a publicity stunt, based among other

things on a lack of perspective. Sf 'happened' over here in about 1955, when Angus Wilson, Edmund Crispin, Marghanita Laski and others launched it on a sort of 'Observer' level (and the 'Observer' was better and less pop than now) . . . Can we muster anything comparable from '66-67? I think not.

I think, *yes!* Waves succeed each other.

Sun push

□ GRAHAM M. HALL

Time St. John Smith stood in the grey, glutinous, supsucking mud, hunched miserably as the rain rat-pattered down.

Private 563287 Smith, Time Saint John (Sinjun), of the 3rd Battalion, the Manchester Regiment, British Army, half-squatted in a trench, a lone sentinel; face-shade grey, dish-washed and watered.

A sole battery lantern, hitched to a tuft of straggling hair-like grass, lit up a stretch of ground, revealing in its scope a dirty streak of road marching solidly north-east.

Smith was drawing in the lantern light, sparrow fingers trailing charcoal lines over wet cartridge paper. The sketch, weeping mascara tears, was a view of the road from the trench, with shallow ditches and other trenches radiating out into the darkness like the *canali* of Mars.

Smith shaded in the sky vista.

To the west, the night sky was tide-washed by summer lightning flashes, silhouetting briefly the bulk of the hill, to be followed by the flickering crumpthump of heavy artillery. Suddenly, the barrage swung closer, cresting the hill in sunburst brilliance, and Smith, cringing, ducked further into the small cover of the trench parapet. He haunched down on his mildewed leather heels, squatting on the uneven trench boards.

Bedraggled, a rat, also on guard duty, slithered away in the mud, dragging a nameless meat-thing behind it into the shadows.

With deft slices, Smith continued his sketch, shading in a grey wash with spat-on charcoal. The single colour process.

Grey.

Grey.

And grey.

Grey the trench, the mud, the wire, the sandbags; grey the darkness and grey the smell.

Smith heard the scuffling of many feet behind him, and suddenly crumpled the half-completed sketch, treading it into the underfoot mud. The rat scurried away further, its feet scratching on the discarded brass of a shell-case.

Soon a platoon of Naafi-scented soldiers were filling the trench. The sergeant, Charlie "The Arse" Trelawney, spoke quietly to the appointed sentry.

"It's a foul night, Private Smith. You can bet your last bottle that the seepees will be following this up. They're giving the western lines a hell of a pounding."

Smith nodded. A trickle of rain took the opportunity to breach an eyebrow, misting one eye.

"Hope you were keeping a sharp look-out, Smith. This light shouldn't be here for a start," Trelawney took the lantern down, dousing it.

"One thing, though. There can't be any seepee snipers around, else you'd be a gonner for sure."

Sloshing and swearing, the fresh platoon had taken up their positions against the lazy parapet, zurrs at the ready. Command was obviously expecting an attack (ah, the blinding LIGHT, the bloodpounding roar of guns, the SCREAMING godDAMN scheming KILLers!!!).

Controlling an important route to the north-east, the sector was a likely target. Smith wished he was far, far to the west, in gut-safe America.

Heart-stopping, there was a pause in the barrage, now much closer. Chinking, pattering, wet grey silence.

Under orders, an eager corporal was leading half-a-dozen troopers over the top, on patrol. They skittered in the night across

the mud like kids in snowland, racing each other for the cover of the bulk-shadowed far hedge.

They were halfway there when the first shell burst, shooting a fountain of chocolate mud high against the stars. There was an impossible hurricane of physical noise, 10-G beating on ears and skin.

Smith crouched, Jesus-muttering (Let me escape, oh God GOD God why me? Let ME escape!) while second and third shells boomed down into the field, into the trench, spreading soil and limbs and grass. A fourth hit the road, slag-transforming tarmac and half-filling the trench with debris, tumbling and burying. Then the poxing shells hopped off drunkenly to the east, crunching terror and death on a computer-planned path.

Time St. John Smith, fetus-wrapped, lay quivering. The sergeant was still alive—could hear him breathing—and somewhere out in the ruined field a man was moaning, slipping into death-rattle.

The bowel-loosening fear faded with the noise of the shells, now passing high overhead with a soft pigeon whine.

Near whimpering, Smith hunched himself to his feet and began to climb, scramble, out of the trench.

Sergeant Trelawney's voice came clear in the darkness.

"Where do you think you're going, soldier?"

"For"—cracked and dry—"For help."

Smith hung on the rim of the trench (out of here, God, please let me GET!).

"Come back, you stupid bastard. D'you think this is the only place they've hit tonight? Up on the hill, they've had a couple of thousand directs. We're just an *en route* accident."

Reluctantly, Smith dropped back onto the trench boards, sat on his heels.

"But, Sarge, we might as well get out of here. There's nothing we can do—except get killed like the poor sods out there." Smith's voice still fear-trembled in the soft-raining quiet.

"Smith, the seepees are going to try for this sector tonight. We're going to hold it."

Smith deliberated. How far to press . . . ? Then. "Come on, Sarge. Let's get out of here."

A new voice came in the night, broad North. "Nay, we'd best stop. There'll be hell t-pay, else."

"Who's that?"

"Private 777967 Eamus here, Sarge."

* * *

Later, the sergeant went off to investigate the dead and the dying.

Sharing a cigarette, Eamus and Smith huddled down against the cold earth wall of the trench.

"T'war's over for a lot of blokes tonight," Eamus said, almost huskily.

Smith spoke low, in a voice like a Henry Moore sculpture. "Yeah. But not back to Civvy Street for them."

"I was a cricketer—afore the war, like. Played openin' bat for Yorkshire. Jesus, it's hard to think of it all now, with all this. I haven't held a bat in years. What were you?"

"Me?" The cigarette glowed low. "Oh, I was a painter—like."

Eamus thought. Then, "Houses and things?"

Houses, yes, and sunlight, Smith mused. The silence lengthened into dozing sleep, fear-drained and care-less.

* * *

Smith lay against the scrawnily sand-bagged parapet, half-dreaming.

He dreamt of sunlight. Sunlight in a wood, with a green-mottled frog-pond clearing and the sun trickling in pipe-pipe notes from the throats of birds, feathered like some unmelted Icarus.

He dreamt of gold beach sunlight; of sunlight on the body of a naked girl, cascading like gold water over her breasts, water-falling its way through her hair.

Most of all, he dreamt of sunlight on canvas. Transforming sail-stuff into miniature suns; and, oh, how to catch it! How to capture sunlight in vermilion and ultramarine, in sienna and lake and ochre, and pin it in paint prisons on canvas or paper or wood.

Sunlight.

The sergeant hissed.

Smith swam through the sun-ocean, groped for the zurr at his side. Eamus stirred too, and, in the grey dimness, the sergeant pointed silently out into the field.

Skirting round the lipped craters were six dark shadows.

Suddenly, a tenuous laser beam probed out from the group, searching across the grass towards Smith with the familiar faint buzzing, like fog-bound pylons. Eamus raised his own zurr, clicking the circuit to ready, but Trelawney waved him down.

As the enemy crept cautiously on toward the trench, Trelawney lobbed a grenade.

"Look out, for crissakes!" one of the shapes yelled, in a London accent, and all six of the darkness zurrs sprang into hoses of light.

"Get the bastards!" the Londoner shouted, beginning to charge the trench.

Then all burst like a rose into roaring red and white agony as the grenade blew.

The enemy group was successfully taken out.

ORDERS FOR THE DAY 29/5/83

All non-commissioned officers and men will prepare to march at 0500 hours tomorrow, 30/5/83.

(Signed)

Lt.-Col. A. T. Scott-McCabe.

*Officer Commanding, 3rd Battalion
Manchester Regiment.*

Smith, Eamus and Trelawney, mud-spattered, scanned the bare notice, tacked, curled like a leaf, on the Camp Orders board.

"Aye," said the sergeant. "We lost five hundred men killed on Bredon Hill last night, and two thousand more injured. My bet's that we'll be leaving that little hill feature to the seepees, and we're to draw back south."

"True," said Eamus. "To Gloucester or Cheltenham, for a dollar."

Smith prepared to march, packing blanco-bright kit, regulation uniform, for dying, the occasion of.

The men's quarters at the Tewkesbury camp were sited in

a vast old building, with colonnades towering like proud missiles, and a high, vaulted roof. The camp was little more than an advance supply depot, and a marshalling point for the cynically-named 'walking wounded.'

Smith was sitting on his cot, watching sunlight trickling and chinking through the shattered stained glass, when Eamus came over. He was a small man, bearded and weary, like seeded grass. He looked like an abridged version of D. H. Lawrence.

"This used t'be a church, y'know," Eamus said.

Smith knew, and said so.

"Church must've been a funny thing."

"Maybe they abolished it because it was competition for television. . . ."

"The Praesidium of Europe meets in a church, y'know—they call it the Basilisk, or something. My bet's Rogers'll be there soon, too. . . ."

Smith rummaged in his kit-bag, produced pencil and paper and began to sketch with deliberation the church and sunlight.

Eamus went on.

"It *is* funny, though. I mean, there being a war *here*, and France and that lot going Red. Just 'cause of Malinski."

Smith put down his pencil, splinter of a democratic forest (U.S. of A.).

"There was a little more to it than that, Eamus. . . ."

"Aye, but London's ruled from Moscow. That's facts, mate. You can't argue with *them*. And we're here sloshing and dying in our own mud like the stupid sods we are, for the Yanks."

"What about the Bristol Government . . . ?"

"That Punch and Judy show! Load of—"

"You'd best be quiet, Eamus. Or security'll be after you."

The sun was setting and the light dimmed like old curtains in the quarters. Smith put the unfinished drawing to one side, and began to pack. Eamus drifted back to his cot near the altar.

Later, Smith went to the NAAFI-commandeered inn, and, loner, sat transfusing whisky and ale, sought in the drinks the essence of sunlight, in barley and in hops.

* * *

The Battalion mustered, scuffling, yawning and whispering, in the cold drizzle of dawn. For a parade-ground, a bulldozer had bullied

down ancient yews, graves and walls, and the men stood chomping the rubbed mud with their boots.

In orderly lines, pew-standing for the address, they stood and waited for a long time in the chill rain, all flat jokes and wet berets, until they heard, far off, a shuffling-walking noise.

Nearer it came, and louder, a parody of the Regiment's crisp and measured march. Into sight, past a row of slumped cottages, came a column of men.

Wearing the Regiment's uniform, they shambled along as if in a grotesque conga, each man gripping the soldier in front by one shoulder.

The column was endless. In single file, hundreds of men shuffled past.

And every one was blind.

"Martyred Mother of God," Eamus breathed. "The zurrs' done that."

Each trooper in the column was a healthy, fit and whole man. Except for that one detail. Each man's retina had been seared away in one vital second of unbearable light.

The Battalion stood in the rain and watched two thousand blind men shuffled off towards Cheltenham, to be demobilised and rehabilitated, compensated for the sentence of life's sightlessness.

The Battalion stood in the rain, and scuffed their feet and averted their eyes. The men, the non-coms, and the officers, in a spontaneous eyes-right, —up, or —down; just —away.

Somewhere, a major took a decision, and with marshalling voice the Battalion slipped into step and brooded in time to the rhythmic crunch of boots.

* * *

The Theobald Stone and onward, through Toddington and the tarmac forest-twisting in green tipped woods of spring.

Marching steadily in the soft rain, the remnants of the 3rd Battalion, the Manchester Regiment, moved on Stow. They met no seepee forces, although there were ordure-like signs of their passing. Cartland tracks rutted and pocked from heavy lorries; trees black-seared by solzurr beams, and the occasional roadside house grenade-blasted in high-spirited vandalism.

With the steady motion of a sluggish river, the Battalion marched on into the middle morning, pausing once for regimental micturition, in communal ditch-hissing action.

Some few miles south-east of Stow, the Battalion halted. The officers were called together and briefed in text-book tones. A section—Sergeant Trelawney's—was detailed for action.

"It's a farmhouse," he told the men. "We think the occupants have gone over to the Reds."

In the final drops of the morning rain, the section scurried like voles across the field. The house, white-walled, glowed in the weak first sunlight.

In the house, a radio was on. Sergeant Trelawney halted the section to listen. Rogers' cockney Oxford voice was unmistakable.

"We of the British Liberation Front . . ."

The broadcast was coming from Shepherd's Bush or one of the other big rebel stations. Case proved.

The section burst into the house like stormtroopers, fanning out and filling the warm, farm-house room.

The farmer stood rapidly, little boy agony at being caught out. His wife and rape-aged daughter sat nearby.

The radio clicked off. Rogers, frenetic, faded in midsentence.

"Good morning, Sergeant," said the farmer, in a ploughed voice. "Is there anything we can do for you and your men?"

Sergeant Trelawney spoke, nazi-harsh cropped words.

"You were listening to a communist broadcast. Under the Defence of the Realm Act, that is illegal."

"It's the only one you can get around here, Sergeant. It's from the three-kilowatt at Bicester, y'see. You know how these things. . . ."

Trelawney unholstered his pistol, bullet, not laser.

The farmer stood still and silent, backing away a little.

"Look, Sergeant. Take that radio, if that's enough. We're all loyal citizens of Britain—I'm a member of the Free Enterprise Party myself. Hang on, I'll show you my papers. . . ."

Dogs bark; guns don't. The pistol cracked once, acrid, and the farmer screamed, choking off quickly. He clutched his belly.

Coughing quietly, he sank to his knees, and salaam-bowed slowly forward.

No hysterics from widowed woman and orphaned girl. They stood slowly, powder-faced and quivering.

Trelawney ushered the section out of the room, locking the door. Out in the farmyard, he lobbed a grenade tinkling through the small window. A few seconds later, the windows and door blew out, leaving the house blind and toothless.

And lifeless, too.

In the fields, marching back to the road and the Battalion, one of the men bitched.

"You might've let us have a bit of fun with the bint, Sarge. Serve her, like."

No reply.

The men trudged on.

Two

Marching is cathartic. The hypnotic rhythms drown the weariness.

Along the Oxford road, Smith marched and thought in fugues of sunlight.

Smith had no interest in the war; didn't care if Birmingham went over to the seepees as the other men did and discussed at each meal break.

He tried to translate pure war into art, to make people realize what war was and what they were doing. But paint and pictures were no good; you couldn't make people feel war on paper. They had to feel it and suffer it themselves. The war meant nothing, but people never realized that until it affected them, with the finality of death and maiming, and then it was just too late anyway. Then you could sit in your wheelchair, perhaps, and write letters to the newspapers and novels, and paint the horror of it all, but while you did there were platoons and battalions of less-fortunate soldiers—and civilians too—being shot at and blown up and blinded by the zurrs in their futile hundreds.

It was the blindness that really scared Smith. He could accept death, with its maybe and its wonder, but the sightlessness and long life darkness of the blind was beyond—above—him.

And Smith marched towards Oxford with the remnants of his battalion, and the lensed gas-state laser chinked and rubbed on his shoulder, patted his back as he paced.

Smith paced and pissed and ate to order, and dreamt of sunlight, and the British Army marched on Oxford.

The entry into the city was easier than had been anxiously anticipated. The dreaming spires had been decimated—along with the population—by a totally unexpected napalm and high-explosive raid by the R.A.F.

Time St. John Smith, zurr in hand, looked at the charred bodies of buildings and objectives, people and persons. God alone knew where they had got the planes from.

The war in the air had been won on the ground, many sad years before. The aim of each side primarily being to stop the enemy getting planes into the air, aerodromes and factories had been bombed with pointed regularity until there were simply no more planes, on either side. The Russians or the Europeans or the Americans could have supplied them to their chosen sides, but there seemed no point. It was a war that would be won on the ground, yard by yard—if at all.

There was sporadic rifle fire from dispirited disloyalists as the Battalion padded on through the gaunt Victorian debris. Bullets rattled over the roofs and concrete, spattering and chipping.

Sniping back like pigeon shooters, the Battalion pushed on into the centre.

A detachment of the 1st Gloucesters had already quelled the Carfax and the shopping centre. High Street and Broad Street dreamed of their past, looking deserted but normal, apart from the occasional blasted building and the blitz-seared trees.

Bivouacking down along the front of Brasenose, the battalion officers posted guards and distributed duties.

Trelawney, mindless of mutterings, volunteered his men to accompany the search for an Oxford traitor, the leader of the forlorn town's defence against the seepee forces; the man who had, on the town's behalf, capitulated.

The leader, fat and foreign-named, was soon found, betrayed by braying citizens, hiding in a deserted department store. He fled from the sales floors as Trelawney and his men entered, dodging from counter to counter, panting and pattering over the carpeted floors. As the searching section spread out to cover the whole floor, the hunted man escaped into the large display windows.

A futile flight followed, with the leader, sobbing tears and gasps, crashing through the gaunt window-dummies, tearing through drapes of crêpe-paper and curtains, stumbling on one window ahead of his pursuers.

Smith, on guard outside the store, saw the chase through the series of windows. He watched as grinning Trelawney finally cornered the man in the last window, amidst lingerie and undergarments.

They took the man, festooned in lace and elastic, and hanged him from a nearby lamp post. He jerked and jangled and broke his finger-nails on the rough rope until even Trelawney's amusement grew weary, and weeping Smith was ordered to tug on the traitor's feet.

When the man was quite dead, Trelawney allowed his section to return to the bivouacs.

Later, Smith tried sketching in the dusk, but the sun had set and his mind kept picturing a shy, white farmhouse, glowing and glistening with tears of rain; and a nightmare glass maze that stretched and stretched and stretched.

He tore the sketch into snowflake shreds and headed out of the tent into the night.

* * *

Trelawney and Eamus, and other members of Smith's section, were already ensconced, supping like navvies, at the bar.

"Here's Leonardo," a trooper chirped. "Buy him a drink, someone."

Tongue-rolling golden foam of bitterness, the drink.

Ah, the beer. God save us from wet knees.

Smith drank slowly, gripping the handle in its strangeness.

The soldiers sang, propaganda songs, scatological, scurrilous and somehow pathetic, about Rogers and Malinski.

"Come on, lads," Charles the Arse said, slip-slurring. "To the flop!" Cheers chimed from the soldiers, trekking out behind Trelawney.

"IN! IN! IN! IN!!" they chanted.

"I'm going to—"

"Luck be a lady tonight," two Brummies sang, bodies clasped in buddy arms.

They piled out of the NAAFI like paratroopers from a plane.

Eamus remained, frowning ponderably.

Smith sat and sipped ale in silence, foamward staring, thinking foam.

Eamus said, "Y'know, Smith. War's a filthy business."

Smith smiled. "Is it, Eamus? I really hadn't noticed," and slipped silently out into the night, toward the cathouse.



Smith went into the redlight like an importuner into a public convenience; head shame bent, hands pocketed, loinstomach churning.

The redlight was a large single hall—an old schoolroom—with forlorn white lines limiting the floor, memories of days when other games were played there. Chipboard shutters maze-like cut off cubicles of seduction, with dreamlight lamps dimgleaming and Pan-Asian joss burning to keep out the smells of death and war, mask the stench of stale sweat, gangrene, last week's lust.

Duty called, not need.

(Hoh, be one of the boys, Tim. If it kills you, Tim.)

Smith pulled aside the stiff old curtains, gnarled with filth, until he found an unoccupied woman.

The whores were seepees. Captured living with the Reds, they were drugwashed, doped into senseless nymphomania and shunted into redlight service.

The woman—girl—in the cubicle had been pretty. Now she had the wan-dead look of the junkie; hooded red eyes in a face like sour putty, body shaking and shivering in the hot-cold torment.

Her body, thin now, was wisped up in yellowed nylon, blue-ish flesh welling through fist-size rips like tears. She strained towards him in empty hungering.

Smith undressed without romance, a ritual preparing for the sole formalized act of creation.

The coming together was cold as her bone-stretched flesh.

Lasers boomed silently in his mind. Their cold fire bathed his limbs, ice inferno. The slaves of sex patrolled his body, bayo-

net-jabbing in groin and midriff. Oh God, God, God. Bathing, diving, dropping. Into seas of ice-hot molten blades and swimming oh, oh, oh, and it's near don't stop oh, oh, the peak the snow on the golden waves and sunlight on the silver beach, oh, crashing, crushing petals, roses, thorns and . . . oh. . . .

Smith withdrew, shuddering, dressed hurriedly and left the premises.

Later, Smith lay in his tent, alone, as, above, planes droned and dreamed and bombed the city. The ground shook and heaved with the noise, and the canvas of his tent flickered with light, vibrated in the man-made thunderstorm.

About an hour after the raid began, when the sky was lit by fires, the planes faded at last into the confused noises of flames, cries and running feet.

The R.A.F. returned from its mission, unaware that they had been bombing their own men.

The soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, the Manchester Regiment, trembled as they slept, and dreamed giant curses for the seepee air force.



The day dawned, with Smith salvorsan-sick in his bag of sleep. He dressed and ate reluctantly at the bivouacs, another day of leave. Orders, like rain slow trickling its way through the earth, delayed in transit.

Smith, in the sunlight, collected easel and paints and brushes and hiked off through the blasted centre of Oxford, heading for The Plain.

They had bombed Magdalen College, and melancholy it looked, scattered as boulders on its own lawns.

The stones of the college, age-weathered and mellow, looked like cheese, like square golden apples, solid geometric lumps of sunlight.

The broken walls of the building, fresh crumbled and bubbled, were new, like the inside of sandstone. Wisps of smoke still rose, drifting and shimmering in the air.

Smith set up his Martian-striding easel, and began to paint the ruins, sitting in spring sunlight by the Cherwell.

Water colours washed onto the paper, yellow and gold. The

pencilled outline was picked out carefully with golds and reds, shaded with grey and shadow-black. The lawns, pocked with rubble and craters, green and brown like the knees of a cricketer's trousers.

Smith sat in the sun and painted.

Yellow, golden—sun.

Mist-wan, like yellowed nylon.

With tear-blue flesh welling: . . . The brothel images crowded in, weeping and gibbering like clouds on the face of the sun.

Smith painted on. The yellow lustreless paints.

Lasers booming.

Paint on!

And seas of molten blades.

Smith stood, trembling. He took the board and its painting and walked to the bank of the river.

Napalm had landed in the water, and now it was prism-sheened with oil. Beneath, in the green coolness, glinted new metal, like the dead fishes. The lilies were gone, shrivelled, and, washed into an eddy near Smith's feet, were the bodies of three black-charred swans.

Smith casually threw the board into the water, splashing and skimming, like bread for the day's-dead swans.

He walked away and left the easel standing, stretching in the sun, its shadow like a giant "A" on the sun-green grass.

* * *

The awaited Battalion Orders arrived, down the stretched long lines of communication like dew down a spider's web.

To march.

Heading for High Wycombe down the London road. One strong summer's push, and the British Army could be in the streets of London once more. While the seepees lay and waited, waiting for the snow and subversion, and the war in the people, the real battle-ground.

The Battalion marched off into the dawn, nailed boots sparking like little heel-sized lasers. Old Oxford slid by, and the auto-worshipping rows of semi-detacheds followed.

Hup right, left right; marching.

At Headington, an old village-suburb, the Battalion met entrenched seepee forces. Approaching a wide expanse of fields, mortars opened fire and machine guns rattled bullets like free-sample sized angels of death.

Men died in mind-jabbering panic and the bullets and bombs whistled down meaningless death.

The field was mazed with trenches, some occupied and some not, criss-cutting and crossing as on a building site. The Battalion, in an orderly flight, sought refuge in the trenches. Smith and Trelawney dived in and the bullets whispered and shouted overhead.

Die, boy.

Die, man.

Die, Smith.

Eamus stood, wuthering, and caught a half-centimetre bullet in his mouth like a thirteenth-rate magician. He toppled, with blood in his beard, bubbling about death and eternity.

The day long, they sniped and shot and mortared, blasting men and earth impartially. Smith huddled, praying half-heartedly, in the trench, muddy knees to muddy chin.

Dusk came.

The lasers, their use more effective psychologically at night, began to trace across the fields, like inspissated searchlights.

Smith, zurr in hand, crouched, listening as the beams buzzed softly in the night like masturbating bees. With Trelawney, he half-lay half-stood against the low parapet, eyes below the rim, holding zurrs above their heads and methodically spraying the field.

There was a scuffling of feet in no man's land.

"They're attacking!" Trelawney whispered.

Smith rose to look, and, slow to recognize the wire-recorder amplifiers—

aaaaaaaH! The colours!

Light! Appleplum sallow flame; iridescent khaki, citron gleaming light, DAZZLE! Flaring sable; steel-scintillate, emerald extinguish; saffron beam SEAR! Light! Lurid verdigris tan; bright crimson rubies, bronzed, flashing YELLOW! Ebony snow, brindled sepia leaves of olive, jet white blaze! Glittering pearly blood; brown amethysts; incandescent rust grass GLARE! Scarlet-barred lemons,

lilac ravens, soot-misted burning zebras of lights, coruscating
and coryban dancing in and, oh God, rice-swirling walls and
down

Down

Down swim sun

Down into pools of sun

 down swim into sunlight

Down, down swim into pools of sunlight

 * * *

Mud grey and sun bright merging.

They came, and they led him away.

Blind.

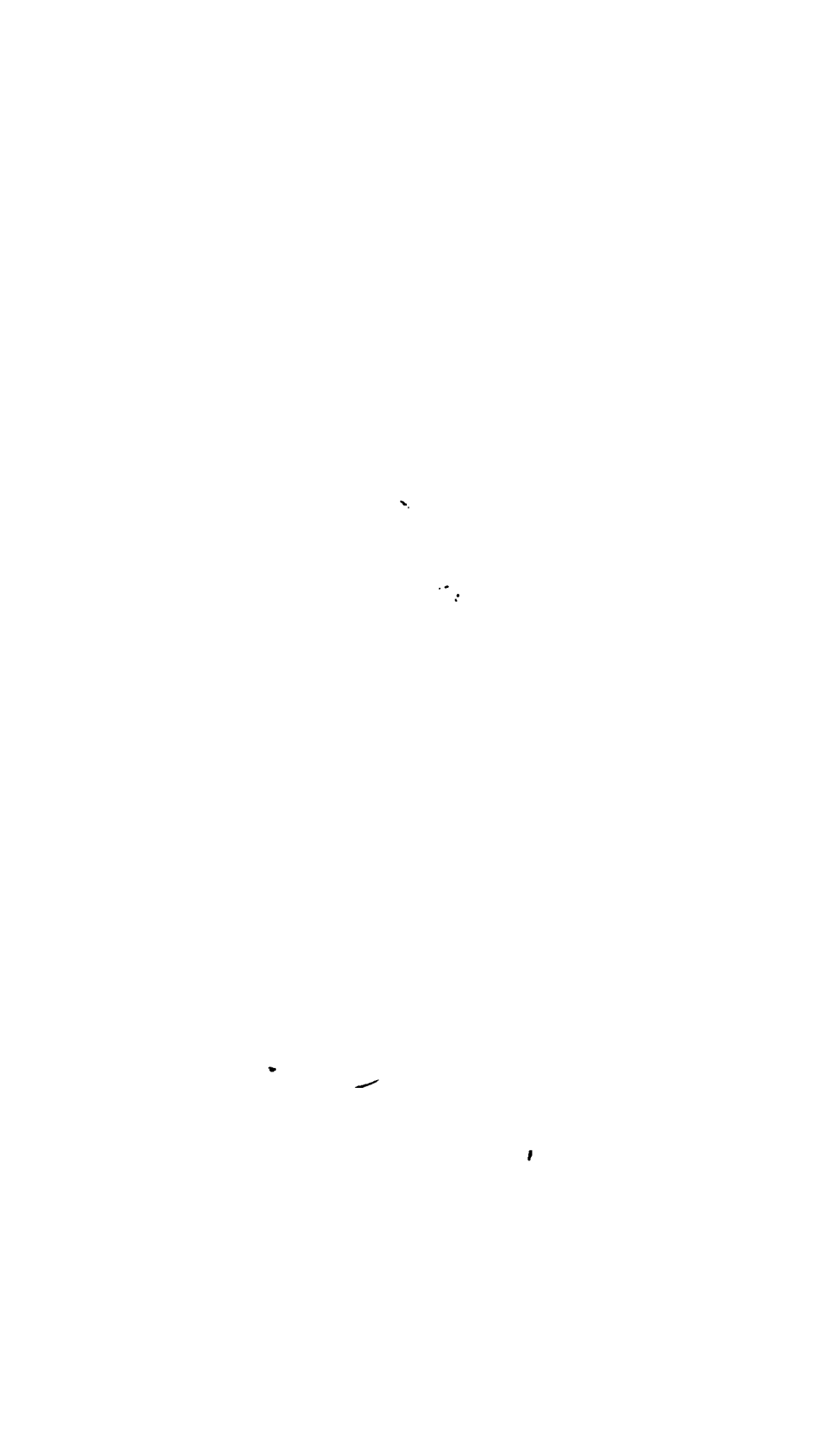
GRAHAM M. HALL . . .

. . . has recently completed his formal apprenticeship as a journalist, and moved from Tewkesbury, in Gloucestershire, down to London.

. . . born probably in Birmingham. Education minimal and self-administered in the large. Left home and school at 16 and have been supporting myself by writing since, first as a weekly newspaper reporter, more recently by general writing and comic script work. I am now a starving freelance, having invested all my capital rather rashly in a kind of estate station wagon van thing that I hope to be able to live in at a push. A great push. And finished with journalism.

His first story appeared in *New Worlds* in 1966; "Sun Push" was the second.

I fear that British sf is tending towards avant-garde for avant-garde's sake. But I am gratified by any trend in any area of writing that expands the parameters of possibility for me as a writer. I'd like to render habitable the areas of the writing world that Ballard, Burroughs and Butterworth are pioneering.



Report on a supermarket

□ MICHAEL HAMBURGER

1

First of all, the site:
Nowhere, I said, put it nowhere,
Right out of town—some town!—
Near the motel, if you like, near the filling station,
But away from houses, all houses.
You wouldn't listen. And now
People drive in for a pack or two
Of cigarettes and—would you believe it?—
Walk in and buy what they want.
Walk—do you get me?—on their own legs,
And buy what *they* want, in dribbles.
That's what comes of the site—retrogression.
I warn you: soon they'll be asking
For fresh food, bread from small bakeries,
Milk unhomogenized, unrefrigerated,
Local fruit and vegetables and fish,
All the small-time produce that once gave us trouble.

2

Next, there are losses, bad losses.
Take eggs: billions of them each year

Crack, a write-off. You needn't tell me
The scientists are working on that—
Tougher shells, to be guaranteed
By diet or injections. But we can't wait.
Injection, that's it: have the whole goddamn egg
Injected into plastic shells, there's your answer.
Then invent a cracking machine, and the makers
Will subsidize the whole process for you.
Natural eggs, in any case,
Are too cheap, not worth marketing.
Plastic shells will cost more.

3

Last, but worst, the housewives—
Retrogressive, I tell you, and unreliable,
Poor material, even the regulars
Who shop by the week, for the icebox—
Like the one ten days ago, an old customer,
Not a red—we can smell them—not an egghead,
Complained that her Florida oranges,
That line with the colour added, our best line,
Were rotten and poisoned a dinner guest
Dear to her, and her husband's career.
Under pressure the woman confessed
That she'd set the table that morning
Taken the oranges from where they belong
And left them all day in a fruit bowl.
"Creative arrangement," she kept on protesting;
"Negligence, madam, waste," I corrected her,
Giving her all the statistics, the handouts.
She tore them up and never came back.

4

Worst, did I say? Well, there's worse to come.
Just picture a model customer,
Middle-aged, no worries at all,
Three grown-up children at Ivy League schools,
Three automobiles—comes in a Cadillac,

Begins her round, as usual, at the meat counter
But goes green in the face and starts hollering:
"Get me out of here! Get me out of this morgue!
Never again! I vow that I'll organize
A nation-wide hunger strike, or live on wild berries!"
What could I do but smile and escort her out?

5

Now, that kind of thing has happened before.
Bad for prestige? You're kidding.
Here's my prescription: have special trolleys made
For emergency cases like that one, strap them down,
Force-feed them with all they need,
Proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, the lot,
From a mixer-feeder I can design,
Injecting a full week's provisions.
Their families? OK, they're another problem,
But the system's prestige would rocket sky-high.
For legal reasons the service could function gratis,
With detergents thrown in, toilet rolls and the rest.
Later a minimal charge would be best
Till the service is recognized, and catches on.
Life-Saver, we'd call it, and gain live advertisements.
If the demand became too great
We need only raise the price
And establish a revolutionary technique,
A new norm in our free-world economy.
Patent the process, that's my advice,
And you'll never look back.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER:

Born in Germany, Michael Hamburger came to England in the thirties, attended Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. A naturalized British citizen, he served in the British Armed Forces in World War II, and now makes his home in London.

Hamburger is probably best-known in the United States as an outstanding translator of German poetry, but his publications include anthologies, five collections of his own poetry, three books of essays. (In the United States: *Weather and Season*, Atheneum; *Reason and Energy*, Grove; *Modern German Poetry, 1910-1960*, Grove; and most recently, Hölderlin: *Poems and Fragments*, from the U. of Michigan Press.) A new critical book, *The Truth of Poetry*, will be published by Harcourt shortly, as well as a volume of translations of Günter Grass' poetry.

. . . see poetry and sf as sharing a common
imagination . . . *George MacBeth*

One of the most vital components of the special character of the 'new British sf' is the influence and interest of a large part of the community of poets in Great Britain.

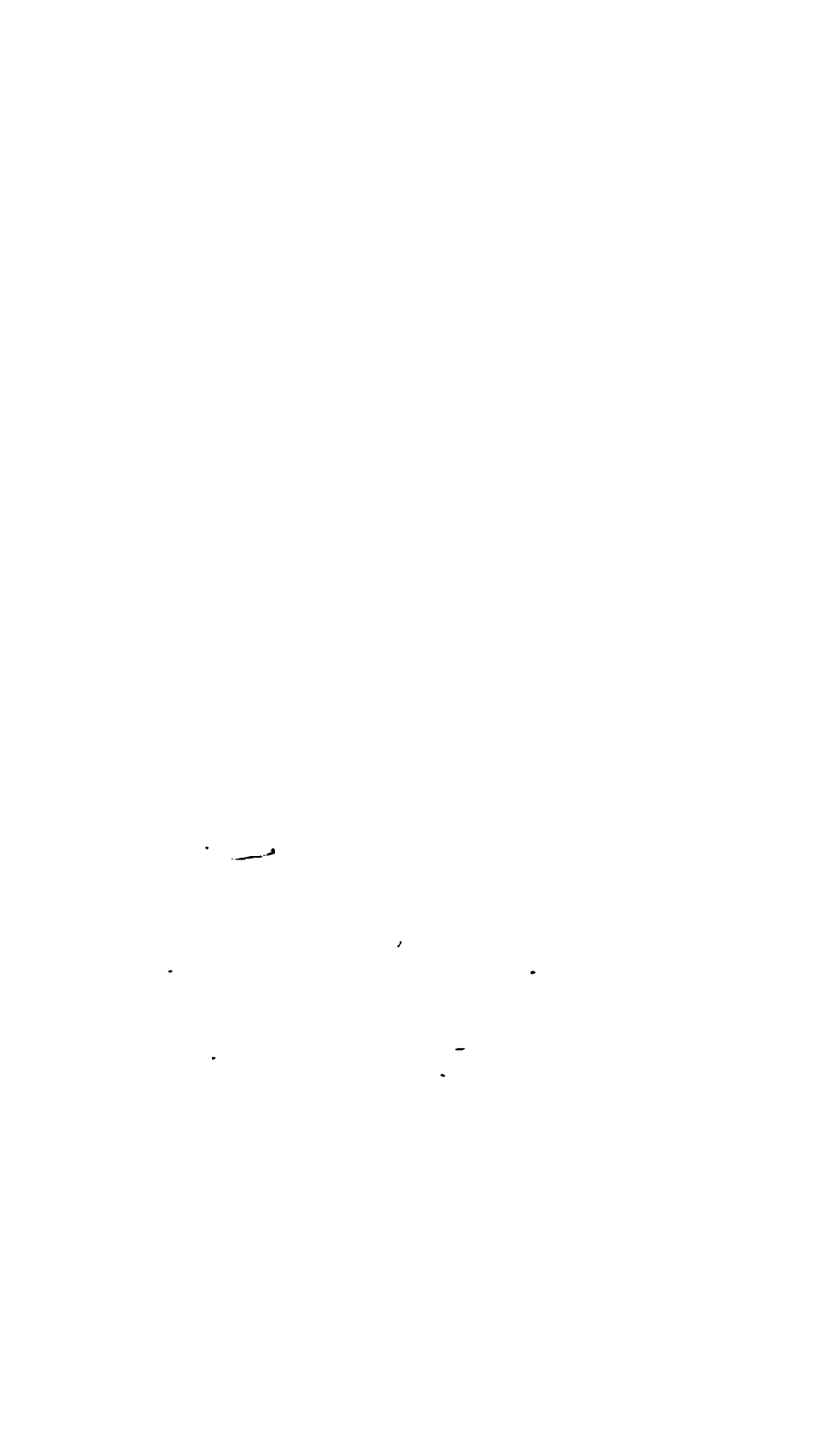
It should be clear by now that most of

the writers in the British sf field—particularly the younger ones—turn as naturally to poetry and the ‘little magazine’ as to fiction and commercial sales.

. . . to show, I hope, that poetry and SF are trying to digest the same things and that so far SF has done more, but that poetry will win out in the end . . .

Peter Redgrove

What is rather more startling—from the American viewpoint—and advantageous—from the British—is that a number of the best young poets regard the overlap-and-intermesh as desirable and even inevitable.



Dr. Gelabius

□ HILARY BAILEY

Dr. Gelabius stood at midnight in the laboratory among his foetuses, all heaving and rolling gently and monotonously in the glass jars around him.

Beyond the white frames of the laboratory windows it was quiet and solidly dark. Even the trees of the campus were hidden by the thickness of the night.

Short, fat and shining-bald, Dr. Gelabius stood, considering, as his foetuses rolled in their jars, three deep on the walls of the small laboratory. Apparatus, gleaming bright under the harsh central light, was laid out neatly on the white work benches. On the central bench lay Dr. Gelabius's notebook. Hands behind small foreshortened back, round brown eyes blank and intent, Gelabius moved, began to tour shelves on which embryos were arranged in order of age: from skinny huge-headed three month foetuses to the large six or seven pounders, complete with toenails and tiny moving mouths in small, finished faces.

Tour over, Dr. Gelabius sat down on his stool opposite the nearly-mature foetuses and, removing a ball point pen, one of three, from his pocket, began to write. Around the walls mute mouths opened and shut, tiny hands slowly clenched and unclenched, monkey bodies rolled in their placid, individual amniotic seas.

Notes done, Dr. Gelabius crossed the silent room with his

slow, heaving, fat-man's walk and began to pace past the forty biggest foetuses, nearly mature in their labelled bottles.

He worked calmly on the contents of the jars, studying the thermometer and pseudo-placenta set in each, touching one embryo gently with a spatula and studying its movements, gazing, huge-faced, through the jar at the tiny features inside. With thirty years practise behind him, Gelabius could judge the potential of an embryo as well as an experienced mother can sum up her newborn.

Work on each bottle completed, Dr. Gelabius marked the labels, some with the date, some with a tiny inked cross.

Dr. Gelabius headed one of five research teams—two in Germany, one in Britain and two in the United States—all working on specialised breeding. Fertile cells from selected women were brought together with sperm from selected men, and the results encased in jars, surrounded by pseudo-amniotic fluid and fed by an artificial placenta. Brought forth at maturity, the ex-embryos were placed with approved parents, chosen for their emotional stability and social normality. At a few years old they began to attend special schools part-time, and finally became boarders at institutions designed to reinforce their healthy psyches and extend their already superior mental, moral and physical powers.

For Dr. Gelabius had spent his thirty years improving the race; making combinations of beauty, strength and intelligence and sanity, putting to shame the haphazard genetic results of ordinary matings. The end products, by their merits, moved ever upwards and onwards, spreading light in darkness, shaping and forming, continually increasing the sum of human knowledge and pleasure.

By law, their natural parents had to be informed of their existence from the beginning—lawyers in all civilised countries had made a last-ditch stand, a desperate and out-dated assertion in favour of those who produced those tiny dots of tissue which fed Dr. Gelabius's jars.

Nevertheless, in the laboratory Dr. Gelabius was king.

He finished his examination and marking of the jars and stepped back: under the glaring light, a short, insignificant figure in the middle of his shining bottles and instruments.

With the sad but dutiful smile of a parent who must punish he moved forward again towards his slowly-turning foetuses. His pale, steady, short-fingered hands reached for the first jar marked with a cross.

He ripped the artificial placenta from its feeder. The foetus gave a sudden jerk. He took the jar, plastic placenta trailing across the floor, contents tossing and moving a little in its water, to the gleaming stainless steel sink. He unstoppered the jar, tipped it up and, one hand splayed across the top of the jar and the embryo's soft head, neatly poured the fluid down the sink. Inside the jar limbs moved feebly, mouth opened and shut soundlessly, fingers closed and loosened in slow spasms. Gravely Dr. Gelabius carried the bottle to the door of the laboratory and placed it outside. The foetus heaved a little and, as Dr. Gelabius closed the door, stopped moving.

Sadly, borne by necessity, Dr. Gelabius removed nine more bottles from the shelves until there were ten shining jars standing in a line in the corridor, each with an unmoving homunculus collapsed on its glass floor.

Dr. Gelabius moved back to his bench, opened his record book and began to write.

Suddenly the door crashed back against the wall. In the entrance to the laboratory stood a woman in a torn red coat. Her grey hair hung in wild tangles around her head, her eyes burned in a lined, pinched face. In one thin hand she held a revolver.

"You killed my baby," she screamed, and as Dr. Gelabius stood up she fired four shots into him.

She turned and ran, her feet banging along the corridor and gradually fading away.

Dr. Gelabius fell down, hand clutched against his white-coated belly which was pierced by two bullets. He lay, knees drawn up, arms around his body. He rolled a little, made a soundless mouthing, heaved himself on to his back, and died.

All around him in the silent laboratory his embryos continued their determined, senseless rolling; naked monkeys heaving like ships at anchor in their bland, amniotic swell.

But Gelabius, mother and father to them all, did not move.

HILARY BAILEY:

b. 19-9-36 under sign of Virgo in Kent suburb of London. Father executive of country's largest armaments firm. Due to war (sins of the fathers) attended eleven schools. B.A. Cambridge. M. Sept. 1962, you-know-who. Sophie born Sept. 1963. Katherine Sept. 1964. No hobbies, no interests, right-handed.

Her full name is Hilary Bailey Moorcock, and her husband's office (which is to say, at least half the full swing of England's sf) is in their living room. Hilary Moorcock is tall, slender, and mod-ly cool in paint-stained jeans or Mary Quant. Her hobby is *New Worlds*; her interests are active, inquiring, frequently hungry, and barely growing into nursery school age; she is obviously ambidextrous.

Recently, she has almost given up writing girls' horse stories in favor of science fiction: her first sf story was in *New Worlds* in 1963; her second, "The Fall of Frenchy Steiner," has been reprinted three times now: in the *Saint* magazine, *The Best of New Worlds*, and *SF:12* (Delacorte, 1968). Other stories have appeared in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Science Fantasy/Impulse*.

The heat death of the universe

□ P. A. ZOLINE

1. ONTOLOGY: That branch of metaphysics which concerns itself with the problems of the nature of existence or being.

2. Imagine a pale blue morning sky, almost green, with clouds only at the rims. The earth rolls and the sun appears to mount, mountains erode, fruits decay, the Foraminifera adds another chamber to its shell, babies' fingernails grow as does the hair of the dead in their graves, and in egg timers the sands fall and the eggs cook on.

3. Sarah Boyle thinks of her nose as too large, though several men have cherished it. The nose is generous and performs a well calculated geometric curve, at the arch of which the skin is drawn very tight and a faint whiteness of bone can be seen showing through, it has much the same architectural tension and sense of mathematical calculation as the day after Thanksgiving breastbone on the carcass of turkey; her maiden name was Sloss, mixed German, English and Irish descent; in grade school she was very bad at playing softball and, besides being chosen last for the team, was always made to play center field, no one could ever hit to center field; she loves music best of all the arts, and of music, Bach, J.S.; she lives in California, though she grew up in Boston and Toledo.

4. BREAKFAST TIME AT THE BOYLE'S HOUSE ON LA FLORIDA STREET, ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA, THE CHILDREN DEMAND SUGAR FROSTED FLAKES.

With some reluctance Sarah Boyle dishes out Sugar Frosted Flakes to her children, already hearing the decay set in upon the little milk white teeth, the bony whine of the dentist's drill. The dentist is a short, gentle man with a moustache who sometimes reminds Sarah of an uncle who lives in Ohio. One bowl per child.

5. If one can imagine it considered as an abstract object, by members of a totally separate culture, one can see that the cereal box might seem a beautiful thing. The solid rectangle is neatly joined and classical in proportions, on it are squandered wealths of richest colours, virgin blues, crimsons, dense ochres, precious pigments once reserved for sacred paintings and as cosmetics for the blind faces of marble gods. Giant size. Net Weight 16 ounces, 250 grams. "They're tigeriffic!" says Tony the Tiger. The box blatts promises: Energy, Nature's Own Goodness, an endless pubescence. On its back is a mask of William Shakespeare to be cut out, folded, worn by thousands of tiny Shakespeares in Kansas City, Detroit, Tucson, San Diego, Tampa. He appears at once more kindly and somewhat more vacant than we are used to seeing him. Two or more of the children lay claim to the mask, but Sarah puts off that Solomon's decision until such time as the box is empty.

6. A notice in orange flourishes states that a Surprise Gift is to be found somewhere in the package, nestled amongst the golden flakes. So far it has not been unearthed, and the children request more cereal than they wish to eat, great yellow heaps of it, to hurry the discovery. Even so, at the end of the meal, some layers of flakes remain in the box and the Gift must still be among them.

7. There is even a Special Offer of a secret membership, code and magic ring; these to be obtained by sending in the box top with 50c.

8. Three offers on one cereal box. To Sarah Boyle this seems to be oversell. Perhaps something is terribly wrong with the cereal

and it must be sold quickly, got off the shelves before the news breaks. Perhaps it causes a special, cruel Cancer in little children. As Sarah Boyle collects the bowls printed with bunnies and baseball statistics, still slopping half full of milk and wilted flakes, she imagines *in her mind's eye* the headlines, "Nation's Small Fry Stricken, Fate's Finger Sugar Coated, Lethal Sweetness Socks Tots".

9. Sarah Boyle is a vivacious and intelligent young wife and mother, educated at a fine Eastern college, proud of her growing family which keeps her busy and happy around the house.

10. BIRTHDAY.

Today is the birthday of one of the children. There will be a party in the late afternoon.

11. CLEANING UP THE HOUSE. ONE.

Cleaning up the kitchen. Sarah Boyle puts the bowls, plates, glasses and silverware into the sink. She scrubs at the stickiness on the yellow-marbled formica table with a blue synthetic sponge, a special blue which we shall see again. There are marks of children's hands in various sizes printed with sugar and grime on all the table's surfaces. The marks catch the light, they appear and disappear according to the position of the observing eye. The floor sweepings include a triangular half of toast spread with grape jelly, bobby pins, a green band-aid, flakes, a doll's eye, dust, dog's hair and a button.

12. Until we reach the statistically likely planet and begin to converse with whatever green-faced, teleporting denizens thereof—considering only this shrunk and communication-ravaged world—can we any more postulate a separate culture? Viewing the metastasis of Western Culture it seems progressively less likely. Sarah Boyle imagines a whole world which has become like California, all topographical imperfections sanded away with the sweet smelling burr of the plastic surgeon's cosmetic polisher; a world populace dieting, leisured, similar in pink and mauve hair and rhinestone shades. A land Cunt Pink and Avocado Green, brassiered and girdled by monstrous complexities of Super Highways, a Cal-

ifornia endless and unceasing, embracing and transforming the entire globe, California, California!

13. INSERT ONE. ON ENTROPY.

ENTROPY: A quantity introduced in the first place to facilitate the calculations, and to give clear expressions to the results of thermodynamics. Changes of entropy can be calculated only for a reversible process, and may then be defined as the ratio of the amount of heat taken up to the absolute temperature at which the heat is absorbed. Entropy changes for actual irreversible processes are calculated by postulating equivalent theoretical reversible changes. The entropy of a system is a measure of its degree of disorder. The total entropy of any isolated system can never decrease in any change; it must either increase (irreversible process) or remain constant (reversible process). The total entropy of the Universe therefore is increasing, tending towards a maximum, corresponding to complete disorder of the particles in it (assuming that it may be regarded as an isolated system). See *heat death of the Universe*.

14. CLEANING UP THE HOUSE. TWO.

Washing the baby's diapers. Sarah Boyle writes notes to herself all over the house; a mazed wild script larded with arrows, diagrams, pictures; graffiti on every available surface in a desperate/heroic attempt to index, record, bluff, invoke, order and placate. On the fluted and flowered white plastic lid of the diaper bin she has written in Blushing Pink Nitetime lipstick a phrase to ward off fumey ammoniac despair. "The nitrogen cycle is the vital round of organic and inorganic exchange on earth. The sweet breath of the Universe." On the wall by the washing machine are Yin and Yang signs, mandalas, and the words, "Many young wives feel trapped. It is a contemporary sociological phenomenon which may be explained in part by a gap between changing living patterns and the accommodation of social services to these patterns". Over the stove she had written "Help, Help, Help, Help, Help".

15. Sometimes she numbers or letters the things in a room, writing the assigned character on each object. There are 819 sep-

arate moveable objects in the living room, counting books. Sometimes she labels objects with their names, or with false names, thus on her bureau the hair brush is labeled HAIR BRUSH, the cologne, COLOGNE, the hand cream, CAT. She is passionately fond of children's dictionaries, encyclopaedias, ABCs and all reference books, transfixed and comforted at their simulacra of a complete listing and ordering.

16. On the door of a bedroom are written two definitions from reference books, "GOD: An object of worship"; "HOMEOSTASIS: Maintenance of constancy of internal environment".

17. Sarah Boyle washes the diapers, washes the linen, Oh Saint Veronica, changes the sheets on the baby's crib. She begins to put away some of the toys, stepping over and around the organizations of playthings which still seem inhabited. There are various vehicles, and articles of medicine, domesticity and war; whole zoos of stuffed animals, bruised and odorous with years of love; hundreds of small figures, plastic animals, cowboys, cars, spacemen, with which the children make sub and supra worlds in their play. One of Sarah's favourite toys is the Baba, the wooden Russian doll which, opened, reveals a smaller but otherwise identical doll which opens to reveal, etc., a lesson in infinity at least to the number of seven dolls.

18. Sarah Boyle's mother has been dead for two years. Sarah Boyle thinks of music as the formal articulation of the passage of time, and of Bach as the most poignant rendering of this. Her eyes are sometimes the colour of the aforementioned kitchen sponge. Her hair is natural spaniel brown; months ago on an hysterical day she dyed it red, so now it is two-toned with a stripe in the middle, like the painted walls of slum buildings or old schools.

19. INSERT TWO. THE HEAT DEATH OF UNIVERSE.

The second law of thermodynamics can be interpreted to mean that the ENTROPY of a closed system tends toward a maximum and that its available ENERGY tends toward a minimum. It has been held that the Universe constitutes a thermodynamically closed system, and if this were true it would mean that a time must

finally come when the Universe "unwinds" itself, no energy being available for use. This state is referred to as the "heat death of the Universe". It is by no means certain, however, that the Universe can be considered as a closed system in this sense.

20. Sarah Boyle pours out a Coke from the refrigerator and lights a cigarette. The coldness and sweetness of the thick brown liquid make her throat ache and her teeth sting briefly, sweet juice of my youth, her eyes glass with the carbonation, she thinks of the Heat Death of the Universe. A logarithmic of those late summer days, endless as the Irish serpent twisting through jewelled manuscripts forever, tail in mouth, the heat pressing, bloating, doing violence. The Los Angeles sky becomes so filled and bleached with detritus that it loses all colour and silvers like a mirror, reflecting back the fricasseeing earth. Everything becoming warmer and warmer, each particle of matter becoming more agitated, more excited until the bonds shatter, the glues fail, the deodorants lose their seals. She imagines the whole of New York City melting like a Dali into a great chocolate mass, a great soup, the Great Soup of New York.

21. CLEANING UP THE HOUSE. THREE.

Beds made. Vacuuming the hall, a carpet of faded flowers, vines and leaves which endlessly wind and twist into each other in a fevered and permanent ecstasy. Suddenly the vacuum blows instead of sucks, spewing marbles, dolls' eyes, dust, crackers. An old trick. "Oh my god," says Sarah. The baby yells on cue for attention/changing/food. Sarah kicks the vacuum cleaner and it retches and begins working again.

22. AT LUNCH ONLY ONE GLASS OF MILK IS SPILLED.

At lunch only one glass of milk is spilled.

23. The plants need watering, Geranium, Hyacinth, Lavender, Avocado, Cyclamen. Feed the fish, happy fish with china castles and mermaids in the bowl. The turtle looks more and more unwell and is probably dying.

24. Sarah Boyle's blue eyes, how blue? Bluer far and of a different quality than the Nature metaphors which were both engine and fuel to so much of precedent literature. A fine, modern, acid, synthetic blue; the shiny cerulean of the skies on postcards sent from lush subtropics, the natives grinning ivory ambivalent grins on their dark faces; the promising, fat, unnatural blue of the heavy tranquillizer capsule; the cool, mean blue of that fake kitchen sponge; the deepest, most unbelievable azure of the tiled and glossless interiors of California swimming pools. The chemists in their kitchens cooked, cooled and distilled this blue from thousands of colourless and wonderfully constructed crystals, each one unique and nonpareil; and now that colour, hisses, bubbles, turns in Sarah's eyes.

25. INSERT THREE. ON LIGHT.

LIGHT: Name given to the agency by means of which a viewed object influences the observer's eyes. Consists of electro-magnetic radiation within the wave-length range 4×10^{-5} cm. to 7×10^{-5} m. approximately; variations in the wave-length produce different sensations in the eye, corresponding to different colours. See colour vision.

26. LIGHT AND CLEANING THE LIVING ROOM.

All the objects (819) and surfaces in the living room are dusty, grey common dust as though this were the den of a giant, moulting mouse. Suddenly quantities of waves or particles of very strong unlight speed in through the window, and everything incandesces, multiple rainbows. Poised in what has become a solid cube of light, like an ancient insect trapped in amber, Sarah Boyle realizes that the dust is indeed the most beautiful stuff in the room, a nanna for the eyes. Duchamp, that father of thought, has set with fixative some dust which fell on one of his sculptures, counting it is part of the work. "That way madness lies, says Sarah," says Sarah. The thought of ordering a household on Dada principles balloons again. All the rooms would fill up with objects, newspapers and magazines would compost, the potatoes in the rack, the canned green beans in the garbage can would take new heart and come to life again, reaching out green shoots towards the sun. The plants would grow wild and wind into a jungle around the house,

34. INSERT FIVE. LOVE.

LOVE: a typical sentiment involving fondness for, or attachment to, an object, the idea of which is emotionally coloured whenever it arises in the mind, and capable, as Shand has pointed out, of evoking any one of a whole gamut of primary emotions, according to the situation in which the object is placed, or represented; often, and by psychoanalysts always, used in the sense of *sex-love* or even *lust* (q.v.).

35. Sarah Boyle has at times felt a unity with her body, at other times a complete separation. The mind/body duality considered. The time/space duality considered. The male/female duality considered. The matter/energy duality considered. Sometimes, at extremes, her Body seems to her an animal on a leash, taken for walks in the park by her Mind. The lamp posts of experience. Her arms are lightly freckled, and when she gets very tired the places under her eyes become violet.

36. Housework is never completed, the chaos always lurks ready to encroach on any area left unweeded, a jungle filled with dirty pans and the roaring of giant stuffed toy animals suddenly turned savage. Terrible glass eyes.

37. SHOPPING FOR THE BIRTHDAY CAKE.

Shopping in the supermarket with the baby in front of the cart and a larger child holding on. The light from the ice cube tray shaped fluorescent lights is mixed blue and pink and brighter, colder, and cheaper than daylight. The doors swing open just as you reach out your hand for them. Tantalus, moving with a ghastly quiet swing. Hot dogs for the party. Potato chips, gum drops, a paper table cloth with birthday designs, hot dog buns, catsup, mustard, picalilli, balloons, instant coffee Continental style, dog food, frozen peas, ice cream, frozen lima beans, frozen broccoli in butter sauce, paper birthday hats, paper napkins in three colours, a box of Sugar Frosted Flakes with a Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart mask on the back. bread, pizza mix. The notes of a just graspable music filter through the giant store, for the most part bypassing the brain and acting directly on the liver, blood and lymph. The air is delicately scented with aluminum. Half and half cream,

tea bags, bacon, sandwich meat, strawberry jam. Sarah is in front of the shelves of cleaning products now, and the baby is beginning to whine. Around her are whole libraries of objects, offering themselves. Some of that same old hysteria that had incarnadined her hair rises up again, and she does not refuse it. There is one moment when she can choose direction, like standing on a chalk drawn X, a hot cross bun, and she does not choose calm and measure. Sarah Boyle begins to pick out, methodically, deliberately and with a careful ecstasy, one of every cleaning product which the store sells. Window Cleaner, Glass Cleaner, Brass Polish, Silver Polish, Steel Wool, eighteen different brands of Detergent, Disinfectant, Toilet Cleanser, Water Softener, Fabric Softener, Drain Cleanser, Spot Remover, Floor Wax, Furniture Wax, Car Wax, Carpet Shampoo, Dog Shampoo, Shampoo for people with dry, oily and normal hair, for people with dandruff, for people with grey hair. Tooth Paste, Tooth Powder, Denture Cleaner, Deodorants, Antiperspirants, Antiseptics, Soaps, Cleansers, Abrasives, Oven Cleansers, Makeup Removers. When the same products appear in different sizes Sarah takes one of each size. For some products she accumulates whole little families of containers: a giant Father bottle of shampoo, a Mother bottle, an Older Sister bottle just smaller than the Mother bottle, and a very tiny Baby Brother bottle. Sarah fills three shopping carts and has to have help wheeling them all down the aisles. At the check-out counter her laughter and hysteria keep threatening to overflow as the pale blonde clerk with no eyebrows like the *Mona Lisa* pretends normality and disinterest. The bill comes to \$57.53 and Sarah has to write a check. Driving home, the baby strapped in the drive-a-cot and the paper bags bulging in the back seat, she cries.

38. BEFORE THE PARTY.

Mrs. David Boyle, mother-in-law of Sarah Boyle, is coming to the party of her grandchild. She brings a toy, a yellow wooden duck on a string, made in Austria; the duck quacks as it is pulled along the floor. Sarah is filling paper cups with gum drops and chocolates, and Mrs. David Boyle sits at the kitchen table and talks to her. She is talking about several things, she is talking about her garden which is flourishing except for a plague of rare black beetles, thought to have come from Hong Kong, which are

undermining some of the most delicate growths at the roots, and feasting on the leaves of other plants. She is talking about a sale of household linens which she plans to attend on the following Tuesday. She is talking about her neighbour who has Cancer and is wasting away. The neighbour is a Catholic woman who had never had a day's illness in her life until the Cancer struck, and now she is, apparently, failing with dizzying speed. The doctor says her body's chaos, chaos, cells running wild all over, says Mrs. David Boyle. When I visited her she hardly *knew* me, can hardly *speak*, can't keep herself *clean*, says Mrs. David Boyle.

39. Sometimes Sarah can hardly remember how many cute, chubby little children she has.

40. When she used to stand out in center field far away from the other players, she used to make up songs and sing them to herself.

41. She thinks of the end of the world by ice.

42. She thinks of the end of the world by water.

43. She thinks of the end of the world by nuclear war.

44. There must be more than this, Sarah Boyle thinks, from time to time. What could one do to justify one's passage? Or less ambitiously, to change, even in the motion of the smallest mote, the course and circulation of the world? Sometimes Sarah's dreams are of heroic girth, a new symphony using laboratories of machinery and all invented instruments, at once giant in scope and intelligible to all, to heal the bloody breach; a series of paintings which would transfigure and astonish and calm the frenzied art world in its panting race; a new novel that would refurbish language. Sometimes she considers the mystical, the streaky and random, and it seems that one change, no matter how small, would be enough. Turtles are supposed to live for many years. To carve a name, date and perhaps a word of hope upon a turtle's shell, then set him free to wend the world, surely this one act might cancel out absurdity?

45. Mrs. David Boyle has a faint moustache, like Duchamp's *Mona Lisa*.

46. THE BIRTHDAY PARTY.

Many children, dressed in pastels, sit around the long table. They are exhausted and overexcited from games fiercely played, some are flushed and wet, others unnaturally pale. This general agitation, and the paper party hats they wear, combine to make them appear a dinner part of debauched midgets. It is time for the cake. A huge chocolate cake in the shape of a rocket and launching pad and covered with blue and pink icing is carried in. In the hush the birthday child begins to cry. He stops crying, makes a wish and blows out the candles.

47. One child will not eat hot dogs, ice cream or cake, and asks for cereal. Sarah pours him out a bowl of Sugar Frosted Flakes, and a moment later he chokes. Sarah pounds him on the back and out spits a tiny green plastic snake with red glass eyes, the Surprise Gift. All the children want it.

48. AFTER THE PARTY THE CHILDREN ARE PUT TO BED.

Bath time. Observing the nakedness of children, pink and slippery as seals, squealing as seals, now the splashing, grunting and smacking of cherry flesh on raspberry flesh reverberate in the pearl tiled steamy cubicle. The nakedness of children is so much more absolute than that of the mature. No musky curling hair to indicate the target points, no knobbly clutch of plane and fat and curvature to ennoble this prince of beasts. All well fed naked children appear edible, Sarah's teeth hum in her head with memory of bloody feastings, prehistory. Young humans appear too like the young of other species for smugness, and the comparison is not even in their favour, they are much the most peeled and unsupple of those young. Such pinkness, such utter nuded pinkness; the orifices neatly incised, rimmed with a slightly deeper rose, the incessant demands for breast, time, milks of many sorts.

49. INSERT SIX. WEINER ON ENTROPY.

In Gibbs' Universe order is least probable, chaos most probable. But while the Universe as a whole, if indeed there is a whole Uni-

verse, tends to run down, there are local enclaves whose direction seems opposed to that of the Universe at large and in which there is a limited and temporary tendency for organization to increase. Life finds its home in some of these enclaves.

50. Sarah Boyle imagines, in her mind's eye, cleaning and ordering the whole world, even the Universe. Filling the great spaces of Space with a marvellous sweet smelling, deep cleansing foam. Deodorizing rank caves and volcanoes. Scrubbing rocks.

51. INSERT SEVEN. TURTLES.

Many different species of carnivorous Turtles live in the fresh waters of the tropical and temperate zones of various continents. Most Northerly of the European Turtles (extending as far as Holland and Lithuania) is the European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*). It is from 8 to 10 inches long and may live a hundred years.

52. CLEANING UP AFTER THE PARTY.

Sarah is cleaning up after the party. Gum drops and melted ice cream surge off paper plates, making holes in the paper tablecloth through the printed roses. A fly has died a splendid death in a pool of strawberry ice cream. Wet jelly beans stain all they touch, finally becoming themselves colourless, opaque white like flocks of tamed or sleeping maggots. Plastic favours mount half-eaten pieces of blue cake. Strewn about are thin strips of fortune papers from the Japanese poppers. Upon them are printed strangely assorted phrases selected by apparently unilingual Japanese. Crowds of delicate yellow people spending great chunks of their lives in producing these most ephemeral of objects, and inscribing thousands of fine papers with absurd and incomprehensible messages. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," reads one. Most of the balloons have popped. Someone has planted a hot dog in the daffodil pot. A few of the helium balloons have escaped their owners and now ride the ceiling. Another fortune paper reads, "Emperor's horses meet death worse, numbers, numbers."

53. She is very tired, violet under the eyes, mauve beneath the eyes. Her uncle in Ohio used to get the same marks under his eyes. She goes to the kitchen to lay the table for tomorrow's breakfast,

then she sees that in the turtle's bowl the turtle is floating, still, on the surface of the water. Sarah Boyle pokes at it with a pencil but it does not move. She stands for several minutes looking at the dead turtle on the surface of the water. She is crying again.

54. She begins to cry. She goes to the refrigerator and takes out a carton of eggs, white eggs, extra large. She throws them one by one on to the kitchen floor which is patterned with strawberries in squares. They break beautifully. There is a Secret Society of Dentists, all moustached, with Special Code and Magic Rings. She begins to cry. She takes up three bunny dishes and throws them against the refrigerator, they shatter, and then the floor is covered with shards, chunks of partial bunnies, an ear, an eye here, a paw; Stockton, California, Acton, California, Chico, California, Redding, California, Glen Ellen, California, Cadix, California, Angels Camp, California, Half Moon Bay. The total ENTROPY of the Universe therefore is increasing, tending towards a maximum, corresponding to complete disorder of the particles in it. She is crying, her mouth is open. She throws a jar of grape jelly and it smashes the window over the sink. Her eyes are blue. She begins to open her mouth. It has been held that the Universe constitutes a thermodynamically closed system, and if this were true it would mean that a time must finally come when the Universe "unwinds" itself, no energy being available for use. This state is referred to as the "heat death of the Universe". Sarah Boyle begins to cry. She throws a jar of strawberry jam against the stove, enamel chips off and the stove begins to bleed. Bach had twenty children, how many children has Sarah Boyle? Her mouth is open. Her mouth is opening. She turns on the water and fills the sinks with detergent. She writes on the kitchen wall, "William Shakespeare has Cancer and lives in California". She writes, "Sugar Frosted Flakes are the Food of the Gods". The water foams up in the sink, overflowing, bubbling on to the strawberry floor. She is about to begin to cry. Her mouth is opening. She is crying. She cries. How can one ever tell whether there are one or many fish? She begins to break glasses and dishes, she throws cups and cooking pots and jars of food which shatter and break and spread over the kitchen. The sand keeps falling, very quietly, in the egg timer. The old man

and woman in the barometer never catch each other. She picks up eggs and throws them into the air. She begins to cry. She opens her mouth. The eggs arch slowly through the kitchen, like a baseball, hit high against the spring sky, seen from far away. They go higher and higher in the stillness, hesitate at the zenith, then begin to fall away slowly, slowly, through the fine, clear air.

P. A. ZOLINE . . .

. . . is twenty-six years old, unmarried, an American art student resident (mostly) in London. "The Heat Death of the Universe" was her first story, published or unpublished, since high school (in California)—written, as it happens, the same month a painting of hers was selected for hanging in a students' exhibit at the Tate Gallery.

After five years of living abroad, Miss Zoline made her first long visit home in the hot summer of 1967:—

From Colorado: Six 'artists-in-residence' were here for the summer: Claes Oldenburg, Dwain Valentine, Allen D'Arcangelo, Les Levine, Bob Morris, and Roy Lichtenstein; a very interesting group . . . The really good artists I've met seem to have a special kind of energy—they generate excitement and spin off ideas all the time. These painters have that quality, Jim Ballard and Eduardo Paolozzi have it, and Tom Disch and John Sladek have it . . . It is a kind of giant and constant conceptualizing, a dominion-taking of the whole world as the landscape of one's mind.

As I just wrote Ballard, *Come To America:* The streets are paved with human flesh, and Science has found a way to im-

plant television receivers within the brain,
thus bypassing awkward external sets and
screens. Come to America! Home.

Happens I got the letter from Colorado just after a one-day trip of my own to Expo 67. There was too much to see, and no time to stand on line for *anything*—so I did not go through Fuller's Dymaxion sphere on foot as I intended, but settled for the minirail ride through the upper levels.

I do not know if that ride lasted for ten seconds or ten minutes, but I should like to know some day, whether it was the most egregious naïveté or a soul-shriveling cynicism that was responsible for the interior design of the American Pavilion.

From the first confrontation with the billboard-size blowup of Elizabeth Taylor, I rode incredulously through a Ballard landscape in tri-di: skew glimpses of day-glo; a yellowcab; mad perspectives of plastic pillars and endless spinning/spilling reels of computer/recording/film/ticker tape. My memories are of peripheral vision impressions. Beyond Elizabeth, and a just-as-larger-than-life Clark Gable, I cannot say what was actually *there*. But when I left, I wrote Jim Ballard: "Do not come to America. One week here might be enough to spoil the clarity of your vision."

The mountain

□ MICHAEL MOORCOCK

The last two men alive came out of the Lapp tent they had just raided for provisions.

"She's been here before us," said Nilsson. "It looks like she got the best of what there was."

Hallner shrugged. He had eaten so little for so long that food no longer held any great importance for him.

He looked about him. Lapp *kata* wigwams of wood and hides were spread around the immediate area of dry ground. Valuable skins had been left out to cure, reindeer horns to bleach, the doors unfastened so that anyone might enter the deserted homes.

Hallner rather regretted the passing of the Lapps. They had had no part in the catastrophe, no interest in wars or violence or competition. Yet they had been herded to the shelters with everyone else. And, like everyone else, they had perished either by direct bombing, radiation poisoning or asphyxiation.

He and Nilsson had been in a forgotten meteorological station close to the Norwegian border. When they finally repaired their radio, the worst was over. Fall-out had by this time finished off the tribesmen in Indonesian jungles, the workers in remote districts of China, the hill-billies in the Rockies, the crofters in Scotland. Only freak weather conditions, which had been part

of their reason for visiting the station earlier in the year, had so far prevented the lethal rain from falling in this area of Swedish Lappland.

They had known themselves, perhaps instinctively, to be the last two human-beings alive, until Nilsson found the girl's tracks coming from the south and heading north. Who she was, how she'd escaped, they couldn't guess, but they had changed their direction from north-east to north and began to follow. Two days later they had found the Lapp camp.

Now they stared ahead of them at the range of ancient mountains. It was three a.m., but the sun still hung a bloody spread on the horizon, for it was summer—the six-week summer of the Arctic when the sun never fully set, when the snows of the mountains melted and ran down to form the rivers, lakes and marshes of the lowlands where only the occasional Lapp camp, or the muddy scar of a broad reindeer path, told of the presence of the few men who lived here during the winter months.

Suddenly, as he looked away from the range, the camp aroused some emotion akin to pity in Hallner's mind. He remembered the despair of the dying man who had told them, on his radio, what had happened to the world.

Nilsson had entered another hut and came out shaking a packet of raisins. "Just what we need," he said.

"Good," said Hallner, and he sighed inaudibly. The clean, orderly nature of the little primitive village was spoiled for him by the sight he had witnessed earlier at the stream which ran through the camp. There had been simple drinking cups of clay or bone side by side with an aluminium dish and an empty Chase and Sanborne coffee jar, a cheap plastic plate and a broken toy car.

"Shall we go?" Nilsson said, and began to make his way out of the camp.

Not without certain trepidation, Hallner followed behind his friend who marched towards the mountains without looking back or even from side to side.

Nilsson had a goal and, rather than sit down, brood and die when the inescapable finally happened, Hallner was prepared to go along with him on this quest for the girl.

And, he admitted, there was a faint chance that if the winds continued to favour them, they might have a chance of life. In which case there was a logical reason for Nilsson's ob-
sessional tracking of the woman.

His friend was impatient of his wish to walk slowly and savour the atmosphere of the country which seemed so detached and removed, uninvolved with him, disdainful. That there were things which had no emotional relationship with him, had given him a slight surprise at first, and even now he walked the marshy ground with a feeling of abusing privacy, of destroying the sanctity of a place where there was so little hint of humanity; when men had been rare and had not been numerous or frequent enough visitors to have left the aura of their passing behind them.



So it was with a certain shock that he later observed the print of small rubber soles on the flat mud near a river.

"She's still ahead of us," said Nilsson, pleased at this sign, "and not so very far ahead. Little more than a day. We're catching up."

Suddenly, he realised that he was displeased by the presence of the bootprints, almost resentful of Nilsson's recognition of their being there when, alone, he might have ignored them. He reflected that Nilsson's complete acceptance of the sex of the boots' wearer was entirely founded on his own wishes.

The river poured down towards the flat lake on their left, clear, bright melted snow from the mountains. Brown, sun-dried rocks stood out of it, irregularly spaced, irregularly contoured, affording them a means of crossing the swift waters.

There were many such rivers, running down the slopes of the foothills like silver veins to fill the lakes and spread them further over the marshland. There were hills on the plateau where trees crowded together, fir and silver birch, like survivors of a flood jostling for a place on the high ground. There were ridges which sometimes hid sight of the tall mountains in front of them, green with grass and reeds, studded with gorse.

He had never been so far into mountain country before and this range was one of the oldest in the world; there were no sharp peaks as in the Alps. These were worn and solid and they

had lived through eons of change and metamorphosis to have earned their right to solitude, to permanency.

Snow still spattered their sides like galaxies against the grey-green moss and rock. Snow fields softened their lines.

Nilsson was already crossing the river, jumping nimbly from rock to rock, his film-star's profile sometimes silhouetted against the clear, sharp sky, the pack on his back like Christian's load in the Pilgrim's Progress. Hallner smiled to himself. Only indirectly was Nilsson heading for salvation.

Now he followed.

He balanced himself in his flat, leather-soled boots and sprang from the first rock to the second, righted his balance again and sprang to the next. The river boiled around the rocks, rushing towards the lake, to lose itself in the larger waters. He jumped again, slipped and was up to his knees in the ice-cold torrent. He raised his small knapsack over his head and, careless now, did not bother to clamber back to the rocks, but pushed on, waist-deep, through the freezing river. He came gasping to the bank and was helped to dry land by Nilsson who shook his head and laughed.

"You're hopeless!"

"It's all right," he said, "the sun will dry me out soon."

But both had walked a considerable distance and both were tiring. The sun had now risen, round and hazy red in the pale, cold sky, but it was still difficult to gauge the passage of the hours. This, also, added to the detached air of timelessness which the mountains and the plateaux possessed. There was no night—only a slight alteration in the quality of the day. And although the heat was ninety degrees fahrenheit, the sky still looked cold, for it took more than the brief six weeks of summer to change the character of this wintery Jotunheim.

He thought of Jotunheim, the Land of Giants, and understood the better the myths of his ancestors with their accent on man's impermanency—the mortality of their very gods, their bleak worship of the forces of nature. Only here could he appreciate that the life span of the world itself might be infinite, but the life span of its denizens was necessarily subject to inevitable metamorphosis and eventual death. And, as he thought, his impression of the country changed so that instead of the feeling of

invading sanctified ground, he felt as if a privilege had been granted him and he had been allowed, for a few moments of his short life, to experience eternity.

The mountains themselves might crumble in time, the planet cease to exist, but that it would be reincarnated he was certain. And this gave him humility and hope for his own life and, for the first time, he began to think that he might have a purpose in continuing to live, after all.

He did not dwell on the idea, since there was no need to.

They came with relief to a dry place where they lighted a fire and cooked the last of their bacon in their strong metal frying pan. They ate their food and cleaned the pan with ashes from the fire, and he took it down to the nearest river and rinsed it, stooping to drink a little, not too much, since he had learned from his mistake earlier, for the water could be like a drug so that one craved to drink more and more until exhausted.

He realised, vaguely, that they had to keep as fit as possible. For one of them to come to harm could mean danger for them both. But the thought meant little. There was no sense of danger here.

He slept and, before he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, he had a peculiar impression of being at once vast and tiny. His eyes closed, his body relaxed, he felt so big that the atoms of his body, in relation to the universe, hardly had existence, that the universe had become an unobservable electron, present but unseen. And yet, intratemporally, he had the impression that he was as small as an electron so that he existed in a gulf, a vacuum containing no matter whatsoever.

A mystic, perhaps, would have taken this for some holy experience, but he could do no more than accept it, feeling no need to interpret it. Then he slept.



Next morning, Nilsson showed him a map he had found in the village.

"That's where she's going," he said, pointing at a mountain in the distance. "It's the highest in this section and the second highest in the entire range. Wonder why she'd want to climb a mountain?"

Hallner shook his head.

Nilsson frowned. "You're in a funny mood. Think you won't have a chance with the girl?" When Hallner didn't answer, Nilsson said impatiently, "Maybe she's got some idea that she's safer on top of a mountain. With luck, we'll find out soon. Ready to go?"

Hallner nodded.

They moved on in silence.

The range was discernibly closer, now, and Hallner could look at individual mountains. Although looming over the others, the one they headed for looked squat, solid, somehow older than the rest, even.

For a while they were forced to concentrate on the ground immediately in front of them, for it had become little more than thick mud which oozed over their boots and threatened to pull them down, to join, perhaps, the remains of prehistoric saurians which lay many feet below.

Nilsson said little and Hallner was glad that no demands were made on him.

It was as if the edge of the world lay beyond the last ragged pile of mountains, or as if they had left Earth and were in a concave saucer surrounded by mountains, containing only the trees and the lakes, marshes and hills.

He had the feeling that this place was so inviolable, so invulnerable, miles from the habitation of men so that for the first time he fully realised that men had ceased to exist along with their artifacts. It was as if they had never really existed at all or that their spell of dominance had appeared and disappeared in practically the same moment of time.

But now, for the first time since he had heard the hysterical voice on the radio, he felt some stirring of his old feeling return as he stared at the great mountain, heavy and huge against the ice-blue sky. But it was transformed. Ambition had become the summit, reward the silence, the peace that waited at the peak. Curiosity was the desire to discover the cause of a freakish colouring half-way up the mountain and fear did not exist for in these enigmatic mountains there was no uncertainty. A vast, wall-less womb with the infinite sky curving above and the richly-coloured scenery, blues, whites, browns and greens,

surrounding them, complete, cutting them off from even the sight of the ruined outside world.

It was a snow-splashed paradise where well-fed wolves left the carcasses of their prey to lap at the pure water of the rivers. A wilderness replete with life, with lemming, reindeer, wolverine, wolf and even bear, with lakes swarming with fresh-water herring and the air a silent gulf above them to set off the smack of a hawk's wing. Night could not fall and so the potential dangers of savage wild-life, which could not be felt in the vastness of a world where there was room for everything, could never be realised.

Occasionally, they would discover a slain reindeer, bones dull and white, its hide tattered and perishing, and they would feel no horror, no emotion at all, for although its obvious killer, the wolverine, was a cruel beast, destroying often for the sake of destroying, the wolverine was not aware of its crime and therefore it was no crime at all.

Everything here was self-sufficient, moulded by fate, by circumstance, but since it did not analyse, since it accepted itself and its conditions without question, it was therefore more complete than the men who walked and stumbled across its uncompromising terrain.

At length they came to the sloping, grass-covered roots of the mountain and he trembled with emotion to see it rising so high above him, the grass fading, parting to reveal the tumbled rock and the rock vanishing higher up beneath banks of snow.

"She will have taken the easiest face," Nilsson decided, looking at the map he had found in the camp. "It will mean crossing two snow-fields."

They rested on the last of the grass. And he looked down over the country through which they had passed, unable to talk or describe his feelings. It possessed no horizon, for mountains were on all sides and within the mountains he saw rivers and lakes, tree-covered hills, all of which had taken on fresh, brighter colourings, the lakes reflecting the red of the sun and the blue of the sky and giving them subtly different qualities.

He was glad they were taking the easiest face for he felt no need, here, to test or to temper himself.

For a while he felt complete with the country, ready to

climb upwards because he would rather do so and because the view from the peak would also be different, add, perhaps to the fullness of his experience.

He realised, as they got up, that this was not what Nilsson was feeling. Hallner had almost forgotten about the girl.

They began to climb. It was tiring, but not difficult for initially the slope was gradual, less than forty-five degrees. They came to the first snow field which was slightly below them, climbed downwards carefully, but with relief.

Nilsson had taken a stick from the Lapp camp. He took a step forward, pressing the stick into the snow ahead of him, took another step, pressed the stick down again.

Hallner followed, treading cautiously in his friend's footsteps, little pieces of frozen snow falling into his boots. He knew that Nilsson was trying to judge the snow field's thickness. Below it a deep river coursed and he thought he heard its musical rushing beneath his feet. He noted, also, that his feet now felt frozen and uncomfortable.

Very slowly they crossed the snow-field and at length, after a long time, they were safely across and sat down to rest for a while, preparing for the steeper climb ahead.

Nilsson eased his pack off his shoulders and leaned against it, staring back at the field.

"No tracks," he mused. "Perhaps she crossed further down."

"Perhaps she didn't come here after all." Hallner spoke with effort. He was not really interested.

"Don't be a fool." Nilsson rose and hefted his pack onto his back again.

They climbed over the sharp rocks separating the two snow-fields and once again underwent the danger of crossing the second field.

Hallner sat down to rest again, but Nilsson climbed on. After a few moments, Hallner followed and saw that Nilsson had stopped and was frowning at the folded map in his hand.

When he reached Nilsson he saw that the mountain now curved upwards around a deep, wide indentation. Across this, a similar curve went up towards the summit. It looked a decidedly easier climb than the one which faced them.

Nilsson swore.

"The damned map's misled us—or else the position of the fields has altered. We've climbed the wrong face."

"Should we go back down again?" Hallner asked uninterestedly.

"No—there's not much difference—we'd have still lost a lot of time."

Where the two curves joined, there was a ridge high above them which would take them across to the face which they should have climbed. This was getting close to the peak, so that, in fact, there would be no advantage even when they reached the other side.

"No wonder we missed her tracks," Nilsson said pettishly. "She'll be at the summit by now."

"How do you know she climbed this mountain?" Hallner wondered why he had not considered this earlier.

Nilsson waved the map. "You don't think Lapps need these? No—*she* left it behind."

"Oh . . ." Hallner stared down at the raw, tumbling rocks which formed an almost sheer drop beneath his feet.

"No more resting," Nilsson said. "We've got a lot of time to make up."

He followed behind Nilsson who foolishly expended his energy in swift, savage ascents and was showing obvious signs of exhaustion before they ever reached the ridge.

Unperturbed by the changed situation, Hallner climbed after him, slowly and steadily. The ascent was taking longer, was more difficult and he, also, was tired, but he possessed no sense of despair.

Panting, Nilsson waited for him on a rock close to the ridge, which formed a narrow strip of jumbled rocks slanting upwards towards the peak. On one side of it was an almost sheer drop going down more than a hundred feet, and on the other the rocky sides sloped steeply down to be submerged in a dazzling expanse of faintly creaking ice—a glacier.

"I'm going to have to leave you behind if you don't move faster," Nilsson panted.

Hallner put his head slightly on one side and peered up the mountain. Silently, he pointed.

"God! Everything's against us, today," Nilsson kicked at

a loose piece of rock and sent it out into space. It curved and plummeted down, but they could not see or hear it fall.

The mist, which Hallner had noted, came rolling swiftly towards them, obscuring the other peaks, boiling in across the range.

"Will it affect us?" Hallner asked.

"It's sure to!"

"How long will it stay?"

"A few minutes or several hours, it's impossible to tell. If we stay where we are we could very well freeze to death. If we go on there's a chance of reaching the summit and getting above it. Willing to risk it?"

This last remark was a sneering challenge.

"Why yes, of course," Hallner said.

Now that the fact had been mentioned, he noted for the first time that he was cold. But the coldness was not uncomfortable.

They had no ropes, no climbing equipment of any kind, and even his boots were flat-soled city boots. As the mist poured in, its grey, shifting mass limiting vision almost utterly at times, they climbed on, keeping together by shouts.

Once, he could hardly see at all, reached a rock, felt about it with his boot, put his weight on the rock, slipped, clung to the rock and felt both feet go sliding free in space just as the mist parted momentarily to show him the creaking glacier far below him. And something else—a black, spread-out shadow blemishing the pure expanse of ice.

He scrabbled at the rock with his toes, trying to swing himself back to the main part of the ridge, got an insecure toe-hold and flung himself sideways to the comparative safety of the narrow causeway. He breathed quickly and shallowly and shook with reaction. Then he arose and continued on up the slanting ridge.

A while later, when the main thickness of the mist had rolled past and now lay above the glacier, he saw that they had crossed the ridge and were on the other side without his having realised it.

He could now see Nilsson climbing with obvious difficulty towards what he had called the 'false summit'. The real summit could not be seen, was hidden by the other, but there was now only another hundred feet to climb.

They rested on the false summit, unable to see much that was

below them for, although the mist was thinner, it was thick enough to hide most of the surrounding mountains. Sometimes it would part so that they could see fragments of mountains, patches of distant lakes, but little else.

Hallner looked at Nilsson. The other man's handsome face had taken on a set, obstinate look. One hand was bleeding badly.

"Are you all right?" Hallner nodded his head towards the bleeding hand.

"Yes!"

Hallner lost interest since it was evident he could not help Nilsson in his present mood.

He noted that the mist had penetrated his thin jacket and his whole body was damp and chilled. His own hands were torn and grazed and his body was bruised, aching, but he was still not discomforted. He allowed Nilsson to start off first and then forced himself on the last stage of the climb.

By the time he reached the snowless summit, the air was bright, the mist had disappeared and the sun shone in the clear sky.

He flung himself down close to Nilsson who was again peering at his map.

He lay panting, sprawled awkwardly on the rock and stared out over the world.

There was nothing to say. The scene itself, although magnificent, was not what stopped him from talking, stopped his mind from reasoning, as if time had come to a standstill, as if the passage of the planet through space had been halted. He existed, like a monument, petrified, unreasoning, absorbing. He drank in eternity.

Why hadn't the dead human race realised this? It was only necessary to exist, not to be trying constantly to prove you existed when the fact was plain.

Plain to him, he realised, because he had climbed a mountain. This knowledge was his reward. He had not received any ability to think with greater clarity, or a vision to reveal the secret of the universe, or an experience of ecstasy. He had been given, by himself, by his own action, insensate peace, the infinite tranquillity of *existing*.

Nilsson's harsh, disappointed tones invaded this peace.

"I could have sworn she would climb up here. Maybe she did. Maybe we were too late and she's gone back down again?"

Hallner remembered the mark he had seen on the glacier. Now he knew what it had been.

"I saw something back on the ridge," he said. "On the glacier. A human figure, I think."

"What? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I don't know."

"Was she alive? Think of the importance of this—if she is alive we can start the human race all over again. What's the matter with you, Hallner? Have you gone crazy with shock or something? *Was she alive!*"

"Perhaps—I don't know."

"You don't—" Nilsson snarled in disbelief and began scrabbling back the way he had come.

"You heartless bastard! Supposing she's hurt—injured!"

Hallner watched Nilsson go cursing and stumbling, sometimes falling, on his over-rapid descent of the mountain. He saw him rip off his pack and fling it aside, nearly staggering over the ridge as he began to climb down it.

Hallner thought dispassionately that Nilsson would kill himself if he continued so heedlessly.

Then he returned his gaze to the distant lakes and trees below him.

He lay on the peak of the mountain, sharing its existence. He was immobile, he did not even blink as he took in the view. It seemed that he was part of the rock, part of the mountain itself.

A little later there came an aching yell which died away into the silence. But Hallner did not hear it, just as the mountain did not hear it.

The last man alive peacefully waited for death.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK:

At twenty-eight, Moorcock has been a freelance writer for thirteen years, and an editor for twelve; he has published twenty-five books, and an unknown number of short stories, under an uncounted number of pseudonyms.

Left school at 15 . . . First sale was a series on Edgar Rice Burroughs for a boys' magazine called *Tarzan Adventures* . . . became editor at 16 and worked on it until 18 . . . got a job doing Sexton Blake Library. Blake is the longest-running detective series in the world—started 1880 and still going.

His first connection with *New Worlds* was the sale of a collaboration (with B. J. Bayley) to founder-editor E. J. Carnell in 1959. A year later, Carnell asked him to try his hand at a 'sword-and-sorcery' series, for *Science Fantasy*, and the now-famous 'Elric' character was born.

. . . Fled to Sweden in 1961 and earned a living playing and singing blues around Scandinavia and other parts of northern Europe . . . Returned to hunt for a girl I'd glimpsed briefly once at a party before I left Sweden—Hilary Bailey—found her, got married in September 1962 . . . In

my spare time I planned a large-size, slick,
modern sf magazine and plotted [literary]
revolution with Jimmy Ballard.

Four years ago, when Roberts and Vinter bought the two magazines, Carnell recommended Moorcock as editor; what has happened since has, literally, made publishing history.

From Brian Aldiss' report on the campaign to save *New Worlds* in 1966:

The appeal went out November 25, 1966. First response came immediately from **Anthony Burgess**—a card saying: "*You're absolutely right and I'm on to the Arts Council right away.*" With only two exceptions, everyone else approached tried to assist the appeal in some way.

New Worlds today is an altogether unique publication: and the astonishment of some of the stuffier intellectual circles in London when the Arts Council announced an annual grant of £1800 for a science fiction magazine (the prestigious *London Magazine* gets £2000, *Transatlantic Review* £1600) was probably no greater than the shock experienced by American fans attending the 1967 World Science Fiction Convention in New York when they had their first look at the transformed magazine of "Speculative Fiction."

Miss Jocelyn Ferguson, for instance, who runs the BBC's **World of Books**, promised to alert all notable SF supporters. **David Carver**, the distinguished General Secretary of **PEN International**, wrote to the Arts Council; so did **Roy Fuller**, the Chairman of the **Poetry Book Society**, and himself a

noted poet and novelist. Support was also forthcoming from **Katherine Whitehorn**, the outspoken columnist of **The Observer**, and from **Kenneth Alsop**, Literary Editor of **The Daily Mail**, and one of the interviewers on BBC-TV's *Twenty-Four Hours*.

The new magazine is quarto size, non-glossy (rather like *The Economist* or *The New Scientist*, except—) with cover art, interior illustrations, and (increasingly) page design to match the most experimental of the fiction, and to suit the sophistication of Chris Finch's articles on avant-garde art and graphics.

Angus Wilson, for a long time champion of SF, wrote to say that as he was on the Committee of the Arts Council, he could not sponsor any requests, but: "You may rest assured that I will give full support when the matter comes up for discussion."

He was sent copies of both magazines. *The Times Literary Supplement* acknowledged my original letter, but pointed out that, since controversy was then filling their columns concerning the role of the Arts Council, it might be a *little indelicate* to support the plea.

As for me, I got my own shock when I saw *New Worlds* selected for listing alongside *Mademoiselle* and *Playboy* in *Transatlantic Review's* back-cover publication credits for an author whose work has appeared in at least a dozen other 'name' periodicals.

J. B. Priestley sent a hearty letter of support, which was forwarded on to the Arts Council. **Bruce Montgomery**, also widely known as novelist and anthologist under

the name of Edmund Crispin, wrote to the Arts Council; it was Crispin who, with Kingsley Amis and Angus Wilson, established SF in Britain on a decent intellectual level in 1954 and 1955.

Moorcock did not make this happen all by himself. He inherited a magazine of distinction, and a situation of enormous potential.

Miss Marghanita Laski, who also supported SF back in 1955, and has herself made distinguished ventures into the fringes of the field, wrote (in the course of a long letter to the Arts Council): "[Science fiction] is a genuinely prophetic literature. The last point I can best demonstrate by reference to my own work as a reader for the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Among the categories of words we are now collecting are, of course, those referring to space exploration, and in almost every case we find we can trace the words used for the realities to an original use in science fiction, sometimes as much as fifty years earlier . . . The contemporary contribution of SF to our vocabulary is enormous."

Without the magnificent interference-running of Brian Aldiss, or Aldiss' own well-earned prestige as critic and author—

Miss Laski was also particularly helpful, putting me on to Professors Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson, both distinguished students of Victorian literature (Mrs. Tillotson is editing the new variorum Dickens):

Without the attention drawn to the magazine by the controversies centered around J. G. Ballard, with whom many readers

identified the magazine, or the active interest of a small group of other top genre 'names' (Brunner, Zelazny, Silverberg, Disch, for example) who offered moral, financial, and public-relations support through the worst days—

Prof. Geoffrey Tillotson:

"As Victorian scholars my wife and I welcome its [science fiction's] carrying on of the older traditions of fiction, in which narrative is supreme, and which has the further interest of having events that take place in a scene that is the result of a real effort of the imagination."

Without the always-under- and sometimes un- paid assistance of Lang Jones, Charles Platt, Douglas Hill, Jim Cawthorn, Hilary Bailey, Pamela Zoline, Claire Walsh, Ann Pohl (and how many more I cannot begin to guess) working on the dummy and first issues of the new-*New Worlds*—

Professor W. H. G. Armytage, author of *A Social History of Engineering*, and long a reader of SF, wrote to the Arts Council in part: "*New Worlds* and *SF/Impulse* provide an important forum for the discussion of ideas about tomorrow, and an admirable carrier of sociological parables, affording common ground for both arts and science students in the universities."

Without the critical acceptance built up over a decade or more by Carnell's enthusiasm and determination on the inside, and the articulate public interest of such spokesmen as C. S. Lewis, Kingsley Amis, George MacBeth, Peter Redgrove, and other prominent 'literary' names on the outside—

These extracts, although they are taken from letters designed to show the usefulness of the function of SF as a quasi-literature, also demonstrate the different attractions SF can have for different readers . . .

Without the dynamic of the 'sibling-competition' 1964-66 period, when gifted young writers were attracted alternately, and sometimes oppositely, to the symbolist quality of the Bonfiglioli/Roberts 'Oxford group' and the surrealist overtones of Notting Hill—

Without the startlingly wide number of 'friends at court' in the media—newspapers, periodicals, radio, and TV—

Without all these, the chances are nothing would have happened, except the predictable death of another science fiction magazine. Without the right *man* in the right place at the right time, nothing else *could* have happened.

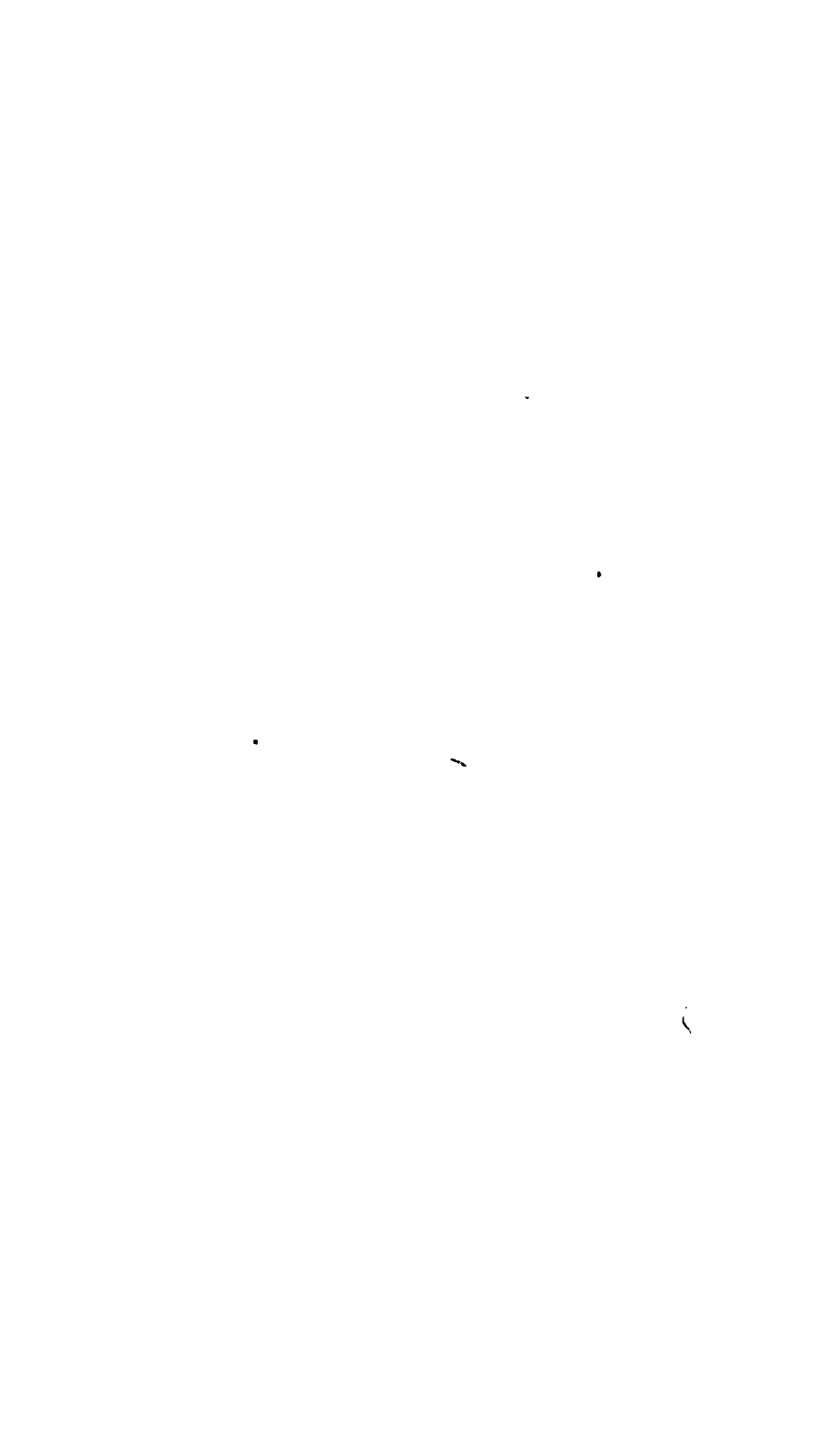
The newsmen who inserted squibs in columns or editorial paragraphs in magazines were people who had started reading sf when they worked with Mike on Fleet Street. And they knew a party at the Moorcocks would justify some press exposure, because Bill Burroughs would be there, or Arthur Clarke, or some visiting American celebrities.

The printers who extended credit or even became temporary publishers did it because they were dealing with a man who knew the production and economics factors and could talk their language—but also had the persuasiveness of a man on a crusade, a man on fire.

The people who sat up all night on the

galley-strewn carpet of Moorcock's clock-filled, rock-and-roll-booming, guitar-bouncing Notting Hill living room/office *enjoyed* themselves: so they came back.

That's what editors are made of.



Psychosmosis

□ DAVID I. MASSON

“One has succumbed in the house by Thorn Thicket, Little Ness,” said Tan, rapidly and shamefacedly, meeting the chunky fellow on the edge of the swamp where Ness had been trapping for some days.

“One of their old ones?”

“No, no, it is the one who was the wife of Kemm; she had a sudden illness.”

“Ah,” breathed Ness, “then we shall have two new namings—or are the wife of Nant and the second daughter of Big Ness already named again?”

“No—it happened an hour ago. You are in time to hear.”

“This was a troublesome death, then—but we shall have fun at the naming-feasts.”

Little Ness found that he was breathing rather quickly. It had been on the tip of his tongue to ask Tan casually “And how’s—?”, for he was interested in Big Ness’s nubile younger daughter. A narrow escape.

The house of Kemm and his parents and old aunts was carefully by-passed by everyone. It had a black cloth stuck on two stakes across its entrance. Nant and Big Ness had seen the way things were going for a day or two and held secret councils in their houses, so they were ready when the black cloth appeared.

Since Nant's wife and Big Ness's second daughter had the same name as Kemm's second wife, they must be re-named at once. As a precaution, Nant had taken to addressing his wife as "wife" at first. She had settled finally for "Mara" which faintly recalled her old name, and Big Ness had persuaded his daughter that "Nura" (which was even closer) would do for her; though he shunned saying or even daring to think so, it recalled his dead wife's name too, which had the same *u*-vowel as well as all the other sounds. A quarter of an hour after Little Ness had heard the news from Tan, Nant and his wife paraded round the settlements banging an old dish and calling out "Nant's wife is Mara. Come to the feast tonight!" Everyone began to mutter "Mara. Mara. Mara" to themselves to memorise the name. Ten minutes behind them Big Ness and his family came hitting two spoons together and shouting "Big Ness's second daughter is Nura—come and see us tonight." The hearers muttered "Nu-*ura*, Nu-*ura*, and debated which house to visit first. They thought there would be more amusement to be had at Nant's house later, on the whole.

Little Ness, however, decided to call first on Nant, so as to have the rest of the evening with the girl whom he must now, with some distaste, think of as Nura. What a name! There he found Nura herself paying a token visit and sliding down her first drink of the evening. They greeted each other self-consciously and remained rather ill at ease. Little Ness did not like to criticise the name directly, but Nura knew instinctively what was wrong. Kemm, walking like a man in a dream, came in on the arm of the doctor, hoarsely greeted Mara by name and touched the proffered (and nearly empty) cup with his lips. Then he and the doctor walked off to Big Ness's, and the company breathed more freely. Presently the doctor, Sull, came in again alone. Everyone knew he had taken Kemm back home. (Parents and aunts were bedridden.) Sull downed several drinks quickly and began to tell one bawdy story after another. Mara and Nura nodded at one another and, escorted by Little Ness (who would now rather have heard the stories) made their way in the bat-haunted dusk to Big Ness's house. As they entered, the dark beauty, Fornia, intertwined with that of Heft (her husband Freth was safely off at Nant's house) was saying loudly "Don't know *how* we manage in the dull old days." After a drink, Mara went back on the arm

of Big Ness, while Tark, his eldest son, played host for the time being.

Little Ness, in whom the drinks were beginning to work, would have liked to get Nura on her own, but it was impossible onight. He stayed to the end, to keep an eye on her, and somewhere in the early morning bade her an amorous farewell outside and lurched homeward. His father was snoring, having got away before midnight from the party.

The doctor Sull, woken an hour or two later by the owls and a rumbling stomach, squinted at the moon, mixed himself a strong tonic, and crept out without waking Skenna. He made his way in the moonlight with a second draught to Kemm's house, stole in without disturbing the old folk, shook Kemm by the shoulder but found him rigidly awake, made him drink the draught, and with him laid the body on the cart at the back. In two hours, luring which neither spoke, they reached the lip of the volcano. The grey dawn was touching the summit as they tipped up the cart and shot the body down the hot cindery slope. Sull, after returning the cart, brought Kemm on to his own house where Skenna gave both men breakfast in silence. Then, as Sull had his wounds to make, she started to take Kemm home. They had not gone far before a confused outcry broke out. Presently a youth came running up. "Mara's husband is gone!" he shouted and sped on.



Nant had spent an uneasy night (or rather, early morning), his brain muddled with alcohol and vague disquiet caused by the too-eager manner of Surt towards Mara that evening. As they stirred in the early rays of the sun he groaned and, out of half-sleep, began:

"I say, Nira—"

Mara shuddered fully awake to find her husband gone. She knew what had happened. A scream formed in her throat. She staggered up, snatching at a cloth. Half a dozen frowzy heads appeared at house doors and windows. "He's gone! He's gone! He said it!" and she collapsed on the ground, beginning a continuously fluctuating moan.

No one came near, but disturbing news was carried fran-

tically from house to house. Fortunately no one had been awake enough to comment on last night's party. Surt, whose interest in Mara was indeed active, decided to keep out of the way, to bide his time. He went fishing for the day.

The sobbing, writhing girl was ignored, with revulsion, by everyone in the community, except, after half an hour, by the doctor. Sull came striding down, sat her up, slapped her vigorously across both cheeks, forced a drink down her throat, and then tried to take her to her parents' house. She shook free and stumbled inside her own door. An hour later her mother, on her way to market, peered inside but did not speak or go in.

That night, exhausted, Mara drifted asleep, only to meet her husband in vivid dreams. He was smiling at her, pulling her along by the arms, leading her down imaginary valleys, up imaginary hillsides. In the morning she woke to the empty reality and in ultimate desperation, as one who falls on a sword, spoke his name. Sull on his rounds found a silent house and, guessing what had happened, warned the community that "The wife who was named but was unlucky is now gone too: a double vanishment."



As the syllable "Nant!" closed in her mouth, Mara felt as it were an edge cleave her brain, a white pang, then she found herself without transition lying on a steeply-falling fern-clad slope, facing the morning sun. The slope was like nothing she knew in waking life: the only hilly country in the Land had been the bare sides of the volcano. Woods and great folded hillsides spread below and across from her. The air was brisk. A wind was pouring down the slope. Gulls called. A squirrel chattered at her from a tree behind her, one of several dotted about the hillside. Voices singing and chattering sounded faintly to south.

After a minute Mara clambered unsteadily towards the voices. Among some trees she came across a group of people, several of whom she knew. There was a middle-aged man who had vanished three years ago, at a feast, shortly after one of his friends had died. There was a girl whose lover had vanished after his brother's death, and who herself vanished shortly thereafter. With the girl was her lover. All nameless now to the People.

"Nira!" called the three joyfully. It was her first name, changed yesterday. But *they* did not vanish. The three left the group and surrounded her.

"You have crossed!" said the girl. "Nant is here. He has been calling you all day and all night. You are here at last; you are one of the Invokers now. Yes, he is waiting for you. Let us take you down to him—it is only a mile or so."

"Are we all dead, then?"

"Not, we are not the Faded; we are the Invokers, we are inside. We spoke the names, in carelessness or defiance, so we crossed."

"They—they know nothing about this world where I was."

"No, but we try. We call. And at night we dream of them, as we dream of the Faded. But they are too circumspect, the Hard of Hearing. Few of them leave the Outside."

"Is he well?"

"He is half-wild, but still hopeful of your coming."

"How do you live here?"

"Just as the Outsiders do. We hunt, we fish, we grow plants, we harvest fruits. It is another land, simply, only Inside. There is nothing all round but the seas, the great waters; you can hear them roar far off. We have never got far out in them. There is no way back. Few of us regret it long."

"We shall not . . . How did those children cross over?" added Nira, seeing a bunch of small ones on a track below them; 'they look too young to have bandied the names of adults about—or did they say a dead brother's name?"

"They didn't cross over—these were born here."

"What are those mounds over there?"

"Burial mounds." And, seeing Nira did not understand: 'Mounds built to cover the bodies of the Faded.'

"Do we not live forever here, then? Or were those people killed by accident?"

"No, no, we simply live a normal life-span. We put the bodies of our Faded in these mounds. Those flowers you see are their birthday flowers for those who were born here, or crossing-day flowers for those that crossed here."

"Do you not remember the days of their deaths, since you think so steadily of the dead?"

"What would be the sense of that? We want to recall the lucky day they came among us, not the sad day they faded from us . . . Let us try calling Nant now." And the girl began shouting downhill through the forest. The others joined. Presently there was an answer. In a few minutes someone came running uphill dodging the boles and tussocks. It was Nant. The others melted away.

When the first ecstasy was over Nant and Nira—he insisted on calling her by her old name—walked hand in hand to the valley, where they meant to build a home not far from one of the clusters of houses. On the way they passed a small grouping of burial mounds. Several were decorated.

"You and I will have crossing-day flowers like these one day—you on one day, I on the next."

"May that be long hence. Our children's children will be there with the first to lay them, I hope. Now we must find something to eat to restore you, pale thing. Then we must get some help to fell the timber for a start. And tonight they will have a guest-house for us. Tonight, too, will be held a specially joyfu celebration for you and me together."

"What shall you do for a living?"

"What should I do but hunt, as I always did?"



A day before the great boar hunt, and a week after the burning of the vanished couple's house and goods, Sull told the community: "The man that was Heft's father has died." No one was surprised—Heft's father had been doddering for some time. Heft had stuck up the black cloth. That evening he and Sull pitched the corpse into the volcano. Heft was avoided for a few weeks though he was already learning to say "The man that was my father" by the time the boar hunt was over. People had become nervous, especially the mothers and fathers of families.

One of the heroes of the hunt was Little Ness's friend Tar. This was because exasperation and self-contempt had made him foolhardy, and he speared and shoved among the ravening beasts like a madman. The fact was, Tan had quarrelled bitterly with Danna, his girl, about half an hour before. She had spoken warmly of "Our two friends who were unlucky after naming, and vai

hed," and Tan, who always felt an irrational dislike of the attractive Nant, accused her of thinking too much of "the man". The colder Danna grew the more blindly enraged Tan became, and they parted as if for good. Once the hunt was on Tan felt himself to have been insanely and pointlessly jealous, and doubted he could ever patch matters up. Hence his "heroism".

Three others would have been heroes of that hunt, but of them only Keth survived. One man died speedily, and his corpse was slung on a pole to be committed to the volcano as soon as convenient. Another, after ten minutes' agony (he had been extensively trampled and gored) bethought himself of a way out and roared out "Nant". He disappeared as the bystanders scattered in horror.

The procession, with Tan and Keth carried shoulder-high among the inverted hanging carcasses, arrived home to a wildly excited mob of women, children and old men. For a tense moment these, who had studiously avoided mentioning names of those away on the dangerous enterprise, heard the news that the first son of Pemf and the second of Rann were gone, then the joyful uproar recommenced.

It was only to be expected that Danna should keep away from the crowd until she heard of Tan's prowess, but he hoped she would come round presently. As the feast developed without sign of her, however, an icy clamp seemed to fasten slowly on his bowels. He fought his way towards an old woman at the back of the green and murmured in her ear: "Tell me, please, is the daughter of Ban and Daaba anywhere to be seen?"

"Why no. I have not seen her today at all."

"Would *they* have seen her, then?"

"Perhaps. Wait." And the old crone ambled over to where Daaba sat balancing a large beaker. Tan saw Daaba shake her head and call across to Ban two rows in front. The huge man rose and lumbered towards her. Daaba whispered to him. Ban roared back at her. Then he shuffled towards Tan, threading his way through the half-drunken featers.

"No," he said unsteadily, meeting the youth's eyes (his own strikingly like those of the missing girl). "No, our daughter spoke to us after the hunt moved off. She was upset over something. Then she walked off down the path."

"Could she have wandered far?"

"I don't think she did. Someone would have seen her. And although she was upset, she was not—you know what I mean—she could not have . . . I am sure . . . Besides there was nothing she could have used, unless a knife. And we missed nothing."

"Or an accident—a wild animal?"

"Let us speak to Forna."

They made their way to where the couple sat, arms around each other's necks, cackling and swaying, not far off.

"Forna!" shouted Tan in the dark one's ear, "Was your old friend that was my friend, my girl, was she in the place all day? Tell me, I must know."

"Eh—oh it's you, you are a hero now, you know. Oh yes, it's odd she isn't here. No; I remember, she was sitting down grumbling to herself about something down by your hut all afternoon. About an hour before the hunt came back I saw her last. Next time I looked, she was gone. Freth—did you see her?"

"No-o!" said her husband.

Tan, followed by Forna and Ban, escaped from the assembly and went round, through and all over his own hut and its neighbourhood. Nothing disturbed within. Nothing gone. A smoky torch showed the ground scuffed up in front of his hut, but there were no obvious recent footmarks. They looked at one another.

"She that was my daughter must have met vanishment. Perhaps she spoke a name of those two—she knew them well," said Ban heavily. "I must warn the rest. Let us go back to the feast."

Tan spent the rest of the night wandering alone round the settlement. He dare not call her name. In the morning he began a search throughout the Land, even wandering among the dust-devils as far as the encircling desert; but to no avail. In his heart he could hear the girl uttering the names of her vanished friends. Estranged from Forna when Forna married the frivolous Frethill at ease with most of the community, too tender-hearted, too thoughtful, she must have felt herself deserted by Tan, and in desperation called on that unlucky pair, and so like them was swept away. Now Tan dare not even think her name. Yet when on the third night he slept he dreamt repeatedly of her, sad, reproachful, hungrily staring at him, calling him, calling.

Of this he could speak to no one. As a hero of the hunt he continued to rate an uneasy slap on the back from men like Left and Little Ness. In the end he drifted back for form's sake to the good cheer and the drinkings of nights, but Ban if they met would stare at him grimly for an instant and turn aside; perhaps he suspected, thought Tan, that there was a quarrel at the back of it; but neither man could even mention the vanished girl now. In truth, Ban was merely avoiding the embarrassment and risk of an encounter that must remind him of his former daughter.)

The recently-vanished couple had made many friends, indeed, whom wine and meat and good company could not entirely distract. Thus it was that impulsive Valla, one day at dinner with her husband (They had married very young more than a dozen years ago) said of a basket she had seen in Sull's house: "You now, it was exactly like the one Mara—"

Vol stood up shouting, scattering platters as he did. The place opposite was empty. Vek was away from home; but he had to be told, and the whole community. No one had to change their name. Vol tried to forget, busying himself with Vek's coming of age, and as for Vek, he was wholly taken up with himself.

It was about a week after that Tan was found standing staring silently at nothing, near the house of Little Ness, one arm half-extended, one heel slightly raised. He stood thus like wood for two hours and then consented to be led away. They penned him up behind Sull's house where an eye could be kept on him, and used to fling him scraps of meat whenever they went by. He raised a few laughs, but most preferred to look aside. In two months he was dead. But his name had long ceased to be spoken.

Vol had successfully outlived his dreams of the woman who had been his wife, but in waking he found her memory growing rather than diminishing. Five months after her disappearance, with Vek safely launched, he found himself sleepless one night and in agony called Valla's name.

A cold slice cut through his brain and he felt a gravelly ank about him, while the stars (different stars) twinkled. "This is death," he thought, but by the time morning came and his stiffness made him all too aware of his body, he knew it was no death. He was on the bare neck of a long drumlin, grass-

covered, on the midst of a rolling vale. Above him on both sides rose ferny and foresty slopes, the nearest a couple of miles away. Far behind and above them there gleamed mysterious white shapes, which Vol could not interpret. Water chattered over stones not far off. The birds skimmed and screamed overhead. A continuous faint murmuring roar rose and fell far off downhill. Movement glimpsed upstream showed him where the settlement was.

When he had hobbled up to it, there was Mara, there was Nant, there was Danna, with a new darkness in her eyes, but a new boy; there was even Vaata, whom he remembered as a lass, much older now but still recognisable. There were many others he had once known, but somehow different. He realised the truth almost at once.

"Where is Valla?" he shouted at them. "I have come through! Where is Valla?"

"They are at the flower ceremony for poor old Somm," called a young girl, anxious to show off her knowledge.

"Come, Vol, you are going to have some trouble; come, dear boy," said an old woman he had forgotten or had never seen, taking his hand firmly; "come with me and listen carefully; steel yourself; you have been too long among the Hard of Hearing."

At this moment, in a grave group of people advancing down the hill, Vol saw Valla. She was hand in hand with a tall man, a stranger. The truth burst upon him. With a cry he sprang forward.

The people encircled the three, who stood, as though of stone, face to face a few paces from each other.

"Yes, Vol, you would not come. So few come anyway from the Hard of Hearing. I married Tel here. I am sorry. It is too late. I am going to bear his child."

Wheeling round Vol broke through the group, and fled up river. Eventually he found the gorge, where he threw himself over. They found his body on the rocks beneath the sombre crags, and carried it back and buried it. On the anniversary of his crossing Valla and her husband (and half the settlement) used to load his mound with rich flowers, and chant their saddest songs. On this first occasion the whole community, singing, escorted them back to their house, and with a long chant bidding Valla think of

the future and of her coming child and seeking to reconcile her to herself, took farewell of them for that day.

"That is the most terrible crossing I have ever known or heard of," said Losp to Mek as they were walking away.

"Yes indeed. Though all crossings are painful at first. The careless-mouthed children are the most difficult: I saw two—long ago. But they have grown up all right among us."

"Kush is a pretty unsatisfactory fellow, all the same."

"Well, yes; he is hard and moody. But one of the worst crossings till now was poor Gal's, wounded in the boar hunt Outside. He'd expected a quick release, but he came Inside only to die in pain."

"Still, he had Doctor Lann to help him. But it was a bitter end."

"We have had rather many crossings lately, but in general they are getting fewer, don't you think?"

"Yes, the Hard of Hearing are getting harder. But we invokers have more children than they have, according to report: our numbers are growing steadily that way. Look at us two: at least third-generation Invokers."

"Fourth-generation: the latest of *my* ancestors to cross over was a great-grandmother of mine. And Menga knows of none of her ancestors that were not born Inside . . . Where *is* that woman?—still gossiping with the other wives back there . . . By the way," (with a wry smile) "our burial mounds are becoming too thick on the ground, as the old fade out. We shall have to build them further off, and on barren ground. I must raise the matter next Council . . . But here is your house. I shall try and pluck Menga from the old wives' party! Good day to you, and fine hunting."

"And a good crop to you!"

* * *

In the Outside, the Hard of Hearing heard the volcano begin to rumble for the first time in living memory.

DAVID I. MASSON . . .

. . . was born in Scotland during World War I, and educated at Oxford University.

Profession: Rare-book librarian.

Avocation: Learned articles, chiefly on sound in poetry of various languages, in American, British and European periodicals, symposia and encyclopedias.

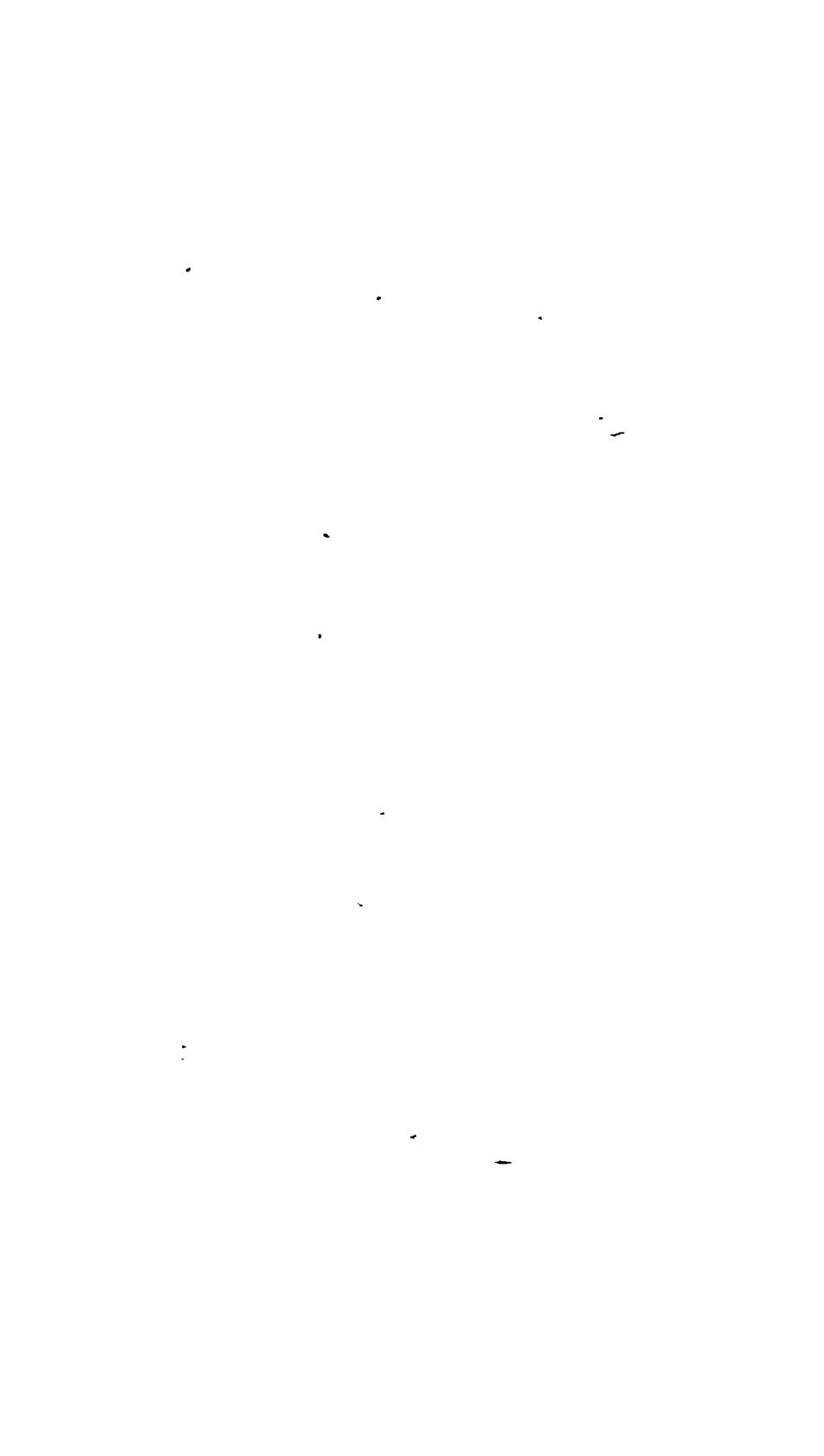
Special interests: Linguistics, literature, scientific information, landscape.

Masson's first published short story, "Travellers' Rest," was included in both *The World's Best Science Fiction: 1966* and the 11th Annual *Year's Best SF*. Half a dozen others have appeared since, all in *New Worlds*, and all seven are included in *The Caltraps of Time*, published earlier this year by Faber and Faber.

To write imaginatively is important: trend-following is not. Not a dedicated reader of SF, I only warm to a small proportion of what I see. However, as regards genres, I am clear that quasi-prediction is out. There is still a future for satire, for indignation, for humour, for the imaginative spotlight on human nature, and above all for a neo-mythology, the symbolization of a hidden truth about life.

I admire the earlier Ballard and agree that SF is about inner space not outer space, but his atomized, self-parodying, non-sense, surrealist later work, which indeed reads aloud better than on the page, points rather to some sort of poetry. It reads like an attempt to construct a numen from the contemporary junkyard: perhaps we are all doing that in the waste-land of the 1960's?

Blish has been and Disch may well be, our white hopes. The best short SF stories ever written include *He Walked Around the Horses*, *Flowers for Algernon*, *A Case of Conscience* (Part I), and *Common Time*. Despite some good stuff, most longer SF is the poorer for being long; one gets bored or infuriated with the set-up. SF should be the inspired illustration of an un-uttered epigram, bizarre but compelling.



The idea of entropy at Maenporth Beach

□ PETER REDGROVE

"C'est elle! Noire et pourtant lumineuse."

To John Layard

A boggy wood as full of springs as trees.
Slowly she backed into the mud.
It was a white dress, she said, and that was not right.
Leathery polished mud, that stank as it split.
It is a smooth white body, she said, and that is not right,
Not quite right; I'll have a smoother,
Slicker body, and my golden hair
Will sprinkle rich goodness everywhere.
So slowly she backed into the muck.

If it were a white dress, she said, with some little black,
Dressed with a little flaw, a smut, some swart
Twinge of ancestry, or if it were black
Since I am white, but—it's my mistake.
So slowly she descended, all pleated, into the muck.

The mud spatters with rich seed and ranging pollens.
Black darts up the pleats, black pleats
Lance along the white ones, and she stops
Swaying, cut in half. Is it right, she sobs
As the fat, juicy, incredibly tart muck
Rises round her throat and dims the diamond there?
It is right, so she stretches her white neck back
And takes a deep breath once and a one step back.
Some golden strands afloat pull after her.

The mud recoils, lies heavy, queasy, swart.
But then this blubber stirs, and quickly she comes up
Swiftly ascending in a brimming pat,
Dressed in a mound of lickerish earth
That grows tall, and smooths out hips, and steps up
Upon flowing pillars, darkly draped.
And—then the blackness breaks open with blue eyes
Of this black Venus rising helmeted in night
Who as she glides grins brilliantly, and drops
Swatches superb as molasses on her path.

Who is that negress running on the beach
Laughing excitedly with teeth as white
As the white waves dropping, dazzled, to the sands?
Clapping excitedly the black rooks rise
Running delightedly in slapping rags
She sprinkles substance, and the small life flies:

She laughs aloud, and bares her teeth, and cries:
Now that I am all black, and running in my riches
And knowing it a little, I have learnt
It is quite wrong to be all white always;
And knowing it a little, I shall take great care
To keep a little black about me somewhere.
A snotty nostril, a mourning nail will do.
Ah, watch, she runs into the sea. She walks
In streaky white on dazzling sands that stretch
Like the whole world's pury mud quite purged.
The black rooks coo like doves, new suns beam

From every crystal of the shattered rock,
From every droplet of the shattered waves.
Drenched in the mud, pure white rejoiced,
From this collision were new colours born,
And in their slithering passage to the sea
The shrugged-up riches of deep darkness sang.

PETER REDGROVE . . .

. . . was educated at Taunton School and Queens' College, Cambridge, to which he won Open and State Scholarships in Natural Sciences. He has been visiting poet at Buffalo University, New York, and for three years was Gregory Fellow in Poetry at Leeds University. After this he spent a year as Visiting Tutor to Bretton Hall College, near Wakefield, and is at present Lecturer in Complementary Studies at Falmouth School of Art.

—or so his publishers elected to describe him on the jacket flap of his latest collection, *The Force and Other Poems* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). An interview by Mary Holland in *Queen* magazine gives a rather different view:—

Redgrove's background is un-arty. He was born and educated in London, read science at Cambridge. "Well, if you were at all good at the sciences, the school pushed you that way. I expect they still do and boys who would like to be reading poetry are studying chemistry. It wasn't until I started falling in love that I realized that crystallography just wasn't enough to express the sum of human experience. I don't think I ever thought about writing poetry before . . . I felt completely cut off from any poetic or literary set at Cambridge. It tends

to be made up of mutually exclusive worlds and I just felt I was a clumsy scientist. But I started a poetry magazine called *Delta*, which is still going now. Isn't that incredible, a poetry magazine?"

—to which I must add immediately that he is a brown belt in Judo, a *large*, solid man, a pounder of tables in pubs, a dedicated viewer of horror films and bad science fiction movies, devoted husband and father, and rarely-gifted teacher. I spent two mornings wallowing in the contents of his library last year; and in rare rushed letters, over several years past, he has probably done more to open new avenues of reading for me than any other source since the Boston Public Library when I was eleven. As for instance, from a recent letter—

—I have six new files of information, just beginning. One is called "The Tree Looks at Us" and is about Herbalism and rades-
hesia, among other things. The one about Jesus is called "Prime" from Blake's "Ever-
lasting Gospel": "What was he doing all that time/Between age of twelve and manly prime?". Have you read "Science and ESP" Ed. Smythies (Routledge) and "Science, Philosophy and ESP" by Mc-
Creery (Faber)? Both v. good. The world picture is changing; we await a new Co-
pernicus to put all the bits together; Bal-
lard quotes Jung in *The Overloaded Man* collection about the ending of the Platonic Year; I myself have found his finest work in this volume: three stories, "The Venus
-hunters", "Time of Passage" (particularly), and (in a different way) "Escapement",

which nearly made me pass out, though it's written as per pulp mag. There is more to him than the hypnotic elegy of "The Crystal World", that hypnotically cadenced style which I myself find not just lulling but blurring . . . he can perhaps be great—

Same autumn in
a different park

☐ PETER TATE

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP FOUR

DARLING DASH DAMN THESE TELETYPES COMMA THEY
TAKE ALL THE WARMTH OUT OF A CONVERSATION STOP DARLING
DASH I DON'T CARE HOW STUPID IT LOOKS IN PRINT COMMA I'M
STILL GOING TO SAY IT STOP DO YOU THINK OUR CHILDREN ARE
REALLY RIGHT FOR THIS SELF-SUPPORT BUSINESS QUERY I MEAN
COMMA WE'RE NICE PEOPLE STOP WHAT HARMFUL INFLUENCES
ARE WE GOING TO EXERT ON THEM QUERY ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA FOUR

HONEY COMMA TRY TO ACCEPT VERNACULAR DASH ALSO
FINDINGS OF COMMISSION ON UPBRINGING RE EVILS OF PARENT
OBLIQUE CHILD INTERCOURSE STOP I QUOTE PAR ONE EIGHT (18)
SUB HYPHEN SECTION L (L) COLON

QUOTE IT HAS BEEN NOTED FROM DEPOSITIONS OF JUNIOR
JUDICIARY PANEL MEMBERS THAT INSTANCES OF CHILD MISDE-
MEANOUR ARE SEVEN TIMES BRACKET OUT OF REPRESENTATIVE
TEN BRACKET DIRECTLY RESULTANT FROM PARENTAL FAILURE
COMMA ID EST COMMA PREVIOUS AND PROVEN CRIMINAL TENDEN-
CIES OF HEREDITARY NATURE COMMA DISCERNIBLE MORAL IN-
ADEQUACIES COMMA RELUCTANCE TO ADMINISTER VITAL CHAS-
TISEMENT SEMI HYPHEN COLON AND TWO POINT NINE SEVEN RE-

CURRING (2.97%) TIMES TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS COMMA
 EXEMPLI GRATIA COMMA RICH HOME COMMA POOR HOME COMMA
 SPOILED CHILD COMMA CROWDED OUT CHILD STOP BRACKET SEE
 FOOTNOTE

FOOTNOTE STATES COLON

APPARENT EXISTENCE OF TWO EXTREMES COMMON TO SAME
 CONDITION SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS CONTRADICTION STOP CON-
 DITION ONLY SERVES ALL MORE TO ILLUSTRATE INADVISABILITY
 OF SUBJECTION OF MINOR TO ADULT INFLUENCE OF ANY FORM
 ENDS UNQUOTE HONEY COMMA NOW YOU KNOW STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP FIVE

BUT WHY DO WE REPEAT WE HAVE TO BE APART QUERY
 WHY DO WE HAVE TO SPEND OUR LIVES IN THESE LITTLE CUBICLES
 MANOEUVERING DREAMS QUERY ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA FIVE

BECAUSE INEVITABLE DISCUSSION OF METHODS WOULD
 YIELD ONLY CONFUSION STOP EACH OF US MUST GIVE OF HIS
 BRACKET AND HER BRACKET BEST STOP MASCULINE AND FEMININE
 UTILITIES ARE CLEARLY DEFINED STOP SEEK COMFORT FROM
 FACT THAT ALL OVER SHELTERCHILD SITE HUSBANDS AND WIVES
 ARE SO PARTED STOP RE DREAMS QUERY COMMA IS IT NOT BETTER
 TO BE IN POSITION TO MAGIC UP CHILD DREAMS AND DESIRES THAN
 TO HAVE THEM BENT BY TOO MUCH TELEVIDEO AND TOO MUCH
 JOHNNY ACTION TOYSHIP QUERY ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP SIX

WHAT ABOUT LOVE REPEAT LOVE QUERY

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA SIX

LOVE OF US QUERY LOVE OF CHILDREN QUERY BE EXPLICIT
 COMMA HONEY STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP SEVEN

LOVE OF CHILDREN COMMA OF COURSE STOP CHILDREN
 MUST HAVE LOVE STOP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA SEVEN

THOUGHT YOU MEANT US STOP SO YOU ARE GETTING EMOTIONAL AGAIN STOP REMEMBER SENTIMENTALITY ONLY LEADS TO EXAGGERATED VALUES COMMA IS THEREFORE HARMFUL DASH AND INNECESSARY STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP EIGHT

IF I HAD MEANT US COMMA IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN INNECESSARY COMMA I SUPPOSE STOP LOVE IS PREROGATIVE OF DULTS STOP COSY STOP I DON'T LIKE YOU STOP

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA EIGHT

YOUR ATTITUDE MERELY PROVES ACCURACY OF COMMISSION FINDINGS STOP TYPICAL OF DOMESTIC SQUABBLE LIKELY TO UNBALANCE RESIDENT CHILDREN STOP NO MORE TO BE SAID STOP NDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP NINE

I STILL SAY CHILD NEEDS LOVE DASH AND SUCKS TO COMMISSION STOP ENDS

* * *

Tina mounted the bird, of yellowing privet and rode at the speed of a gentle breeze along the top of the hedge.

The fine high wall of shrub followed the whole meandering perimeter of the garden, shifting at will to encompass its unhartable moods.

Borne upon a product of its leaves, Tina crossed humpback bridges over unopening gates and skirted great green spinning top creations.

It had been a magnificent idea. Tina thrilled even now to its ingenuity as she jogged on, invisible and ever-watchful of the bowers and half-hidden spinnies for some sign of Addison.

Once she thought she saw him standing near an MR booth, but she could have been mistaken. The molecular recomposition units had an inherent hallucinatory property. Nothing in their region was ever quite what it appeared. Or it NEED not be.

So it was with Tina. Skipping as usual, having again evaded

Addison in the maze, she had come upon the garden boundary with its topping of foliate heraldry.

How much better to ride, she thought. On a bush bird. She entered an adjacent cubicle and dialled.

Behind the rejig controls, the unit searched for a common codon, translating the DNA code of the Tina gene into the messenger-RNA template required for the new triplet base, forming the attendant spiral.

Then it fed in simulant functions—respiration-photosynthesis, sepalody-glandulation. It stored a little of this, paid out a little of that, until the body was the bird and the mind was a pure psychomotor, balanced astride in the conscious guise of a rider.

An off-shoot of the hedge ran inward, following a path Tina did not recognise and she determined to veer right and follow it.

But she did not anticipate any effort and she was past the turn, bewildered, before she realised the difficulty.

She was a motile, vivacious and thinking and dreaming in terms of action. It took a little time for her to work out her predicament.

Her muscular distribution and her tensile qualities had been deposited at the MR unit. Which meant that her only mode of movement now was the wind, presently whitening the leaves spasmodically, and any telekinetic surge she could will from her doubly-impulsive mind.

She felt annoyance and stamped an imaginary foot. Her idea had suffered a setback. It was no longer brilliant. It was no longer even bearable.

The bird jerked fitfully along the hedgetop until it came to another MR unit and promptly disintegrated. It took all Tina's meagre strength to dial her genetic home-code, "G . . I . . R . . L."

In a remote corner of the garden, Addison wandered. Just today, he was Addison.

It was a new game and they were still on the As. Correction—he was still on the As. The girl cared for no such discipline. She fancied a name, picked it and pinned it to her. Today, this day, this now, she was Tina. Probably.

Already, he was beginning to feel a discomfort low down

his virus-resistant stomach. If he had known the word, he would have called it "foreboding."

The setting was idyllic. They did what they pleased, which was little enough in any event. Sometimes, they walked together long the avenues, naming the trees; but more often, pursuing each other throughout the shifting co-ordinates of the garden.

And there was this early uneasiness. If he had known the word, he would have called it "apprehension."

The pursuit was a matter of Ideas and Tina—if she were still Tina—was the one with the Ideas. This was not as it should be, Addison thought. He preferred the walks, she the chases.

Whenever they were together, her eyes darted hither and thither like humming-birds. Then, when they came to a molecular jig unit, she would enter quickly, dial a code and be gone, crawling like a caterpillar, drifting like a leaf.

The unit, a miraculous device programmed against impossibility, nevertheless set a restriction on its activities. The dialling had to register originality. A second-hand idea produced no response.

Addison (before he was Addison) had spent a number of aytimes moving about the MR regions, seeking some tangible link with a power source. There was none—he was sure of that. The machines had to operate by a wave pattern or an encephalographic principle.

If he were to stay with the girl, he must think as she thought. And even then, the very fact that two of them shared an impulse made it redundant.

He had to think ahead of the girl—or else chase butterflies hopelessly or ignore the challenge altogether, wandering as he wandered now.

Despite the pain of her presence, the garden was no fun without the girl. Somehow, he had to out-manoeuvre her.

* * *

DD9/SHCHLD HQ REF MM9 SNAP NINE

APOLOGIES FOR REMARKS RE COMMISSION STOP WIVES
RE COMMA AS YOU SO RIGHTLY POINT OUT COMMA RATHER
MORE EMOTIONAL THAN IS GOOD FOR THEM STOP I SHALL
COUNSEL HER STOP REMARKS GUIDE REQUESTED STOP ENDS

SHELTERCHILD HQ/DD9

SUGGEST YOU SAY NO MORE RE SUCKS REMARK STOP HQ
IS ABOVE FEELING OFFENCE FROM MM9 OUTBURST STOP DIRECT
MM9 THOUGHTS TO VALUE OF TEACHING CHILDREN HORROR OF
COMMA FOR INSTANCE COMMA NUCLEAR WAR AND FASHION
GARDEN ACCORDINGLY STOP ENDS

DD9/SHCHLD HQ

THANKS FOR GUIDE STOP POST HYPHEN WAR PHASE
ACTIVATED STOP END

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP TEN

CO HYPHEN OPERATION REQUIRED FOR N WAR SYMBOLISM
PHASE STOP TRUST THAT THIS IS ACCEPTABLE TO YOU STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA NINE

ANTI HYPHEN WAR CONCEPT ACCEPTABLE SINCE IT RE-
QUIRES LACK OF HATE STOP IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN OFFER
QUERY ONLY DOUBT DASH IS FRIGHT RIGHT WAY TO BANISH
AGGRESSIVE INSTINCTS QUERY STILL SAY LOVE STOP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP ELEVEN

NO TIME FOR HALF HYPHEN BAKED FEMALE PHILOSOPHY
STOP FOR NOW COMMA JUST DO AS YOU ARE DAMNED WELL
TOLD STOP ENDS

It all began with the strontium doll. Tina found the pitiful bundle lying in the middle of the path. She picked it up and then thrust it from her hastily, repelled by the charred clothing and palsied limbs.

Some sleep-fed reflex told her dolls should be pink, rounded, well-frilled.

"It is a victim toy."

She nodded to acknowledge the intelligence, unsurprised at its prompt emergence since she had never known any inadequate pause, any barrenness of expression.

After that first time, she and Addison found many such playthings, placed rather than scattered about the garden.

Addison stumbled on a curious construction of cold black

slimy steel, running his hand along the tube, moving the butt almost unconsciously to his shoulder while an itch started up in the first crook of his right index finger.

"It is a laser gun."

Always the voice that sounded so much like his own, yet spoke of things he could not possibly know.

Then there were the mutants—terrible creatures of withered limb and disarranged features, explosive body chemistry and harmonic disharmony.

Addison and Tina came upon them together and found a new but short-lived closeness in shared nausea.

"These are the overkill people."

Two voices like their own, explaining, explaining.

When they opened their eyes again, the mutants had gone and their purpose had been served.

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP TWELVE

I HAVE WITHDRAWN POST HYPHEN BOMB PHASE AND
CHILDREN ARE RESTING STOP TIME FOR SLEEP FEED STOP PLEASE
ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADVISE OF SLEEP FEED PROGRAMME STOP
ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA TWELVE

SO WE ARE SPEAKING AGAIN COMMA ARE WE QUERY
ACKNOWLEDGE SLEEP FEED STOP PROGRAMME EXCESSIVE VIVID
PROMPT OF RIGHT HYPHEN WRONG STOP SUBJECT BOY STOP
AND I STILL THINK LOVE MATTERS STOP ENDS

* * *

Addison stirred on his bed of leaves and heard an attendant rustle a few feet distant. Tina—still Tina?—was back. He listened for some sign of wakefulness but heard only the even rise and fall of her breath.

He rose silently and tiptoed to where she lay, squatting and looking down on her sleeping face.

When peace had smoothed some of the lines of youthful determination from her brow, she looked more like her ten years.

When he was fortunate enough to find her in genuine slumber and not just feigning sleep until he turned away and

she slapped his calves, he often sat just so, trying to piece together some kind of beginning for himself.

She had not always been with him—at least, he did not think so. Certainly, the whole time they had been in the garden, they had been together. But when he hovered protectively—in the face of what?—over her sleeping form, he could pick out recollections as insubstantial as thistledown of locations and places which might have been memories but might just as easily have been dreams.

Tonight, for instance, his mind moved along streets in a city of prisms, where some eternal sun at horizon height cast a million paths for him to follow, and as many broad patches of shadow where he could find an illicit coolness and a refuge from the spectral rays which coloured this strange rainbow city, dappling his hands and his moving back.

For miles, it seemed, he had been following a violet trail, stepping from one pin-width of light to another to find some constant path that would take him wherever about the city that he wanted to go. But then the violet way petered out into darkness.

He stepped onto a nearby green way and kept to it as best he could, weaving among the great glass edifices. More miles before a broad, unnavigable belt of shadow separated him, at one extreme of the green band, from its continuation.

He saw no other person in all his journeyings hither and thither across the city; but something moved within the shadow. Something which had a loud voice and many feet but used them all silently.

He stepped onto a sweet blue walkway and went weaving again among the prism dwellings which carried only a yellow light at their apex and washed the wide, trafficless, formless, directionless streets with a showerfall of primary hues.

The blue trail ended. As did the red. Addison found himself, face pressed against one prism, trying to see beyond it, to perceive the yellow light that hung like a sun at its core.

Like a sun.

He must get the sunward side of the city, but how?

He tried, knowing full well that he would not succeed, to scale the prism, but his hands and feet slipped and were done on the smooth sides.

Then he must go round the prism. And there was shadow away from the focal points, where the colours radiated across the patchwork spaces.

He began to edge his way cautiously along the wall, his eyes fixed on the yellow core. He felt the increasing weight of the darkness on his back.

The something that inhabited the darkness raised its voice to a whisper, to a million million whispers that set his skin crawling and his ear-drums fluttering as though a breeze played through his head.

He was around the side of the prism now but the weight was not lifting. He moved fast but not too fast in case he should trip and take his eyes from the glowing core, which was changing to a horizontal shaft.

"Fall . . . fall . . . it is not bad to fall . . ."

His fingers traced the line as though it were some braille umbilicus and by and by he was at the back of the prism and a clear golden road stretched across the darkness to guide his feet. He embarked upon it, strolling purposefully into the eye of the sun.

* * *

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP THIRTEEN

RETURNING CHILDREN TO YOUR DIRECTION STOP SCHEDULE
SAYS FREE EXPRESSION STOP OF COURSE COMMA I DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU HAVE IN MIND STOP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA THIRTEEN

SCHEDULE GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME STOP HOW LONG DO
YOU INTEND TO KEEP THIS UP QUERY ANIMOSITY GETS THROUGH
ON MOTIVATION PARAMETERS STOP DON'T THINK ME COMMA
THINK MOTHER STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP FOURTEEN

THINKING MOTHER STOP ENDS

* * *

Tina stirred uneasily, summoning Addison to his outer world. Shortly, she sat up and gazed at him curiously with wide eyes.

"Where were you this afternoon?" she asked. "I looked for you. I had the most marvellous Idea."

"You wouldn't have been able to tell me," said Addison and looked down upon his crossed legs. "Ideas don't speak. At least, not your sort of Ideas. They may buzz a little at times, or develop a scent of bougainvillea . . ."

"Well, I'll tell you now. I was a bush bird."

The full meaning was not immediately apparent to Addison.

"But you've been a bird before . . ."

"NOT made of privet," countered Tina with a gesture of pride. "I went right round the garden on top of the hedge."

"Did you . . ." Addison checked himself; a vague guilt had been born a minisec behind the question.

Now Tina was watching him, almost defying him to complete it, as though the broken sentence, the hesitation, was an indication of inferiority.

He shrugged the doubt away. "Did you see any of the outside?" he asked quickly.

Only when she reflected on it did Tina realise that she had not once turned her eyes away from the garden.

"There was some kind of sight-shield," she lied and then, just in case he should clamber up the hedge and look, she qualified her answer. "It is nothing visible. It is some kind of strong undesire to turn the eyes to unfamiliarity."

"You didn't look." This time, at least, Addison could see through the deception.

"I COULDN'T look. Try yourself."

She knew he wouldn't take up the challenge now that he could believe she had lied; he would not care to be seen taking that much notice of her pronouncements.

Back on his bed of leaves, he wondered why the unknown bothered him so. Surely he had everything he wanted.

But then, how did he know what he wanted until he knew what there was to have? And did the unknown bother him because it WAS unknown and for no other reason?

He cried quietly. A six-year-old knows no other way out of frustration.

Tina, hearing his distress, found her hand straying again to the scar on her left side. It was a habit, she supposed, like the way she enjoyed the feel of a leaf's sharp edge between her

fingers or folded into the palm of her hand; like the way Addison still sucked his thumb occasionally.

There was some connection between Addison and that scar. She stroked it to comfort him, incapable of any other consolation.

Gradually, his sobbing receded. She thought he had fallen asleep, until he said:

"Why don't we know anything about the Outside? I mean—if we know it's there, why aren't we told anything about it?"

"It's a matter of obedience," said a voice like Tina's. "A matter of doing what we are told."

"But what are we told?"

"We are told not to concern ourselves with the Outside."

"But why?"

"Because," said Tina.

"Because what?"

"Because, because."

"That's stupid."

Addison leapt to his feet and moved across to Tina. For a moment, she thought he was going to strike her, and indeed he was until his programmed serenity won control and he stood above her awkwardly, swaying from side to side.

"That's stupid," he repeated limply.

"There are good reasons—you must be content with that."

"But what are those reasons?"

Tina pulled him down beside her and put a sisterly arm around his shoulder.

"I don't know," she said, and felt him go tense with returning annoyance. "I know only that they are good reasons and that that should be enough for us. Perhaps further knowledge is . . . harmful."

"Perhaps it's something to do with the strontium doll . . ." Addison entered into the speculation and felt better. "And the overkill people and the . . . the"—again a curious guilt made him hesitate—"the laser gun."

"Something it is better for us not to know," said Tina conclusively. Addison nestled against her. "All right," he said.

A little later, he asked another question, drowsily—"Why were you here first?"

Tina found her hand moving back to the scar below her ribs.

"Sometimes, disobedience springs out of lack of responsibility. That was what happened before . . ."

But Addison's head lolled suddenly and Tina knew he had no word of her explanation. She heard it alone.

* * *

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP FOURTEEN

I NOTED A HOSTILITY READING FROM THE BOY LAST NIGHT
STOP I THINK HE NEEDS TO BE SHOWN LOVE STOP I AM NOT
TRYING TO PROLONG THE ARGUMENT COMMA DARLING COMMA
BUT I AM AFRAID THAT HIS NEED MAY FIND ANOTHER OUTLET
STOP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA FOURTEEN

CONFIRM HOSTILITY READING STOP WHAT BOY NEEDED
WAS ANSWERS STOP REPORT EXISTENCE OF INHERENT IMPATIENCE
STOP GIRL COULD SHOW RECONCILIATION STOP CAN I LEAVE TO
YOU QUERY ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP FIFTEEN

I AM SURE YOU ARE WRONG STOP LOVE IS ALL ANSWER
HE WANTS STOP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA FIFTEEN

REPORT IMPATIENCE DASH OR I WILL STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP SIXTEEN

BLIND BULLY STOP ENDS

The children breakfasted on the usual nuts and fruit, complemented with a filling cereal they found in a seeming never-ending store in the dwelshel.

"Who are you today?" the boy asked the girl. He allowed her first choice habitually because he liked to know where he stood—for the first few moments of the day, at least. After that, she would probably add further to his frustrations. She would not keep to the disciplines they had shared at the outset—spas-

modically he remembered a better time and this was what he understood by the outset—and he felt a new indignation at each fresh infringement.

"No. You must be first," answered the girl. She waited, forming an "A" silently with her lips.

"Why?"

"For a change."

"So you can try some other trick on me."

"For a CHANGE," said the girl emphatically. "I'm ALWAYS first. I want you to be first so that we'll know where we are and we can play together all day."

The boy pondered the new arrangement.

"'Able,' he said finally. "'Able' because I can do anything."

"'Able'? Or 'Abel'?"

"What's the difference?" the boy asked innocently.

Since he had asked there was no need to answer.

"Just a joke," said the girl.

He regarded her suspiciously. "Now you."

"I think I'll take a little time to think about it. I'll let you know."

"That's not fair. I told you my name. Now you must tell me yours. How can we get in touch with each other?"

"I'll get in touch with you."

"It's not fair. You don't even stick to the As . . ."

He sat hunched in his rustic chair, sulking. "You don't make it much fun for me. You should, you know. You have a duty."

The regretful words, dropped unsubtly into the conversation, caused the girl a twinge of conscience.

What he had said was true, perhaps more true than he knew. She did have a duty to him. As yet it was still obscure; but she knew with certainty that she must deter him from any whim that might endanger their existence in the garden.

While she exulted in her own Ideas, made her own enjoyment out of her superior capacity to use the garden's strange gifts, he was left alone.

He was younger and less likely to reconcile himself to the

life, building his own satisfaction within the meandering hedges; more likely to look for diversions and not always the wise ones.

She recollected how his finger had begun to curl around the trigger of the laser gun.

The younger you were, the more difficult it was to be strong—because you had no reason to try and could understand no cause.

She watched him now with a certain warmth. The soft curve of his cheek, the slight snubness of nose, the pursed perfection of his presently-petulant mouth—it all filled her with a weak-knee quality she could not comprehend.

"All right," she said. "I'll promise. I shall be an A all day. See if you can find me."

She rose quickly from the table and paused as she passed his chair to run her fingers through his curls. He turned his head away angrily.

"You don't want me," he said.

The words hurt her. "How can you say that? You know—"

"I'm a burden to you. You can't have things the way you want them because you have to think of me. So you try to deceive me all the time. You try to be cleverer. I know, Well, I'm sorry. I'd go away, but you won't tell me how."

"I don't know how." The girl bit back the words. She had reacted only to his last comment when sense told her she should have considered the whole of his outcry. But if she stopped to think, it would be too late.

"Oh, so you'd let me go." It was too late already. "You're all I've got and you want me to go. Fair enough. I hate you."

"Boy," she said gently. "Able . . . I didn't mean it like that . . ."

But Able (just today, he was Able) was gone down the path, hiding his reddening eyes.

The girl gathered up the platters and vessels and carried them back into the dwellshel. The exchange had shaken her. She was not at all sure what she could do.

As she stacked the crockery in the ashbox, she went over the dialogue again, concentrating on what she had said to Able.

She had promised to be an A all day. She had invited him to find her. Perhaps, if she made it a little simple for him . . .

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP SEVENTEEN

AM RECEIVING ANXIETY PATTERN FROM GIRL STOP BOY
JUST BE SHOWN SHE DOES NOT MEAN WHAT HE THINKS SHE
MEANS STOP ADVISE YOU USE MINDSWEEP SO HE CAN FORGET
OP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA SEVENTEEN

NO STOP MINDSWEEP WOULD ONLY FACILITATE MATTERS
FOR GIRL STOP CONTEND UP TO GIRL TO MAKE MOVE STOP
BOY TOO YOUNG TO ACCEPT CONCEPT THAT TAKING BLAME IS
ONE OF LEAST RESISTANCE STOP ENDS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SNAP EIGHTEEN

QUIT BEING SMART STOP BOY MAY HAVE NOW PASSED BE-
YOND STAGE WHERE APOLOGY WOULD SUFFICE STOP SUBMIT IT
IS NOT FAIR TO GIRL TO EXPECT HER TO KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW
OP ENDS

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD ANSA EIGHTEEN

TELL HER THEN STOP ENDS

The path down which Able disappeared in such haste led directly to the school zone. There was an MR unit in the classroom to facilitate their physics studies. She could place herself there—for a while at any rate.

Once inside the booth, she dialled A . . L . . P . . H.

The unit slotted her request into the calcium programme and she felt the chemistry beginning its chain.

Alphabet peered down from the blackboard with her twenty-eyes, but there was no sign of Able within the school precinct moving in the parkland visible through the window.

She waited for an hour and then willed the chalk characters from the board and drifted the dust into the booth for composition.

She tried the recreation runs next, waiting while the local unit shunted her formula into the resin bank and then lying, bent head down, in a quiver for another hour before allowing breeze to direct her feather flights back to the booth.

Then she turned her steps to the playground, but again. At was not in the room. She departed A . . . B . . . A . . . C . . . and waited while both parties and without show a search with made her a wooden frame with gaudied wires which could brightly continued carrying beads.

But Alice did not come. Even though she finally found a presence of spirit and called his name until her throat was up Alice did not come.

THE NEW NEW WHOLESALE SHOP

THE NEW NEW TO EXTREMES TO CONVINCE THE SHOP
SUCCEED THE FASTER WITH REPEAL WITH ACT SHOP SOME

THE NEW NEW WHOLESALE SHOP

PROHIBITING WAS PROPER VIOLENCE WITH SHOCKING
THEY DON'T HAVE SHOP ALL UNDER CONVICTION SHOP SOME

Alice did not come because he knew she was looking for him. He heard her shouting, but instead of responding, found a mechanical toy was in a distant corner of the park and used his two wires on the dial.

First, he fingered out B . . . A . . . I . . . E

The machine went dead. The silence which followed was no more on a definite personality.

"You shall not kill," he heard himself say. "You shall not kill."

An unseen hand propelled him forth across the garden. He stumbled on the stationary dial.

"He was a victim too."

He found the laser gun suddenly in his right hand.

"This is a killer."

The mutants barred his path and he fell upon his knees before them, disarmed by the sudden withdrawal of the laser. "These were killed without firing. These were dead when they still drew breath."

Then the force picked him up again and carried him to "You shall not kill. You shall NOT kill."

Unconsciously, he was back in the South, kneeling at

ghtened. It was as though some person watched how his
gers moved on the dial.

"I shall be an A all day," the girl had said.

He dialled A and his imagination failed him. He tried to
. . B . . C . . D as proof of his desire to obey, but his
rvous fingers slipped on the digits.

Instead, he dialled A . . B . . A . . D. And all restraint
d hesitation withdrew with a terrible sigh, like an agonised
eze through bare, wounding branches. But the machine clicked
d hummed its inevitable way.

A . . B . . A . . D . . D . . O . . N

The boy felt his mind bulked with horrific knowledge; his
art extinguished with cold water; his fearful tears dried before
y could surface. Of an instant, he knew the easy beauty of
darkness and the tainted deviations of the prisms.

* * *

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD RUSH TWO

BOY HAS JAMMED MY OUTPUT STOP DON'T ASK NOW
OP AM NO LONGER IN EMPATHY WITH HIM STOP GIRL MUST
PEAT MUST CONTAIN HIM UNTIL I CAN RENEW CONTACT STOP
DS

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD SPEC TWO

AM PUTTING GIRL TO FLIGHT STOP IF BOY IS ANGRY SHE IS
T GOING TO BEAR BRUNT STOP I TOLD HOW TO CONTROL HIM
OP MAKE YOUR OWN CONTACT STOP ENDS

Abaddon laughed. He considered the garden. He revelled
the limitlessness of his own devilment. He strode purposefully
ough the vegetation, trampling it before him.

The girl had found her way to the MR booth in the shadow
the hedge where she had ridden the day before. Now, she
ld hear the thrashing progress of some thing, a sound that
ne ever nearer.

Able was taking his spite out on the garden. It must be he.
She must avoid him. But how? And should she still play,
fairness to him, in a last bid to appease him?

She would change. He would pass her by. But at least she

would have retained her good intention. Her thoughts fled the classroom, to the wall-chart there.

"A is for Apple. A is for Apple."

MM/DD REF SHELTERCHILD RUSH THREE
I FEAR FOR GIRL STOP I WARNED YOU STOP

DD/MM REF SHELTERCHILD SPEC THREE
DON'T WASTE MY BLOODY TIME WITH THREATS STOP
WILL WORK OUT STOP ENDS

The rolling apple touched Abaddon's foot as he walked. He picked it up and polished it while he looked for the tree from which it had fallen.

Then he sank his teeth into it, deliberately ignoring the small scar that marked its glistening surface and amusing himself with the scream that seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth and filter through the crowded chambers of his brain.

He threw the core down carelessly on the grass very close. After that, the gates out of the garden opened easily.

MM/DD UNSPECIFIED
CHILD KILLER STOP I WILL GET YOU STOP ENDS

SHELTERCHILD HQ/DD9 CLASSIFIED

WE HAVE RECEIVED GRAVE COMPLAINT FROM MM9 STATING YOU DELIBERATELY ENGINEERED DEATH OF GIRL AND BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DESTROY STOP STUDY OF YOUR TAP REVEALS MM9 PERSISTENTLY WARNED YOU OF NEED FOR SUTLER METHODS BRACKET LOVE STIMULUS BRACKET STOP WHY DID YOU NOT CONTACT US FOR ADVICE QUERY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THIS WAS MERE BAD JUDGEMENT ON YOUR PART STOP SHELTERCHILD PROJECT NOW BECOMES RIDICULOUS STOP COMMISSION OF UPBRINGING DEMANDS YOUR SCALP COMMA MY RESIGNATION STOP WHAT IS YOUR EXPLANATION DASH AND IT HAD BETTER BE MEMORABLE QUERY ENDS

DADDY9/SHCHLD HQ RE MUMMY 9 CLAIM
BOYS WILL BE BOYS STOP ENDS

ER TATE . . .

. . . was born in South Wales approximately thirty years ago, and left Cardiff High School for Boys at sixth-form level to become a trainee journalist on the South Wales *Echo*.

er six months, I was given a district to
er . . . the Rhondda Valley, which is
bably the most mixed-up, time-tied,
bivalent and retrospectively lovable
lge of land (two valleys, two rivers, a
en villages with many common denom-
ors and not a few entirely individual
ts) outside America.

He was married in 1959, and returned to the *Echo's* Cardiff headquarters, where he ran the gamut of feature writing, show business coverage, book reviewing, etc., and is now a senior sub-editor.

ture work in South Wales is probably
re interesting than most places in the
ld with the possible exception of India.
ture writers seem to produce their best
k when observing a tragedy and South
les has never been short of trage-
s . . .
redilection for foreign travel (particu-

larly Italy) shared by wife, Lesley Patricia, and son, Mark, aged seven. Like art, music (ancient and modern) and pottering around bookshops hoping to find something by me though I know I haven't written it yet—am I living ahead of time? Also an inveterate drummer on table tops and resounding surfaces, a throw-back to the late, great days of rock and roll when I played semi-professionally.

His first short story, "The Post-Mortem People," was published in *New Worlds* 1966 (and will appear in the United States shortly in *SF:12*). "Same Autumn" is the only story in this volume originally published in America, in *Fantastic*, which he earlier reprinted his story, "The Thinking Seat." (A novel of the same title is now being completed for publication by Doubtless next year.)

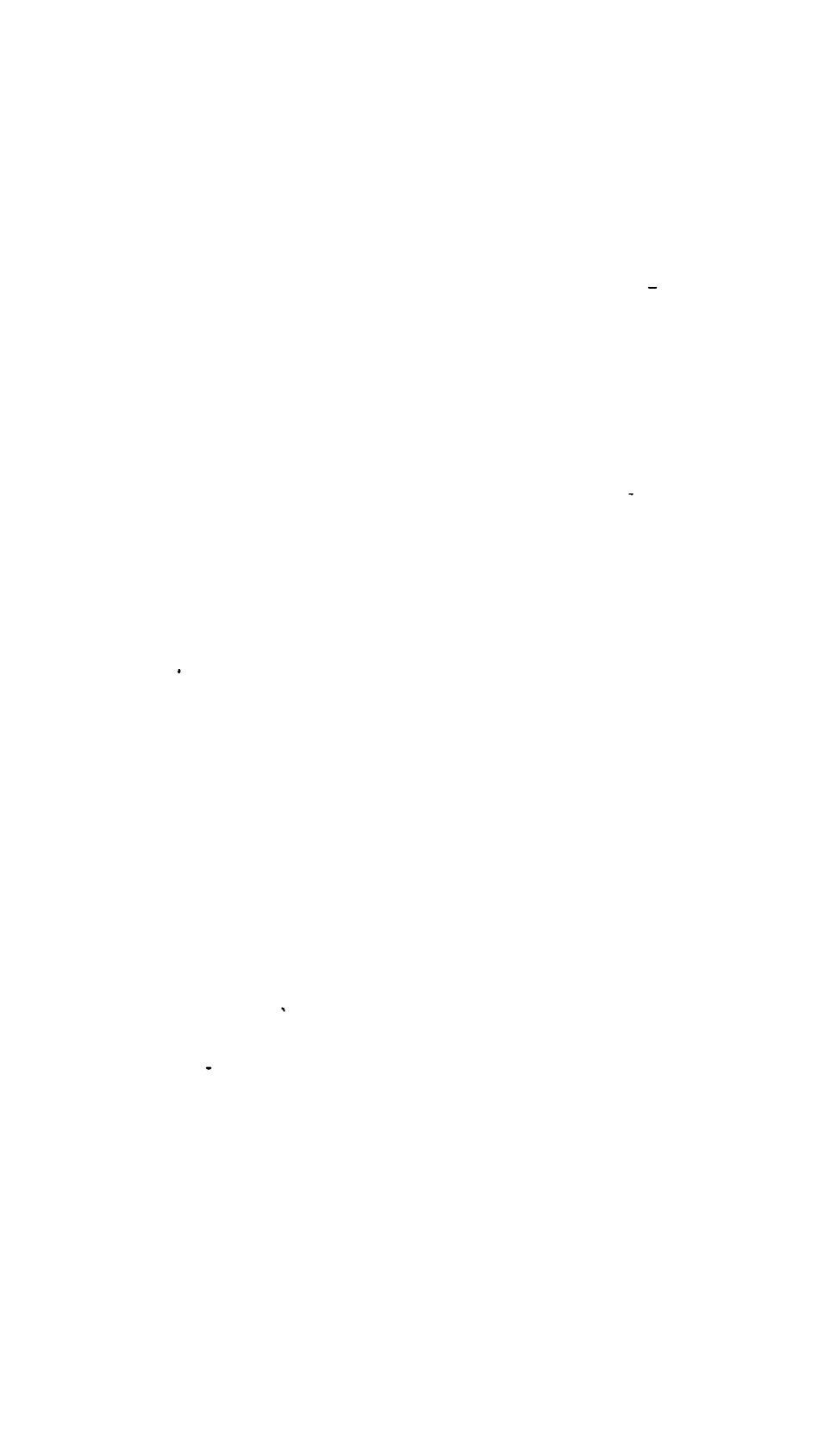
—So British writers are speaking with a new voice. Then they want to take care what they're saying . . .

It is possible for a science-fiction writer to be topical; to produce in his works (like Jim Ballard) an appreciation of current affairs which reads like good, incisive journalism. It is more than possible, it is necessary . . .

Progress is problematical. Much of the time, the world heads itself in the wrong direction. A science-fiction writer, a speculative writer (there is little difference in my interpretation) should be able to see what can lie at the end of the great technological rainbow. And if it isn't a crock of gold,

is his to say so. The SF man is one of the
town-criers left . . .

The scenery may change. The season of
the comes round year after year. The
way to stop it is to recognize it.



The assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy considered as a downhill motor race

□ J. G. BALLARD

AUTHOR'S NOTE. The assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963, raised many questions, not all of which were answered by the Report of the Warren Commission. It is suggested that a less conventional view of the events of that grim day may provide a more satisfactory explanation. In particular, Alfred Jarry's "The Crucifixion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race" gives us a useful lead.

Oswald was the starter.

From his window above the track he opened the race by firing the starting gun. It is believed that the first shot was not properly heard by all the drivers. In the following confusion Oswald fired the gun two more times, but the race was already under way.

Kennedy got off to a bad start.

There was a governor in his car and its speed remained constant at about fifteen miles an hour. However, shortly afterwards, when the governor had been put out of action, the car accelerated rapidly, and continued at high speed along the remainder of the course.

The visiting teams. As befitting the inauguration of the first production car race through the streets of Dallas, both the Pres-

ident and the Vice-President participated. The Vice-President, Johnson, took up his position behind Kennedy on the starting line. The concealed rivalry between the two men was of keen interest to the crowd. Most of them supported the home driver, Johnson.

The starting point was the Texas Book Depository, where all bets were placed on the Presidential race. Kennedy was an unpopular contestant with the Dallas crowd, many of whom showed outright hostility. The deplorable incident familiar to us all is one example.

The course ran downhill from the Book Depository, below an overpass, then on to the Parkland Hospital and from there to Love Air Field. It is one of the most hazardous courses in downhill motor-racing, second only to the Sarajevo track discontinued in 1914.

Kennedy went downhill rapidly. After the damage to the governor the car shot forward at high speed. An alarmed track official attempted to mount the car, which continued on its way, cornering on two wheels.

Turns. Kennedy was disqualified at the Hospital, after taking a turn for the worse. Johnson now continued the race in the lead, which he maintained to the finish.

The flag. To signify the participation of the President in the race: Old Glory was used in place of the usual chequered square. Photographs of Johnson receiving his prize after winning the race reveal that he had decided to make the flag a memento of his victory.

Previously, Johnson had been forced to take a back seat, as his position on the starting line behind the President indicates. Indeed, his attempts to gain a quick lead on Kennedy during the false start were forestalled by a track steward, who pushed Johnson to the floor of his car.

In view of the confusion at the start of the race, which resulted in Kennedy, clearly expected to be the winner on past form, being

forced to drop out at the Hospital turn, it has been suggested that the hostile local crowd, eager to see a win by the home driver Johnson, deliberately set out to stop him completing the race. Another theory maintains that the police guarding the track were in collusion with the starter, Oswald. After he finally managed to give the send-off Oswald immediately left the race, and was subsequently apprehended by track officials.

Johnson had certainly not expected to win the race in this way. There were no pit stops.

Several puzzling aspects of the race remain. One is the presence of the President's wife in the car, an unusual practice for racing drivers. Kennedy, however, may have maintained that as he was in control of the ship of state he was therefore entitled to captain's privileges.

The Warren Commission. The rake-off on the book of the race. In their report, prompted by widespread complaints of foul play and other irregularities, the syndicate lay full blame on the starter, Oswald.

Without doubt Oswald badly misfired. But one question still remains unanswered: who loaded the starting gun?



Homage to Abraham Zapruder: at what point does the plane of intersection of these faces and the cleavage of Jacqueline Kennedy generate a valid image of the glazed eyes of Chiang Kai Shek, an invasion plan of the offshore islands?

Plan for the assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy

□ J. G. BALLARD

IN HIS DREAM OF ZAPRUDER FRAME 235

MOTION picture studies of four female subjects who have achieved worldwide celebrity (Brigitte Bardot, Jacqueline Kennedy, Madame Chiang Kai Shek, Princess Margaret), reveal common patterns of posture, facial tonus, pupil and respirator responses. Leg stance was taken as a significant indicator of sexual arousal. The intra-patellar distance (estimated) varied from a maximum 24.9 cm (Jacqueline Kennedy) to a minimum 4.2 cm (Madame Chiang). Infra-red studies reveal conspicuous heat emission from the axillary fossae at rates which tallied with general psychomotor acceleration.

TALLIS WAS INCREASINGLY PREOCCUPIED

ASSASSINATION fantasies in *Tabes Dorsalis* (General Paresis of the insane). The choice of victim in these fantasies was taken as the most significant yardstick. All considerations of motive and responsibility were eliminated from

the questionnaire. The patients were deliberately restricted in their choice to female victims. Results (percentile of 272 patients): Jacqueline Kennedy 62%, Madame Chiang 14%, Jeanne Moreau 13%, Princess Margaret 11%. A montage photograph was constructed on the basis of these replies which showed an 'optimum' victim. (Left orbit and zygomatic arch of Mrs. Kennedy, exposed nasal septum of Miss Moreau, etc.) This photograph was subsequently shown to disturbed children with positive results. Choice of assassination site varied from Dealey Plaza (49%) to Isle du Levant (2%). The weapon of preference was the Mannlicher-Carcano. A motorcade was selected in the overwhelming majority of cases as the ideal target mode, with the Lincoln Continental as the vehicle of preference. On the basis of these studies a model of the most effective assassination-complex was devised. The presence of Madame Chiang in Dealey Plaza was an unresolved element.

BY THE FIGURE OF THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE

INVOLUNTARY orgasms during the cleaning of automobiles. Studies reveal an increasing incidence of sexual climaxes among persons cleaning automobiles. In many cases the subject remained unaware of the discharge of semen across the polished paintwork, and complained to his spouse about birds. One isolated case reported to a psychiatric after-care unit involved the first definitive sexual congress with a rear exhaust assembly. It is believed that the act was conscious. Consultations with manufacturers have led to modifications of rear trim and styling, in order to neutralise these erogenous zones, or if possible transfer them to more socially acceptable areas within the passenger compartment. The steering assembly has been selected as a suitable focus for sexual arousal.

THE PLANES OF HER FACE, LIKE THE

THE AROUSAL potential of automobile styling has been widely examined for several decades by the automotive industry. However, in the study under consideration involving 152 subjects, all known to have experienced more than three involuntary orgasms with their automobiles, the care of preference was found to be (1) Buick Riviera, (2) Chrysler Imperial, (3) Chevrolet Impala. However, a small minority (2 subjects) expressed a significant preference for the Lincoln Continental, if possible in the adapted Presidential version. (Q.v. conspiracy theories.) Both subjects had purchased cars of this make and experienced continuing erotic fantasies in connection with the trunk mouldings. Both had a strong unconscious identification with the figure of Oswald and preferred the automobile inclined on a downward ramp.

CARS OF THE ABANDONED MOTORCADE

CINE-FILMS as group therapy. Patients were encouraged to form a film production unit, and were given full freedom as to choice of subject matter, cast and technique. In all cases explicitly pornographic films were made. Two films in particular were examined: (1) A montage sequence using portions of the faces of (a) Madame Ky, (b) Jeanne Moreau, (c) Jacqueline Kennedy (Johnson oath-taking). The use of a concealed stroboscopic device produced a major optical flutter in the audience, culminating in psychomotor disturbances and aggressive attacks directed against the still photographs of the subjects hung from the walls of the theatre. (2) A film of automobile

accidents devised as a cinematic version of Nader's "Unsafe at Any Speed." By chance it was found that slow-motion sequences of this film had a marked sedative effect, reducing blood pressure, respiration and pulse rates. Hypnagogic images were produced freely by patients. The film was also found to have a marked erotic content.

MEDIATED TO HIM THE COMPLETE SILENCE

MOUTH-PARTS. In the first study, portions were removed from photographs of three well-known figures: Madame Chiang, Elizabeth Taylor, Jacqueline Kennedy. Patients were asked to fill in the missing areas. Mouth-parts provided a particular focus for aggression, sexual fantasies and retributive fears. In a subsequent test the original portion containing the mouth was replaced and the remainder of the face removed. Again particular attention was focussed on the mouth-parts. Images of the mouth-parts of Madame Chiang and Jacqueline Kennedy had a notable hypotensive role. An optimum mouth-image of Madame Chiang and Mrs. Kennedy was constructed.

OF THE PLAZA, THE GEOMETRY OF A MURDER

SEXUAL behaviour of witnesses in Dealey Plaza. Detailed studies were conducted of the 552 witnesses in Dealey Plaza on November 22 (Warren Report). Data indicate a significant upswing in (a) frequency of sexual intercourse, (b) incidence of polyperverse behaviour. These results accord with earlier studies of the sexual behaviour of spectators at major automobile accidents (= minimum of 1 death). Correspondences between the two groups studied indicate that for the majority of the spectators the events

in Dealey Plaza were unconsciously perceived as those of a massive multiple-sex auto-disaster, with consequent liberation of aggressive and polymorphously perverse drives. The role of Mrs. Kennedy, and of her stained clothing, requires no further analysis.

'But I won't cry till it's all over.'

J. G. BALLARD—II:

Both assassination pieces were first published in *Ambit*, of which Ballard is now Prose Editor. The pastiche of Jarry's "The Passion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race" had established some sort of record for being apparently-lost-in-mail during earlier submissions to American publications, but it attracted no great public outcry when it was published in *Ambit* ~~29~~ about the same time *MacBird* came to London. The Jacqueline Kennedy piece in ~~31~~ was another matter.

ROW OVER STORY ON
MRS. KENNEDY

The American Embassy is considering asking the Arts Council why it pays £100-a-year subsidy to a magazine named *Ambit* whose current issue carries an article entitled "Plan for the assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy."

A spokesman said yesterday that someone had written to the Ambassador, Mr. David Bruce, saying he was "disgusted and revolted" by the article, and thought the subsidy a "disgrace."

Ambit (circulation 2,000) is edited by Martin Bax, a north London children's doctor, and backed mainly by his own money.

The writer of the article is Mr. J. G. Ballard, author of a number of books which

critics have reviewed with awe, reserve and perplexity . . .

"You mustn't take the plan literally," Mr. Ballard said. "The story is about the popular image of Jacqueline Kennedy as translated through all the television, newspaper and magazine media.

"These images of public figures become mixed up and reverberate with each other." . . .

Mr. Charles Osborne, assistant literary director of the Arts Council, said: "I've read the article and take no exception to it myself. Is there anything wrong with sexual climaxes or cleaning automobiles?"

—*Sunday Telegraph* (London)
May 21, 1967

The next *Ambit*, #32, failed to infuriate, but drew more press notice.

The science fiction novelist, J. G. Ballard, has an original attitude towards the subject of advertising. He wants to stop writing novels and concentrate on writing advertisements promoting abstract ideas.

His first appears on the back page of the poetry quarterly, *Ambit*. It is a photograph of a girl's head, and half a dozen lines of text which might well persuade readers they were being led down the garden path. "But it is all completely serious," Mr. Ballard assures me.

The *Ambit* ad is one of a series of five which advance the propositions:

1, that his girlfriend, Miss Claire Churchill, the girl in the picture, is very beautiful and ought to be desired by everybody.

2, that there is a significance to the angle between two walls.

3, That there is a thing called a neural

interval, which is a moment that sits up and says "Hello, World."

4, That Princess Margaret is the sexiest woman in London, and

5, That Ralph Nader, the American lawyer, and Barbara Castle, in their emphasis on road safety, are acting as the enemies of sexuality.

"I'm dealing with very abstract ideas, and all of these ideas have to be sold. I'm trying as a writer to sell a product. If I cast a story in conventional fictional terms, it's accepted by those who see it in a magazine only as one of a whole range of fictional outpourings.

"But if I take an advertisement, people are much more tuned in. Anyway, by taking an advertisement a writer preserves his moral authority. It's a completely virgin continent for the creative writer.

"Troubadors used to sing for their girls. Now they should take an advertisement."

—*Evening Standard* (London)

July 24, 1967

The back cover of *Ambit* №33 carried second ad, containing a rather more controversial piece of photography; but real troublemaker this time was inside magazine.

AMBIT'S GAMBIT

The literary grants bestowed by the Arts Council, which has £60,000 to hand out in this way each year, are supposed to be without strings. But the avant-garde magazine "Ambit" is in danger of losing its recently-voted grant of £120 . . .

"Ambit" has gone too far by setting a competition in which writers are asked to

submit works written under the influence of drugs . . .

"Ambit's" editor is a doctor, Martin Bax, who's assured Eric White that the competition is both serious and responsible. Writers, he says, have experimented with drugs for years, and it would be valuable to find out with what results.

The competition was actually set by J. G. Ballard, who also offers a prize of £25 to the winner . . .

Ballard asked the Arts Council for £1,000 to back a personal advertising campaign in which he hopes to feature a nude on Westminster Abbey's high altar, a motor crash, and Princess Margaret's left armpit. "Advertising is the medium that people are tuned into. But they were just considering my application when the Kennedy piece appeared."

It took them a very short time to say no.

—"Atticus", by Philip Oakes
The Sunday Times, London
 October 16, 1967

Frivolous? Only on one level, and any consideration of J. G. Ballard cannot afford to neglect the multiplex character of everything he does.

Between the ads and the press interviews, and sessions with the experimental film group who are filming "You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe" (another of the new pieces, which will see its first U.S. publication in *SF:12* and later in a collected volume of Ballard's *New Pieces* to be published by Doubleday) and the BBC group working on the "Sound Sweep" opera, he continues to turn out the dense, poetic surreal/collage "condensed novels" which form the basic substance of his current work.

Readers—and other writers—are variously repelled or enraptured by Ballard's work: hardly any are indifferent, particularly—as has been evident—other writers.

I will leave the last words here to Thomas Disch, from his taped message to America last year:—

I think the most impressive of the people I've met has been J. G. Ballard, for whom I feel a great respect. I have been compared with Ballard for past efforts of mine and at that time I'd never read his work. I only started reading it a while before I came to England and then I got caught up very much and was quite astonished that anybody could write science fiction this good . . . He seems to me one of the most courageous writers nowadays. Not necessarily within the field. He's the only writer who seems to me to consistently surpass the field and stand outside it . . . His example is very inspiring for a young writer because it says you can go absolutely as far as your guts can carry you.

ACE RECOMMENDS . . .

LORDS OF THE STARSHIP by Mark S. Geston	49250 — 50¢
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