

# new worlds

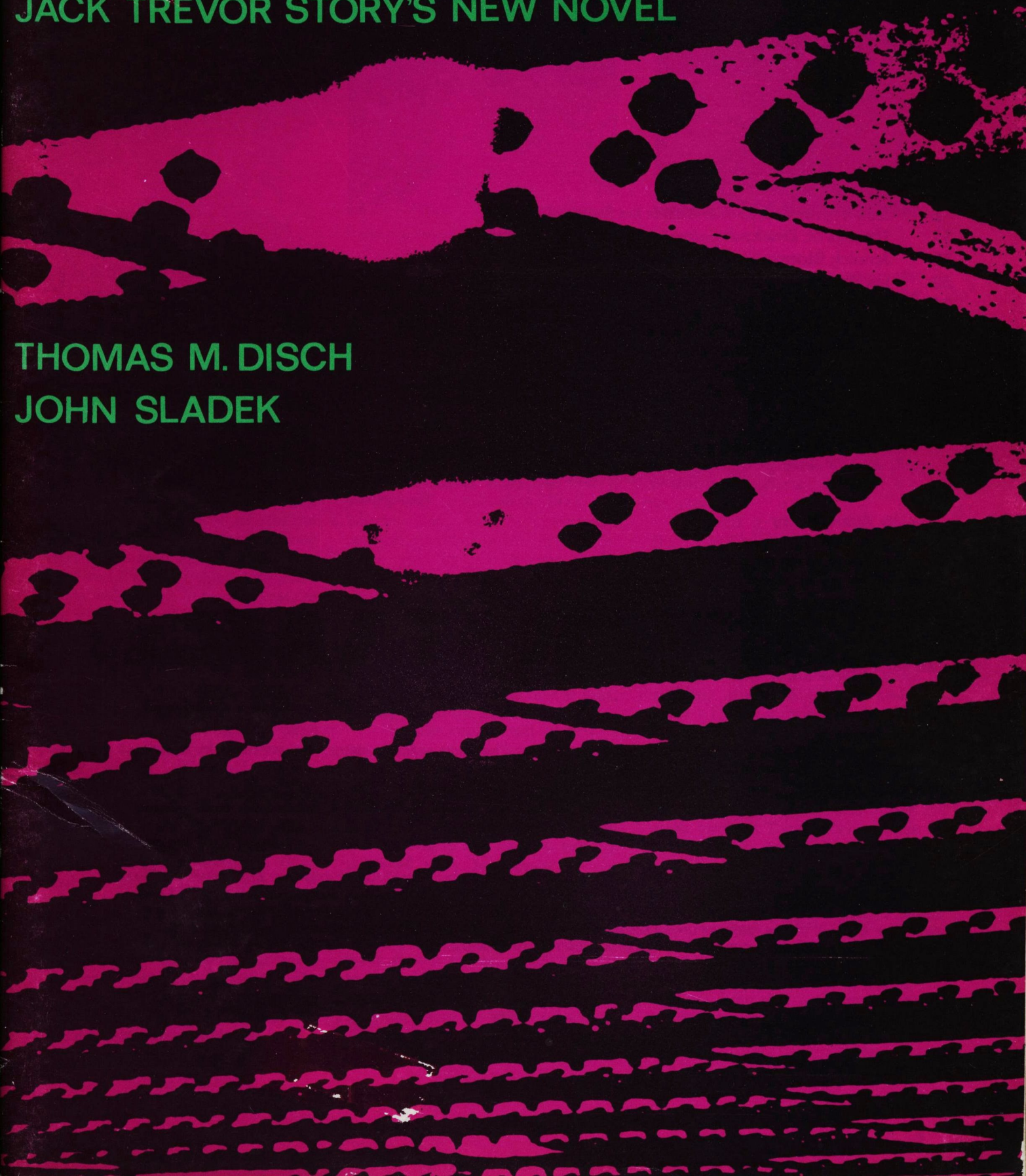
Number 195

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JACK TREVOR STORY'S NEW NOVEL

THOMAS M. DISCH

JOHN SLADEK





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Number 195

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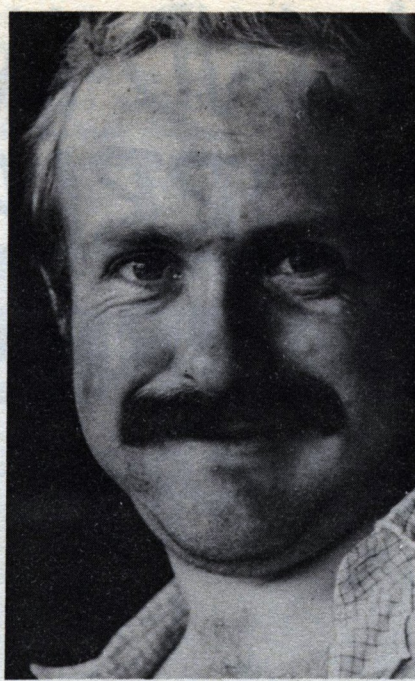
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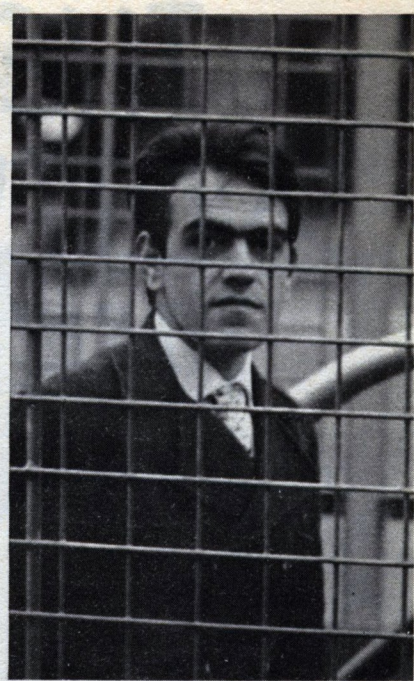
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# LEAD IN~



Watson: Japanese disaster area



Jones: Cornelius canon

JACK TREVOR STORY is probably already familiar to most readers as the author of the Albert Argyle trilogy (*Live Now, Pay Later*, *Something for Nothing* and *The Urban District Lover*), *The Trouble With Harry* (on which Hitchcock based his well-known film), or his first Horace Spurgeon Fenton book, *I Sit in Hanger Lane*. Until recently Story's work has been predominantly of the kind that might be called comic naturalism — its subject matter drawn from his own experience of the London suburbs and the New Towns — but with his second Horace Spurgeon Fenton novel, *One Last Mad Embrace* (which Allison and Busby will publish in the new year) he has added a strong element of fantasy and his concerns have been growing increasingly similar to the concerns of the kind of writers who are usually published in *NEW WORLDS*. Like *One Last Mad Embrace*, his new novel *The Wind in the Snottygobble Tree* takes much of its subject matter from the larger canvas of world events, investigating and utilising many of our current totem-figures and questioning our attitudes towards them. Story's talent for comic writing remains as strong, but he has refocused it to analyse, like J.G. Ballard, the mythology of the present day. How can we separate the truth from the fiction in our newspapers and television programmes? What, in fact, is truth, at what point does fiction actually begin to become truth? These are some of the concerns of *The Wind in the Snottygobble Tree*. And like Story's

previous books, these questions are directly inspired by his own experience (particularly his experience, late last year, with a group of police officers in a London police station and, later, during a series of trials and investigations concerning Story's allegations of terrorisation of himself and his girlfriend which ended with the police being cleared of all charges made against them).

Jack Trevor Story has been a professional writer since 1951 and before then was an electronics engineer, developing the first audiometer used by the National Health Service. He has written films and TV plays as well as short stories and novels but has managed, all this time, to resist the image and life of the Successful Writer. He now lives in a Hampstead bedsitter overlooking the Heath, writing and, from time to time, playing his Gibson guitar.

Regular readers will be pleased to see the return to our pages of Thomas M. Disch whose last story in *NEW WORLDS* was *The Colours* (NW 185). Disch has published his poetry in many magazines in Britain and the U.S.A. and his most recently published story was *Master of the Milford Altarpiece* in *PARIS REVIEW*. His novel *Camp Concentration* was the first serial in the larger size *NEW WORLDS* and received great praise from many sources though, largely we feel because of its presentation in hardcover form, did not get the notice it deserved from the Press or, when reviewed at all, received a few lines in the sf

review columns from critics notoriously incapable of judging anything above the level of schoolboy adventure fiction or barroom philosophising. It is our hope that *Camp Concentration* will soon receive greater recognition. Still one of *NEW WORLDS*' most popular contributors, Thomas M. Disch is currently living in New York City, sallying out from time to time on his bright green 650cc BMW. We hope that we shall soon be able to publish another story by him.

*Travel to the Sun with Coda Tours* is Chris Lockesley's story in *NEW WORLDS* (his first, *Sub-Synchronisation* appeared in our New Writers issue, 184) and we expect to be publishing more work by him soon.

Ian Watson, currently living in Tokyo, is another writer of whom, we suspect, readers will be seeing more in future issues. *Roof Garden Under Saturn* is his first story in *NEW WORLDS*.

Langdon Jones's first anthology, *The New SF*, has recently been published by Hutchinson and contains work by Aldiss, Ballard, Sallis, Moorcock, Jakubowski, Platt, Butterworth, MacBeth, Thomas, Zoline, Disch and Sladek. *The End of the Cycle* is his particular contribution to the Jerry Cornelius canon.

Next month — the continuation of our serial, plus stories by predominantly new contributors. We regret that our publication schedule has been slightly erratic just recently. This has been due to circumstances concerning production and distribution that have been beyond our control.



# THE WIND IN THE SNOTTYGOBBLE TREE JACK TREVOR STORY

*Frondebis hirsutis*; n: thrives in burial grounds and bears slimy fruits (snottygobbles). Poisonous.



## PROLOGUE: THE CURFEW NATION

"In the midst of life," Horace Spurgeon Fenton said, "we are in St. Albans."

Coming from Horace, whom I've known since 1952 when we were on the Amalgamated Press slave belt together, this was an unusually profound remark and it led to my asking him to show me the rest of the manuscript; the story you'll be reading for the next four issues. DV, that is and always assuming somebody doesn't throw a grenade in the printing press. When he said St. Albans, of course he didn't mean St. Albans, nor life, life or even, probably, midst. What he meant was that with the increasing legislation (i.e. breathalyser, drugs, immigration etc etc) nibbling away at our liberties the good old British bobby now has the power of Graham Greene's *Tontons Macoute* of the Haiti of *The Comedians*. That is, in effect, the power to kill in the early mornings when there's no one much about and the power to convince a magistrate that somebody slipped over while crossing the charge room floor.

"Too many people are hanging themselves in prison and police station cells with their braces," Horace said, "and it's high time everybody wore belts."

Of course he didn't mean people or hanging or any of those things but what he did mean is that the good old British Public are getting increasingly frightened to go out

at night in case they meet a squad car — this is a kind of curfew. And if the police are not what they seem, how about the rest of the municipal services; how about dustmen, firemen, ambulance men, magistrates; how about County Cricket Clubs? How about anything?

In other words, nothing is what it seems and particularly justice.

"In the courts of justice," Horace said, "the well substantiated lie is all the rage and the truth is old-hat."

He makes injustice sound trendy, but in fact it can't be new because Doctor Samuel Johnson once said (in effect, for I wasn't there) that if more than two men agree precisely upon a tale, then treat that tale with extreme caution.

Now nobody here in NEW WORLDS editorial agrees precisely on this tale of James Balfour Marchmont, therefore treat it as a fable for our times and afterwards think twice before dialling 999. The marbled horrors of Marchmont's imagination may stalk your own particular cosy corridors and may even be one step ahead of his. The death, corruption and decay of freedom succours the roots of the Snottygobble Tree; the wind in the branches comes for the turning of the pages of our awareness.

Now read on: *Ludicrous Crudicrous*  
Editor, Hunchback



## DEDICATION

To Inspector Arthur Upson, Sergeant Alexander Fraser, Police Constable James Donnelly, Woman Police Constable Carol Gray and all the lads and lasses of Notting Hill police station who, on the long night of December 28/29 1969, made this book possible.

# TRADE WINDS TRAVEL



## CHAPTER ONE 1

TRIESTE, BUDAPEST, VIENNA, Vladivostok, Constantinople," Marchmont chanted, much as he used to chant 'tenners, fivers, ones or halves' before he got the sack from the bank and 'cod, plaice, sole, rock-salmon, hake' at the Vampire Fish Bar up by the bus station, after that.

"Constantinople?" the man said.

"Certainly, sir, how long for?"

"There's no such place!" the man said, "not now!"

"How about Budapest, then? Very lovely the twin cities, Buda one side the river, Pest the other – take your own spray. Sunbathe behind the iron curtain with just that tiny touch of uncertainty – yes, madam, Yugoslavia on the little table behind you."

He brought to the rainy High Street the spirit of the Casbah. He favoured tropical suits, sunglasses, lamp tan, brown-and-white leather shoes, silk shirts, tie-hankie matches; it was a treat to see him slipping through the flapping canvases of the street stalls on Saturdays en route to lunch at the ABC.

Marchmont had always felt a bit like Peter Lorre,

even at school; had always yearned for sticky heat and ceiling fans and hot-eyed women. There was one at his elbow now, whispering at him.

"Mr Marchmont. I've got one!"

"I know you have, darling. Keep it warm," Marchmont told her.

"No, I mean a chap for Dubrovnik!"

"Oh!" said Marchmont. "Ah!"

Miss Bartholomew of Trade Winds Travel was also dressed for Nassau and preferred to stand near the Philips heat blower. Although she was five feet six inches, her little white dress would have looked modern on a child of four. The rest of her was all golden brown skin and long, almost to the waist, blue-black hair, though her nose was too long for real beauty.

"If ever I came into a lot of money," she told everybody, "I'd have a nose job."

She had a mental list which she sometimes recited of beautiful actresses and public women who had changed their lives by changing their noses.



"Mr Carroway?" Marchmont said. He made the name sound complimentary. The owner, who had just filled in a travel form, admitted it was his. "So you're going to sun yourself on the Adriatic coast?"

"I hope so." While his wife was alive Mr Carroway had always gone to Clacton for his holidays like the rest of the town, but now, thin, recovering from a hernia operation, he had sold the car in exchange for this package holiday abroad. Although forty-six, skinny and pale and only just clever enough to be a clerk in the gas showroom, he hoped that he would get mixed up with a society set and meet some beautiful rich young widow who would want to mother him.

"I see you're staying at the Hotel Kompas?" Marchmont said.

"That's one of the best, isn't it?"

"My favourite," Marchmont assured him. Then he said: "I was just wondering if you could perform a little service for one of our clients while you're there?"

"Oh?" said Mr Carroway.

"He's staying at the Villa Makarska. He left this small package behind. Would you mind giving it to him?" Marchmont had produced a flat brown-paper package sealed with various bits of sellotape. It had the name Oliver Mapplebeck Esqr. written on in ball-point blue.

"I see," Mr Carroway said, to give him time to feel the package and think about it.

"I would post it," Marchmont said, "but by the time it got there he'd be back."

"Couldn't you send it to his home address?"

"I think he's going to need it on holiday," Marchmont said. "I think it's his sterling."

"Oh, I see. He'll need that."

"He will," Marchmont said.

The V-form amount was more than a thousand pounds and Mr Carroway only had two thousand pounds to spend abroad with this paid. The thousand pounds sterling allowance was vital in places like Dubrovnik.

"It's a bit of a responsibility," Mr Carroway said. This was one reason why at forty-six he was still a clerk in the gas showroom having started one step lower as office boy at the age of fifteen.

Marchmont said: "I'll accept full responsibility."

"And you say he left it here accidentally? On the counter?" Mr Carroway said.

"Yes or no?" Marchmont said, cheerfully, "I daresay I can find somebody else. You just happen to be going this week."

"Mapplebeck, is it?" said Mr Carroway. He just couldn't make the decision. This was the other reason he was still a clerk.

"You'll find a nice social set at the Villa Makarska," Marchmont said. "If you care for that sort of thing."

"I'll take it," said Mr Carroway. And then he said: "And could I just have your business card to explain it."

"What?" Marchmont said.

"In case there's any trouble."

Marchmont gave Mr Carroway his Trade Winds Travel card, though he didn't like doing it.

**2** "Forgive me for asking," Miss Bartholomew said after Mr Carroway had gone, "but what do you put in those little packages?"

"Nothing," Marchmont said. "Anything." He was still visualising the scene in Dubrovnik; Mr Carroway stalked through the street, kidnapped, whisked across the Albanian border and tortured in some old mountain castle. *Who are*

*your contacts? Speak! Speak!*

"Mr Marchmont."

"What's in those parcels?"

"Bits of rubbish. Cotton wool. Old income tax returns. Empty cigarette packets."

"Where do you get the names from?"

"I have nothing to say!" Marchmont snapped in his pidgin German interrogation voice.

"Oo-er!" Miss Bartholomew exclaimed and she giggled as Marchmont turned his sunglasses on her, malevolently.

Then she said: "I'm just popping out to get a WOMAN'S OWN."

They were giving away samples of make-up specially suited to long noses. It seemed to Marchmont that Miss Bartholomew was switched off as she left the sun-lamp lighting of the shop and appeared again outside the windows, crossed the High Street to W.H. Smith's

"Sixty-three steps," he said to himself. It was exactly sixty-three steps from his counter to the counter of the newsagent's across the road. He was immersed in watching Miss Bartholomew's long tights scissoring across the pedestrian crossing when Mr Parfitt the manager of the travel agency drew his attention to a waiting customer and suddenly he found himself faced by an equal and opposite pair of dark polaroid lenses. He could see a clear reflection of himself in each lens. "Can I help you sir?" he said.

It seemed to Marchmont that this man was carrying a gun in a shoulder holster. His hair had a military scrub-brush cut and the back of his head was straight with neck and spine like a spy. Also he was asking about Albania.

"There's no tourism in Albania, sir. Mind you I can get you right up to the border with a pair of wire cutters. Rubber handles, of course. How much do you want to spend?"

A very curious thing happened about now.

Miss Bartholomew came from behind the man's right ear and walked on her long brown legs across towards his shoulder. This was a perspective illusion of course; in fact she was coming back across the High Street with her WOMAN'S OWN just as the man ducked his head to consult his wrist watch. However, because the scene outside had taken his eye momentarily Marchmont sensed rather than saw a flick in the corner of his eye; that is to say the corner containing, as it were, the man's wrist.

A kind of metallic flick one might suppose to be associated with the micro-shutter of a micro-camera concealed in a secret agent's wristwatch.

A second curious thing happened as the man was going out with a selection of travel pamphlets. He left something small and shiny lying on the counter which Miss Bartholomew was the first to see.

"Excuse me, sir! Is this yours?" she called.

"Don't touch it!" Marchmont snapped, nervously.

But then he saw as he came closer that it was nothing more than a lady's vanity mirror. He picked it up with some relief as the man came back to reclaim it.

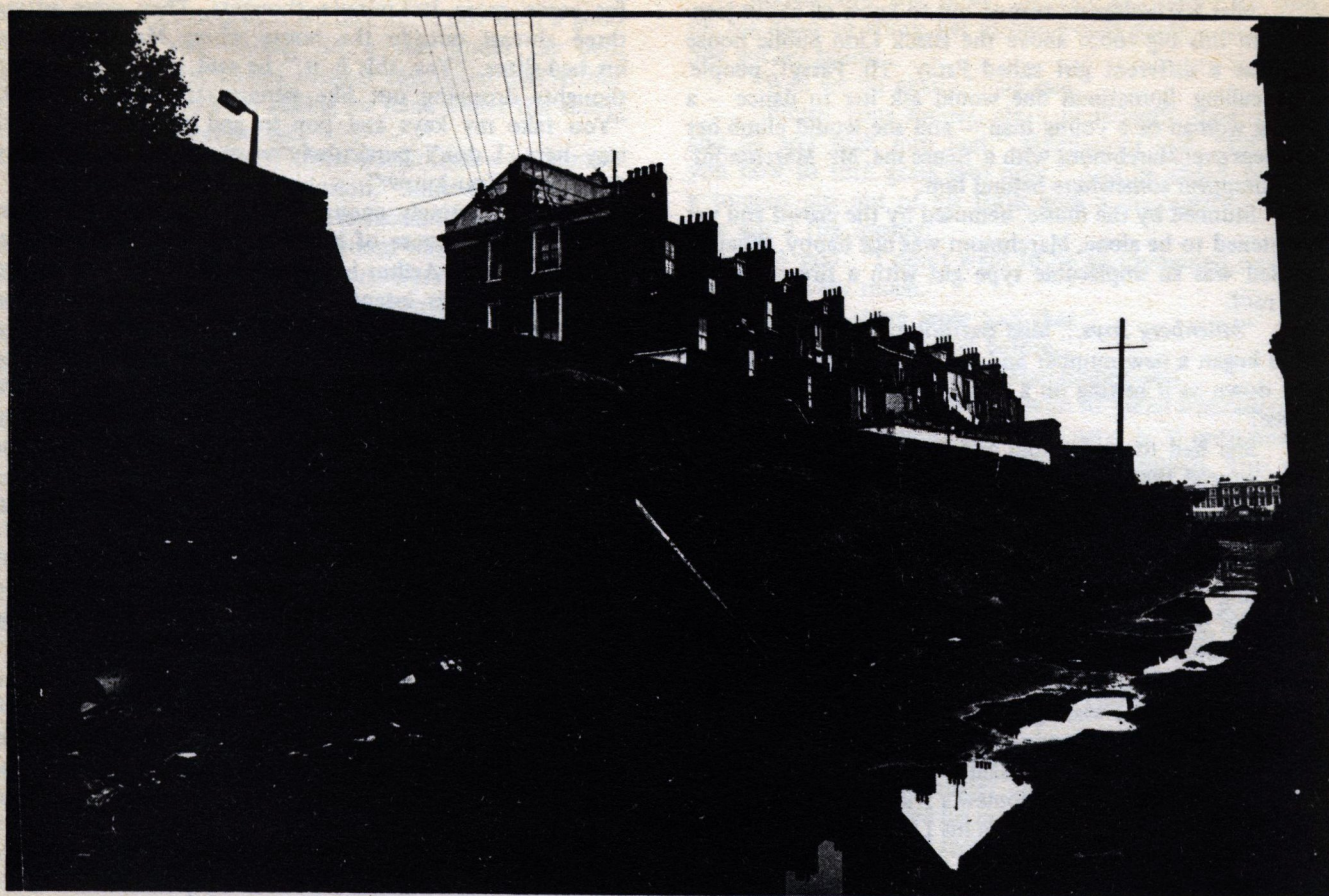
"Thank you," the man said.

Too late Marchmont saw that he had been tricked, for the man took the mirror in a black-gloved hand and slipped it carefully into his inside pocket before going out.

"Whatever's the matter with you?" Miss Bartholomew asked Marchmont. "You haven't half gone white."

Marchmont had gone white and no wonder. He had just had his photograph and fingerprints taken. To Miss Bartholomew's further alarm he now removed his dark glasses. Not so that he could watch the man's departure along





the street more clearly, but in order to disassociate himself from the spy business and become an ordinary twenty-four years old travel agency clerk again. It was as though, involved in a harmless game of cowboys and Indians, he had caught the baddies using real bullets.

In the absence of further customers Marchmont now set about tidying shelves and dusting the counter and performing little hum-drum jobs, trying to make himself as unimportant as possible.

**3** "Miss Bartholomew!"

She turned from her place at the tail of the 330 bus queue and saw Marchmont loping towards her, his white raincoat over his shoulders, Italian grandee fashion. At first she thought she'd come away with the shop keys in her pocket, but she hadn't. Marchmont drew her away from the nearest home-going person and spoke earnestly.

"Would you mind if I come home with you tonight?"

"What?" What he had said astonished and frightened her. She liked him inside the shop and had been his colleague for some time but here in the street he was like a stranger.

Inside the shop he could keep her laughing; but not now.

"Were you doing anything tonight?" He re-phrased it, aiming for normality. He was wearing his dark glasses again and kept casting around at the crawling rush-hour cars.

"I was going to the jazz club," Miss Bartholomew said.

"I'll take you," Marchmont told her, firmly.

"Oh. All right, then. Only I was going with Arthur."

Her bus came and she crowded on and discovered that Marchmont was still with her on the front seat of

the top deck. She said: "This is not your bus is it?"

"That's all right," Marchmont said, obscurely. He was scanning back at the other passengers.

"Is it to do with that chap?" Miss Bartholomew asked, discerningly.

"Can I shave at your place?"

"You don't need a shave."

"I shall in the morning," Marchmont told her. "We'll go round and get my kit tonight if you'll come with me."

Miss Bartholomew only now realised what was in his mind. "You can't sleep with me!" she exclaimed.

They kept getting the emphasis wrong and people were looking. He didn't want to sleep with her. He had never fancied her. He had always hoped he would meet somebody a little more sultry than Miss Bartholomew.

Anyway, her nose was too long.

"All I want to do is sleep on the floor," he told her.

She had been told this before.

**4** There was this man's head stuck on a pole and a big white spider kept running up and down the pole while somebody kept slapping at it and trying ineffectually to kill it. But when Marchmont opened his eyes a little wider to peer through the smoke he found it was a man playing a string bass at the back of the band shell.

*New York may be all right,*

*But Beale Street's paved with gold.*

*(I said it's paved with gold.)*

"Douglas Chapman on the trombone, Miss Bartholomew told Marchmont.

"Who?"

"Jimmy Chapman now — clarinet."

"Oh."

"No relation. Isn't that funny?"



Miss Bartholomew turned out to know all about jazz. Here in this big room above the Black Lion public house she was a different girl called Patsy. 'Hi, Patsy!' people kept calling. Sometimes one would ask her to dance — a young woman or a young man — and she would climb her long legs over Marchmont with a 'Scuse me, Mr Marchmont' and disappear somewhere behind him.

Stunned by the music, bemused by the crowd and yet frightened to be alone, Marchmont was not happy. What he needed was an implacable type girl with a fire escape to the roof.

"*Milenberg Joys*," Miss Bartholomew said now as the band began a new number and her knees started poking up and down as if resting on a nerve. And she said: "Do you dance?"

She had to nudge him and say it again for he could only lip-read the question. Marchmont shook his head. He did dance, but he didn't feel like dancing now. There were two hundred strangers behind him and he had his jacket collar turned up and his dark glasses on again; and he was beginning to get a funny feeling about the bass player. The man didn't seem to have much connection with the band or what was going on; his hands were jerking about on the instrument it was true, but the face seemed disassociated and was staring straight at Marchmont and the lips kept moving as if trying to give him a secret message.

"Beer up!" somebody said.

This was Miss Bartholomew's friend Arthur who had brought them to the jazz club in his Land Rover.

"Snowball for you, Patsy."

As he lifted his pint jar of beer, Marchmont took a swift glance behind him. He got a blurred impression of a Wembley Cup Final mob all jogging up and down. Some of them were wearing dark glasses, although the British trad scene is not fundamentally psychedelic. It seemed impossible that Arthur could have carried three glasses from the bar, though others were still doing it. Paths opened and closed behind them as people came through from the bar.

"Walt's good tonight," Miss Bartholomew shouted. "That's Walt playing the banjo. Walter Kopek. He used to be with Chris Barber."

Marchmont said: "Who's that on the bass?"

"Oh!" Miss Bartholomew exclaimed; it was something she had missed. The string bass was not a spectacular instrument and people were inclined to overlook it. instrument and people were inclined to overlook it. "He's new! Isn't he, Arthur?"

"I've never seen him before. Unless he was with Alex Welsh."

"No," Miss Bartholomew said, emphatically. "That was somebody else." She looked at Marchmont, pleased to enrol him into the coterie: "Do you know him, then?"

"No," Marchmont shouted.

"Kopek wasn't with Chris Barber," Arthur said. "That was Tony Bagot."

"No, he was with Monty Sunshine," Miss Bartholomew said. And she said to Marchmont: "You'll like it once you start coming."

But Marchmont was planning a way of risking Arthur's life instead of his own when they went home. The plan itself was not very ingenious, but what heartened him was his ability to think at all. The paralysis was going and he was beginning to think like an agent.

**5** "Look, I tell you what, if you don't mind," Marchmont said. He was tapping his forehead as though

for some more last-minute thoughts. They were sitting three abreast outside the house where Marchmont had his bed-sitter. "Yes, this is it," he said, still tapping, with thoughts dropping out like pennies from a piggy-bank. "You take my keys and pop in and get my things. I'll stay here. I don't particularly want to see my landlady this week. You know."

Disconcertingly enough they just stared at him. Miss Bartholomew because of his extraordinary behaviour ever since that chap; Arthur because he didn't like Marchmont and suspected his intentions. Also Marchmont had been so elaborately casual that it showed. He found in fact that he had to repeat it all again and add something else besides. Arthur, who had a beard, was leaning forward on the wheel and not attempting to move. What he wanted was for Marchmont to get out and go home so that he could take Patsy home.

"If you just pop in and out quickly you won't even see her," Marchmont said.

"What me?" Miss Bartholomew said.

"No!" For God's sake he didn't want her to get blown up. "No, not you. Arthur can do it. Here's the keys."

Arthur said: "Where d'you reckon you're going to sleep then, mate?"

He had only recently started calling Marchmont mate; it was a way of leavening the atmosphere ready for some harsh unpleasantnesses which might become necessary at any minute.

"You can't sleep with me," Miss Bartholomew told him for the second time. "I mean at my place."

"He knows that," Arthur said.

But Marchmont did not know that. "All I'm asking," he said, to avoid the point, "is for you to pop up to my room."

The word pop, repeated yet again, sent Arthur on his way.

"What about the key?" Miss Bartholomew said.

"Call him back."

She called him back and Marchmont gave him a bunch of keys.

"Which one?" Arthur asked.

"All of them," Marchmont said. "This one for the outer door. These two for my bed-sit door, this one for the top drawer in the tall-boy —"

"I don't want to go opening up the furniture!"

"Why don't you go yourself?" Miss Bartholomew urged.

"Razor, toothbrush and towel," Marchmont said, with finality. "Oh, and Arthur — bring my hot water bottle. It's in the bed." The bed would be the most likely place for a booby trap. An electrical contact connected to the spring.

"Is he your boy friend?" Marchmont asked Miss Bartholomew.

"I've got about three. Robin used to play with Terry Lightfoot. Or was it The Peppers?"

"Who's number one?"

"Oh, none of them. They're all about tenth." She giggled and was still laughing when Marchmont's bedroom light went on. And when Marchmont sank down in his seat to be clear of the windscreen in case of an explosion, she said: "What are you afraid of?"

"I'll tell you about it in bed," Marchmont said.

Miss Bartholomew sighed before telling him the reluctant truth. "I sleep with Arthur tonight."

"That leaves a bed empty," Marchmont told her, equably.



If she was hurt by this she didn't show it and just then Marchmont's bedroom window blew out with a good deal of flame and smoke. So it was under the bed, Marchmont thought, having roughly calculated that Arthur would by now have been sliding his hand under the sheets to reach the hot water bottle.

"Oh, my Godfathers!" Miss Bartholomew exclaimed.

"It sounded like an explosion," Marchmont told her.

This was a quiet street of terraced houses, unremarkable unless you knew that the bedroom windows overlooked the county cricket ground. Doors were opening, lights coming on, voices shouting; some courting couples were getting out of parked cars where you would never have known there were any.

"Here comes Arthur!" Miss Bartholomew said, suddenly and with some astonishment.

Arthur came walking from Marchmont's house with razor and toothbrush in one hand, hot water bottle clammy full and cold dangling from the other; his eyebrows had gone and his face was black but he didn't mention the explosion.

"I couldn't find the flannel," he told Marchmont as he got back behind the wheel.

Marchmont said, "That's all right."

Then Arthur, starting the engine, said to Miss Bartholomew: "Do you mind if I drop you off and go home? I don't feel very well."

"That's all right, Arthur," Miss Bartholomew said.

"Young man! Young man!" Marchmont heard his landlady's voice screeching as they drove away.

An ambulance, police car and fire engine came roaring around the St. Peter's Street roundabout as they turned south into Hatfield Road.

"I've just placed that bass player, Patsy," Arthur said, all at once. "He was with Alan Elmsdon."

"That's good," Miss Bartholomew said, fretfully.

It was evident that Arthur was suffering from severe shock, yet to even mention the cause of it might have dangerous mental consequences. If he shook his head, Marchmont felt, it could fall off.

**6** "You knew that was going to happen, didn't you?" Miss Bartholomew told Marchmont as she helped him to piccalilli.

"I just had a funny feeling, that's all."

"What about Arthur? You don't think about him. He ought to be in hospital."

Marchmont said: "He don't know what's happened yet."

"His mother died last year," Miss Bartholomew said.

"He'll be all right, love. Can I have some cheese?"

"He works at the Agricultural Research Station. They're turning grass into milk with a machine."

"He'll be as right as rain tomorrow," Marchmont assured her.

"You can't stay here all night, Mr Marchmont. He's bound to ask if you did."

"You're not engaged to him are you?"

"Not really," Miss Bartholomew admitted.

"You're lovers?"

"Well - not quite."

"You said he sleeps here."

"Only sometimes," Miss Bartholomew said. "After jazz club, that's all. Wednesdays. Then he has to get home before his father wakes up at five o'clock. He's a post office sorter."

"That's not much of a love life," Marchmont said.

"We don't make love," Miss Bartholomew said.

Marchmont laid down his fork and rested his chin on his hand to study her as one would study a specimen. She got his point.

"Well we do nearly," she said.

"Finish your supper, clean your teeth, have a bath and go and tuck into bed," Marchmont said. "I'll show you how to turn grass into milk." And he added, picking a tomato pip out of his teeth with a matchstick: "Have you got a fire escape?"

She said: "I don't want to be an unmarried mother, thank you very much."

"I've got more sense than that."

"And I've heard that before."

"Don't you trust me?" Marchmont said.

"That's got nothing to do with it!" Miss Bartholomew began to talk in a more animated way; as if until now it hadn't been necessary to state her real feelings. This was partly because Marchmont until now had not appeared to desire her. He had been talking about a bed for the night. Now he was including her body as a kind of afterthought. It was time for animation. "You're not talking about love," she went on. "You've never looked twice at me except to ask me for a V-form. Mr Marchmont and Miss Bartholomew, that's us. And Mr Parfitt. Now suddenly you want to turn grass into milk. It's a bloody insult. You can go as soon as you've finished your cocoa."

She started scraping the debris of their supper into the now empty stone butter dish. With his elbows on the table Marchmont bowed his face into his hands and appeared to be hiding distress; in fact he was. She refused to weaken. Anyway, she cleaned her teeth *every* night. This, rather than the main issue, had made her angry.

"Did you hear what I said?" she asked now.

"Got nowhere to go, have I?" Marchmont murmured into his hand.

"You can go home, can't you?"

"You saw what happened to Arthur."

"I don't know what happened to him," Miss Bartholomew exclaimed. "You haven't told me anything. God knows what's going on. Following me home tea-time. Haven't you got any relations?" Then, upon reflection and with the mutual sympathy and understanding of their generation, she added: "Surely you've got a chum or a girl friend? Someone you can go to?"

"I lost my license, didn't I?"

This apparent obscurity, oddly enough, she understood. If you weren't mobile, you weren't anything. If you weren't anything, you had nobody. Indeed, reminded now that Marchmont was a pedestrian, even the explosion became almost reconcilable to Miss Bartholomew. Perhaps she had been too harsh. She had stood up and gathered some dishes, was on her way out to the shared kitchen - but instead she came and leaned close to him, spoke to the crown of his head - there was a spot that he had scratched and showed a trace of blood through the brown short hair.

"Who's after you, Mr Marchmont?" she asked, earnestly

Instead of replying he clutched her to him, suddenly, buried his face in her cotton-covered breast and sobbed just once like a little boy. Alarmed, a little embarrassed, she didn't know what to do; her hand nearly came down to stroke his head but then seemed to re-think of its own accord and instead hovered. Part of the embarrassment was that she did not know for sure his Christian name and hesitated to use 'Mr Marchmont' whatever she said under this circumstance. Their relationship had progressed



suddenly beyond Trade Winds Travel and out of her control. "Couldn't you go to the police?" she said at last. But Marchmont seemed to prefer her. Just at this moment there was the sound of a tap at the door and a girl's voice called: "Patsy. Patsy!" Miss Bartholomew tried to disengage herself but failed. The door opened and a young, fair-haired girl looked round the door. "Oh, Patsy — I'm sorry. I wondered if Arthur was here." And to what she could see of the man clutching Miss Bartholomew she said: "Have you left your side-lights on, Arthur?"

"Arthur's not here," Miss Bartholomew said. "This is Mr Marchmont." Not until this late stage did Marchmont take his face from the intimacies of her breast and look round at the girl. "And this is — Kiki." It made it that much worse that she did not know her neighbour's surname.

"Hi, Kiki," Marchmont said. He liked the look of her. She looked sultry. It was the way her long hair fell down over her eye. He released one of his hands from Miss Bartholomew's waist and extended it so that the girl was obliged to come into the room and shake it. For a moment he just held it and Miss Bartholomew was aware that he had both of them in the same embrace. She had an inconsistent stab of jealousy and jerked herself away from them, picked up the dishes again and went out of the room.

"Do you live here, Kiki?" Marchmont said.

"I'm just across the landing," Kiki said.

"I'll remember that," Marchmont said.

They laughed together and he let go of her hand at last. She met Miss Bartholomew as she went out, bumped into her for she was still laughing back at Marchmont. "Sorry!" she said, but archly, and adding: "I always lock the door!"

When she'd gone Miss Bartholomew said: "Now you'll have to go!"

"I thought that was the idea?"

"I mean quickly! She'll tell Arthur. She likes him."

"She likes me," Marchmont said. He stood up and started the ritual business of hoisting his trouser band over a rather too-round stomach. "She said I can stay in her place."

Miss Bartholomew turned quite pale. "In her place? In her room? All night? She doesn't even *know* you!"

"Well it's nice of her —"

"It's not *nice* of her! Nice? I don't think it's very nice. She's only got a single bed in there. She hasn't even got a sofa!"

This seemed to distress Marchmont. "I'm sorry. I didn't know that, did I?"

"Nice!" Miss Bartholomew said again. And she said: "Hah!"

"Oh dear," Marchmont said. "Just a single bed, eh. And I don't really see how I can refuse now."

Miss Bartholomew looked at him with real pity tinged with exasperation. "I don't know, Mr Marchmont. You don't half get yourself into some rotten scrapes."

She picked up the dishes again and went out only to come flying back as if she had swung round on her heel just outside the door; which she had.

"Nice!" she exclaimed yet again. "Do you know what she's done? She's gone to bed! Her light's out! She's gone to bloody bed. She's waiting for you!"

They stared at each other, poisoning the disaster. "It looks as though Kiki's tricked me, Miss Bartholomew."

"You're not going in, surely?"

"Not if she's after me —"

"She's not after you, she's after me!" Miss

"She's not after you, she's after me!" Miss Bartholomew cried, somewhat wildly.

"Oh?" Marchmont said, inviting more.

"I mean my boyfriends. She thinks she's so beautiful just because she's got a little turned-up nose."

"She's not as pretty as you." Marchmont told her.

"My nose is too long," Miss Bartholomew said, wretchedly. "If only I had five hundred pounds for an operation I'd show her."

"If you did that," Marchmont told her, "you'd become ugly inside. At present you're beautiful inside."

Miss Bartholomew smiled at him; it was the most she'd ever liked him. She said, quite suddenly: "You can stay here if you like."

"I couldn't do that," Marchmont said.

She said: "I want you to, Mr Marchmont."

"Are you sure?"

She was standing by the door, still holding the dishes, and she nodded and smiled again. "Only you'll have to be careful." From his face she could see that she'd got the emphasis wrong again. "Quiet, I mean."

Marchmont joined her by the door, kissed her on the cheek, whispered in her ear.

"I'm ever so quiet," he said.

**7** Blattner was also very quiet.

Blattner was the man with the spy-shaped head who had that afternoon photographed and dabbed Marchmont. The graphic information had already been flashed eastwards through the facilities of *Hunchback*, London's most vociferous underground journal. Until he received identity confirmation he was instructed to watch Marchmont and keep him alive. But somebody, and Blattner could hazard a guess who it was (Farquarson? Smythe? Runecrapp?), had equal and opposite instructions.

The fact was, it was easier to kill than to keep safe. To kill you did not have to sit on the back buggy seat of an abandoned car wreck on a disused lot watching the windows of a house all night while others more fortunate copulated with pretty girls. To kill you did not have to hang about afterwards at all; you could go home to bed.

To kill you did not have to go fucking up to St. Albans.

The light came on and soon went off and on again and off again as they forgot things, got out of bed and got in again. Remembering Miss Bartholomew's legs and how even longer they would be naked, Blattner began to get an erection. It was a bitterly ironic thing to happen tonight when he couldn't even get it back to Mrs Blattner in Ruislip.

## CHAPTER TWO

**1** What makes the human condition just tolerable is that things don't always seem quite so bad the next morning. Exceptions occur in the case of condemned men and people like Marchmont who find themselves suddenly stuck with their dream and unable to awaken from it.

"Whatever you doing?" Miss Bartholomew exclaimed. Immersed in a bath of steaming lavender *Evette* she had just glanced round and caught Marchmont, naked, standing on the lavatory seat cover and peering out of the hopper window.

"Checking up on the weather," he said. He didn't know whether the house was being watched or not but it



seemed likely. "You go out the front way and I'll climb over the back fence and meet you at the bus stop."

"You're not dressed yet!" Miss Bartholomew told him.

"I'm making plans darling. On second thoughts I'll get the next bus. We don't want old Parfitt putting two and two together and coming up with a dirty answer."

Miss Bartholomew said: "No one'd think it was purely platonic to see you standing there."

"Let's do your back," Marchmont told her, "then I'll get dressed."

It had been a fruitless night. What Mr Blattner had suffered unbidden outside in the cold car, Marchmont had been unable to muster in the warm bed. Miss Bartholomew now wasn't certain whether he was strong-willed or queer. Or did it have something to do with that chap and the explosion that followed?

"No, look, I tell you what." Marchmont was now washing her nipples with absent-minded thoroughness. "You pop in first and see if everything's normal. I'll be watching from Burton's arcade. Push the bikini girl over if something's up."

The bikini girl was made of plywood and stood in the agency window.

"All right! I'll do that!" she cried. Not about his instructions, however.

He had the flannel under the water, not with any orgiastic intent but rather like a mother not wanting to miss any detail; Miss Bartholomew took it away from him.

"What have you been up to? You must have been up to something. I'm not going to incriminate myself. My father's a foreman."

"Just push her forward, that's all. It often happens." Again absently he had scooped up some of her *Evette* lather and stood washing his testicles; it seemed wrong to her, somehow: the removal of polite social barriers was only appropriate after intimacy. They were still calling each other by their surnames and honorary titles with occasionally a 'darling' creeping in — which, from Marchmont, was less familiar than "Miss Bartholomew," for it was a word he used even on men when he wasn't thinking.

"Do you think the police are after you?" she asked next.

"Dunno, do I?"

"Couldn't you tell 'em it was a practical joke?"

"Have to play it by ear, won't I?"

"Well I hope they're not after me, that's all," she said. Then holding his bare shoulder while she stepped her long legs out of the bath, she added: "Scuse me."

Recrossing the landing dressed in their towels they passed Kiki coming from the kitchen with her instant coffee. She was wearing something transparent over something else transparent. They all said good morning to each other and Marchmont felt a little urge where nothing had stirred all night.

"Better still," he said, as they dressed in Miss Bartholomew's room, "you pop in and I'll stay here till you telephone."

Miss Bartholomew, getting into her knickers, was beginning to not like the sound of this. "Did you know what was going to happen when Arthur popped in for your things last night?" Somehow the situation seemed related to her popping into work first this morning.

"Course I didn't. Do me a favour. I got nothing against Arthur."

"But if you hadn't got rid of him you couldn't have

slept with me. I mean here."

Marchmont zipped his front fly on a note of disgust. "What a nasty mind you've got."

"Well it just seems funny to me, that's all. Who was that chap?"

She kept on about that chap. Marchmont didn't know who he was any more than she did. Is it a gang? What's in those envelopes and packages? Who is Mr Mapplebeck?

"What?" Her last bit of querying dribble brought his mind back again.

"I saw the name on that parcel. Mapplebeck. He's not one of ours. I looked through the package holidays."

"I made it up," Marchmont lied. "Now off you go."

"I haven't got my piece yet."

Seething with impatience lest Kiki should leave for work or even get dressed before the coast was clear, Marchmont watched Miss Bartholomew prepare her 'piece'. This consisted of a black bread sandwich enclosing some foul sour milk curdle mixed with sliced raw apple. It was the latest thing. At last she was ready and at the door.

"Suppose they ask me if I've seen you?"

"You haven't seen me since you left the shop last night. All right? Roger then. Ta ta. Run or you'll miss the bus."

"Aren't you going to finish getting dressed?" she asked him. It had just come to her that Kiki was still here and they would be here alone together and that Mr Marchmont detected

Marchmont had not yet spent any of his strength. Marchmont detected this and countered it swiftly and without effort.

"Don't talk too loud. I want her to think I've left with you. Save a lot of chat about last night."

"Kiss me, then." She hoped this might remind him of his loyalties.

Marchmont kissed her and at the same time ran his hand up her bottom under the mini-skirt. "Remember where I kissed you last night? And you closed your legs and broke me glasses!"

Miss Bartholomew went out laughing. This was more like their shop relationship.

**2** What is known in the espionage business as a spy swoop had taken place at Trade Winds Travel Agency in the High Street. Mr Parfitt, with his morning porridge barely past his windpipe, had been questioned within an inch of his life without knowing why — which is the essence of the whole thing.

"Name?"

"Parfitt."

"All of it!"

"Hugh Stanley Parfitt."

"Address?"

"Fifty-six-B Clarence Road."

"Married or single?"

"Married."

"Sex?"

"Male . . ."

There came 'father's occupation' 'nationality' 'diseases' how long in present job, previous occupations, schools, technical qualifications if any, wife's maiden name, were you the driver and everything that had ever been created to put on forms. It was a huge relief to Mr Parfitt when the first of his staff arrived and rattled the door to get in.

"It's a woman!" somebody said.

"Ah! Good. Hide yourself. The rest of you spread out."



"It's Miss Bartholomew," Mr Parfitt said. "Patricia Gwendoline."

"If that turns out to be false," somebody warned him, "I don't have to tell you you've committed a serious crime against the realm and could be imprisoned for life."

It filled Mr Parfitt with the most dreadful fear. Perhaps she wasn't really Miss Bartholomew? He tried to remember if her father had come with her to get the job. Or was it Marchmont they were after?

"Oh my God!" Miss Bartholomew exclaimed as she was dragged into the shop and the door locked behind her. She found herself held by three men in raincoats. Marcus, the man in charge, who was now interrogating Mr Parfitt turned and smiled at her. Although quite young and with a homely face a closer look would reveal that he had the oddly synthetic marbled humanity that you find in policemen and gangsters. He was a Detective Chief Inspector.

"Keep quiet and nothing will happen to you," he told Miss Bartholomew.

This calmed her more than anything could, for he had chosen a phrase which neatly summed up her whole life.

"Is this to do with that chap?" she asked.

Nobody answered her and she was thrust down on the rexine-padded seat put there for customers. One of the raincoated men asked Marcus if he wanted her stripped and he said not just then. Others went on with what had been their main occupation for the past hour; turning out drawers and files, confiscating all correspondence, travel documents and even samples of holiday prospectuses.

Two men were fingerprinting the whole shop.

"Any gold teeth?" Detective Chief Inspector Marcus was now asking Mr Parfitt.

**3** Meanwhile, back at the Tudor-style semi up near the *King Harry* Marchmont has knocked Kiki's door and received the following reply:

"Is that you, Marchmont?"

"Ees!"

"What?"

"Ees!"

"Well don't come in - I'm fully-dressed!"

And she was, laughing as she rammed down some bread and dripping when Marchmont went into her room. However he was not disappointed for fully-dressed she was wearing thigh-high shiny boots with a tiny Pocahontas Indian maid leather-fringed skirt with the tiniest thonged G-string under that and no tights - as Marchmont rapidly found out by the following mock-humorous ploy:

"Do coom in," he said, in mock Cumberland accents for Kiki was a Lakeland girl from Kendal, "lay yourself ont' bed, taak doon trucks and fook!"

Which had her in fits of laughter in no time.

"Do you want some bread and dripping?" she asked him first when she'd stopped laughing.

He repeated the sentence in the same sing-song manner for he liked the sound of it and she was soon laughing again and telling him he had a 'raght cheek'.

"Ah've heard all about you," she went on.

"Good," he said. "Show me what I do - but wash your hands first, I don't want crumbs on me penis!"

This rather lewd talk was so funny that it took the offence out of it and before they continued he had her on the bed and had entered her body, though without doing more than move very slightly for an occasional thrill. The thonged G-string was still on her but loose enough not to cut him; they were talking, relaxed, comfortable and

joined.

(Author's note: the hipster-type skirt or jeans allows free access simply by raising them to the waist when there is ample room for one or even both hands to slip down inside the waistband. This is one of Mary Quant's gifts to the permissive society never mentioned in *Woman's Own*. It is possible to fondle to orgasm while dancing in a crowded discotheque or replying to your parents across a dimly-lighted party room.)

"Who told you about me, then?" Marchmont said in that same Cumberland accent. He was unable to resist ambiences of this nature. "Was it Miss Bartholomew?"

"Nay! Is it lahkley? Noo, ah got it from group."

"Group? What's group?"

"Splinter of National Front. Group! We run 'oonchback!" She meant *Hunchback*, the underground paper previously mentioned in relation to Mr Blattner and his radio-ing of Marchmont's particulars to Eastern Europe.

"Where do I come into that?" Marchmont exclaimed and deep in her vagina his penis twitched slightly.

"Where do you come into it?" She started moving now with serious intent remembering his heroism and wanting to be a part of it and also to reward him. "You're a hero of the revolution, aren't you?"

"Am I?" Marchmont said, also moving and ready to agree if this is what she wanted.

"But of course you're not allowed to talk about it, are you? They wanted to do an editorial on you at 'oonchback (*Hunchback*) but it were vetoed. I'm editorial secretary. This is the copy room."

They came up to a massive, satisfactory double-climax the stains of which survived three years of leather cleaning on her skirt to her secret pride.

**4** By eleven o'clock this Thursday morning with it just starting to rain, something rather unpleasant was happening to Miss Bartholomew. Her interrogation by Detective Chief Inspector Marcus had followed the same general pattern as Mr Parfitt's but now it was becoming particular; and not only particular but peculiar. An element of sadistic entertainment had crept into the proceedings and the other detectives had stopped what they were doing in order to watch. One got the impression that Marcus was specially good at this. He had the poor girl standing on the Trade Winds counter so that they could all see up her mini-dress. Her petticoat and her panties were quite plainly visible to all the men clustered around.

Mr Parfitt, be it to his credit, had his back turned on what was happening. He had made several protests to Marcus and threatened to write to the Commissioner of Police but had been told that this unit was Special Branch and answerable only to Military Intelligence.

"Where is Marchmont?" Marcus asked again.

"I keep telling you. He's at my digs."

"If you keep telling me you must know that I keep not believing you," the Inspector said. "Take off the next item."

It was what in espionage they call strip-interrogation. Every wrong answer and the interrogatee has to remove an article of clothing. So far Miss Bartholomew had had to remove her coat, her shoes, her silk scarf and the amber chain belt of her dress. The next item was the dress itself, a short-short crimpoline summer dress with balloon sleeves in scarlet, blue and green jungle pattern.

"I won't!" Miss Bartholomew shouted.

"Then we shall have to take it off for you," said Marcus.

Miss Bartholomew screamed for Mr Parfitt who tried



to prevent the detectives seizing her. Swiftly one man trod on Mr Parfitt's foot while the others pushed him over. He lay helplessly flat on his back on the floor behind the counter, bald-headed, glasses gone, his foot still twisted under a heavy boot. Marcus looked down at him, calmly.

"I shall have to charge you with assaulting a police officer in the execution of his duty, Mr Parfitt."

"You're breaking my foot!" Mr Parfitt groaned.

"Let him alone!" Miss Bartholomew cried. "You rotten lot of thugs."

Detective Chief Inspector Marcus gave his men the nod. They pulled Miss Bartholomew from the counter and ripped off her clothes until she was naked, then stood back and looked at her. Mr Parfitt closed his eyes in distress and pain.

"Now. Where is Marchmont?"

Miss Bartholomew was sobbing, holding her breasts, trying to cross her legs away from the male stares. "He's at my digs! He is! He is! He's waiting for me to phone him!"

Marcus picked up the telephone receiver and handed it to her. One of his men started a tape recorder attached to the switchboard. The girl took one hand from her breast and dialled the number. It started ringing and went on ringing with no reply.

**5** The telephone in the hall of the shared flat in the mock-Tudor semi-detached house up by the *King Harry* kept giving little tings. Post Office telephones often do this and the party calling thinks there's no reply or else that the number is engaged — there are various banshee noises available rather than a straight-forward connection. In the converse you try to get a number but fail to get the the ringing tone and instead there is an open circuit noise ringing tone and instead there is an open circuit noise like holding a sea-shell to your ear. It is possible to waste six hours out of a working eight hour day on the telephone alone.

Marchmont was fucking Kiki again, this time in Miss Bartholomew's own double bed; Kiki had insisted on this.

"It might bring her luck," she said. It sounded like 'look'.

Marchmont could hardly believe his own prowess and generously gave partial credit to Kiki's own expertise.

She had the knack of caressing his scrotum so delicately and yet with such electric fire that he seemed to have achieved a permanent erection, even after ejaculation. When he mentioned this Kiki giggled and showed him the tips of the fingers of her left hand which appeared to be responsible for the miracle.

"It's because I'm fingering me joombo all day and half the night," she said.

"Your what?"

"Practising me chord," she explained. She played

"Practising me chords," she explained. She played a jumbo folk guitar, finger-style. The frets of the guitar had roughened and hardened her fingers and when she drew them lightly over his back it felt like tiny whiskers of copper wire and set his spine tingling at just the right moment again.

"No wonder you pinch all her boy friends," Marchmont complimented her. He was sitting up in bed enjoying a Peter Stuyvesant cigarette now while Kiki was at the hand basin bathing herself and using Miss Bartholomew's deodorant spray on her vagina.

She was slightly offended at this and told him that she had only sampled them in order to discover which one was Marchmont. She had been established in the house by the Group for this purpose.

"We thought Marchmont was just a front." It sounded like 'froot'.

"Oh?" Marchmont said.

"Nobody could believe it was just one person, d'you see."

"Really?"

"You seemed to be working all over Europe at same time. 'A one-man international front', Mr Blattner called you."

"Mr Who?"

He thought Marchmont were a code name and we spent a month trying to decipher 'it. Then d'you know what? I found it in the voting register bold as brass! Brilliant, that's what the committee thought. It's better than a front. It's a double bluff (blooff)!"

"Thank you," Marchmont said, modestly.

She came back to the bed, concerned and serious although quite naked now. "What're you going to do, love, now you've been blown?"





Marchmont said: "I haven't been blown yet, have I? Or was I asleep?" But she was talking politics. She meant that his identity had been blown.

"Mr Blattner thinks it was Mapplebeck," Kiki said. Marchmont blinked. "Oliver Mapplebeck?"

"He was kidnapped in Dubrovnik last week."

"I read about that," Marchmont said. The fragment of reality dropped from the vast obscurity of the rest of her conversation and gave him goose pimples; it was like breaking an old dream.

"We think he was taken to Zagreb for torture," she said. She sat now on the edge of the bed, brushing her hair down in front of her face. "You haven't worked Zagreb, have you?"

"Not exactly," Marchmont said.

She laughed. "You've worked everywhere else — Trieste, Budapest, Vienna, Vladivostok . . ."

He felt quite weak with fear. There was something rather horrifying in this recital of his package holiday spiel in this girl's north-country voice. He couldn't see her face through the curtain of hair and didn't know whether she was smiling or not.

*And who was Blattner . . . ?*

**6** Irma Blattner stood in the greengrocer's queue for the first cherries of the season in Ruislip High Street, talking to an American serviceman's wife called Ingrid.

"Are you a grass widow agen honey?" Ingrid said. "You know, the way you're dolled up and making with the green lights?"

Irma's husband had got every secret there was from the USAF base and most of them through Ingrid. Not by guile or stealth but by just because Ingrid was bitchy about her husband Ernie and thought his eyes had got smaller and closer together since she married him.

"Is Fritzie out on another espionage assignment?" she asked now.

Irma nodded, sadly.

"Well that's the way it goes, honey. Old soldiers never die but old spies are never allowed to retire. Did you know Fritzie's on the CIA short list for extermination? The only reason they ain't done it is the elections come up and then shortage of staff and a general muss-up at HQ. You know something? They ain't got any real killers any more. Are you making cherry pie or just eating 'em? Four pounds ten a pound is too pricey. Do you wear knickers under them Levis?"

Irma was Dutch Javanese, beautiful, tall, well busted and buttocked and with a noble strong dark-complexioned face, high asiatic cheek-bones and vivid eyes, lashes, black-red jungle hair. Ingrid's Ernie said she's a lot of woman and needs a lot of man but all she's got is burnt-out Fritzie. Ingrid spent a good deal of time retailing such snippets of opinion; inflicting little wounds with little barbs; trying to make people hate each other and especially trying to prise couples apart and get them mated elsewhere.

"You coming to the mix-in tonight?"

"Ah ah," Irma told her, explicitly.

"Maybe you're right," Ingrid said. "It's not fair don't you bring something to barter. On the other hand at best you only bring Fritzie. Has he had an erection lately?"

"One pound of cherries," Irma told the greengrocer as he interposed between Irma and Ingrid's intimate question. His name was Joseph and he was taken for an Italian though he was Cuban and in Havana was feared and respected as one of Castro's top agents:

"You wanta some onion?" he chanted now, in the

idiotic Itie manner that the English and Americans love. "You wanna some carrot?"

"You wanta focka me, Joe?" Ingrid said, just to embarrass him for every time she said it he dropped his eyes bashfully like a girl, as now:

"Please, Mrs Huck. Your old man he droppa da bomb on poor Joe." Focking crude bitch, he thought. He would like to push a live cobra up her as he did to Liu Fu Wung, which means peaceful co-existence.

"So how's the landscape business?" Ingrid now asked Irma.

"We have three gardens to do now," Irma said, proudly.

But Ingrid didn't like proud or garden or anything wholesome and she gave a coarse laugh. "Oh yeah? I bet I know whose! Don't tell me! The Minister of Defence, the Atomic Research Home of Rest and whatelse oh yeah Jesus it has to be Operation Vatican at Ayot St. Peter! Am I right?"

This kind of comic rhetoric, although based on strictly accurate and factual classified information did not require an answer. Fritz's landscape gardening was debased even in the utterance by Ingrid who debased everything. It was something they had gone in for upon Fritz's retirement from the several secret services he had become hopelessly entangled with; it was something more important than missiles and moon-shots and world issues although, oddly, he had become attached to horticulture while laying mine-fields in Wales at the time of Prince Charles' investiture.

"Do you mind roubles?" Irma asked Joe now.

Joe shrugged; roubles, drachma, lira — in Ruislip anything was possible. While totting up her bill on a piece of paper he was in reality writing the words: *Operation Vatican* with a query after it. For a peach he would get an invitation from Ingrid to the Mix-in, since her husband Ernie was over Siberia in B22; for another peach he could fuck her.

She would probably have all the chat on who was holding Mapplebeck. She might even know where was Blattner and why had his wife just bought potatoes when both of them were on a strict diet . . .

**7** "Dad?"

"Who's that, then?"

"It's me. Patsy."

"Ow are yo, hen?"

"Da, that's what I'm ringing about. I've been stripped naked by a gang of policemen!"

"Oo aye. Jest a minute, hen, I'll go in t'time-keeper's office away from din . . . Ther, that's better. You've done what, hen? Shouldn't you be at work?"

"That's where it happened, dad. Mr Parfitt's at hospital having his foot X-rayed. They've gone to find Mr Marchmont now. They're going to kill him. It's the Special Branch connected with secret service. Can't you get in touch with your union, dad? It's an Inspector Marcus — just a minute, sir — oh Christ they forgot to lock the shop door and I'm not dressed — dad, can you hear me?"

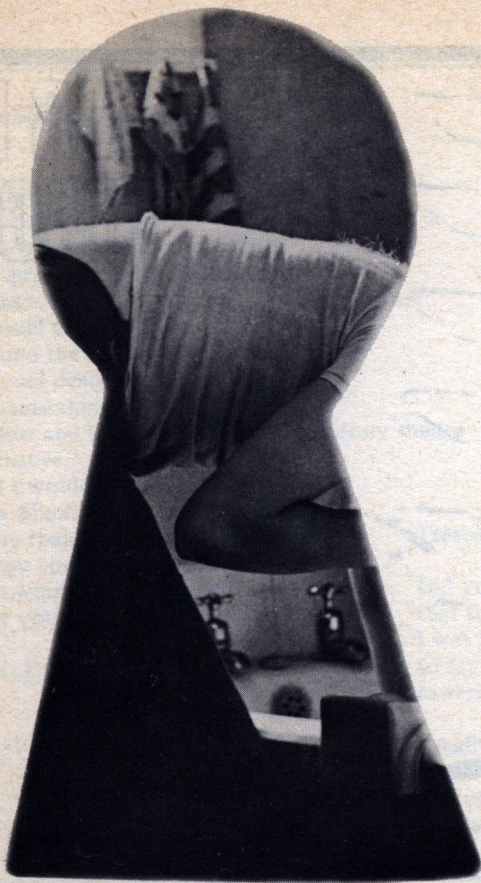
"Are you in some sort of trouble hen?"

**8** Marchmont said: "How do I look?"

Kiki said: "You look really debonair. How is it you look taller when you're dressed?"

Marchmont admitted that he wore lifts; that is the high heels that actors wear to make them taller than the leading lady. It was unusual for him to wear the same suit two days running since he usually woke up in a different frame of mind; Kuala Lumpur, perhaps; perhaps





Narvik. Today it was Dubrovnik again; beige mohair, pink silk shirt, crocodile shoes with discreet lifts, crocheted yellow socks. He decided to wear a silk scarf instead of a tie and a gold pendant which luckily he had in his pocket (it had a miniaturised street map of Addis Ababa where your mother's portrait should be). He was thinking, as he put the finishing touches to his dress, that if the explosion had gutted his room he had lost seventeen suits and accessories covering practically everything Peter Lorre, Claude Rains and Humphrey Bogart had done in the civilised world.

"Hark!" Kiki said, suddenly.

There was a dog barking in a high falsetto somewhere downstairs. It was an Afghan hound named Felicity who only barked in moments of extreme danger and was inclined to be telepathic.

"She barked for a whole hour before Mapplebeck was kidnapped in Dubrovnik last Tuesday — that was more than a thousand miles away." Kiki could not keep the pride out of her voice even though they were both shit-scared and peering out of the windows.

"It's okay," Marchmont called, suddenly. He was in the bathroom again and standing on the lavatory seat with his head out of the hopper window. "It's only the police."

A white police Jaguar and a tall blue police van had just turned in from King Harry Lane and were now stopping outside. Felicity's barking was now reaching a frenzied almost hysterical crescendo. Kiki, who had not replied to Marchmont's information now came running into the bathroom holding two snorkels, one blue rubber, one white.

"Put this on and piss in the bath," she instructed him, thrusting the white snorkel into his hands.

"I don't get it!" Marchmont exclaimed, though he was already undoing his flies with a fatalistic instinct that she must be right. "It's the police!"

"It's the *Tontons Macoute!*" Kiki said. So urgent was it that she finished undoing his flies and pulled out

his penis. "They're trying to kill you. You must know that. It's Marcus's Special Branch — they blew up your digs last night!" And as he started passing water into the cold bath water already there from Miss Bartholomew's bath, she rushed out to the kitchen and rushed back with a plastic squeeze bottle of Fairy Liquid which she squirted accurately into his pissing so that the surface foamed up. As she was doing this he heard the front door crash from its hinges and then the dog's barking changed to a terrified scream ending on a high note.

Kiki had lifted her skirt, pulled down her panties and sat also pissing on the edge of the bath. She looked up at him as she was straining to do the utmost and a little fart sounded. "Put your snorkel on," she said. Then, about the fart she said, "Sorry."

She hoisted her panties, pulled on her skirt and brushed it as though concerned for appearance, then stepped into the bath in her boots, put on her snorkel and knelt down. "You get on top of me facing the other way, keep right down, make sure your snorkel's hidden in the soap suds — if you move you're dead. Oh just a minute. Christ." She jumped out of the bath and ran out, came back clutching some flat waterproofed parcels which she lay all along the bottom of the bath. There were heavy footsteps on the stairs when she sank out of sight under the stinking foaming bathwater and a few desultory bubbles came out of her snorkel pipe.

Marchmont decided not to follow her.

"If you see him, shoot him," he heard a police voice say somewhere quite near. "His job's done. They don't need him."

Marchmont stepped into the bath, feeling for Kiki's body; carefully he went down astride her and at the last moment as his head was going under he put his snorkel into position. When the police came into the bathroom Marchmont's nose was touching the plug-hole, Kiki's feet were either side of his ears.

"Jesus stinking focking Christ!" Detective Chief Inspector Marcus said, holding his nose and looking at the yellow foam. "Some people live like focking swine!"

The voice came thinly down the snorkel and terrified Marchmont. This was the police? Who could he go to if this was the police? The police didn't even have guns. And if they did it was only when they were after some dangerous armed criminal.

"Watch out for booby traps," said the thin voice. "If you don't kill Marchmont he's going to kill you." ? , Marchmont thought to himself, desperately.

He could feel Kiki's arse under his balls, could hear her breathing transmitted through the water, could taste the stenchy taste of their combined urine mixing with Fairy liquid and Miss Bartholomew's lavender water. And whatever was in the waterproof wrapping at the bottom of the bath was cutting with sharp metallic edges into his elbows and knees (it turned out to be printers' plates for the next issue of *Hunchback*).

Marchmont was becoming increasingly certain that he had been mistaken for somebody else. The best thing he could do now was write to his Member of Parliament and then go into hiding until something was done for him.

But where could he hide?

And who the hell was his Member of Parliament?

TO BE CONTINUED



THOMAS M.  
DISCH

**NEW  
AND  
REASONABLY  
NEW POEMS**

**The Liver Goes**

And then the arteries, like brittle grass,  
Are snapped beneath the hoofbeats of the heart;  
Ducts clog, and dribble juices, stop, and start;  
The teeth lie, idle, in a waterglass.  
The laws that govern molecules of gas  
Govern the pistons, valves, and every part  
Of our machineries with equal art:  
We are mere quantities of speed and mass.  
— But you, my longest-lasting friend, and best,  
For you, during the noon of your success,  
It is too soon to think of death. And yet —  
You'll die. But not until I have expressed  
At least one elegy. For I confess  
I love you now but *then* I may forget.

In memory of J.T.S.  
January 25, 1968

**Stars as Thought**

The sinking inward  
of each tiny point  
into a tinier

& forgetting  
how it began

**The Romance of the Writer and His Soul**

At Carnival I said to you:  
“We’ve had enough fun to last a lifetime.”

You told me that was always true,  
and I immediately denied it.

“For,” I said, “if I were dead,  
who would write my poems to you?”

But you insisted you were right.  
We spent the night in separate beds.

**A Prayer for the Harvest**

I love the gibbous politician bathing  
in my view:  
the lovely, bulbous demagogue.

Although it's true  
I only go up to the roof occasionally  
when I must do

the wash. The sirocco blows over the crops  
and I marvel  
at the gross expansions of the humid squash.



### The Blindman's Sign

I'm bitter and I wish  
you bastards  
were blind instead of me  
I'd sprinkle salt into your bloody  
sockets oh you would scream but as for me  
I would drive  
around the corner at 100 mph  
I would describe the world to you  
in painstaking colors  
yellow and blue-pink and red and funny shades  
of mauve  
and I would kick  
you when you weren't looking  
more than once I would be *hideous*  
if you could see me  
you would be so terrified  
that you would be glad you were blind

Thank you.

### Opening the Heart

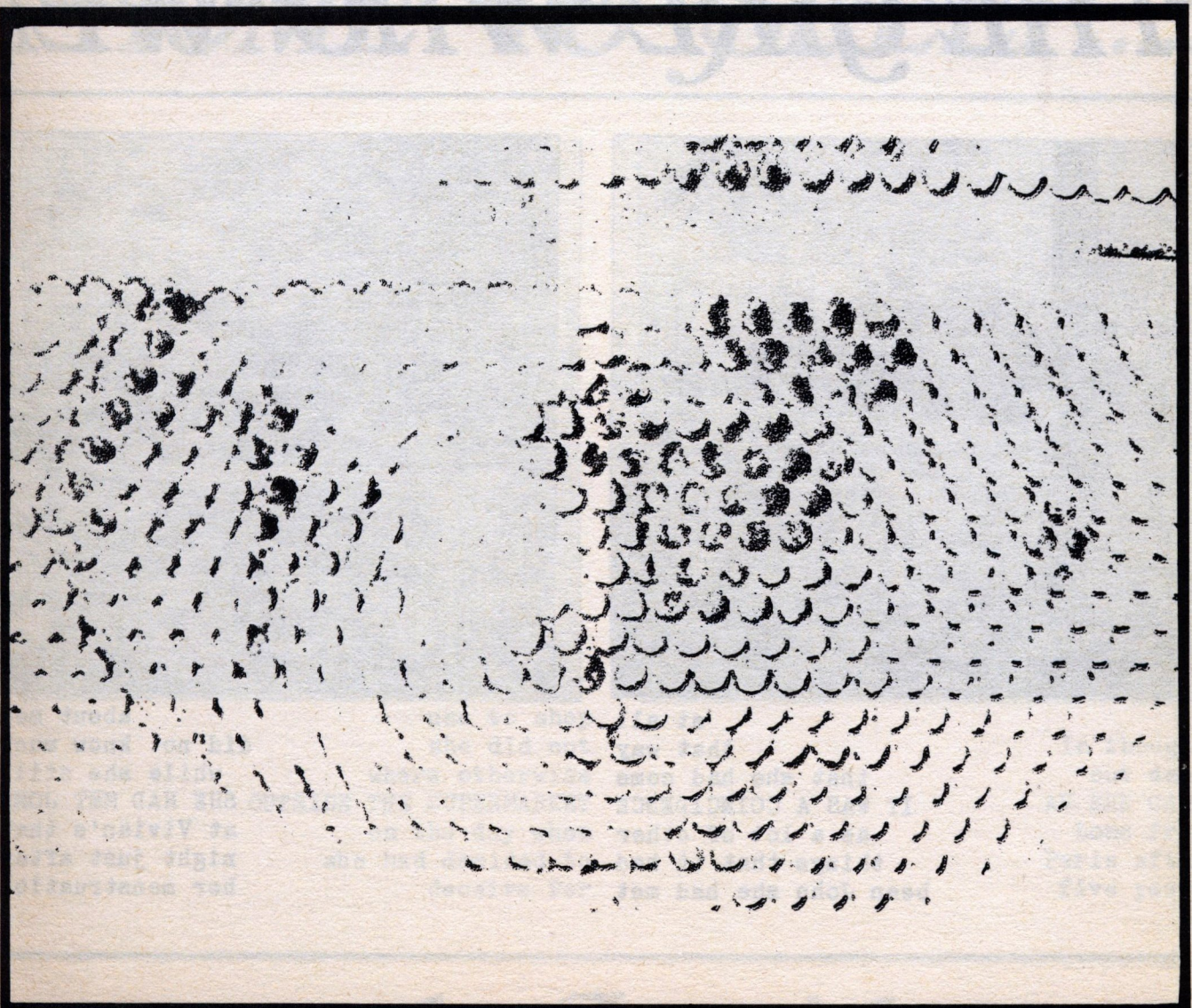
Learning surgery is no snap.  
1st Latin,  
names for all the bones, &  
knots. 2nd How to disconnect  
the heart. 3rd Palpate,  
replace (this part  
requires a great  
delicacy). Usually these operations  
are not a success,  
& for years  
the intern gets too little sleep.  
We all must agree that  
a good surgeon  
cannot be paid too much

### Testosterone

Did you think it was your feelings  
that touched you, Inky-Dinky?  
I was more crude. It wouldn't do  
to say all this between the  
lowering of the blinds:

whether

I really loved you, whether permitting  
me these liberties was wise.  
Medusa, darling, spread your legs  
and let me look into your eyes.





# THE GIRL WHO WENT



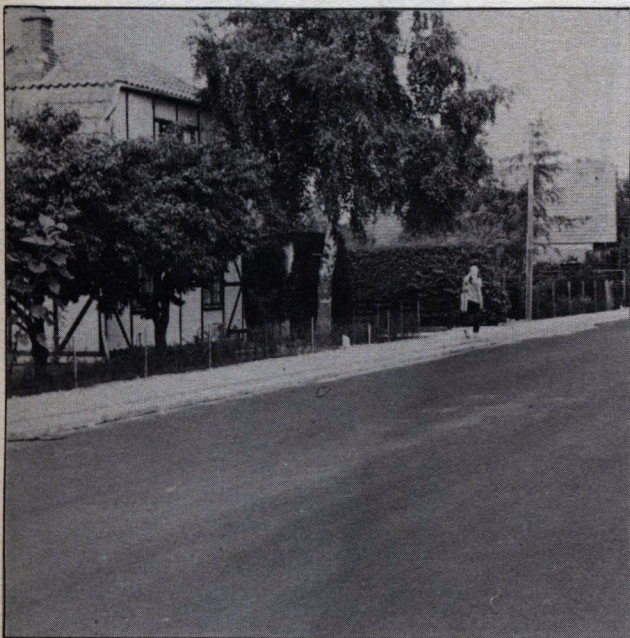
at all  
 that way  
 that she had come  
 IT WAS A COINCIDENCE  
 as a lot of other  
 things that it had  
 been John she had met



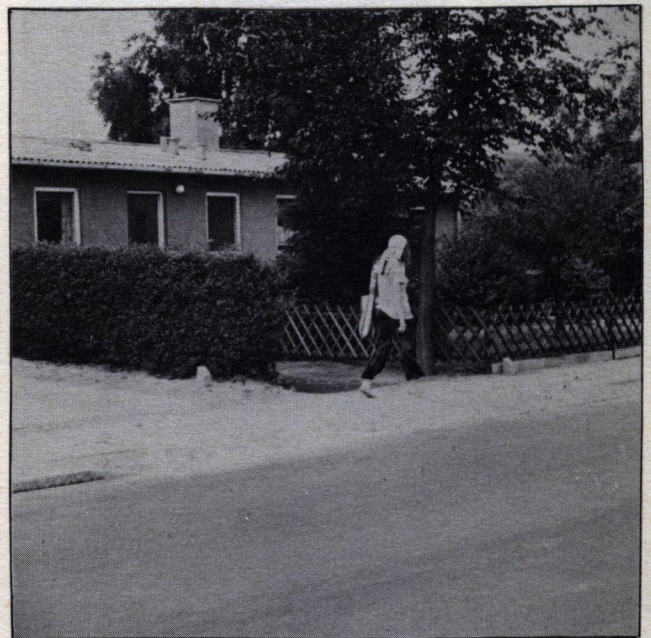
about men  
 did not know much  
 while she still  
 SHE HAD MET JOHN  
 at Vivian's that  
 night just after  
 her menstruation



# T HOME TO SLEEP.....



use to shop  
she did not  
where otherwise  
OUTSIDE THE SUPERMARKET  
on the day when  
she had decided to  
deceive Per.



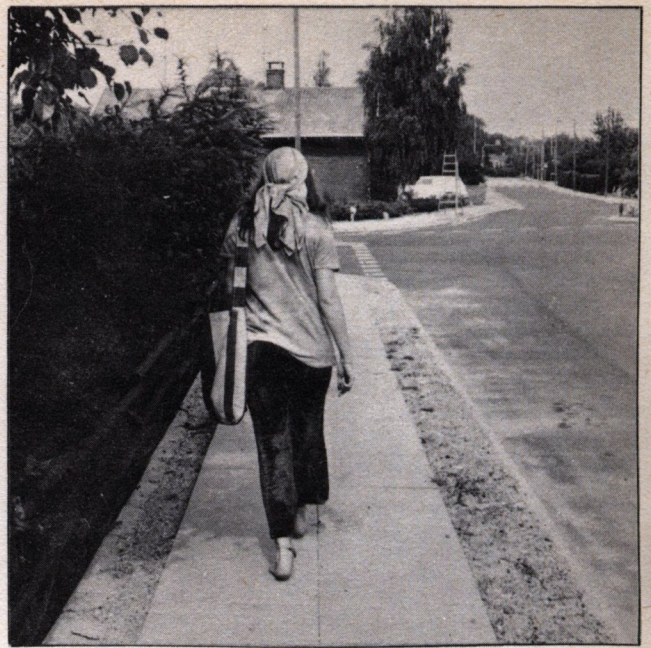
in thought  
out deep  
AS SHE CAME  
home from  
Paris after  
five years

...by Jannick Storm

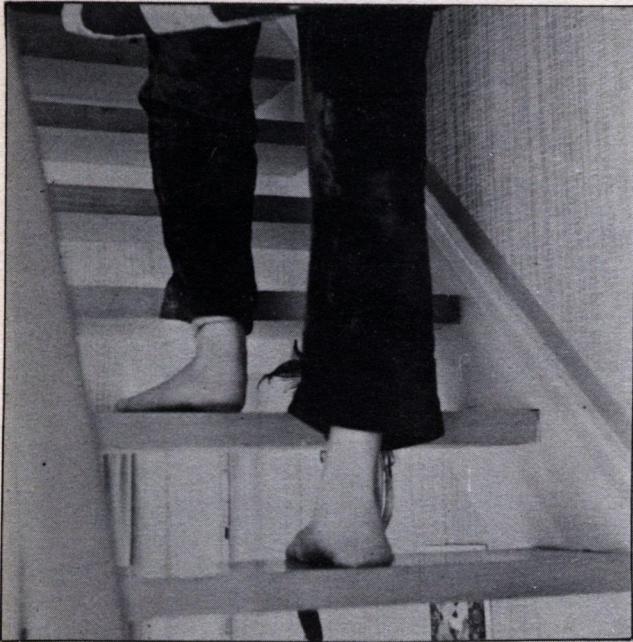




Alex and Berit  
together with  
WITH THE BUS  
an hour  
earlier  
than usual



job  
looked for a  
after having  
FROM THE CITY  
because her father  
had thrown her  
out



wife  
"understanding"  
and his  
AFTER MEETING WITH PER  
and she  
ignored it

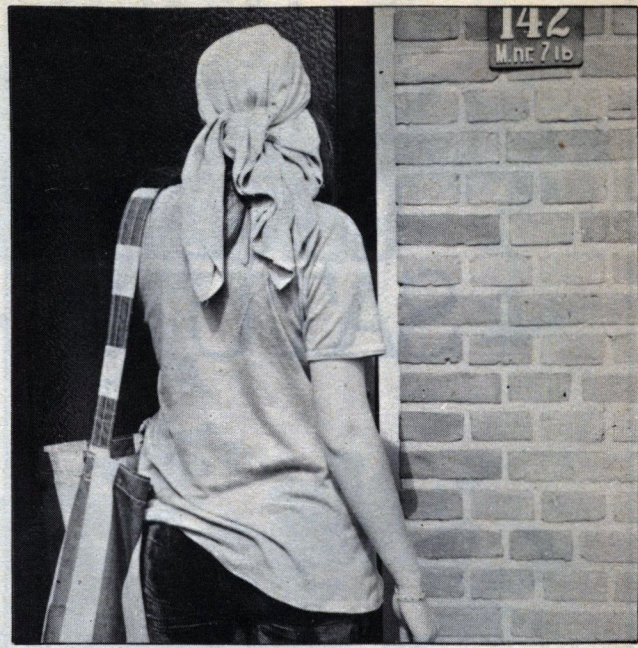


at once  
told him everything  
wish she had  
AND SHE DID  
wish she had  
gone home  
with him





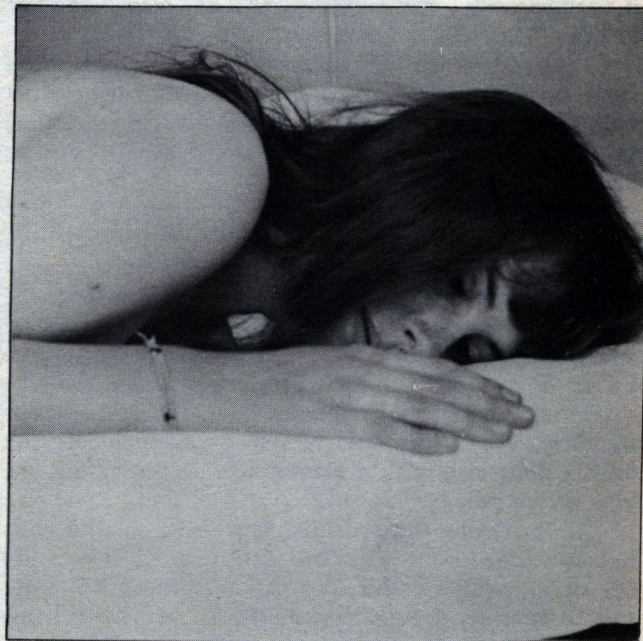
her eyes  
tears in  
STILL  
without knowing  
anything  
definite



training  
hard  
after the quite  
VERY TIRED  
after the stay  
at the clinic



standing there  
why he was  
of the reason  
NOT WANT TO THINK  
of what might  
have  
happened



ABOUT IT ANY MORE.



# ROOF GARDEN UNDER SATURN

by Ian Watson

**S**HORTLY AFTERWARDS, another commotion occurred. A booming hysterical voice rose up from the street.

"Are we living on one of Saturn's moons I ask you?" it cried mightily — yet petulantly too: the magnified voice of a flea. "And no one has told us!"

Suzuki opened one of the gates in the high metal fence surrounding the Roof Garden. He stood by the parapet wall, gazing down into the street. Anxiously. And regretting his sudden impulse. For anxiety was the worst answer to life.

Ten floors below, traffic had ground to a halt, and the crowd of pedestrians was growing denser and denser. The focus of attention was a thin scarecrow figure clinging to one of the utility poles thirty feet or so above the pavement. He was balancing on a steel rung. Yet these steel rungs only began eight or ten feet above the ground. Either he had made an incredible, superhuman leap (the hop of a flea, in fact, performed by a human!) — or else some comrade had humped him up on his shoulders. But only a policeman with a bloody nose leaned against the base of the pole.

"Come after me and I'll stamp on all your faces so help me," cried the voice of the giant flea — a voice as far out of proportion as his leap must have been. "I've got something to say to everybody. Hear me! You're wondering how I have such a mighty voice eh? Mightier than any of you police with your metal trumpets . . ."

A policeman on the edge of the crowd was indeed babbling vainly into a megaphone about air and oxygen and danger. He made as much noise as the scarecrow on the pole; yet couldn't drown that fierce flea voice, for the crowd wasn't listening to him — they were captivated and hypnotised by the scarecrow above their heads . . .

". . . but how did I get my powerful plastic throat?" the flea was crying. "Once I was just a humble teacher,

minding my own business, trying to instil the *Analects of Confucius* into the young. Till the day when I succumbed! No longer, then, could the teacher address his class of young minds in the clear ringing natural tones of authority. He must croak, he must whisper Truth. Shall we cut out these growths on my vocal chords by surgery? — growths that are the very flowers of poison and the only flowers we can ever hope to know? Why not just cut the whole throat out? Who wants a throat of flesh and blood? We can create a plastic throat, it seems, with a plastic loudspeaker. Then why not plastic men? They would not need air or food or light or water! I am speaking ironically, you understand. Look around you. What do you see in this street? Oxygen meters, smog meters, decibel meters. All telling you in no uncertain terms that this is Saturn's moon, and not the Earth! What arrangements are we making to evacuate Saturn and go home, I ask you?"

What sort of teacher was it who incited to riot instead of teaching the ceremonies of appreciation? Suzuki shook his head sadly, for the *Analects of Confucius* taught obedience and not rebellion . . .

"Do you see the thin houses?" the teacher cried, "barely three feet wide they are, yet three stories high. The residents walk sideways all day long like crabs. It's life in the thin edge of the wedge these days I tell you! We're the printed circuit people! When was it we Commuters became parts of a Computer? When the Earth became Saturn's moon and nobody realized! Can't you see? Can't you see? There's Saturn in the sky above your heads! We're on the Moon of Saturn. Let's leave and go home to Earth. I beg you. To fresh flowers and cherry blossom . . ."

The crowd gazed up at the glowing globe of Saturn hanging above the rooftop, and groaned.

And sighed.

**K**IM THE KOREAN, who had helped the thin man up the pole on sheer impulse, had dived into the Store before the trouble started.

The air was hot and turgid with people inside the building. Yet it was rich with oxygen compared with the air outside, for the management of the Store enriched the stale air, as a bribe to the Consumers.

In the Karel Appel Exhibition, which Kim wandered round in bewilderment, he felt overcome with nervousness. He reckoned it was the paintings that distressed him, but wasn't sure. Overcome by a compulsion to *touch*, he found that it wasn't the paintings themselves he wanted to touch, but the section of wall beneath each painting. As he stood in front of each, he trailed his hand along the wall, as if testing the authenticity of the painting by this novel means. When he came to a huge canvas, he bent double, scrutinising the texture of the paint while compulsively he felt the wall beneath, pressing his fingers into it fiercely . . .

In this poisoned world, insane opulence was the rule. The City itself resembled a funfair built on a rubbish heap — and when he left the exhibition and forced his way into the Furniture Department, the furniture on display looked like the lootings from some palace on another world. There were gold-plated coathanger stands, marble statues of nymphs, porcelain castles with drawbridges, turrets and battlements. There was tapestry, there was a coach and horses made of coloured glass. Yet people regarded these lunatic luxuries with but a mild interest, as something





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unexceptional. What was guarded by armed policemen, however, as uniquely precious, was a show of designs for television monsters. From the walls glared and sneered children's notions of mechanical-animal-vegetable horrors — heads sunk in shoulders like the anthropophagi, porcupine men, metal men, creatures of suckers and tentacles, livid vegetables. In a top-security glass tank a popular star wearing a rubber monster suit paced back and forth, threatening the kiddies with stylised karate blows, while lights flashed on and off and sirens howled.

While proud excited tots prowled the rows of monsters, seeing the faces of the future, their mothers battled with walls of ice that surrounded a Car which Must be Won. Buried in the ice were dozens of ignition keys. The housewives held the palms of their hands pressed to the ice in sheer devotion like Jews at the Wailing Wall, melting the ice with their blood-heat. Some wives had established little tunnels in the ice, and their hands looked ghostly in gloves of ice like inverted X-ray pictures of hands. Some wives keened in pain, yet kept their hands where they were by will-power.

Then Kim saw the Store for what it was: a vast plot, a subterfuge. The Store was a new one — yet straightway as full of people as any other Store. Could it be said to *create* the people that filled it and played its games? Could it be said that those were the latest doll designs standing in queues on the escalators?

**K**IM TOOK AN escalator up to the Roof, and had his suspicions confirmed.

Huge red-and-white-check balloons trailed advertising streamers hundreds of feet into the pale smog, marking one of the main nodes of megalopolis. The grey haze hung lifeless yet feverishly hot . . . as hot as a greenhouse.

The Sun was not visible; but Saturn was — the great globe hanging ominously above the Store, glowing with bands of light, its rings tilted at an angle to the roof . . .

Monstrous pink plastic flamingoes were attached to the grey walls. Below the huge birds stood a whole cohort of tin buglers four feet high with tin pennants fixed to their bugles, waiting to blow a flourish on the hour. A monorail ran round the roof's perimeter: six pink pumpkin chariots carrying wondering passengers around.

There was a full-size fairground roundabout with horses to ride, up and down, round and round, to wurlitzer music; and a woman chestnut-roaster with a rococo chestnut stall and a mechanical monkey who wound the handle that churned the chestnuts. The woman was a human being, even if the monkey was mechanical. There were humans in pumpkins, but the buglers were made of tin.

Love in an iron lung . . . or a plastic bag: sitting on a rustic bench in this foul fairyland, two young lovers, the boy breathing into a plastic bag, working the bag in and out by hand like the anaesthetist his rubber lung: recircling his own foul breath which tasted purer than the tainted gas of Saturn's moon to him; his girl dizzy, head between her knees, drowning in love and gas. The boy broke off pumping the plastic bag, to snatch a kiss or a word. Accepting the vicissitudes of love under Saturn.

Though Kim did not.

For Kim stared, scandalised, at the asphyxiated lovers in their metal fairyland . . .

Kim joined the sluggish crowd that oozed like a coil of toothpaste towards the Roof Garden Route and around

it, gaping in wonder at the dwarf trees and fish tanks inside their oxygen tents . . .

**S**UZUKI WHO HAD returned from the parapet, after seeing many people faint in the crowd, and finally the fall of their flea God of the moment from the utility pole, distrusted these people — for what did they really care in their hearts about these wonderful fishes and trees? Oh to be sure they were taught the ceremonies of appreciation. Yet Suzuki was well aware of the real reason why they flocked in their hundreds and thousands up to the roof, under Saturn. It was the spectacle of so much free oxygen, so much sheer fresh air, lavished upon these pedigree fishes and trees (that fade and tarnish far more swiftly than the human machine will ever fade and tarnish) that was the real wonder of the roof . . .

Today of all days, on the eve of the Fish Festival (his very own), Suzuki felt almost painfully sensitive to the well-being of the fish . . . and, to a lesser degree, of the trees. Ah but the fish . . . bloated and knotted by mutation and selective breeding into wondrously mottled finned globes which rivalled, no surpassed the fantasies of the finest glass-blower. He cast a disapproving glance over the crowd, and observed Kim staring sullenly at a particularly beautiful dwarf maple flourishing in its transparent hood of fresh air . . .

An insistent insect-like buzzing caught Suzuki's attention. The buzzing sound gradually asserted itself above the noise of traffic in the street, the hurdy-gurdy music of the roundabout, and the chant of adverts over the Store's loudspeakers concealed in the bugler's bugles. The noise drifted closer, on the grey air.

A curiously antique-looking biplane (that surely ought to have been in a science museum and not in the perilously opaque skyways of the City) was flying towards the Store, dodging between the tethers of the balloons.

The biplane circled the huge illuminated globe of Saturn which straddled the roof, its grey steel supports barely visible (creating a grand illusion) . . . and while it circled Saturn, the biplane pumped out a cloud of bright pink smoke.

This pink smoke settled slowly through the thick grey air towards the Roof Garden, while the crowd on the roof stamped their feet nervously and shoved their neighbours impolitely . . . for it had begun to look as though the real planet Saturn's caul of methane gas was dripping down on to the roof — a sight and a supposition that stirred currents of agitation in the spectators . . .

Suzuki wasn't concerned for his own sake. With the true Zen sensibility, it became — as it were — possible to breathe yet not to breathe . . . He was more concerned about the safety of the oxygen tents. His whole life was involved in them. Beauty could only exist on such a small scale in the modern world. The Culture of Poverty (when small things were valued because of the people's poverty) had given way to a Culture of Affluence in which, once more, small things were admired by the discerning, since the big things were compatible with human life no longer. These oxygen tents with their fish and to a lesser degree their trees represented his aesthetics, his religion, his social situation. This kind of feudal loyalty made him an excellent watchman, for he would never steal a breath of air from his beloved fish and would make sure no one else did. The watchmen watched each other like hawks, and watched



the crowd like dragons.

The pink mist had by now descended upon the Roof Garden, tinting the air a delicate shade of cherry-blossom . .

Kim felt a subtle horror creep over him. The uneasy shuffling of the crowd in this pink polluted fairyland and their laboured panting for breath made them seem like a herd of man-sized lizards on some Saturnian moon. When the pink mist cleared, they would see him as he was, a Man, and . . . . The reptile pack closed round him, grunting and pawing.

He thought . . .

*The explorer seized the strange idol of the Lizard People and escaped through the throng of worshippers bearing it aloft. The Tree Of Life in its tent of poisonous oxygen (paradoxical image of their religion) was his talisman and their taboo. They strank back fearfully . . . .*

Kim shoved people aside rudely, embraced the plastic container with the dwarf maple in it, and wrenched it free from the air pipe. It was heavy. Much heavier than he had thought. Yet the oxygen gushing from the pipe invigorated him. He succeeded in lifting the unwieldy box and swung round . . . .

**Q**UITE SOON THE crowd was moving on its caterpillar course again wondering at the fish and trees, squeezed by people still inside the Store who had seen nothing of the pink mist and were only too anxious to view the beauties of the roof and begin the ceremony of appreciation.

Suzuki glimpsed himself briefly, vaingloriously, as a samurai of old, clutching on antique sword still wet with

blood against a background of the rising sun, rising behind a snow-capped cone . . . although in reality it had only been a chemical spray that had frozen the vandal in his tracks blinding him, not a slash of steel . . . and some of this anguish of misplaced tradition must have passed over Suzuki's normally impassive features, for another watchman, who was not his friend, took it upon himself to remark on it . . . .

"We are only servants, after all, Suzuki-san. He was a man too."

"Bah," snorted Suzuki, his vision rent in half. "He was rubbish . . . to do that."

Suzuki let his thoughts dwell upon the next day's Fish Festival, to calm them . . . .

Once more he would take to the City's waterways in a painted lacquered barge for the voyage upstream from Tea-Water Station. He would wear protective clothing, of course, since the waterways were somewhat full of human waste and detergents, of mercury and cadmium and other chemicals. He would breathe air from a scuba-duba back-pack since no creature but hideous rats could breathe the air of the waterways (and these breaths he anticipated with due pleasure, though not in the spirit of self-indulgence). He and his partners of the Fish Ceremony would dip symbolic oars into the streams, sometimes deep in concrete culverts, sometimes in underground tunnels dimly lit by service lamps. The high point of the journey through the poisoned waterways of the City would undoubtedly be when they passed, for a whole half-mile, beneath the massive concrete arches of the overhead expressway all freshly painted a dazzling vermilion — as massive and noble a line of sacred gateways to a shrine as Suzuki could conceive . . .

## NEXT MONTH

It is a year since we presented a special New Writers issue of New Worlds, featuring authors never before published. It proved to be one of the most popular issues we have ever produced.

Next month the emphasis is again on new names, with outstanding fiction by C.R.Clive, Bob Franklin and Michael Biggs — new writers of great potential.

There will also be a special feature on the collages of Ian Breakwell; an enlarged Books section; short fiction by Marek Obtulowicz; and the second episode of Jack Trevor Story's remarkable new novel, *The Wind in the Snottygobble Tree*.

We're confident that this New Writers issue will be as popular as was last year's. Don't miss your copy.

# new worlds



# ALIEN TERRITORY

JOHN T. SLADEK

The "conflict" between this large nation and this small nation was as empty of meaning, to the photographer, as a rowing contest between A and B. He was told that A was his homeland; he shared meals (frozen delicacies) with A officers.

Having more than enough contempt for himself, he was able to spare some for them. He alone knew why he was here — to make a living, out of the pathos of their deaths. Thus he was totally unemotional about being captured by the enemy.

In the same battle, a man whose last name he'd never quite caught blew himself up with a grenade. It may have been only an accident, or suicide out of fear of the enemy — the unnameable — but the photographer enjoyed the rain of meat.

This battle came to an abrupt end when he discovered he had not come awake to it, but gone to sleep to it. Now he awoke, to find himself on the other side. Not that it made much difference, for almost at once he was "liberated."

Now he began to like the "war." But why did no one ever talk of the enemy? Except technically: "We shoot one bastard and about six more stick their heads out to see what the fuck was coming off. So everybody but fuckhead here opens up.

"But we got 'em and wired 'em up to a fence to let the C have their fun and games. We had steak and french fries for dinner, apple pie a la mode. Ate till I puked." The soldier grinned. Cut to charred animal. "Charcoal broiled steaks."

In the very next battle, he was shot down, captured, then recaptured by the E. Rightly suspecting he was not of their race, they prepared to flay him of his offensive skin, using their famous well-honed bayonets.

As they began, he realized this was only a comic strip; he could step out of this skin any time. He did so, then wadded up the boring, disgusting scene and set fire to it. Alas, the fire attracted the attention of an enemy spotter.

He and his group were suddenly pinned down by enemy fire, and now there was no possible escape. He was killed. In the next world, the enemy was already shelling the base. Before he had taken many steps he was halted by tough-looking women guerillas.

Later he went on patrol with the "men." They were badly shot up (and he got some fine pictures) and the enemy captured him. Interrogation showed him harmless, so they kept him under light surveillance. Only the food was different from before.

The post was overrun by the other side, but as they made their way back, one of their own planes accidentally strafed and bombed them. The lone survivor, he was able to pose their bodies for a lot of interesting pictures, which he hoped to sell to LIFE.

Pictures such as these made the photographer's life worthwhile. They gave him pleasure even when they were not right before him, when, for example, a venerable (nearer death) politician or general addressed the men via television.

But this was only his TV life. In real life, he and his "friends" ran a stage coach through hostile country. All at once the enemy began coming at them out of the movie screen. He told the anecdote modestly, in the third person:

"That rifle of his been jammed every place in the country but up his ass, and next time . . ." But they were loyal to each other, and apishly curious about the operations of machines — and of the enemy. They were almost movie heroes.

It was a movie, with eats. He could lose himself in it, but eventually he would have to get up and leave the darkness, go blinking into the street of plain cars and people in bifocals. He did, eventually, and they jumped him.

When they had finished, he found the pain (a welcome sign of animal life) diminishing too fast. The world looked different, bifocal. He was able to fly, at dusk, flapping his arms and trailing red tatters of skin.

Bullets from some invisible point touched him. His right wing caught fire, and there was just time to bail out of himself. The red tatters of his chute, caught in a tree, drew new enemies to him. He was captured by a children's battalion.

He would always save a piece of shroud in memory of that day. They moved on quickly into the East, into new country. The monotony of it tired him. To check his sanity, the photographer wrote himself a letter:



**IMPORTANT: INSTRUCTIONS FOR READING THIS STORY.** 1) Read top left hand paragraph on facing page. 2) Select one of the two arrows leading from this paragraph to the one alongside and below. 3) Read the new paragraph you have selected. 4) Repeat instructions 2) and 3). 5) When you have read the bottom right hand paragraph on this page, stop reading. This is the end of the story.

"I am reminded of a photographer friend who was not protected by so much reality. He sent back a postcard of the Crucifixion with some caption about enemy atrocities. Then he went around the officers' mess severing spinal cords with his Scout knife."

Such behaviour, he knew, could only come from living too long in an "idea home." Away from home, he himself was a kind of tourist, blind without a camera, who sees not men, trees, death, streets, food or cathedrals, but snapshots.

Again he was lost, shot and captured, this time by the C, the non-governing government installed by A as an excuse (commitment) for A's war with B. The C believed him a B spy and offered to torture him. He lost some perfect teeth.

"No, this was real life," he said. "The *real* real enemy was coming at him, to break his teeth." But the *REAL* real enemy had surrounded them all. And they in turn were surrounded," he said, when his side had them all hemmed in.

It was cinemascopic. He could see the hell-bent Special Forces charging uphill straight into the technicolor rocket/automatic weapon fire of the marines. Their marines. It was too late to fix the error. Victorious, they began the ritual atrocities.

Was this reel reality? This Christmas tree festooned with guts, the skull boxes clustered around the foot, the meat carillon, the organ contest, bobbing for *augapfel*, *The Chocolate Soldier*, pieces of Victor Herbert? He spoke, finally.

"But this couldn't be him," he said. "He was already *dead!*" The other smiled. "Not quite. "Nothing is complete," as he used to say. It's all very symbolic the blood probably representing his "camera" or ragged temperament or something."

Speaking together, they asked, "Is all 'blood' just a symbol, then?" Very likely it represented a Scout knife, but he said nothing. He was tired, and for chow there were sodas and banana splits and a personal note.

"Dear you: (1) We are pretty sick of all this fighting and bickering you're causing (though the food is good). (2) Therefore we are going to kill you slowly and with much pain. (3) How do you like that, you bastard?" He liked it fine.

"The way I see it," he told one "rescuer," "it's all like a dream. I could still be in the hands of the enemy, just dreaming I've been rescued." And he farted contemptuously.

Then he awoke, and by God, it was a dream, and he was still in the hands of the other side. Different food, but same jokes, same reluctance to imagine or discuss their enemy. During a battle, he killed the uglier ones.

Then the guerillas, D, who lived in country C but were loyal to B, recaptured him. They took less interest in food, because their TV sets showed fewer food commercials, and more interest in sweaty politics. He escaped from them during a battle.

Suddenly the B, C and D opened fire on his new position. Being short of ammo, the A spared him. He took a few laconic shots of the strange crossfire patterns. Then the A or B came with choppers, to airlift him to the safety of a concentration camp.

This business was run with strict military unimaginativeness. He could visualize so much more: An Empire State building of teeth, zeppelins of skin, lung pyramids that breathe, a quivering heart bank.

"But nobody was allowed to hump none of the women or nothing. None of 'em was worth it anyhow. Sheeit! Leave that to the E." The E were allies of A, committed to help through some treaty, who anyway hated people of the B-C-D race.

He wondered what "race" and "hatred" meant to the E. They themselves represented, in some obscure way, the B, C and D, he supposed. The A did not fit his scheme - but outside the canteen, some of them were getting ready to beat him.

This was a false note. The photographer quickly reassumed his true identity, that of a plain black-and-white photo of a group of tough marines in action. *But was it a target?*

He took one final photograph of them all, bunched in two rows, grinning, cake all over their faces, matured by the cutting edge of publicity and boredom. He captioned it **JUST AFTER DEATH**, writing it across their backs in lead.



# TRAVEL TO THE SUN WITH CODA TOURS

Chris  
Lockesley



**A** QUIET DAY, in all probability a Sunday afternoon. During a quiet day such as this Lyautey finds himself stilled as the wind outside his sorry apartment dies down and releases a gift of predominance to the alternative sounds that litter the day's air. Sounds of far-away automobiles flashing off to the coast; the dull bass pulse of a jet passing overhead on its way to Lagos or New York; the faint sounds of music from a block away. These sounds tilt the passage of the afternoon, subtly yet definitely. They are caught within their own elastic nuance much in the same way as a Russian or Icelandic or for that matter anyone is captured by his own language, the inbuilt snares and fallacies. These are the sounds of the lonely for those who have other things to think about rarely notice them. But the lonely in thought are consoled by these undercurrents of modern living, like an intellectual can always return to the flesh-and-blood world when his vocation sickens and stifles him with its unprecise symbols.

Lyautey then is a lonely man, as his actions and interests show, as does the dull, indrawn glaze of his eyes. He is a lecturer at the local University but devotes most of

his time in the Summer (and it is Summer now) to study and his writings. He could almost be a central figure in a novel written in the first few years of the twentieth century. He has loved a woman but she has since married and looks after three young children who live with her husband and herself in a town just outside of London. He once attempted suicide but selected a room from which gas leaked furiously. The woman in the apartment below smelled the gas and got the proprietor to open the door with a master key. To escape prosecution by the police Lyautey attempted: *"It was a mistake. I turned on the gas and looked around for something to light it with but slipped on the floor and crashed my head."*

This afternoon Lyautey decides to go on a short journey. Selecting a clean shirt and jacket, he changes then stumbles downstairs and opens the front door. Outside Summer waits for him: like a woman he knows he can never possess. Gentle lupins of brilliant light illuminate the specks of dust stirred up from the street by the sparse but constant traffic. Overhead the sky is a cloudless blue, and a brief gust of wind carries over on the sullen air the chuckle of children's voices, no doubt playing some esoteric



game on the edge of the woods beginning three blocks away. A scrap of paper progresses across the narrow street in skips and bounds, chanting its own song at the steaming sunbeams. A thrush rides the sky like a fleeting memory of, perhaps, a past Summer afternoon just like this one.

So Lyautey closes the door behind him and starts to walk down the road, warmed by the sun. Yet he is still cold inside from a source which no sun can penetrate, where alien trees partition the green sky and eggs are split from within by ragged machines and headless antelopes which ride the clouds while hiding, escaping from the tiger-sun emerging from the depths of despair contained within him like a flaking onyx.

"I'm within a foreign planet" he cries out into the warmth, and in the distance a dull concussion congealing on the air gives his words for one minute a taste of truth.

In the mainstreet a few people stroll and look into the shop windows, aimlessly playing their eyes over the glittering watches and rings, mirrors and bottles within them. A tinted bottle of perfume catches Lyautey's eye as he walks quickly down the street, thinking his alien thoughts. He stops to examine it. *The bottle is shaped like a conical flask*, he inwardly says to himself. *Like Helen's face as she looked out at me from within the red-lighted diner*. The bottle is standing on a golden silk ribbon upon which there has fromed a dull brown stain — just a little stain — but nevertheless a mark in its fabric. Beside the ribbon and near to the stain a piece of faded card presents its face to the window. It is a picture of a girl in a bikini there is a caption which reads: *Travel to the sun with Coda Tours*.

At the end of the mainstreet, where the shops change to duller decor and the noises on the air are harsher and less remote, Lyautey picks up courage and walks into a cheap restaurant where a juke-box is playing. Inside he orders a coffee and sits by the dusty window sipping the dark liquid pensively. Outside a girl runs up to a man and says: "I'm sorry I'm late" or "Am I in time?" or "Why didn't we meet before or something." And he smiles revealing a gold tooth reflecting the sun. With that they walk together out of sight and the dust on the restaurant's windows seems to thicken a little.

Then there is a fragmentary, momentary quiet. Inside the restaurant the man behind the counter suddenly stops what he is doing to scratch his head as the juke-box is dulled between records. Outside, the traffic, casual Sunday traffic, stops for a moment and even the wind dies down with a gently defiant howl. There is, for just one isolated moment — a particle of time — absolute silence. With this silence comes first a sense of belonging for Lyautey (even lonely men belong in vacuums) and soon after a repose, until, jerked by the vacuum of noise into generation, his brain tints and colours the things before his eyes and memories, associations *and feelings and melancholy* laugh at him from where they stand in the sun — a vinyl covered table, a salt-cellar, a pane of glass, a wisp of high cirrus which has escaped into the sky foreboding a cool evening and just maybe a light covering of Summer frost next day. And after these memories comes a backlash of rejections the alien world replaces for a brief second his loneliness and dramatic cleft skies play over a surreal landscape and Stonehenge melts into the clouding Earth and lasers scythe through flying men and women as their blood slops onto the ground, staining the . . . . .

. . . . . staining the bottle of perfume with the curious scarlet tinge.

The random sounds of the afternoon begin again like the initial clatter of plates at the sink as they are disturbed. First comes the screech of tyres along the road and then, as if this is the catalyst, the key to the release of silence, this sound is followed by others — the rumble of an empty bus, the sudden bark of a dog on its afternoon walk, the startled cry of a gull on loan from the coast. The potential of the moment has been quickly passed, suddenly drained, and the darting movements of the sun's reflection from the few cars speeding along the street advertize Summer's vitality.

Lyautey gets up from his seat, pays for his coffee, and walks further down the street. Afternoon is already giving way to evening and with the deepening sky the street-people's conversation changes as they dissociate from the day and fill with their own thoughts and dreams the vacuum of the coming night. Lyautey feels drained by the day, by the small events which become dramas and tragedies in the brain. Far off in the woods children play and their shouts and calls redden the sky as the first clouds appear and the impulsive wind veers from the coast and shakes the trees.

There is a shower of rain and Lyautey waits whilst it soaks his head. The air suddenly feels full of electricity and a bolt of lightning whips across the rain-stung sky like the crack of an Elephant gun. Lyautey, his head clear and his eyes grey lanterns which flare with the light above, leaves loneliness and melancholy and laughs and laughs and cries out loud with the falshing thrill of the cascading electric vortex raging over his head.

And Lyautey is no longer lonely, and the potential of the evening is not marred.





The helicopter had died in circumstances  
That were most distressing, falling,  
As it had, from a boiling sky like a large  
Humming top, and coming to rest from a  
Velocity approaching two hundred miles an hour,  
A much greater impact than its shock absorbers  
Could even feel — and all this had happened  
A year ago.

Now it lay on the parched earth — a lattice  
Of broken forms that almost resembled  
A crashed helicopter, and Jerry Cornelius  
Stood alone in its parts and spoke  
With a soft voice and a sad face  
To its pale, pale passengers.  
“You thin white men, while you’ve been here  
The world has fallen into disrepute.”

The men stayed quiet, their large teeth closed,  
And saw not Jerry’s sky-blue shirt,  
His flared white trousers or the rising moon.  
“You lie there in a gristly embrace  
While bombs are snowing in Pekin.”

Cornelius sat moodily, chewing a straw,  
The white men respectfully lying at his feet.  
He remembered when it had really begun,  
The end, the conjunction, the newness in death.  
The step had been taken in France,  
When Jerry pressed a button like  
The nipple of a nun, and the machine  
Sucked the world like mother’s milk.  
He remembered Miss Brunner, for then they had met  
In the gardens by Paris, quite near to Versailles.

It was night, sometimes, and they walked through grass  
That melted under their feet. The flowers were freezing  
And shattered at a touch. She took his hand  
And thrust it into her blouse, and he felt  
The coolness of her sexless breasts.  
“It’s all falling apart, Jerry,” she said  
As she sipped at a glass of *crème de la neige*.  
“*On voit plus souvent*,” Jerry replied, “*le ciel sans nuages*  
*Q’une putain dans une chapelle.*”  
An old Provençal saying.

Her tongue moved, like a river of lust,  
And his hand felt the decay of her soul.  
*Crème de la neige* could not disguise  
The tremors of a falling cathedral.  
“The engine is an anachronism,” he said, and there was  
A wondering pity in his voice.

They had walked through the ruins of  
Seventeenth-century Lourdes, their feet  
Leaving great putrid holes where they stood.  
“This is one of the nodal points.”  
Jerry pointed at the towering wrecks they passed,  
But Miss Brunner had been disconsolate,  
Her brain fluttering like a drowning fly.  
And he had watched only as a train-bound man  
Sees the landscape receding in space and time.

The bulbous heads of the white men still lay  
Together in a hard embrace, as they looked,  
With seriousness, at the brooding Jeremiah.  
The helicopter once had been  
A transport craft, in grey and brown.  
“Appalling taste,” thought Jerry.





# LANGDON JONES: The End of the Cycle.

He adjusted his cuff-link of silver  
But it was hard to create his usual mood  
Of studied nonchalance, for now his brain  
Was troubled by visions of strange perspectives,  
Receding lines and distant shapes,  
And snows boiling upwards through his mind.

He extended his calf-length calf-skin boot,  
And placed it idly inside the chest  
Of one of the pallid pilots – the man  
With disapproval shook his head, which rolled right off,  
And came to rest with a quiet tap against  
The twinkling instrument panel.  
And the moon went out.

“It’s all going, chum,” Jerry said.  
And there’s not much left for you or me.”  
At first they’d all loved it, his  
Largest and friendliest audience, but then  
When the cold came, and the age of space  
Pressed down upon each person’s mind  
And the rind of infinity choked each  
Mortal throat, they’d changed, and now  
When he approached threw vegetables.  
The strangest effect of all the effects  
Was only to come much later, when he  
Saw her again, for then there had been a conspiracy  
Of entropy – for he had disturbed  
The symmetry of the cemetery.  
And now his eyes were bleak as he succumbed  
To this memory of his Catherine.

Perhaps their closeness had helped to resurrect her  
For it was almost as though both had grown  
Simultaneously inside their father’s womb.  
He had seen her in Hyde Park, coming closer,

Near the Serpentine, just by  
The Durex clock. His heart had jumped  
When through a frame of faces he had seen  
Her face, and she pushed through to him with fear and haste.  
The time was ten; as they embraced, the clock struck  
And the jacks fucked, with their great sheathed pricks.  
“They’re playing our tune,” she smiled, and urgently  
He said, “How long?” And she replied, “Eternity,  
However long that time may be.”

By the clock they both lay down,  
And there made love, while the passing crowds  
Stepped over them, or paused to watch.  
But her skin was cold, with the cold of the death  
Which was behind them all.  
And they loved as the clock struck again  
And released to the air, filled with gas  
A hundred French letters, in red, blue and green  
Which floated along, above the park  
Which was getting smaller and turning to jelly.

And the crowds laughed at this summer distraction  
And forgot, for a moment, that the end of the cycle  
Was on them. And the lovers kissed in the afterglow  
Of their incestuous, necrophile passion.

And now the helicopter had moved,  
And was balancing upon its nose.  
But Jerry did not notice, for he was blind  
Through the coughing of the seagulls.  
He stood up, and left his hand  
Upon the burning rock, but did not notice this,  
Or that his sky-blue shirt was now a bra  
Or the flaming sun, and the frosty ground  
Or the water that dripped from his ears.  
He turned, and from the helicopter walked away  
Into the promise of a new-born day.



# BOOKS

## JOHN CLUTE: Pouring Down

THE LANDSCAPE COULD be called Europe After the Rain, and has been. Surreal, abstract, haunting, self-destructed, Europe after the War has become a fundamental metaphysic or pathos for many of the new writers creating, in book-length fictions, in short stories in NEW WORLDS, a new rhetoric of the imagination, a fortran to sector-focus the terror that seems to be felt, that we seem to feel. Brian Aldiss, Alan Burns and Jerzy Kosinski have published new novels or — as Robert Scholes would call them — new fabulations. In America the rain is falling now, and can be seen as dreck; Donald Barthelme's new collection of stories is being released in England.

*Unspeakable Practises, Unnatural Acts* (Cape 25s.) is Barthelme's third book. The first, *Come Back, Dr Caligari*, a brilliant collection of short stories, was followed by *Snow White*, a novel I thought pretty poor, elaphantiasic though short, lumpy, arch unfocussed. *Unspeakable Practises* is short stories again. Some of them, like "The Indian Uprising," "Edward and Pia," and "A Picture History of the War," are his best fictions yet; others, like "Report" and "The Balloon," exhibit a smartaleck obviousness of image and "symbol," and aren't much better than good jokes. "Report," for instance, cheaply parodies the technological response to Vietnam; the narrator visits the "engineers" in Cleveland, where they are meeting, and gets a report on various devices that could be used in Vietnam, the "new improved pufferfish toxin which precipitates an identity crisis," rice maggots "in secret staging areas in Alabama," et cetera. Sure, sure, I'm enlightened, I'm tickled.

But the good stories are not so obvious, though it is true the American versions of the new rhetoric tend to a more open-form, more accessible, funnier versions of our encompassing dread, more like Germany between the wars than England afterwards, chock full of jokes, declamatory put-ons, dreck, tang; more imperial. The surface of Vonnegut's current *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Cape 25s.) is garrulous, corny, chatty, muckraking; there's no real dislocation between the reader and the implicit — in this case pretty explicit — narrator; the reader is taken by the hand, more or less the way Don Giovanni was, and is led to Dresden.

Barthelme is a good deal closer to "Europe", and as implicit narrator trick-mirrors himself out of immediate view or purchase, in his best stories, so that the reader seems to plummet unmediated into the image-knives of the conflict between generations and/or the barrenness of our object-filled lives in "The Indian Uprising", and blood is spilled:

"We defended the city as best we could. The arrows of the Comanches came in clouds. The war clubs of the Comanches clattered on the soft, yellow pavements. There were earthworks along the Boulevard Mark Clark and the hedges had been laced with sparkling wire. People were trying to understand. I spoke to Sylvia. 'Do you think this is a good life?' The table held apples, books, long-playing records. She looked up. 'No.'"

But somehow there is a narrator here, telling us in the very order of his sentences, the building-block way his images come, how to work out the sense. So, finally something optimistic, "American", there's an expert, somewhere behind the knives, teaching us how to juggle the century. It is a very short step from the self-conscious implicit or rhetorical narrator, found most clearly in American fiction, and the use of this stance of narration in a didactic manner, satirical or apocalyptic or minatory; modern science fiction has been an American idiom), tends to give lessons in juggling the century.

Which goes against the grain of much postWar European creative thought, the European fabulation tends to be blind, lessonless, which leaves Brian Aldiss where? *Barefoot in the Head* (Faber and Faber, 30s), his answer where, combines science fiction and fabulation, the hortatory and the blind, America and Europe, though it is subtitled "A European Fantasy," and there's as little as possible of American didactic finger-pointing. Much of *Barefoot in the Head* appeared in NEW WORLDS, but be warned, in much simpler form; the reader who avoids the book version of this dazzling, "sparky" explosion of a novel because he thinks he's read it already is missing a fascinating series of experiments with language, puns fire-wheeling through the jazzed narrative, an attempt at a whole new idiom. It's no *Finnegans Wake* of course — though it borrows both techniques and explicit word-patterns from that book, which is supposed to be too far out to influence anyone — but the NEW WORLDS excerpts were very much in the way of fragments from a Work in Progress.

Kuwait has waged the Acid Head War by spraying most of the industrial west with hallucinogens whose effects vary from a few months to indefinite. Colin Charteris is a young Serb who

worked briefly for the United Nations in freaked-out Italy, but who, at the beginning of the novel, is travelling north to England, Simon Templar, some kind of vague dream maybe of the past, even though England too had been struck by Kuwait's Psycho-Chemical Aerosols. On the way he has a vision. (It is derived from Ouspensky-Gurdjieff.) He sees matter as hallucination, himself and "tortured Europe" as "merely another manifestation of a time-emotion node . . . Only the perceptual web itself was 'real.'" In this time-space web, the correspondences perception arrives at are, on a fundamental level, a series of puns. Charteris goes north, reaches England, the book begins to pun.

Charteris goes to England by car, and the Messiahhood he is about to take on in acidhead England is tied in closely to his use of motorway travel (multi-value logics are a pun on motorways) as a technique of perception, coming through. Moving through the web peels off the Gurdjieffian "personality photographs", the outdated reality moulds, "Truth thus like a pile of photos, self-cancelling for self-fulfilment, multi-valued." The words begin to come, the novel tools itself as diagram of possible futures of each word, as it echoes down. Charteris returns with a rock group and hangers-on to Europe, where he is immolated into his own myth, or some version we can perceive of it, very briefly, near the end of the book. The lack of a clear resolution is required by both theme and language; the last prose sentence is run-on, we segue into a flock of poems, pretty bad

### WRITERS READING

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poems, Aldiss can't do everything, and the novel ends where you will it to, you pick your own motorway.

Faults: the language, the experiments with which are didactic in the sense that they are tied to a genre conceit, the Acid Head War, and therefore do not show "reality" but what can happen to "reality" too often reads like a sloppy bastard diddling with words, Dali out of e e cummings; an undifferentiated slush, so that when somebody awakens he does not merely awaken but "lumber(s) up from the vast brown inaccessible otherworld of sleep . . ." This is not experiment, it is simply something loose. Second fault: Aldiss uses genre characters like Charteris, attempts to mythicize them by stripping them of individual traits; the result, ciphers. Words make *Barefoot in the Head*, but they also drown it

Jerzy Kosinski's *Steps* (Bodley Head, 25s) is a picaresque set in postWar Europe, a sequel to *The Painted Bird*, but a good deal more controlled than that rather sloppy novel. Both are picaresque — a series of incidents linked together through the "criminal" denied his just inheritance — and both have the open-ended virtues of the form; they both also tend to the diffuse. *The Painted Bird* is closed by the facts of history, World War II, so that the reader, and the novelist, are both secure, both know the sequence of events are leading to the end of the War, and survival. It is not so easy in *Steps*, there is no external coherence to postWar like to play against; Kosinski had to cut the purple, the sloppiness, the easy repetitiveness of events, or he would have not a novel but a scrap album. He did it. *Steps* is a clean, severe, abstract, steely weapon of the open end; a refraction, an ideogram of the first person narrator, who is clean, severe, steely, who lives to survive, who creates himself through surviving. The novel is a Chinese puzzle of short incidents, told with a deliberate fable-like clarity; they are not linked chronologically, for there is no time scheme in the postWar. But through their deadpan cruelty their austere self-concern, the self-creating ideogram of survival comes through, the picaresque itself becomes a weapon in this firm hand.

If the reader has not yet come to Alan Burns, a major writer, his third novel, *Babel*, (Calder & Boyer, 30s) may be a little off-setting. Something brilliant is happening, but the whole point of *Babel* is the failure of coherence, the mixing of languages and codes: so that there can be no tower, it is the postWar. The novel comprises a series of superficially unrelated paragraphs, about 500 of them; I thought I saw a dual tendency in

these blocks to mount towards "depictions" of figures of authority/structures, and to tear them down through nonsequiturs, demolishing juxtapositions of imagery, a brittle pervading sadness. But there is no lesson, there is no reason no plot causing the towers to shake themselves down into individual sentences of the surreal; the Biblical analogy of the title is a kind of trick, because analogies do not hold in Babel . . . Here and there a conventional sentiment surfaces, suitably cloaked: "Do not talk peace with the cruel people, the lips of the big stomach will learn nothing." There are fragments of scenes of breakdown; the feeling is of waves seeking a shoreline, some coherence, but the "point" of the book — another specious finger — is that there is no shore. Burns' earlier novels present a semblance of order; I don't think they're quite as nervewracking as *Babel*, but was very glad to have read them first. Taking its title from the painting by Max Ernst, Alan Burns' first novel was called *Europe After the Rain*.

Epilogue: Stevie Smith, perhaps the reader watched her on BBC 2 reading excerpts from the book in a voice that revealed her sense of identity with the protagonist, has just republished her preWar Novel on *Yellow Paper* (Jonathan Cape, 30s). In some ways delightful, in some ways indulgent, prettified, talky, talky. Very much preWar; the London surrounding Pompey (the protagonist) is very solid indeed, and not particularly malevolent: Pompey's troubles are personal. Her novel is a free-associative, oddly saccharine spree in the interior monologue; the novel is the novel she is writing in the novel; she is talking to keep from suicide. For her own purposes then, a successful book.

## M. John HARRISON: The Tangreese Gimmick

IN AS CONSERVATIVE a field as science fiction, it isn't very reasonable to posit basic, long-lasting, or stable forms: they're all that way, and the hoariest of them crop up as regularly as the phrase 'with boring regularity'. That accepted, the hoariest, most basic, and longest-lasting of them all is probably the gimmick story — a couple or so thousand words of featherweight characterisation, a wonderful machine, and a twist in the tail that was apparent from the third word. They seem to exist merely as stiffening for the concept that machines, progress and technology are

two-edged, and that fact alone suggests a reliable method of dating their primogenitor.

Staunchly in the tradition is Robert Sheckley's collection, *The People Trap*, from Gollancz at twenty five shillings. Of fourteen stories, a couple are in Sheckley's new mode — the title story, an outrageous satire on urban degeneration, very reminiscent of *Journey Beyond Tomorrow*; and *Dreamworld*, apparently an alternate-worlds job, but in fact a rather sad indictment of order and security. The rest are gimmicks. How to kill the unkillable alien? Why, "No pattern can cohere in a state of patternlessness", so put away the black, black coffee and close up the laboratory. Got a quick scheme for making money? Be warned by the experiences of the "AAA Ace Planet Decontamination Service" (there are two or three of their exploits here), and forget it, or you'll end up drowned in *tangreese*, the stable diet of the Meldgians.

It's all entertainment, I suppose: but is it part of the fun to guess ahead of the author *every* time?

Paralleling the stable forms of the genre, we have the stable subject matter. The *New Minds* (Avon, 75 cents), by Dan Morgan, is a reshuffle of the deck stacked originally by Kuttner and Sturgeon: parapsychology (mixed unintelligibly with cant based on psychotherapy), the *gestalt* mind, and (Sturgeon's freak in particular) telepathy as an answer to the problems of lonely people.

Victor, a monstrously powerful mentality in a tiny, immature body, interferes with a stumbling attempt to communicate over long distances by two mildly telepathic twins, throwing them into catatonia and Doctor Havenlake's research institute into confusion. After that, it's a case of beat the master-mind, cure the twins, and form the nucleus of the inevitable telepathic watchdog service for poor, un-Talented Humanity; all of which is made difficult because (of course) All Our Best Telepaths are locked in bedlams run by people who think Rhine was a fake.

For a real boost, try Morgan's first-page picture of a drunken whore as seen through the eyes of a child. More insensitive and sentimental portraits have been drawn in the same fashion by Sturgeon himself, but this is masterly. The trouble with the majority of science-fiction telepaths is that they have so little of value to communicate that it's hardly worth the trouble learning not to talk. (I think James Cawthorn said that.)

Jack Vance is a patchy author, souring his *The Dying Earth* triumph with well-executed but badly conceived stuff like the 'Star Kings' series. His latest novel, *Emphyrio* (Doubleday,

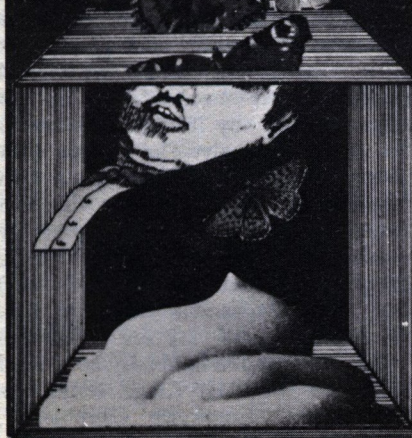


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4.95), has the theme of the latter fight a losing battle with an atmosphere and technique that almost matches the former.

The world of Halma exports hand-crafted goods throughout the galaxy. To keep the standards up, the use of even the most primitive automation is punishable by death; and most of the considerable profit — from a market which resembles executive America in its lust for 'art' objects — goes to the feudal overlords for the planet. When Amiante, a wood-carver, is executed for processing old documents with a camera, his son Ghyl decides to bring the system down. Its fall is bound up with the legend of Emphyrio, an early Halman William Tell, which he must first interpret.

'Star Kings' Material, without a doubt: but the book's success lies in the wealth of detail Vance adds to the narrative, and in the grossly meaningful coincidences and loaded pre-echoes that are the essence of this kind of wide-screen baroque. The feudal lords in fantastic costume at the County Ball (the honorific of each having a cadence often imitated and rarely achieved since Vance's own 'spell of the Excellent Prismatic Spray'); all sorts of jewelled space yawls, puppets, machines: carried on a strong thread of action and sustained by the very effective mystique of the Emphyrio legend, arabesques like these make the book extremely enjoyable.

The Best From Fantasy & Science Fiction (Eighteenth Series), also from Doubleday, at four dollars and ninety five cents, contains fourteen stories ranging from 1967 to 1969 and some terrible cartoons by Gahan Wilson. Sheckley's *The People Trap* appears here, along with Ballard's *The Cloud Sculptors of Coral D* (reviewed in conjunction with *Nebula Award Stories 3*, in NW 186), Harvey Jacobs' *The Egg of The Glak*, and offerings from lesser talents like Redd, Biggle, and Nunch. Ballard's story is probably the most original, Ed Jesby's *Ogre!* the funniest. The all-time loser of the anthology, possibly the most sugary

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fantasy over written is Bunch's *That High-up Blue Day That Saw The Black Sky-train Come Spinning*:

"I think, in many cases, those who are near death wish for some holocaust to go with their demise, that big Long Dark being too lonely alone, much too fierce to face singly, entirely too real to go alone into in only their thin little armour to battle the last Big Dragon."

Rage, rage, against the turning of the light? Punctuation and all, this epitomises that 'Dylan Thomas' school of fantasy style sparked by Bradbury's 'boys of summer' in *Dandelion Wine*. Every one a poet, and every image a time-tested favourite. The big black sky-train recalls a story that used to appear regularly in GALAXY, under the title "Littul Miss Muffit's Ickle-pretty Soft-feeling Telepathic Teddy From The Fifth Dimension".

One of the most powerful short stories to appear in the latter days of SCIENCE FANTASY was Josephine Saxton's *The Wall*, which demonstrated her peculiar ability to isolate figures in a landscape stripped down to its bare physical necessities. She has applied this technique to her first novel, *The Herios Gamos of Sam And An Smith* (Doubleday, 4.50), draining the common landscapes and images of common meaning, and implying in its place something disturbing, elegant, and only partially explicable by any means other than the fiction itself.

In a world which seems to have recently forgotten some queer (and almost benevolent) disaster, a boy, completely alone and given to narcissism, scavenges the old stores and supermarkets, perpetually on the move but seeking nothing. He finds and rears a baby girl, and they move through the fantasies of youth together, haunted by certain rituals of mind, their maturation echoed by the endless journey over an empty continent. Slowly, the fantasy sophisticates. The dog on the seashore reflects the internal nature of their fears; the fantastic fish in the beautiful pool counterpoints their assumption of decisive sexual roles. Finally, An Smith bears Sam's child on the spot where he found her: things have come full circle, and the Smiths are insinuated without fuss into a savagely satirical model of a very common relationship indeed.

This book can't be rated too highly. Mrs Saxton begins with her characters as exhausted of emotional associations as her backgrounds, fills them with humour and understanding, and never sentimentalises. The *Herios Gamos Of Sam And An Smith* is a beautiful, sharp-edged novel.



## R.GLYN JONES: Coke Culture

CLAES OLDENBURG IS for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. Roy Lichtenstein thinks that the meaning of his work is that it's Industrial, it's what the world will soon become. James Rosenquist tries to get as far from nature as possible. Tom Wesselham dislikes labels in general and Pop in particular. Andy Warhol wants everybody to be a machine.

This information, alongside a couple of hundred pictures, is to be found in *Pop Art Redefined* (Thames and Hudson, 2gns), which began as a catalogue for the recent Arts Council exhibition at the Hayward Gallery but grew into quite a large book. The text assembled by the organizers of the exhibition, John Russell and Suzi Gablik, consists of statements by critics and artists about themselves and one another, examining Pop "in terms of formal ideas and not," they say, "in terms of the jokey, gregarious, eupeptic and loosely organized phenomenon which was seized upon with such relish by the mass media in the early 1960s." — Which is an odd way to introduce the book, since the same mass media contribute a large part of its contents.

As far as a definition of redefinition is concerned, the book is inconclusive: there seem to be as many definitions as there are artists and as many interpretations as there are critics, and the critics tend to write in a curious jargon which makes banal thinking sound a little more impressive, if not completely incomprehensible: "... it has since evolved (writes Suzi Gablik) a more pragmatic relationship with reality, and assumes forms of extreme literalness and comprehensibility which are directly related to the explicitness of technology. 'Found' and 'ready-made' images borrowed from the mass media are one way for an artist to escape the limitations of his own personality: he is no longer bound by ideas belonging only to him". Soup tins, eh?

A useful approach is to describe — if not exactly define — Pop Art in terms of its updated subject-matter and techniques: Instead of painting saints they paint Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley; Coke bottles and hot dogs replace the jug of wine and the fruit; inspiration comes not from the Bible or from classical mythology but from magazines and comic books. I



Mel Ramos: *The Pause That Refreshes* (1967, oil on canvas, 48" x 48" x 48").

said "paint" but sometimes you have to look hard to find evidence of a brush stroke. They prefer more anonymous industrial techniques or collage, and there is an increasing tendency for the artist to take on the role of contractor, giving instructions to professional painters, welders or whatever, but personally playing little part in the construction of the work. Paolozzi, for instance, admires Victor Mature's ambition to use a double as often as possible and eventually to make a film without actually appearing in it at all.

In attempting to reveal some unifying purpose in all this experimental — and sometimes successful — activity, the critical apparatus begins to creak and it quickly becomes clear that something is wrong: art is changing in a number of different ways, but the art establishment — the financial and critical activities that begin as soon as the paint is dry — are not changing at all. Give a dealer a frame containing paint on canvas and he will know what to do with it. The identity of the painter, Rembrandt or Rosenquist, will perhaps affect the price it fetches or the museum to which it is ultimately sent, but the process is effectively the same in each case.

Since the turn of the century there has been a continuous challenge to the concept of an art that is remote and permanent, to be hung on museum walls and approached only with respectful steps. Amazingly, the challenges have never been taken up. As a new movement emerges, the older one — once controversial — is

simply assimilated to become a further chapter in the History of Modern Art, and whatever issues it once raised are forgotten, defeated simply by obsolescence. But this incestuous triumvirate of artist, dealer and critic has very little to do with the real world, where a reproduction Picasso hanging beside the plaster ducks would certainly provoke harsh comment from visitors, and a student seeking to improve himself might be found wrestling with the problems of Surrealism — but Warhol...

If Pop Art really was popular it would be a good deal less rich because of it. Vulgar subject-matter and slick techniques do not, in themselves, mean very much and Pop's biggest disappointment is that its new ideas have been used almost exclusively for fine-art purposes, perpetuating the myth of Pedestal Art.

A more sensible approach to criticism is to forget movements and labels, and to write about artists individually — which is what Christopher Finch does in *Image as Language* (Penguin Books, 10s). The work of sixteen artists is discussed in the context of recent British art, with the underlying thesis that while American Pop artists have been interested mainly in direct visual impact, their English counterparts have concerned themselves with exploring and manipulating communication techniques — for its own sake. His analyses of the aims and achievements of these artists are intelligent and readable, and several of them were first published in *NEW WORLDS*.



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