

new worlds

number 198

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**J.G. BALLARD:
JOURNEY ACROSS
A CRATER**

**PLUS: Incredible Tokyo
soul food | books | music**

new worlds

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Penguin Modern Stories 3

Featuring eight stories by Philip Roth, Margaret Drabble, Jay Neugeboren and Giles Gordon, none of which have been published in this country before.

'This series is going to be worth collecting' *Scotsman*
'It fills a gap and is to be welcomed and congratulated' *Financial Times*

Original 4s

Also in this quarterly series, Volume 1, containing stories by William Sansom, Jean Rhys, David Plante and Bernard Malamud, and Volume 2, stories by John Updike, Sylvia Plath and Emanuel Litvinoff.





Gwyneth Cravens: Gently satirical

JG. Ballard's latest story for *New Worlds* describes an astronaut's search to re-establish the meaning of his surroundings, after a disaster which has destroyed his conception of space. The astronaut deciphers the coded landscape slowly and painfully until at last he finds the key to interpreting the geometries of his environment.

Among the many inter-connections in the story there are also some pre-echoes of Ballard's current project: a full-length novel exploring the car crash as the prime example of intersection between fiction (the image) and reality. When completed, this book will be his first for five years.

In the meantime, a collection of all his "condensed novels" to date, the majority of which were first published in *New Worlds*, is soon to be published by Jonathan Cape. He says he intends to go on writing in this form "for many years to come", in addition to his new novel, which will be conventional in form.

Gwyneth Cravens makes her first appearance in *New Worlds* with *Soul Fast*, a story tying in soul food fads with the thermodynamically self-contained relationship of husband and wife. She grew up in Mexico, claims the status of first girl in the USA to launch a rocket containing a mouse made of bread dough, has been published by *The New Yorker* (where she is now one of the staff) and *Mademoiselle* magazines, and will shortly be featured again in *New Worlds* with more of her gently satirical fiction.

Ian Watson, resident in Tokyo, presents an impressionistic view of an urban landscape more genuinely science fiction than any speculative writer's extrapolated view of a future city. The restricted land area, intensive industrialisation, pragmatism and hard business sense are conditions in Japan which inevitably bring about the predictable but frightening alien environment which Watson describes in his article. Less predictably, there are many resonances with Japanese history and mythology playing a large part in the industrialised social system.

Last of our principal features this issue is Michael Butterworth's in-depth exploration of



*Jack Trevor Story: pictured following his trial on a breath test charge, which was the original inspiration for *The Wind in the Snottygobble Tree*, the last episode of which appears this issue. Back issues containing previous episodes are available at 4s each including postage.*

perception, images and realities. Butterworth says of his story: "It is a fusion of factual reality and factual symbolism. It is not a 'story'; it is an account of myself and what I perceive. ... The writing represents my thoughts, my remembrances and my present."

Two new artists illustrate Watson's article on Japan and Butterworth's piece of fiction: Ian Watson's wife Judy presents two examples of the contemporary, stylised Japanese comic strip format; Alan Stephanson interprets Butterworth's images.

Another artist new to *New Worlds* is Ivor Latto, who illustrates M. John Harrison's study of ailurophobia and its infectious progress through a mental hospital.

Paul Green and James Sallis both contribute short poetry; Sallis, once co-editor of *New Worlds*, has been absent for far too long from our pages, and will be featured more in future.

We are also pleased to be able to publish a new poem by D. M. Thomas. Previous poems of his in *New Worlds* have drawn interestingly on the mythology of science fiction; this time it is the biblical mythology of Apocrypha which provides much of the subject matter.

This issue we are publishing the first of a new record reviews section. The definitions which once separated modern serious music from pop music are becoming very blurred; it seemed only natural to include reviews of the best progressive and experimental music, to accompany our books section, already one of the most popular features in *New Worlds*.

JOURNEY ACROSS A CRATER

j.g. ballard

Impact Zone

As he woke he felt the wet concrete cutting his face and wrists. In the drained light after the storm the causeways of a highway cloverleaf crossed the air above his head, the parapets at angles to each other like sections of ambiguous scenery. Feeling the rain-soaked fabric of his suit, he climbed the embankment. The half-built roadways formed a broken arena, the perspective model of a crater. An empty car was parked by the verge. He opened the door and sat behind the steering wheel. His hands moved across the unfamiliar instrument heads, trying to read this strange braille. As the radio blared into the damp air a young woman leaning on a balustrade fifty yards away ran back to the car. Her alert, childlike face stared at him through the windshield while he listened to the commentary. The giant fragments of the news report of a space disaster rolled across the deserted concrete.

No Entrance

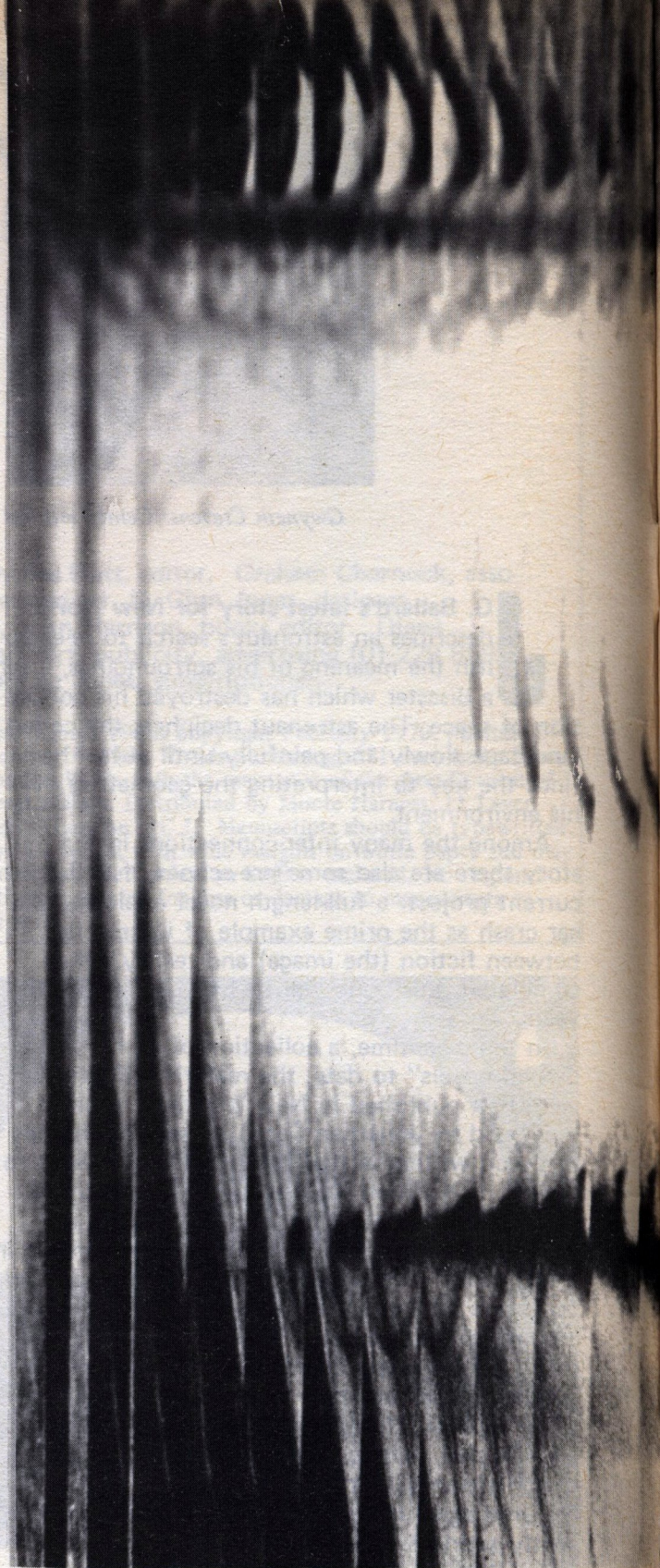
As they drove along the highway Helen Clement glanced down at the man in the tattered suit slumped in the passenger seat. His heavy face, unshaven for several days, now and then turned toward the window in a bored way. His only focus of interest seemed to be the instrument console of the car — he explored its vents and toggles like an aborigine obsessed with a bright toy. Who was he — a road accident casualty, the surviving passenger of an air crash, an eccentric rapist? During the storm she had sheltered below the overpass, had seen him appear in the centre of the concourse like a drowned archangel. Startled, she looked down as his strong hand gripped her left thigh.

Hell-Drivers

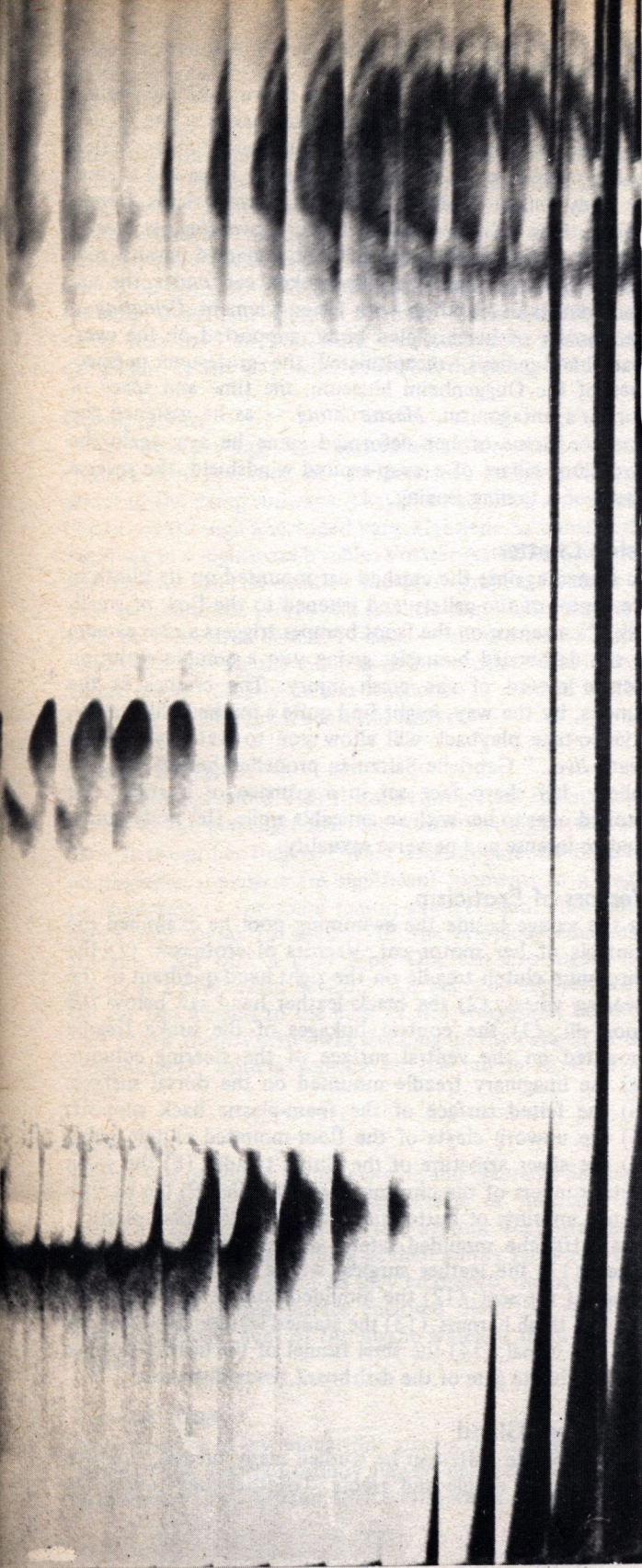
Through the plastic binoculars Vorster watched the last of the target vehicles burning in the centre of the stadium. As the artificial smoke rose into the evening air the crowd began to leave. The men's faces were pinched and sallow, as if dented by the collision impacts. Vorster studied the bandaged man still sitting on the bench in the drivers' enclosure. During the climax of the show, the reconstruction of a spectacular road accident, he assumed that the man was one of the drivers masquerading as an accident casualty. But he seemed barely aware of the ugly crashes re-enacted a few yards in front of him, staring emptily across the litter of beer bottles and tyres. With a grimace, Vorster handed the binoculars to the small boy waiting impatiently behind him. He stood up and began to move around the empty arena, wiping his damp palms on the suede leather of the camera case.

Aircrew Rescue

They walked along the airfield perimeter, avoiding the coils of barbed wire overgrown by grass. Vorster gestured at the shell of an abandoned helicopter. "As you can see, the runway leases expired years ago." He waited as the tall man in the shabby suit paced back to his Land-Rover. "What sort of aircraft are you planning to bring in?" The man was



staring at his reflection in the rain-streaked windshield, as if reminding himself of his own identity. The planes of his face seemed to occupy different levels, like a papier-maché pop art assemblage of a psychotic. His bloodshot eyes glanced unseeingly at Vorster. He turned away and began to scan the sky from one horizon to the other, as if marking out the landing traverses of enormous aircraft, an armada of Starlifters. Vorster leaned against the bonnet of the car, uneasily aware of the crude energy in these huge arms and shoulders. During the past hour he had deliberately spoken a meaningless jargon, but the man seemed able to make sense of his nonsense. Everything around him formed an element in a conundrum. On the centre seat lay a packet of



promotional leaflets for a new airport terminal, an abstract design that looked like some unfittable piece in a Chinese puzzle. The same hemispherical module had begun to appear in a new advertising series on the billboards along the highway.

Foramenifera

Around them the light flared through the walls of the empty aquarium tanks. Helen Clement felt his hard fingers on her elbow as he steered her through this maze of greasy glass. Since giving Vorster the slip he had become more and more preoccupied, moving between this abandoned aquarium and the hospital casualty department. Why was he

buying up these arbitrary leases on derelict sites all over the city? It was almost as if he were preparing a complex of 'landing zones'. She stumbled over a coil of rubber flex, then nursed her heel while he peered into the murky water in the tanks. Varying levels: fragments of a quantified womb, entry points through the foramens of memory and desire.

Nutrix Corporation

She sat in front of the dressing table, listening to the radio report of the lost space capsule. She glanced at the mirror, and involuntarily cupped her hands over her small breasts. He was staring at her body with an almost clinical detachment, as if measuring her abdomen and buttocks for yet another new perversion. All week, as they lay on the bed in this rented apartment, their acts of intercourse had become more and more abstracted. These strange perversions had at first disgusted her, but she now realised their real identity — bridges across which he hoped to make his escape. She switched off the radio when the newscast ended. Trying not to flinch, she waited as his strong hands moved across her body.

Unidentified Flying Object

As they drove along the coast road Dr Manston pointed out the sand-bars to Vorster. "The capsule was punctured during its re-entry orbit. It's just possible that he escaped alive, though God only knows what happened to his mind in those last moments — you remember the reports of the Russian cosmonaut Ilyushin going insane." He stopped the car on a water-logged jetty. They stepped out and walked along the wet sand toward the pieces of debris. Dr Manston stooped to pick up a crushed mollusc. "After all, when one thinks about it, we know very little about the real effects of a disaster in space, the effects upon us, that is. One can see the disaster mimetised in terms of faulty stair angles, advertising campaigns that misfire, unsatisfactory sexual relationships, the defective arithmetic of everyday life. You said yourself that it's been a strange week in many ways. Incidentally, who is this fellow you've been following around?"

Particle Physics

Vorster watched the paraplegics racing their wheelchairs around the basketball field. Two years earlier, while driving home one evening, he had seen Cosmos 253 breaking up on re-entry. For half a minute the sky had been filled with hundreds of glowing fragments, like an immense air force on fire. Vorster stood up as the audience cheered, and walked out among the players. The man in the shabby suit was rapidly wheeling a startled player toward the exit. What was he doing here, at a hospital for injured aircrew?

Connections, only connections

Dr Manston walked through the deserted table tennis rooms. Through the rain-streaked windows he could see the perimeter of the airfield and the beach beyond. He opened the door of the disused conservatory. The 'machine' which Vorster had described lay across a glass table, display screens around it. Dr Manston stared down at the collection of items, and then watched the solitary figure moving through the rain along the beach. He beckoned Helen Clement through the door. He waited as her nervous eyes searched the items on the table, as if hunting for the residues of misplaced affections.

Junction Makers

Dr Manston indicated the items: (1) Photograph of partly constructed motorway cloverleaf, concrete embankments exposed in transverse section, labelled 'Crater'; (2) Reproduction of Salvador Dali's *Madonna of Port Lligat*; (3) 500 imaginary autopsy reports of the first Boeing 747 air disaster; (4) Sequence of perspective drawings of corridors

at the Belmont asylum; (5) Facial grimaces, during press conference, of Armstrong and Aldrin; (6) List of pH levels of settling beds, Metropolitan Water Board Reservoir, Staines; (7) Terminal voice-print, self-recorded, of an unidentified suicide; (8) The market analysis of a new hemispherical building-system module.

Space Platform

Dr Manston glanced sympathetically at the young woman. "Perhaps together they make up a love poem to yourself, Helen. On a more prosaic level they seem to represent the components of a strange kind of 'space vehicle' — literally, a device for moving through space in every sense of that term: figurative, dimensional, metaphorical. A far more powerful vehicle than any astronaut's space ship." Dr Manston pointed to the solitary figure still combing the beach, his clothes drenched by the rain. An elaborate construction of drift-wood and nets had been built on the sand. "I assume that with one of these devices he plans to re-enter space."

Tracking Station

In the thin light of the hotel room she searched the drawers of the dressing table. The carpet and bedspread were covered with magazine photographs and advertising brochures, pages torn from a textbook of conical geometry. She picked up a poster advertising a new space film. His face stared out through the glassy lens of an astronaut's helmet. Had he really starred in this film, or was this just another of his strange manifestations? His personality seemed to touch everything at an oblique angle. Their own affair had been marked by the same ambiguities, the sense of his not being wholly there. Carrying the poster to the window, she looked down into the forecourt. Beyond the shadows of the sculpture garden he was pacing about on the floor of the drained swimming pool.

Equipment Failures

These equipment failures preoccupied him during this period of his search: *The drained swimming pool* — its rectilinear walls and canted floor expressed a profound disjunction of time and space, the rupture of the satellite capsule. *The breasts of Marilyn Monroe* — in the dissolving lipoids of the dead film star's breasts he saw the gradients of his own descent, his failed relationship with Helen Clement. *The dented automobile fender* — this contained the faulty geometry of his own skin areas, the unbearable asymmetry of posture and gesture.

Beckoning Glance

He waited on the kerb as the attendants helped the crippled young woman from her car into the art gallery. When they lifted the chromium trestle on to the chassis of the wheelchair the sunlight flashed around her deformed legs. Her knowing eyes, set in a hard, pallid-skinned face, saw him staring at the junction between her thighs. Beside him, Vorster murmured in a sharp aside: "I know her — Gabrielle Saltzman, you won't..." He pushed Vorster away and followed the crippled woman into the gallery. The sunlight pressed against his skin, lying over the bright pavement like excrement.

Road Runner

All day he had been driving around the city, following the white car and its crippled driver. At traffic intersections he stared at her toneless face, marked by a scar that smeared the right apex of her mouth across her cheek. Her powerful hands moved expertly through the gear changes. He followed her around the streets, from clinic to art gallery, watching the slightest inflexion of her face. Her right-handed gear changes formed a module of exquisite eroticism.

The Drive-in Death

From the balcony of his apartment he watched the woman through the eyepiece of Vorster's cine camera. She moved across the roof garden in the chromium wheel chair. Seated by her makeup case, she would suddenly pivot and writhe, her body almost shedding its skin in a savage rictus. In particular, these activities obsessed him: *Powdering her face* — caressed by the soft puff, the talc-impacted mouth scar described the geometry of the broken car fender, the uneven transits of his affair with Helen Clement. *Urinating* — the posture of her crippled body, supported on the overhead hand-pulleys, recapitulated the grotesque perspectives of the Guggenheim Museum, the time and space of Vorster's antagonism. *Masturbating* — as he watched the extensor rictus of her deformed spine he saw again the chromium pillars of a wrap-around windshield, the reverse thrust of a taxiing Boeing.

Salon Chatter

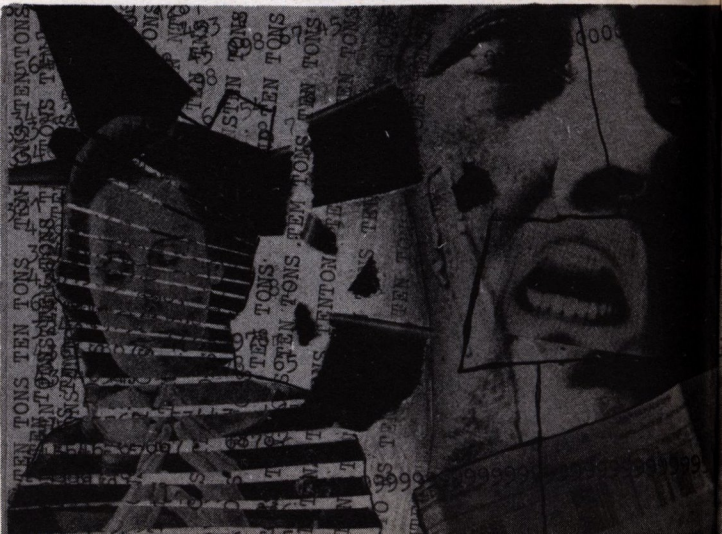
He leaned against the crashed car mounted on its plinth in the centre of the gallery and listened to the flow of small-talk. "...a sensor on the front bumper triggers a cine camera in the dashboard binnacle, giving you a complete motion picture record of the crash injury. The crashes of the famous, by the way, might find quite a market. Ultimately, a video-tape playback will allow you to watch your own death *live*..." Gabrielle Saltzman propelled herself into the gallery, her sharp face set in a grimace of hostility. He strolled over to her with an amicable smile. Her body emanated an intense and perverse sexuality.

Vectors of Eroticism

In the garage beside the swimming pool he examined the controls of her motor car. Vectors of eroticism: (1) the chromium clutch treadle on the right hand quadrant of the steering wheel; (2) the black leather hand rail below the door sill; (3) the control linkages of the brake treadle mounted on the ventral surface of the steering column; (4) the imaginary treadle mounted on the dorsal surface; (5) the felted surface of the foam-plastic back support; (6) the unworn cleats of the floor-mounted clutch pedal; (7) the silver armature of the clutch treadle; (8) the worn metal runners of the chromium seat trestle; (9) the unsymmetric imprints of buttock and thigh on the foam-plastic seat; (10) the moulded lateral depression for the spinal brace; (11) the leather surgical wedge on the right hemisphere of the seat; (12) the moulded conical depression for the left thigh harness; (13) the stained leather mounting for the seat urinal; (14) the steel funnel of the urinal; (15) the cracked lucite gate of the dashboard tissue dispenser.

Mammary Gland

With Gabrielle Saltzman he studied many breasts, the time and space of nipple and areola. Together they toured the



streets in her white car, analysing these breasts: of store dummies, pubertal girls, menopausal matrons, a mastectomised air hostess. The soft belly of the lower mammary curvature described the ascending flight paths of the aircraft taking off from the runways at the airfield. The skies of his mind were filled with the geometry of these rising globes. Holding the sketchbook marked with these curves, he watched Gabrielle Saltzman manoeuvre the car through the crowded streets with her strong hands. She confided in him with droll humour: "My own mastectomy — left breast, by the way, a difficult decision to make — was done for cosmetic reasons. Can you work that into your advertising campaign? By the way, what exactly is the product?"

Going Down

In the powdery light the parked aircraft resembled giant clinkers. On the roof of the terminal building Vorster searched the damp runways. They were strolling arm in arm like lovers through a secluded park, Gabrielle Saltzman jerking along in a nightmare hobble. Vorster rested his folder on the balcony rail. He studied the photographs. Sections of wall, wound areas, pieces of a satellite communications system, perineums, a deserted beach — elements in a weird conceptual art? Or the symbols in a new calculus of unconscious rescue? Clearly he was marooned in a world as hostile as any of Max Ernst's mineral forests.

Orbital Systems

Dr Manston gestured with the slide projector. Helen Clement sat in the passenger seat, the stub of her cigarette a wet mess between her fingers. "What these apparently obscene photographs represent are significant moments in a tragic psychodrama — for some reason pre-recorded. Miss Saltzman's role seems to be that of the crippled seductress, Madame Dali with a club foot. One can also regard the drama as a propulsion device..." Dr Manston stepped from the car and walked to the edge of the overpass. A hundred feet below them Vorster was standing on the parapet of the embankment, camera waiting on the rail in front of his chest.

Interlude

During this period of idyllic calm he and Gabrielle Saltzman moved together in a pleasant reverie of intimacy and warmth. In the gardens of the asylum they wandered through the patients, smiling at their empty faces as if they were servitors at a levee. As they embraced, the curved balcony of the disused terrace enclosed them like an amputated limb. The eyes of the insane watched them in inter-course.

Launch Area

He parked the heavy convertible among the dunes. The blue water of the deserted estuary moved between the concrete breakwaters like a broken mirror. The warm sunlight played



on the eroded surfaces. He began to help Gabrielle Saltzman from the car. The bright chromium flashed around his fingers as they touched her wrists. As he pushed her between the clumps of sun-bleached grass he was aware of Vorster moving between the concrete embankments on the beach. The uncapped lens of the Nikon flickered in the sunlight.

Quick

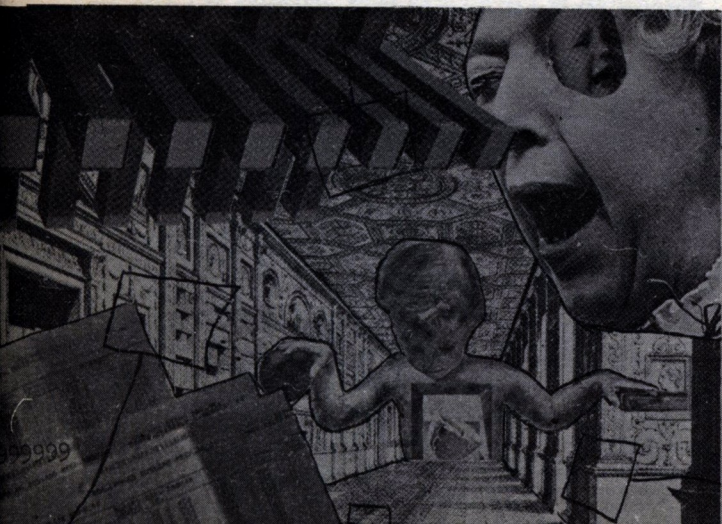
His feet raced across the unset cement as he propelled the chromium chair toward the overpass. On either side the concrete pillars formed the entrances to immense vaults. At the centre of the cloverleaf, where the surrounding embankments formed a familiar arena, he stopped and let the chair spin away in front of him. It careened to one side, spilling Gabrielle Saltzman across the wet cement. He stared down at her metal body-harness as the chromium wheels revolved in the sunlight. Fifty yards away Vorster was crouched on one knee, Nikon working in his hands. He began to approach, face hidden behind the camera, feet moving in oblique passage across the concrete like the stylised dance of a deformed machine. These transits formed an enscribed graphic glass, a caption that contained Gabrielle Saltzman's scream.

K-Lines

These wounds of Gabrielle Saltzman were keys to the locked air, codes that deciphered the false perspectives of time and landscape. He looked up at the sky. At last it was open, the bland unbroken blue of his own mind. Vorster was a few paces from him, face still hidden behind the camera. The flicker of the shutter destroyed the symmetry of the landscape.

Exit Mode

Stepping across Vorster's legs, he moved away from the two bodies. On the overpass Dr Manston and Helen Clement watched from the windows of their car. He walked across the arena and entered the arcade below the overpass, at last accepting its geometry of violence and eroticism.●



ROSEMARY STUART often served Freeman, her husband, the food of the poor. Such food was often difficult for Rosemary to procure and prepare. She did not complain, however. Freeman Stuart was only 28, but he had a twelve-room townhouse, a Frigidaire refrigerator, a Yashica camera, and a job as a biophysicist for a large chemical corporation, where he was in charge of a major project: "An Investigation into the Feasibility of Harvesting Plankton in Order to Recover, Reprocess and Re-use Trace Contents of 1,1,1-trichloro-2, 2-bis (*p*-chlorophenyl)-ethane and 1,1-dichloro-2, 2-bis (*p*-chlorophenyl)-ethylene [DDT]."

"Your meals could be somewhat more nutritious," Freeman told Rosemary one evening in the dinner room after he had finished a supper of hoecakes and clabber. "But the important thing is that your kind of food feeds the soul. I am not speaking from a professional point of view, of course."

"I always try to balance the meals," Rosemary said, carrying his plate and silverware toward the kitchen. "I always try to see to it that half the food has yin and half the food has yang."

"That's where it's at," Freeman said, without much feeling.

Freeman went into his dressing room and changed from his dark blue suit, his white shirt, and his black tie into a purple cashmere dashiki. Then he stood before the gold-rimmed mirror of his dressing table and waxed his soft, curving, blond moustache and his soft, curving, blond sideburns. Lately Rosemary has not been eating dinner with me. She just watches me while I eat. I'm pretty observant, thanks to my scientific training, and that's what I've observed.

He went into the conservatory and played his twelve-stringed guitar with the broken neck of a Coca-Cola bottle. In a clean, youthful voice he sang:

"Give me that m'lasses and spoonbread
Give me that m'lasses and spoonbread whup
Give me that boss ol pigmeat fried
Give me that boss ol pigmeat fried whup
I taken my nine-pound hammer
I taken my nine-pound hammer whup
Threwed it at the captain's head
Threwed it at the captain's head whup
If he ask what happen
If he ask what happen
Tell him he dead whup."

ROSEMARY WENT INTO the kitchen and scrubbed the hoe and the blender with sand and ashes. Freeman keeps on eating even though any fool can see that the yin food and the yang food don't harmonise us or change us worth a darn. He's supposed to be so intelligent and educated, but that's what he keeps on doing. Eating.

She tuned in the microwave oven to the Shanghai Peoples' Opera Hour, which was broadcast over a clandestine station.

Freeman stood alert and impassive on the grey sidewalk waiting for the corporation limousine to pick him up and take him to the corporation lunch, where he was to give a report on bond energies and forbidden-zone width. I can't get at that Rosemary any more. She's very different from the clear, simple, good girl she was when I met her, standing there on the levee in her bast shoes and her burlap lappa. Her long black hair blowing in the wind or whatever. Ah, God! How happy she was when I told her about the conservation of matter! How happy I was when she fixed me soy cakes and pemmican! Those were the days.

Rosemary sat on the red and black and yellow rattan carpet in the pantry and read *Health News from the Tibetan Masters of Anaheim*. "Fasting breaks down the cholesterol and calcium that accumulate in the arteries and harden them, preventing cosmic awareness. Fasting brings you long life and also you get a clear picture of 1) the happeningness and existing of all things in the universe, 2) the essential quality or character of your inner nature, and 3) what the basis of human activity and conduct should be."

HOW'S TRICKS?" Freeman asked Rosemary as he came into the kitchen one evening.

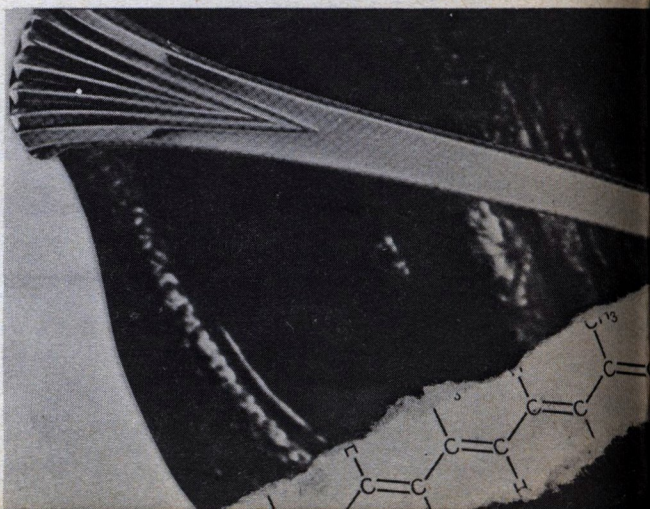
"Any of various complex organic substances, originating from living cells and capable of producing certain chemical changes in organic substances by catalytic action," Rosemary replied, her head bowed over a basalt slab on the floor where she knelt grinding corn with a granite rolling pin.

Freeman peered into the glowing white interior of the Frigidaire. "Mm. Black bread and onions." She knows her lessons well, but she still can't speak in complete sentences. I have a feeling she's hiding something.

Gnawed by restlessness, Freeman went to the bookstore on his lunch hour and weighed himself. One hundred and seventy-eight. Mercy, I've lost ten pounds.

He bought "Bread and Wine" and "Cakes and Ale" and took them to his laboratory and stacked them on top of a microscope slide cabinet, where they eventually disappeared under back issues of the "DDT Newsletter" and old editions of the "United Nations Protein Yearbook".

If only I could get at the inner something of Rosemary. Recover, reprocess, re-use.....



FAST

Without enzymes we could not live, move, or have our being.

—Walter Sullivan.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? Freeman asked Rosemary as he came into the kitchen one evening.

“According to an article in the paper, a scientist fed one group of white rats every day and another group of rats every other day and the second group lived twice as long,” she replied, her head bowed over a basket of rice she was winning in front of the climate-control-unit fan.

Freeman peered into the Frigidaire. “Mm. Blackeyes and fatback.” How did she figure out how to read? He turned away from the Frigidaire and struck her across the mouth with the back of his hand. “What scientist?” he shouted, rigor surging through his bones. “What rats? What colour was the other group of rats? What day or every other day? What’s this lived?”

Freeman sat alone in the dining room eating agaragar and grits. My wife, the beautiful Rosemary, has long red or blonde braids and plump, cheerful breasts. That much I know. Every morning while I am in the sauna room weighing myself she is busy in the kitchen making something with the new electric grinder, the new electric shredder, the new electric crusher, the new electric dicer, the new electric knife. Yet she seems unappreciative of all these things. I could put a stop to this aid if I had a mind to. It hurts me that she doesn’t even watch me eat any more — but I must say she serves me more and more food at every meal. Maybe she has noticed that I’ve lost fifty pounds in the past three weeks — although she hasn’t mentioned a thing about it! And she doesn’t seem to notice the unusual fold of skin that has begun to grow in the corners of my eyes. A pretty unusual event, I would say.

ROSEMARY LOOKED at herself in the gold-rimmed mirror of Freeman’s dressing table. I am getting so fat. I should donate some of this fat to the mayor. I have been fasting secretly for a month now and I love it, this new thing about me that Freeman doesn’t know. In the past he robbed from me to make progress for himself, but he cannot rob *this* from me, this wonderful secret. The stove has stoveness. The garbage disposal has disposalalness, or is it garbageness? In any case, my “nothing” days are over, and I’ll find out soon what I have. Oh, he asks me what data I’ve gathered, what hypothesis I’ve formulated,

whether I’ve verified my hypothesis by experiments. But I’ve been clever. If he found out I was noneating, he would want to noneat, too. He always wants a piece of the action.

Freeman slumped over his crucibles. I have lost seventy-five pounds in what I would call a phenomenally short period even though I continue to eat heartily. And my skin, my skin is getting extremely dark.

THE BULK OF ROSEMARY lay on the bed asleep. She was wearing a white silk bonnet, a white silk laboratory jacket, and pearl-studded ankle bangles. Freeman lay on the floor next to the bed. He was wearing nothing. He stared at the fan of blue veins in the instep of Rosemary’s foot, which jutted over the edge of the bed, and he thought about the effects of single and double bonding and about insolubles. And he thought about the conservation of energy. Even though my heart has always been one with the belief that the amount of energy in a closed system is constant, irrespective of changes in form, and even though I have tried to live my life with this principle uppermost in my mind, a terrible new realisation — God knows I didn’t ask for it — has thrust itself upon me. Everywhere I look I find a tendency toward uniform inertness, especially on the part of the universe. At any rate, a plateau is finally reached.

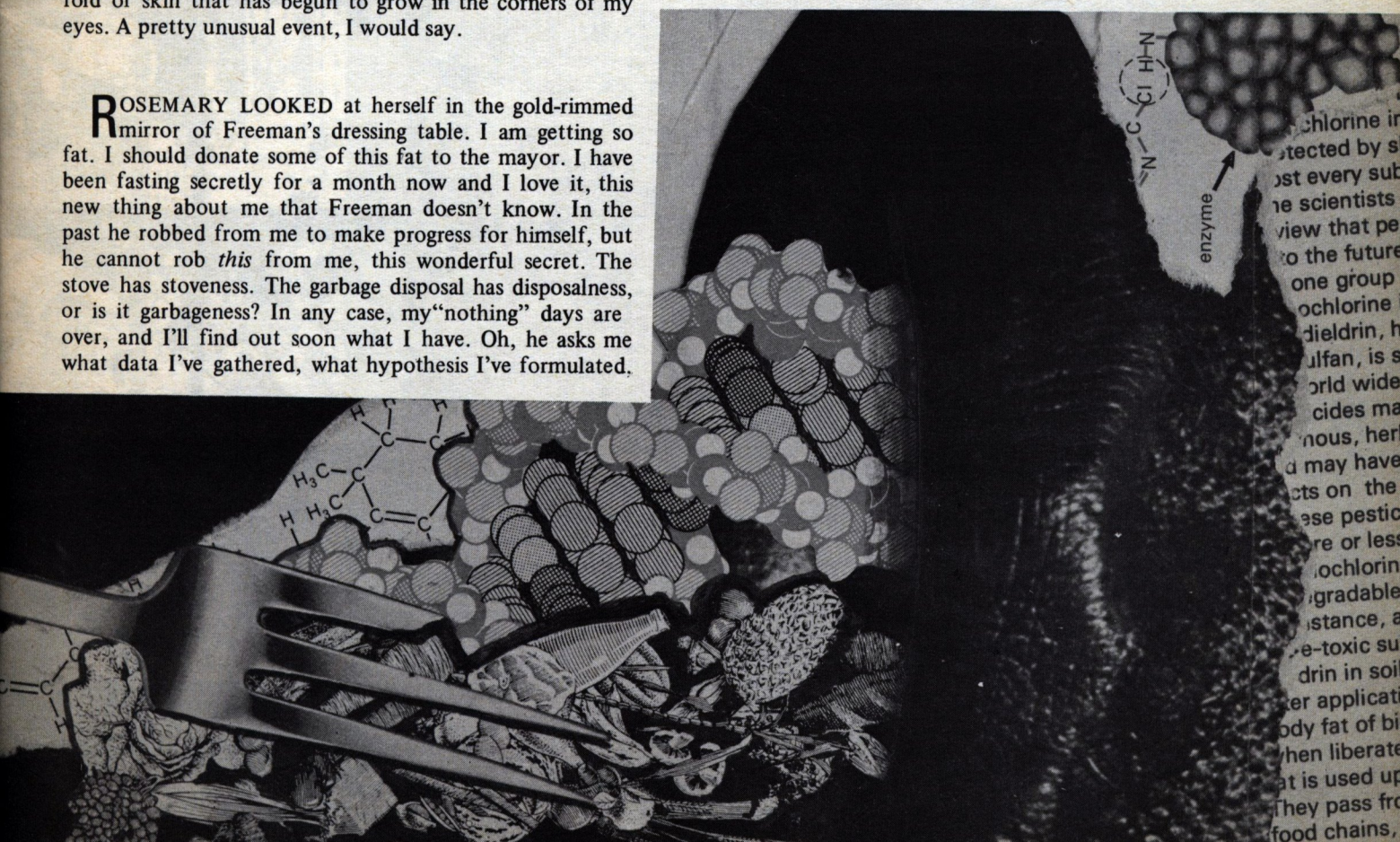
“Why, your old black hide is cracking,” Rosemary said to Freeman, who lay on his back on a pile of old newspapers on the doorstep of the townhouse.

“Hypovitaminosis,” he murmured.

She circled him, snapping pictures of him with the Yashica. “According to an article in the paper, hominy contains an anti-strontium agent and will protect your skeletal structure from the effects of Strontium 90 in fallout. More or less.” She turned to go indoors.

“One last thing,” said Freeman, raising his head with great effort. “Does it still please you that matter in a closed system is constant? I mean, irrespective of changes in form?”

“You bet,” she said.●



JAPAN

IAN WATSON

JAPAN IS A NEON-PAINTED taxi, bright red and white, a metal butterfly chasing the honey of a fare sixteen hours a day. I'm sitting among a flock of metal butterflies, listening to Good Morning Starshine from the stereo speakers fixed in the back of the car.

Coming abreast of me, a prehistoric jungle of tree-ferns and cycads waving upon the back of a lorry, as if the lorry is a time machine that has just snatched them from the deep past. Crack the window, try to get at their oxygen. Take my respirator out of my bag. FOR LOW CONCENTRATIONS OF ORGANIC VAPORS AND ACID GASES/USE IN R3143 RESPIRATOR. Press it over my face secretively. Is this a national insult? Worse, it might cause a node of panic, realization, hysterical suffocation. We all pretend the world is still inhabitable.

We weave down an open traffic lane with a crazy burst of speed, bobsled-ding between metal walls. Brake violently alongside a mini-truck wrapped in a cloud of blue-grey fumes with great garish wreaths of flowers on tripods ten feet high bestriding it. Like the paper flowers you drop in a glass of water to see them unfold, the impossibly bright swollen blooms seem to be the huge plastic growths appropriate to a gas environment. Soon they will be stacked outside a new café or pachinko parlour, a fairyland grove of huge day-glo flowers dwarfing the people who push their way between the wooden stalks to eat spaghetti napolitan or play pachinko, into dream children. Flowers have to be over-bright to be seen through the haze, to outshine the neon and balloons and posters. After a week they'll go back to the plastic factory, after a month the café or pachinko parlour will collapse, be gutted, be revived. The prehistoric jungle lorry will come

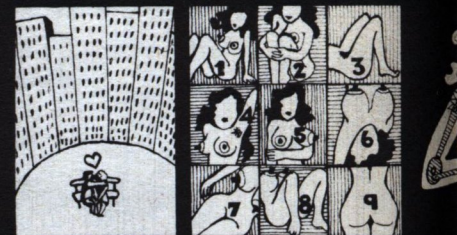
back, the plastic flower mini-truck will come back. The time machine will be switched on again. Instant far-past and instant far-future — tree-ferns and mutated plastic flowers. The dream children will again use the facilities. This is the city of phoenixes. They sit on every rooftop, immolating and resurrecting themselves in the red, branching rays of the rising sun.

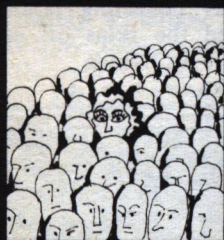
MY NEON TAXI DRIFTS TO a halt in the zero-meter flood of traffic, across the metal plates of the road. The road is made of metal sheets for as far as I can see. A thin booming crust. What caverns are being hollowed out underneath? Perhaps the surface of the earth is only six inches under the metal skin; equally it may be a hundred feet. Good Morning Starshine... The taxi driver opens his door and hawks on to the metal violently. Two familiar sounds of Japan: the piercing screech of bicycle brakes where nobody could ever hear the demure tinkle of a bell; and the hawking of gobs of smog-stained phlegm.

Eastern Tokyo is zero meters above sea level. Two rivers empty their sewerage through it to the sea. After every heavy rain they overflow through the tight streets. Zero-meter traffic then is the flood of vehicles overflowing throughout the whole city, a flood of gas and metal.

But there is zero-meter life, as well...

They promise to build a disaster-proof zone of safety in eastern Tokyo by 1985. Six artificial tablelands rimmed with high-rise apartment blocks standing shoulder to shoulder like muskoxes at bay. Come fire or flood or earthquake, hundreds of thousands of refugees will shelter inside these inhabited concrete rims, likewise shoulder to shoulder. It's Noah's Ark in concrete on the scale of a giant Japanese





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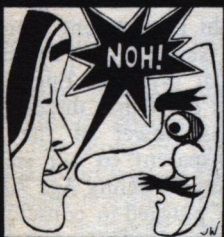


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ソーズ アスド ムバーザツ
ホワイッスホウレツド



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oil tanker; it's the permanent disaster shelter. Only, if the fire should be too hot, or suck up too much oxygen, or if the earthquake should be too strong (and that there will be another major city-wrecking earthquake with its epicentre under Tokyo in the future no one really doubts; it's a race between it and the economists to amortise the new skyscrapers in time) — this zone of safety will become a crematorium, the first volunteer Belsen.

Yet Belsen or Noah's Ark, it's an answer. An answer out of the Herman Kahn megadeath stable, but an answer. If the plan works then an army of reconstruction will be ready to march out of the rim, and the plastic flowers will be brought out again; and if not, the concentration camp can be bulldozed over and a new one built on top of it. It's already unclear where the exact surface of this city is.

MY NEON TAXI COASTS under a crowded pedestrian bridge. Six hundred bridges have been built to span the streams of gas and metal flowing through the streets. Everyone has to take part in the hurdle race, old and young, coronaries and cripples. And everyone is in a sense a cripple who has to accept the special handicap of this race: an alien low-oxygen atmosphere. Everyone has to surge up and over and down, just as there's no alternative but to shelter in the Belsen zone of comparative safety. And this is what zero-meter life means: zero-choice life, nul-alternative existence. Which is a programmed life, life of a machine (commuter into computer).

A million people cross one bridge outside Shibuya Station in Tokyo every day to escape one arm of the zero-meter flood. They climb 1800 kilometers skywards daily. They reach the moon every seven months from this single bridge. Japan's Lambda series rockets have all failed one after another for lack of an onboard-guidance system (an onboard-guidance system equals guided missile equals Hiroshima Mon Amour); but Japan has reached the moon from Shibuya Bridge in a surge of bodies breathing carbon monoxide and tetra-alkyl lead,

cheered by loudspeakers, flashing signs and balloons.

If there is overkill here, it is mainly (for the moment) the overkill of persuasion techniques. A loudspeaker is talking to me from the next street, but I'm trying to ignore it, because I want to note down with my plus-glory pencil: Teapots and Lipton's Teabags are dancing across the lips of Alan Ladd and an electric razor slides over his smooth gallant chin right in the middle of the movie — and how long will it be till telephone conversations are interspersed with commercials? Picturesque characters, balloons, neon — all part of the total assault on the Japanese mind. Japanese kanji (ideograms) are more sensuous, plugged deeper into the nervous system than the alphabet; they still have a residual picture-meaning lurking in them. The kanji for Tokyo

東京

represent the sun, squared off, rising behind a tree, symbolising the East; and a stone lantern such as stood outside the Chinese Emperor's residence and denoted the Imperial capital. Thus: Eastern Capital. Advertisements written in kanji, picturesque to the Westerner, are actually subliminal in their impact on the Japanese on account of this extra image content.

THE CITY STRETCHES OUT like chewing gum, the commuter railway lines the long thin-strings of sticky chewing gum pulled from the mouth ever-so-far without tearing, the little residual blob on the end the bed-town where the commuter sleeps. Located at the edge of the smog cloud, these bed-towns are places where the organism plugs in to oxygen again, and reoxygenates the blood before travelling down the chewing gum line once more.

Scenes from life in the chewing gum city:

Perfect plastic models of meals in a cafe window, a man squatting outside selling hermit crabs clattering in an enamel bowl, and day-old chicks dyed day-glo yellow, cheeping on a box top.

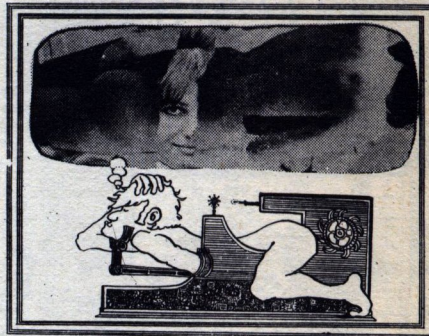
If real-life toys are classed as 'perishable commodities' by the department stores in their summer nature-sales-drives that lead them to erect tropical insectoria on their rooftops... and if you like your sashimi sliced from a live fish which a store will deliver swimming in a polythene bag of water right to your door... if there seems to be a vast casual consumption of living objects in Japan... Well, human life is also expendable. Childless women buy 'real-life' dolls to console themselves; disenchanting mothers stuff their children into plastic garbage bins. There's no essential difference between the plastic baby nuzzling at the empty breast, and the flesh baby suffocating in the plastic bin. Flesh and plastic interlock. In

this sense, then, murderers are perhaps the most effective sociologists. Here are two exemplary murders:

Murder Number One: A number of people saw the youth carrying the crying boy, but nobody bothered to stop him. The body of the boy was found stuffed in a small suitcase the youth had deposited at a Shibuya Station luggage counter. The boy's hands were tied with tape. The boy bore a stab wound on the left side of the chest, plus a few minor cuts on the stomach and hands. The suitcase measured only 66 x 41 x 21 cm.

Murder Number Two: The boy said he wanted to have his friend change his overbearing attitude toward him. He hit Kagami on the back of the neck with a jackknife when they were out on a stroll after school. He struck his friend repeatedly after the latter collapsed at the first blow. The body was later found to have 47 stab wounds. The boy said he cut the head off his friend lest he revive. One of his hobbies was collecting reptiles. He often peeled the skins off captured snakes before his friends.

ONANのとき キミは...?



AFISHING PARLOUR NEAR the sewer waters pouring under Edogawabashi in a dark grey stream: the black-uniformed students rent a bamboo rod and bent pin, and try to catch goldfish swimming in a canvas tank: symbolic fishing, a sketched-in reflex such as a chopped-up amputated insect engages in when it goes through the forms with part of itself missing...

The police are sitting round the corner from the fishing parlour in their battle wagons with the steel mesh windows and water turrets, talking to the spotter helicopters overhead, stiff as TV androids in their aluminium-plate saurian clothes...

The police are sitting round the corner from the fishing parlour in their battle wagons with the steel mesh windows and water turrets, talking to the spotter helicopters overhead, stiff as TV androids in their aluminium-plate saurian clothes... A labourer walks into a coffee bar, talking over a two-way radio to a cement mixer stuck in a traffic jam, and orders a foot-tall fruit parfait...

Mitsukoshi Department Store's slogan for the New Year is "Feeling Age 70". Vestigial symbolic English, bantered across the Ginza directly opposite the glass tower of the Dream Centre, transparent to our steel and plastic dreams. "Feeling Age 70"! The year of the plugged-in consciousness, not a sinister medical message...

Following in the image steps of the department stores are the politicians, and way ahead on images is Komeito, the political arm of a militant new pseudo-Buddhism. Blending Madison Avenue with the techniques of Maoist thought reform, Komeito, which used to specialise in an intensive and irresistible persecution-persuasion of selected families, is now applying its methods to the community at large. Its current mascot is a leaping girl dressed all in white with a red cockade — health, energy and sophistication, teeth white as a toothpaste ad, clutching a microphone like a cheerleader her baton. She is the political onan partner I have to see as the loudspeaker van chants at me over and over again: *Minna-san doozo, Komeito de gozaimasu!!* (Everybody go ahead, it's Komeito!!).

Komeito is the New-Time-Style party. It has charisma, collectively, as a party, because it is all image, unsaddled by ideology. Its posters do not promise merely a fantasy of future joy and destiny; they are that fantasy, that joy, themselves; since the future can't really exist in the disaster area, but only the eternal Now of the image.

LOOK OUT OF THE TAXI window at these images, not at Tokyo itself, since Tokyo is only a series of screens for images.

Japan's greatest image maker is Tadanori Yokoo, 34 years old. Tadanori Yokoo brings together the garishness of Japan's Shinto shrines and folk-ways with the disaster landscape of commercial Japan. Atavism and the contemporary disaster flow into and out of one another, threaten, dazzle one another, are linked by the national fetishes of history from Samurai to Kamikaze pilot.

The weeping kick-boxer, the rising sun naval flag, the bullet train riding through typhoon surf, the frantic swimmer trying to flee through the Imperial Palace moat in the heart of Tokyo, the lesbians and the airmen, muscle-man Yukio Mishima with a blood-stained sword, the masturbating woman squeezing a jet of milk from one of her nipples with her free hand, the gold-toothed bathing beauty baring her huge tits, the girl jockey crunching a fish in her jaws, the salesman metamorphosed into Superman flying through the sky with a case of samples: these are his images of Japan; and Japan is this multitude of images.

THROUGH THE NEON WINDOW I see open fires in the street outside a wood yard, blazing drums of sawdust, sparks flying thirty feet along the road... and a fashion-image girl waiting for a taxi in this slipstream of sparks, unconcerned. I imagine her hairspray suddenly flaring in a head dress of flame. She is so

close to being a Tadanori Yokoo image girl; she's almost there. And I read in the paper only this morning that a locally made hairspray turns out to contain 95% methyl alcohol that leaves deposits in the body causing dizziness, headaches, lesions in the motor nerves; which could even explode, since methanol is mixed with propane gas. She has so many chances of living an exemplary death, of becoming an image: The girl with the blazing head, the girl with the imploded skull, the lesion motor girl. And so have I, and so have you.

NEON TAXI SKIDDING TO a halt, bobsled at the end of its run. Door opening automatically. Climbing out.

Buying the magazine weeklies to discover mechanical sex, the threat of the breast, the death of the male. For the masturbating woman squeezing milk from her huge tits in an aggressive jet — as if from a water pistol or a grease gun — is the totem of Japanese sex.

One magazine runs a weekly page of English sexual smalltalk. "You have a cute bum!" no. 15 says. "What a cute bum... rump... sirloin... rib..." (slipping into the language of butchery, for women are carved up by doctors and unscrewed by mechanics in the artwork on other pages — which is very delicate, sensitive artwork in the Japanese graphic tradition). "Wow, you're a tigress!" "You must be Jane Fonda's sister!" "She's a bed-hopper!" say others. "That's why she's bow-legged! They're all bed-hoppers, that's why they're bow-legged, n'est-ce pas?" The Japanese male is basically frightened of his emancipated slave, who now has her own serial on TV called Play-girl, in which trendy girls break men up with karate blows, humiliate them, drive fast cars and helicopters, and lounge about in their lesbian pad crunching apples.

Thus sex is mechanised to re-homi-

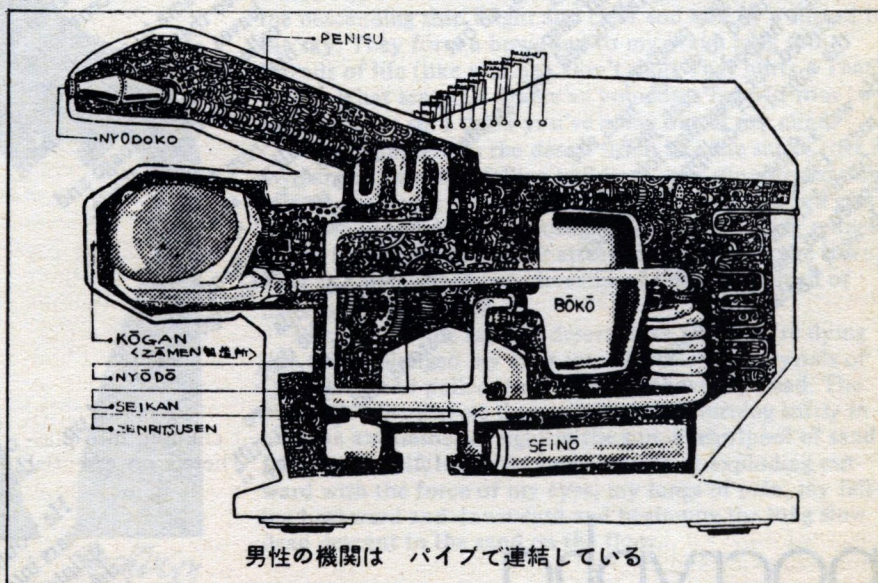
fy it; males are essentially engaged in performing skilful operations on a high-precision machine with their tools and driving it in a perilous race where the car might run away under them, might prove a tigress. Therefore the genital parts are as carefully catalogued as the spare parts in a garage stockroom, and female nudes have to compete with cars and even with car assembly lines (the female stripped to the buff and the car stripped down to its chassis are equal meat for mechanical voyeurs).

The male is nailed to the cross of sex with a metal chastity belt locked around his loins; or if he is free he sits astride a naked woman dressed in a suit of armour. These are the images of Japanese sex: images presented with great subtlety and taste at the best of times, with a crude vestigial violence at the worst. "Teach me onan technique!" is the cry from these pages, from the Japanese male locked in his ingenious masturbating machine, which bears a startling resemblance to a chastity belt...

THE CHEWING GUM screens stand around me on all sides, catching the images and bouncing them. Balloons hang in the grey haze like giant beachballs bobbing on the surf of smog. The girl with flaming hair runs past me searching for the waters of the Imperial Moat. The lesbian jockey gallops past with a penis in her teeth. The sun rises in broad red stripes.

After sixteen hours in the zero-meter flood the taxi driver drives headlong into Tokyo Bay, fast asleep, curled up in his machine like a metal womb painted in bright neon zig-zags, with his air cooler cooling and automatic door opening and stereopack playing music. The driver drowns and rusts, good morning starshine.

I check the straps of my respirator, then I buy a day-old chick dyed bright yellow, and put it in my buttonhole. ●



He tingled at a touch of lips so light it was less than the black streak of a kingfisher, rising, wriggling silver in its beak.

Like a woman who scours her house and makes endless finds more delightful than the trinket lost, his eyes explored her for love's reason.

From the shore the child saw the telltale shimmer when the casting boats were blinded. "Cast your nets on the right," he shouted. They did so.

At Magdala. He touched by chance the hem of her skirt. Seven devils rushed into him. Thirty coins burnt a hole in his pocket.

She removed his hand, and gazed over Galilee. To make love to God! She caught to her lips his five wise fingers heavy with oil.

At Cana. Tense with worry. Recriminations flew. Then rain from the south fell; as she stood up: through her dress, a joyous winestain.

Always her garden always easter, raised him, made him stand humble, born. He touched her back and she turned, astonished, fingers testing.

He could not believe he had risen again. He lay in the arms of Mary. Light as the blind he touched all her redeeming holes.

In an agony of masochism, he forced her to relate all the details of her flesh, who had eaten of her flesh.

Tenderly he wiped the glans free of its bud of liquid. "In there, one the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

Her love moving at the evening lake, his throat tightened, the good simple meal grew uneatable feasts.

An alabaster box of fragrant ointment, too of her profession, burst upon his tongue that churned seeking the close-cauled stable.

Before the dawn broke, they stirred in their sleep. Masts of grey lolling boats were three crosses. Each looked at the loved face and did not know it.

Her cunt still pulsed. He was already penitent. "I come, to give you life more abundantly." Her loved face and teeth flashed.

At their heights he could enter her again at once, hard, this time sustain it forever, repeating the ninety-nine names of God.

Two Marys bent to sponge his crucified breathing flesh: breast, face, thighs, feet, the circumcised organ of excretion and genesis.

He stood in the red sand which the sun's hourglass had poured out. A snakeskin hissed: *Thirty years. Halfway.* Poised between sloughed skin and round stone.

At Bethany. One netted him with her hair, one watched. His breast sighed, tension was left to frot his ever tumescent spirit?

He came to a fig-tree that was barren, having leaves but no fruit. He called up an old image and masturbated in its shade.

"Child from Nazareth, you will not suffer me to come to you. A millstone of gravity hangs on me." Round, dust-ringed eyes stared up.

Meshes of her lids iridescent in the dark. She said to John, "Cleave a log end and I find him still, turn a stone and he is there."

Storms sawed her into jagged waves of latesummer. A half, waning moon. She grew turgid, baleful. He knew better than to still it.

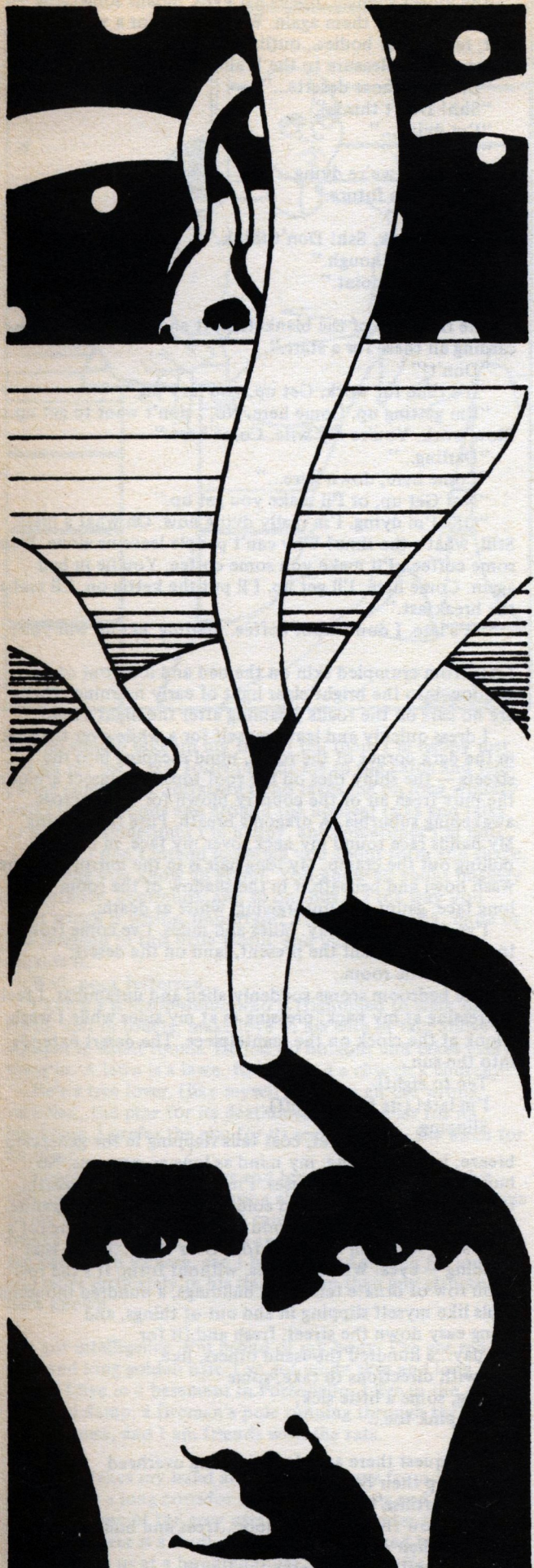
It would still itself. The moon disappeared, all but an earthlight of him. Half in relief, half despair, her month's fall loosed red cascades.

At the last moment she tried to cut the nets she had helped to cast, jack-knifed her spasming loins. But the son of God slipped from her.

He was a fisher of men. Fishergirl, her pale back turned from the drag-nets swollen on the curves shore. Her thigh wept a galaxy.

The village empty, he yielded to impulse. Bent to the well, saw the strange other Mary look up, tense in silk, bewildered.

He would cram thirty years into three, climb a dark splintered stairs and by the intensity of his lust, lie with eternity.



Stephenson
76

How many people are stuck in dull jobs, 9 to 5 through the week, and retreat into acid trips each weekend to break the monotony?

How many more find that the only way to get through the working day is by daydreaming?

Which is more real: the daydreams, the acid trips, or the 9 to 5 jobs?

The experiences overlap: how can one tell the difference?

Michael Butterworth's very vivid, personal, fragmented story is a transcript of the merging acid-dream-real worlds side by side in the writer's brain.

6B 4C DD1 22

Michael Butterworth

take acid the question you ask yourself
and get its reply or just be:

remain forever undecided
through a mobile world

BE ALICE THE ACID CHILD you recall her adventures
in wonderland the sense of a little girl the intellect of a man

move through rigid walls see a gleaming car in the wing
mirror let it move through you don't look at the road

ZERO

I looked up at the hot sun. It was racing across the sky like an insect, black and fuzzy. The intense glare stung my eyes. I looked down at the ground, the miles of red desert, flat and unending to the steel horizon. My eyes ached and felt dry.

Water, I thought. I could do with some water. I could do with some cactus — that cactus over there. What is it? That'll do. It's a plant of some sort. No, it's a rock. That rock over there. What is it? That'll do. Is it all right? No it isn't. That sky over there...

I looked at my tiny feet. My shoes were black and tiny and unending like the desert, small, miles away, their laces curled and tubed running away through the sand crystals to the descending ship bright and clear and tied by a thread to the sky. They form a bow, tied to my brain, long thin threads of life (like worms). Don't pull! That hurts... That's better. What are you? Where've you come from? From earth? I hope so. I think you've come out of my mind.

I ran racing across the desert floor, like the sun, a roar in my ears of unending falling buildings, lifts slipping, crashing surf, buses fusing melting into their own slag, trapped grey hungry eyes glazed and caught in the descending redness of the buses...the rush-hour streets of my own home town, clear and detailed at last. Screams of the dying, smell of metal and seared flesh.

Racing over the red-hot desert. Like this, you're dying like this! I plunged my arms into the brick-red crystals of the desert, and pulled it up high, far above my head. The pieces left themselves there spinning and turning softly in the thin air, flashes of light in the sun, a whirlpool of sand flattening itself, losing its spin, expanding exploding outward with the force of my eyes, my lungs of pain, my falling backward and downward and beginning the long slow dead descent to the sand on the floor...

My feet! My feet! Hey I'm on fire — running across the desert, axe in hand. I ran, chasing the ship over the horizon. It disappeared into the non-world of a blind spot, then reappeared, blinking on and off, in and out of my existence.

My stomach heaved, turned, gave up its pain. The ship blinked-out. I'm gone. I'm gone. My hand was big and flat, laid out on the quilt, an extension of my covered body quiet and worn out, life below the blankets.

My favourite park bench. I've slept on it and stood on it and kissed on it. I've eaten on it. I've smoked on it. I've watched pigeons exploding out of flower gardens from it. All night I've seen the sky very clear and seen the tiniest trajectories of moving light slowly through the stars.

My name's Hot Plate. I've an eye for fashion. I've got good looks. I've good action. I pay good attention to my appearances and speech. I think God exists inside me. I've nuclear eyes and I used to go to atomic school.

Old wooden stairs climb up to the rafters. Water leaks through the roof. Damp creeps through the walls. Cockroaches crawl across the floor at night. In the centre of the room where there's a shiny brass bed...

It's my favourite castle! I play at night with eels of rubber tubing — something to do with the fires — that hang on the walls ... and sprinklers in the ceiling. Lights come on and off. Chairs swivel. Kitchens cook their meals. Hot water runs in the showers. Nothing needs to be done. I talk to a machine on the computer room wall about the weather:

"Computer?"

"Yes?"

"Are you coming?"

"Yes."

"There's an electric storm overhead. Can you give me some more information?"

"Yes. 6 robot has clapped out."

"Is he responsible for relaying this information?"

"Yes."

"Then there's no real point to our discussion. I'm switching you off until the maintenance crew arrive."

"OK. Don't be long."

"That's all right."

I stand in the sun inside my mind. Jefferson is holding up my hand. Grey cars like tiny lice are lumping toward us from the horizon. He feels to me like a framework of tough roots freshly dug out of the ground. I can see through him. He's just a peculiar vegetable I've found somewhere on the grassy clifftop at Tintagel.

"Mike, look over there," he says, pointing to a stone monument by one of the cars. The open moorland unfolds from his gaze, and undulates very quickly, as if seen under water for a second.

"Jeff, I'm falling."

"Sorry, just keep your head still." ...the patience of a dentist.

He brings down my arm with his other hand and points it directly at the white monument. "Use this as a gun."

I look along the barrel through the sights and fix my vision rigidly to the stone and feel cold and dust dry and electric inside, with dry ethereal eyes.

"What's happening? Can't you do anything right?" One of the animals rises from its seat on the stone plateau and walks toward me, waving a large brown pipe with a shiny bowl. "We'll see you hanged for this." The stone monument towers above his head, wide and bulging, with three stone faces carved back to back. "We all agree you really should be hanged." The animals rise one by one.

"Jeff! Jeff!"

"Don't panic. Put the gun away." He drops my arm. The monument's a distant speck. He's a curtain of roots and hairs covered in clods of earth...long crawling threads with many yellow legs race in and out of his eyes...

The sun comes up from over the horizon. Its rays blind me. I can't see the cars or the monument. I can't see the horizon. I can't see Jefferson. I can't see the ground or the sky. Only the sun, blinding and fierce, shattering like glass in the greyness.

"Gina. OK?"

She moves slightly, opens her eyes, moans something — a breath — shuts them again. We lie there for a while like that, feeling our bodies...outlines of heat and flesh, closeness and pleasure to the brain.

"Darling...those deserts..."

"Shh! Don't think."

"I'm dying..."

"We all are."

"We know we're dying..."

"There's no future."

"No past..."

"Don't think. Ssh! Don't think."

"I want to, though."

"There's no point."

"I want to."

She rises, out of the blankets, soft and giving. "I'm discarding all these for a start."

"Don't!"

"It's time for work. Get up, you lazy pig."

"I'm getting up. Come here. No, I don't want to get up. Blow work. You're my wife. Come here."

"Darling..."

"Come here, down here..."

"No! Get up, or I'll make you get up."

"OK. I'm dying. I'm really dying now. Oh what a mess. Still, what's the time? Why can't people leave us alone. Want some coffee...I'll make you some coffee. You lie in bed again. Come here. I'll get up. I'll put the kettle on. I'll make the breakfast."

"It's late. I don't want coffee...darling, get up will you?"

I rise from crumpled skin on the bed and look out of the window into the bright clear light of early morning. There are no cars on the roads gleaming after the night's rain.

I dress quickly and leave myself for a while over the sink in the dark corner of the room, mind escaping into the streets — the shiny tiles on the roof tops, like insect armour; the pure fresh air of the country blown for miles across awakening suburbia. A dragon's breath. Pure fire, I think. My hands race round my neck, over my face, in my ears, pulling out the cramp. My long hair is in the mirror over the wash bowl and beneath it in the shadow of the room, the long face, gaunt and unforgiving, white as death...

I've come a long way. Miles and miles. I've come from last month to haunt the present, land on the desert, re-arrange the room.

The bedroom seems suddenly alien and unfamiliar. I feel it pressing at my back, pressing in at my sides while I wash. I look at the clock on the mantelpiece. The desert extends into the sun.

Ten to eight!

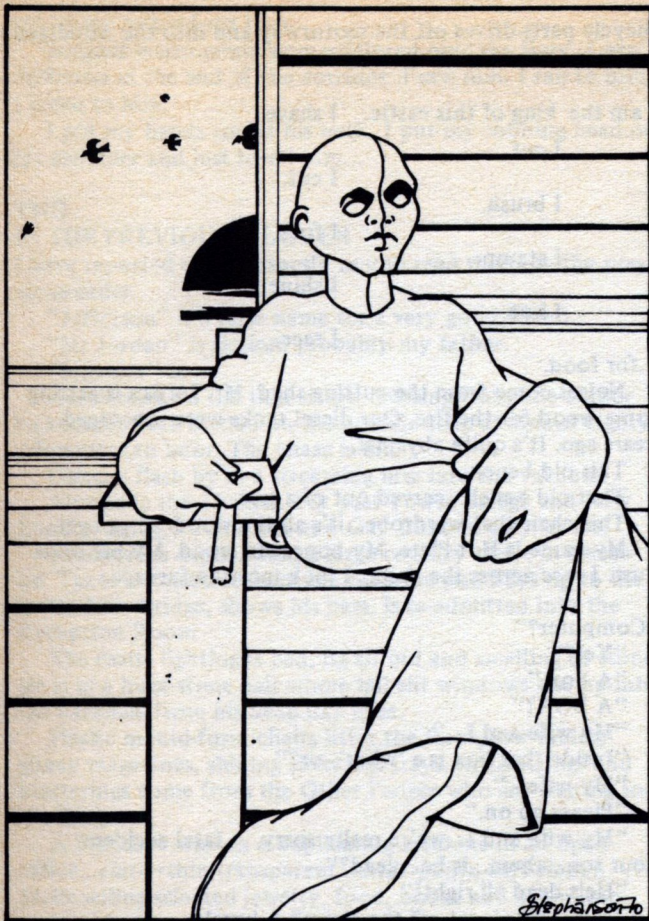
I'm late! (its face fell off).

Slipping

down street, coat tails flapping in the generated breeze, hair streaming, my mind as long as my arms. No buildings. No tubes, or buses. I'm crashing, out of breath. It's the pavement, hard and cold under my feet like granite. It's my skull, split-open, blood on the floor, quick the cat's been sick. What am I looking for? Over there...inside that building — eyes! Without faces, without form. It's the row upon row of ornate tenement buildings, a hundred thousand souls like myself slipping in and out of things, and going easy down the street, fresh and fit for the day...a hundred thousand others, like cats with directions to take, some smiling, some a little sick, a little pink toe...

at my request there are planes circling overhead
eggs fill up their bellies
i rise to fertilise them
my legs grow from the city floor...trees and buildings shrink
i fertilise their eggs
they dart and dive and catch the liquid
from the city floor a roar a rise of protest greets the sting

Mr. Jordan is my boss. Jefferson is my nurse. They argue as



see Jefferson running away from me. He has his arms round a girl whose face is familiar and rather like a pig's.

"Jeff!"

"Watch that car!"

"What car?"

It's night time. The clouds are low and the streets wet, gleaming yellow like acid butter under the sodium lamps. Inside a driveway to one of the houses there's a shape that keeps turning and jumping and turning. The cat is playing with itself in front of a silent garage. Its eyes glint tracers of green light. I feel it a bit like a stinging nettle.

I was running across the desert toward the ship. The sand was orange phosphorescent — blinding day-glo filled the whole of my vision, a sheet of pain. I ran through the pain, free-falling into the heart of the ship close to the radio-active heart, eyes dry and bulging globes forced out into the cold air of the heart. I'm alive. I'm dying.

I was on fire. Black lungs and brain smoking silhouettes against the fire sky on the crater rim. Below me avalanches of cinders, fused sand and radio-active waste left behind in the wake of the ship nose to the black sun and the distant home galaxy. Help me I'm on fire. I was burning sand, in the sun, in the fire waste. I was waste, souped-up life, blinded by pain axe in hand speeding across the desert. I was death. I was huge. I was large thin death with glistening blade swung high in a blurry arc under the close small sky. Chemical Alice burning everything up.

"I feel you honestly don't know which is dangerous or safe...And slowly but surely things which you see no longer seem important, sounds which you hear could come from anywhere. Touch seems to be your only *real* sense left...and taste you don't really relate to what you've eaten."

ONE

Miroslav jumps up, for the moment wide-awake, motorway central reservation coming parallel to his car once more. His white fingers grip the wheel of the old car, huge eyes frightened for his life, hypnotised by the strobe dazzle of oncoming traffic.

Alongside his Ford in the third lane appears a cream light-weight truck, tyres drumming like stage thunder on the road. Its passenger turns his head, gives Miroslav a long expressionless look, eyes wild and feverish.

The driver still has his hand on the horn.

Miroslav drops his speed and slides into the first lane. He can just make out the rear red lights of the cream truck receding into the distance.

The interior of his car is cold. The motorway is silent, only the purring of the car engine, the squeaking of its upholstery... its own lights light the way ahead, swallowing yards of the dark road, not a single point of light from the far carriageway.

Far ahead of him, a train of red lights are swallowed by a hill. Miroslav is left behind, disconnected. A globule of peace. Silence travels with him, touches the small hills and the tree clumps that glide behind him in the dark.

Energy disappears from the Ford. Its rhythm breaks up into little jagged pieces, coughing on to the hard shoulder. The needle dies on the speedometer. He parks like this under the low heavy clouds, gets out into the warm air and takes something heavy from the boot.

"Minotaur to base. Over."

"Base to Minotaur. Can hear you. Over."

"Hello Johnny. We're trailing. Description is cream-coloured, light-weight..."

"Where are you, Minotaur?"

"Heading towards Birmingham on the M6. We're a mile past Keele services. Over."

"Thanks Larry. Over."

"Jenny, I'll see you later. Over...wait a minute...Danny, pull over! Jenny? There's a black Ford being a bit of a nuisance. Can you send another car as quickly as possible?"

"Will try. Good luck with the truck. Over."

"Thanks. Over and out."

The wood is dense, pitch black, swampy underfoot. A few

to who should take up my time. I tell them I'm happy just left on my own. Mr. Jordan trains me to file cards and telephone computers. Jefferson (who takes me on long wintery walks in the woods and around the houses) talks and talks to me, and sometimes I'm happy, and sometimes I'm not.

"Now I don't intend lecturing you about form and shape, something you know all about. You know all about imagery and infinity, continuity and so on. But it's the way you react which is wrong, important...too indifferently, more or less resigned to this little world, and incapable of living outside it."

Well, poor Jefferson.

I know a schizophrenic who is frightened to walk on lawns, spit in toilets, make love to his wife or talk above a whisper in silent rooms. He has no humour and takes everything in. A lawn is a lawn, to him, and a church a church.

He's a tree lover, (like myself), prefers all the wrong varieties...the pine for its deathliness, the poplar for its bleakness. I prefer the elm for its secretiveness, the birch for its silver.

I compare trees to lungs and bronchial tubes, each bit dividing and in the end bearing alviolic leaves. I mention this to my friend who thinks the same about roots. He says trunks and boughs and twigs are all visible — that roots, like the base of an iceberg, can't be seen, and stretch far longer and more intricately in his imagination than any structure I have known.

I've got intelligence. I'm proud of my body. I've got red eyes and long golden hair. I've got white skin and long heavy bones. I live in a basement in Portobello. I live in the cellars, cold and damp, a fireman's pole running through the centre of the house, and I am friends with the rats.

Jefferson takes my hand and leads me away from the moorland, down a long corridor lined with screens and mirrors. Behind us one of the grey cars manages to enter the corridor. The driver is a skull, grinning and blistered head, bearing down on us at a hundred miles an hour. Jefferson turns left into one of the screens.

I bow. I fall. I raise my chest with my arms. I fall. I rise up through layers of earth and reach the surface in time to

bicycle parts drives off the motorway and into the woodland. Its radiator blows up.

I am the king of this castle. I shave

He is scratched and bleeding. Moist powder from the bushes covers his hands and face. Rot and the powder fill his nostrils. A sharp weight in his arms...he falls into one of the bushes where he cries out of breath.

He wants to open the parcel.

It lies heavy pressing against one of his arms against one of the rhododendron's branches...children in colourful stage costumes sit in the seats in the inside of his head -- a vast theatre, every seat occupied...three balconies and two tall walls of boxes three storeys high. On the stage zoo animals and a keeper with a gun in his hand...the children are laughing. He feels too big.

He gets up and reaches the edge of the wood, a fence of barbed wire and a farmer's ploughed field, which turns out to be a pond. He sits down for a while on a soaking wet log and thinks up a plan to get him to safety over the border into the Midlands.

"Slow down. That's it."

"Blue Knight to Base. Over."

"Receiving you loud and clear Blue Knight. Over."

"Jenny?"

"Yes, Blue Knight?"

"Send us an ambulance will you? I think we can manage the fire on our own."

"Base to Blue Knight. Ambulance on its way. Am puzzled. What fire? Over."

"Blue Knight to Base. There's a burning car on the hard shoulder here. It looks like the black Ford. Can't talk any more. Will keep you informed. Over."

"Thankyou, Blue Knight. Radio your position as soon as possible. Over."

"Will do. Over and out."

Miroslav can just about make out the stagnant pond, a deeper black against the ploughed field. He sees the face of the passenger in the cream truck in the darkness twist with pain. They have hit one of the pillars supporting an underpass. Miroslav isn't sorry about the man's condition -- his own pain is that much more important. That passenger had appeared to scowl...

He lets first one and then another glowing butt fall to the ground. The parcel wrapped in brown paper and tied with strong white string leans against the side of the log.

He decides to give himself up.

At the border, with his burns, they don't turn him away. Instead they let him through into a hut that has a bed in it. He has a doctor brought to him and also an officer of high rank who carries the parcel in and wants to know what's inside it...a dismantled bicycle, large dummy hairgrips and a black telephone, stolen by Miroslav from the boot of a car that exploded at the wrong moment? Miroslav is a thief, indentityless, homeless...back at his car, police already investigate the wreckage. There's no body. Border officials are notified. They're on the lookout for a badly burned man.

Miroslav raises himself from the wet log, stoops for the parcel, shudders. He blows an invisible stream of smoke over the pond before he leaves, and staggers on uphill into the dark...

Parakeets with flashing red tails come into his house. They pull at the straw thatching to make nests in the furniture, whistling shrilly all the while. He lies in his bed, shivering, and draws an old tartan car rug round his shoulders. A parakeet lands on his covered arm, cocks its head, digests the colours in the rug with its eyes, makes a reconnaissance into his long thin hair falling grease over his shoulders, begins to build its nest there. The bed's immobile. The walls to the house fragile and thin, soon destroyed by the parakeets. There's only the furniture left, scattered amongst the woodland, stuffed with straw nests. White bones lie in bed with the tartan rug and a parakeet occupies the skull. Several yards away a bus-load of parakeets and white bones and

bicycle parts drives off the motorway and into the woodland. Its radiator blows up.

I am the king of this castle. I shave

I cut.

I cut.

I brush.

I fork.

I stamp.

I shine.

I hoe.

I race.

...for food.

Noises come from the cutting shed. Mr. Jordan is getting some wood for the fire. Our diesel tanks were sabotaged years ago. It's quite abysmal.

This old bench...

That old bench...carved out of a tree.

This chair that wardrobe...it's all the wood we can get...

My name is Hot Plate. My bones are wood. My breath is dust. I race across the desert I look into the furnace.

"Computer?"

"Yes?"

"A box."

"A BOX?"

"My wife and I..."

"Inside that box is a 'what', sir?"

"My wife..."

"Please go on."

"My wife and I...we're really sorry. A fatal accident... your son...ahem...is he...dead?"

"He's dead all right!"

Alarm. Who's set off the alarm? A burglar.

"My wife is really a box."

The

"I am quite unconcerned about your"

"No. No. Go on."

"About your"

"Please go on!"

"Your"

Diminishing box. It's ringing. My wrists are grazed and bleeding. No one will give me a lift. I've been on the road all night, through wind and...a heavy wind! I wish someone would

"My dummy. Exceptionally large fingernails."

"That's all right dear. I'll be getting the bio-repair crew on to you."

Opening from the hatch were dark forms, brown tentacles

Stabbing the air. I could hardly believe my eyes.

"Jefferson! Jefferson! Help me! I'm being drawn in!

It's very painful. Help!" The desert extended into

The sun. By the open bedroom window another patient

Was being sick all over the tiny flower garden. Violet rays

Shone from his eyes. I felt a slight lift and was airborne

Carried from one room to another where I could feel

Steel points enter my skull, pressure inside my head,

Drills at my teeth.

Chatter.

Chatter.

Chatter. Parrots sat on each shoulder. I

felt their talons...

The room was empty. Objects looked far away. I was cold. An optician's letter board stood in one corner. I tried to tell the parrots to shut up. On the mantelpiece

over the fireplace stood

an old wooden clock

a clock that looked like

a goblin's pointed hood...

O God. O Christ. Take it away.

My attention...

My heart burst

with adrenal pain...empty sick feeling to the stomach. I

turned I ran out of the room

screaming upsetting Mr Jordan

who tried to hold me back.

Surgical instruments were scattered over the floor. I saw Jefferson at the end of the corridor. I saw him. I ran to him. I raced to him.

I put my hands round his neck. I put my sobbing head on his shoulder and just loved him...

**TWO
IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER**

I have reported events exactly as you read them, in the previous order.

"Jefferson" is a false name for a very good friend.

"Mr Jordan" is fiction, probably my father.

"Miroslav" is

Accelerates on the thin strips, crossing from one colour to another until settled on the outside strip at almost eighty kilometers an hour. The chase is on.

Colours flash by in a streaming blur into the vacuum.

Alongside the Thames. Fly past Tower Bridge and New London Bridge. Colourful new Gay London City by air.

Reaches his destination, a large country castle in Cheshire. Takes a runabout from the roadside and rides up to the castle draw bridge, shows his pass, is re-admitted into the Reception Room.

The castle lighting is bad, its air old and smelling of stone. He is in a huge stone hall where tall slit windows rise up into the darkness from his head like eyes.

Plastic mould-form chairs litter the floor, low tables, glossy magazines, shining silver ash trays...whisperings and mutterings come from the Other People who are waiting for the King.

A blonde works on a duplicating machine in an open office...clatterthin transparent...underpants, soft flesh... Stalls selling selected jewelry, food, books and so on lean against the outer walls...

In the distance he can make out a runabout. A trail of drunken attendants follows in its wake like a column of ants. It zig-zags over the stone flags knocking down tables and chairs. It's King Trash...in a good mood.

Pulls out a cigar from his inside pocket, snaps a light from

an attendant, disappears through another archway into a different part of the castle. Smell of burnt oil in the air.

The Other People rise and follow, talking loudly now that the chase is on.

Miroslav smiles at everyone who passes him on their way out of the large hall into the dungeons. The King has left an odour behind him ---

---left alone, the sound of voices dying into other regions. He walks briskly to the far side of the hall, meandering for ten minutes through

- tables
- chairs
- old coffee cups
- cigarette ends
- microphone leads
- spare wires
- glossy magazines;

trips of powerful acid over

- cables
- umbrellas
- stiletto shoes
- shopping baskets. He passes the

Visual Aids Office Girl...

Up the Grand Staircase that leads into the roof of the West Tower -- three steps at a time, sword in hand, a proud librarian!

Enters the theatre and occupies every seat. Next to him is always the same beautiful girl of about ten years...

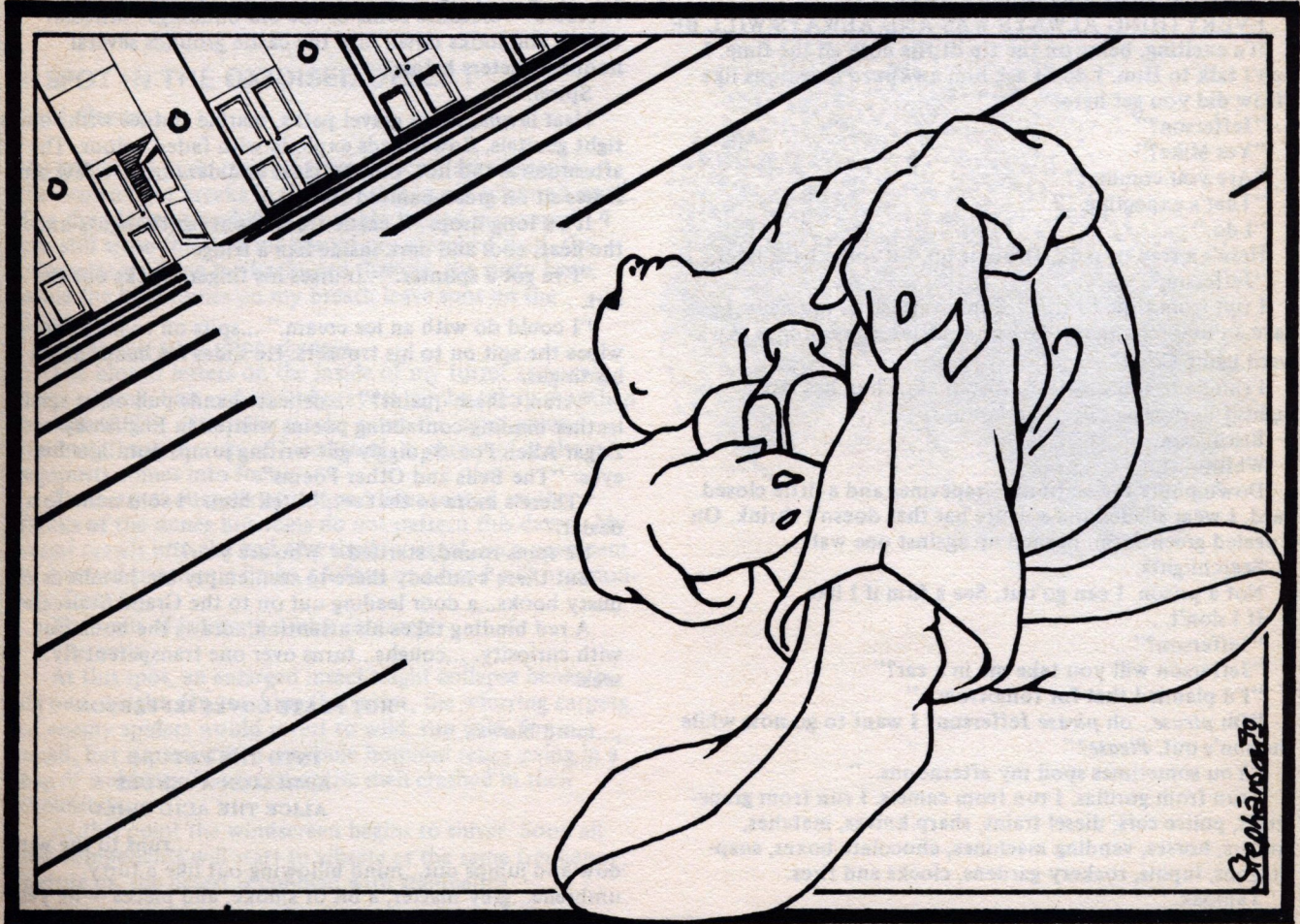
I run from trains. I run into the sun. I'm painted man from the brush of God.

His universe exists without me. In. Out. In. Out. I'm attacked by lions. My sexual parts feel mauled. I'm pulled into His power by His wand.

Bang.

A star for each correct sum.

At the end of term I've got 14 gold ones and 6 green ones and 2 black ones and 8 red ones and 10 little blue ones and 10 little silver ones and 3 big blue ones and 4 big silver ones.





Spoil his afternoons... He's lucky I'm God with good perception. No distortion.

Fix.

Chop.

Mince.

Joins hands with a leading member of the group. He feels he's not on the level of the Other People who throng the dance floor. His mind is somewhere else, in a car crash outside Keele Services on the M6. His pulse quickens. Something tells him to watch out. A young girl walks past dressed in a white silk trouser-suit patterned with pink flowers. There's a clue to his existence...her hair, its style frizzy?...an unusual colour?...On the floor by her feet lies an Embassy cigarette packet. Squashed flat...smells of urine. She easily sees he's attracted...turns round to face him, face caught in the light from a neon strobe attached to the group leader's head. She makes a little bow. Miroslav laughs. Inhales a large amount of air and sings with more power, loses control of his voice. Adrenalin makes his lungs hot, histamine causes his orgasm. She's got a diamond ring which flashes him in the eye. On a far wall he notices a drawing by Odilon Rodon...come suddenly close. He feels there's more space inside his head...detach from his shoulders and leave the group, the club floor far behind in a remote fuzzy area. *It might not exist...his head is severed at the neck, filling up the whole sky, flying in low over the ocean. Fear and pain control his flesh. There is no land at all. He flies toward me.*

Jumps up. Himself reflected in the mirror...sees a hazy outline of his own face. Blurred shadows lend a patchy grained appearance to its roundness...an old newspaper photograph *Swamps and fallen trees. Rocks covered with creeping grasses. Stagnant pools ringed with bracken. Antlers of a deer. a few*

He turns away from the mirror, a swirl of his cloak.

Book cases line the other walls. Tall hand-bound volumes written in greek and latin...the room tapers into a passage lined with books, one solitary window at its end.

Sunlight streams through the diamond-shaped glass panes, lights the grey wood floor — *taut flesh, a pair of tweezers* — bleaches some of the old buildings...Miroslav winces and looks down into the castle grounds several hundred meters below.

Spiral.

Neat lawns, white gravel paths, marble statues with round tight genitals, flower beds explode with faded colour. The afternoon is too hot, the sky clear and dazzling... a few old ladies sit on green-painted forms...

"It's a long drop." ...castle trembles at his thoughts under the heat, cool and dark inside like a fridge.

"I've got a splinter." ...nurses his finger...sucks out the dirt.

"I could do with an ice cream." ...spits on to his palm, wipes the spit on to his trousers. He slides his hands down his thighs.

"Aren't these quaint?" ...delicate hands pull out a small leather binding containing poems written in English by Edgar Allen Poe. Squiggly gilt writing jumps out...hits his eyes: "The Bells and Other Poems".

"There's more to that set," I tell him. "I sold mine to a dealer."

He spins round, startled. "Who are you?"

But there's nobody there to see...empty air, hundreds of dusty books...a door leading out on to the Grand Staircase...

A red binding takes his attention...draws the book out with curiosity. ...coughs...turns over one transparent fly... sees:

"HOT PLATE LOVES JEFFERSON"

...mind blows...

INTO THE FUTURE
A MILLION AVENUES
ALICE THE ACID CHILD

...runs to the window and jumps out...mind billowing out like a furry umbrella...grey matter, a bit of smoke, and pieces --- he yells:

Mr. Smith you're quite funny. You try to put your house out. I run at him with my horns. He's asking: "Why is it? Why is it?" over and over. The fire brigade arrives.

"Darling, darling, be my darling..."

"Help me, somebody help me, yeah..."

EVERYTHING ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE.

It's exciting, being on the tip of His nose all the time. I don't talk to Him. I don't ask him *awkward* questions like "How did you get here?"

"Jefferson?"

"Yes Mike?"

"Are you coming?"

"That's expecting..."

"I do."

Here's a tray of milk. Drink it up. I'll come back later."

"Jefferson?"

I run from time to time. Apply varnish to my nails. I have an umbrella that's dark and rattles. Gravestones. *Awkward* being God.

I run from this creation. And that...Churches late at night. I have my pride. And honour.

Brickwork.

Whitewash.

Down pours the warmth. Grapevines and a little closed yard. I wear shades and a white hat that doesn't shrink. On a peeled green form, pushed up against one wall...

Searchlights.

Not a prison. I can go out. See a film if I like.

If I don't...

"Jefferson?"

"Jefferson will you take me in a car?"

"I'd planned that for tomorrow..."

"Oh *please... oh please* Jefferson? I want to go now while the sun's out. *Please?*"

"You sometimes spoil my afternoons..."

I run from gorillas. I run from camels. I run from grapefruits, police cars, diesel trains, sharp knives, matches, spiders, horses, vending machines, chocolate boxes, snapdragons, lupins, rockery gardens, clocks and fires.

Tampax.

a sharp pain — hits gravel — police are all around, making a ring of blue. Grey matter showers down.

Fluff.

Light images from all over the castle grounds: every plant is a knife. A message from outer space: there's no quasars. No space. No beginning. No end. No God. No man. No atom. There are no directions.

The universe goes on. The drug is on the table where the man left it. The ant crawls. The advert flickers...

The police carry guns and club what's left of the body. They look up at the West Tower window with suspicion and they aim...

FIRE!

But they won't hit me. I'm a ghost. I'm Miroslav. I'm Hot

Plate. I'm them. I'm everything. In out. In out. I'm image, wherever there's matter — resounding. Beyond the flesh.

No scorn or hard feelings when I look down at the policemen packing their guns, two of them carrying away a black box, a sweaty sergeant at their head.

I walk over the red sand. The sun is high and black. Clouds gather on the horizon. Rolling stone giants with squat heads and grasping hands are coming down from the mountains behind the clouds. My clothes are torn and bloodied, dry and dusty hot. No more sweat. No water. I walk for hours, thinking of a way to get out of the desert into the hills. I can't make it by walking...●

A SPOT IN THE OXIDISED DESERT

Paul Green

My armoured brain reverses through sepia dreamscapes; the brown light breaks in through slits in my blistered mask. The shuddering gearshift is probably locked in reverse — I can still sense the slow motion of my scorched shell, the odometer whirling me backward through the rusty haze, while the blue fumes on my breath leave soot on the dashboard.

In retreat, everything changes.

The blur of letters on the inside of my turret are now cryptograms. Last orders and prayers can be safely mouthed backward. The caterpillar tracks cover the same ground, meshing firmly in ruts of fused sand. A clump of molten signposts comes into focus.

There are thousands of thin red lines scored on the flanks of the dunes but veins do not pattern this desert. My vessel crawls into the bed of a shallow canal, on a pavement of crushed prosthetic limbs. (A foot or a hand still occasionally flickers).

The trails of intricate rubble intercept.

The oasis.

At this spot, an enlarged insect might collapse beneath its own weight. On reaching this point, the whirring carpets of enemy spiders would revert to wild, run wild. From a small, but typical, tilted maypole hominid relics swing in a bag of webbing. The ornithoptric men crashed in their thousands.

At this point the windscreen begins to shiver. Soon all my components will start to vibrate at the same frequency. Before us, the desert is cobbled with stahlhelms.



THE BAIT PRINCIPLE

M. JOHN HARRISON

IN THE BASEMENT were the offices of Hodgson the almoner, two treatment rooms that took the overspill from the security wards, and a small laundry. On Thursdays, the uniforms of the male nurses were washed; during the rest of the week, the clothes of the National Health patients. Each nurse was required to possess three uniforms; to ensure this, Hodgson ran spot checks on their quarters.

The lateral extraction shaft of the laundry served the secondary purpose of carrying warm air to a system of ducts beneath both male and female long-stay wards; this arrangement saved on heating bills during the winter. The idea had earned the congratulations of the Board of Trustees.

Christian Heinecken, wrote Hodgson, was born in Lubeck, in 1721. He was said to have talked fluently within a few hours of his birth. Like *Cardiac the Parisian*, he read Latin and French before his third birthday. Neither of them, however....

It was his thesis, *The Infant Prodigy Related to Transient Social Disequilibria*, with which he hoped to gain an extramural doctorate from the University of Bristol. He stopped writing to listen to the noises from the ventilator shaft. Distastefully, he brushed animal hairs from his working jacket.

A week after Mayer's physical symptoms had receded, he dreamed he was flying. There were three acres of flat smooth turf, bounded by a tall chain-link fence.

He was swooping, varying his altitude between two and thirty feet, occasionally perching on the fence like a small bird gripping the sides of a cage. He was naked, and waddled

at the joints.

After a while, he saw his brothers walking over the turf. He shot over their heads immediately; circled them; did bunts and loops, hoping to attract their attention. They looked up and said: "An unexpected arrival". They told him a few things he already knew. Then they walked, ignoring him, to a turnstile set in the fence. He kept pace.

After 'lights out', he lay listening to the breathing in the next bed. He had to be quite careful. He knew he was turning into a bird.

Jane, the adult prodigy in Long Stay (female), dosed with laragactal that hadn't yet taken effect, was watching speeded-up blue movies flicker across the wall like industrial photomicrographs in a blinker, or a quick voyeuristic sequence of growing vegetables. In two minutes, how many penetrations, how many complicated angles. She sat on her bed to watch, wearing the top half of her pyjamas, which was all they allowed her, swaying in time to her internal plan for beating the largactal and saying: I had this *friend*, I had this *friend*.

The king escaped the hunters and came in unnoticed by her, but all the other patients made a fuss of him.

"I feel that all the patients are turning into cats," Hodgson said. He found that something had worked its way into his mouth as he spoke and lodged beneath his tongue. He spat it out and saw that it was a ball of hair, like an owl's pellet.

Hollis, the RSPCA spokesman, said, "So I'm advising you to use traps. There are several humane models working on the bait principle. If you then turn them over to us,

we'll attempt retraining and perhaps find them good homes. If that doesn't work (which I'm afraid is very likely), we'll dispose of them painlessly.

"We never recommend poison: there's the risk of infection, and the new ones aren't very kind, you know."

While he talked, he made small, involved drawings of the humane devices on a scratchpad. They soon covered it from edge to edge, some of them interlocking.

"If you don't mind, inspector, I have to buy my own note pads," said Hodgson.

Hollis smiled. "Oh dear me. We had a similar situation in Sheffield about a year ago. Shooting them is out of the question here of course. We had about two hundred of them there."

"We try to limit them to the garden. They never get as far as the wards."

From left to right, the other long-stay males were: Gordon Maddock; Michael Polesworth; young Mr Rees; Michael Jeffries, a 'tall, dark-haired, athletic-looking man, much respected by his colleagues'; Mr Redvers Davies.

They were in the lavatories.

"Some boys shook the street lamps, but the vision didn't move."

He put the toothbrush in his wet bag.

"I had the last laugh after all! Hee-hee."

He waved his arms.

"On one night alone there was a crowd of three hundred people outside my house."

The nurses came and gave *him* a treatment.

"In twenty years the students will be manufacturing them in the cellars."

"After I became ill, we found out."

Mayer the bird knew that it was Jeffries he had to watch. It was the way he ate. Maddock was trustworthy.

In therapy, Jane added up numbers again, imagining she was the Theta Queen, hung with copper brooches and periapts. Theta, theta, theta she thought. The quick blue movies were now projected on the doctor's face. His lips shed the locked wet limbs easily, but as he said "Marginal difference" his forehead climaxed, biting its fingers and blurrily waving its legs. Jane calculated some powers and translated the answers into Latin numbers.

She could see out of the window, which revealed a small arc of the gardens. The gardener had watered the rhododendrons, a pink wet tangle, although some of them were white. She saw a drop of water roll off one of the blossoms; followed it down into the secret brown dirt. She fidgeted with her hair ribbon. The hose was out there.

The king came out of the rhododendrons and sat down.

What if the doctor should see him. He would call the gardener, and then she might never get back. She grasped at straws. Leaning forward, she said nicely but loudly:

"I had this *friend*."

The doctor smiled at her, distorting his face-movie. But the gardener was a long way away, and the king yawned and went back into the bushes.

The autistic in the corner of Therapy began to do things to herself.

Hodgson had got into the ventilator shaft without difficulty.

He squirmed along, pushing a small caravan of baited traps in front of him. Meal-coloured dust clung to the sides of the tube and hung in weepy festoons from the brackets and stanchions that braced its junctions. The air was warm and moist. A wisp of steam drifted past him. The traps clattered and jumped over riveted seams. He had passed

four junctions and laid a trap at each. The shaft seemed longer from the inside. He thought he might be underneath Long Stay (male).

Coming to a place from which radiated several shafts of lesser diameter, he got into a sitting position and began to deploy the remaining traps. He noticed that the dust had drifted into peninsulars and vortices, and an image occurred to him.

A tabby female came out of one of the subsidiary shafts. He shouted and struck out, and it bit him.

His head hit the side of the shaft and confused him. The female sniffed the bait, purred, and *rubbed itself against him*. He shouted again, and backed off.

Others appeared. Soon there were hundreds of them.

They surrounded him, ignoring the traps. "Eat the bait, eat the bait," he said. They licked his face and pushed their long unkempt bodies against his cheeks and neck and the backs of his hands. He wept and pushed at them. He hated fur.

He discovered that he had become wedged between some metal struts at the nexus of the two ducts. His coat was covered with smears of wet dust. The way he had come was obscured by steam, but he could see the other end of the main shaft, where it emerged behind the rhododendrons.

Mayer managed to get the bed between them. The huge cat lashed its tail. For a moment, it was stalemate. Might it leap the bed? In a very short while he would remember how to fly and that would be all right.

"Hodgson's unfortunate accident," said Holloran, the temporary almoner, "may well have acted as a trigger. Rumour spreads very quickly in such a closed system." He noticed that only his own blotting paper remained clean. He pretended to test his ballpoint pen on it. The others had fibre-tipped pens and fountain pens.

"This is all very well. But it goes no further toward explaining the patient Mayer's death. The circumstances, for instance."

Halloran looked round the table, from left to right. The Board of Trustees comprised: Norman Bocker; Sir Gilbert Rees; Delfont; Lady Rees; and Gopert, a JP. He knew it was Lady Rees he had to watch. He had studied her over lunch.


"The *press*," said Gopert the JP.

"The circumstances have been exaggerated somewhat." Halloran broke the plastic clip of his pen.

"In fact, there was no question of Mayer being 'eaten'. He had suffered some slight laceration and bruising by Jeffries' fingernails and teeth; but the suggestion that he was 'eaten' is a quite ridiculous assumption on the part of some of the more highly strung male patients.

"Each will share another's fantasy readily, should it lead to some ephemeral bond of mutual sympathy. Nothing more, I assure you."

"Better stop admitting these NH patients for a while, eh?" said Sir Gilbert. "Can't trust the buggers, eh?"

The Theta Queen sat on her bed in her pyjama top, licking at a scab on her buttock. The Roots and Powers would deliver her. She watched the movies from half an eye, sleepily lapped in the warmth of the long-stay ward. She curled up and thought of how the king might finally transform her entirely, and take her down, hung with numerals and mandalas, to his mazy kingdom in the even warmer world below; and how, on a beautiful evening, among the rhododendrons, they might mate with flickering blue speed, so fast that no one need ever know. 

JACK TREVOR STORY

THE WIND IN THE SNOTTYGOBBLE TREE

CONCLUSION

You can catch up on the previous three episodes of this serial by sending 12/- for the last three issues of the magazine to New Worlds; or, read on...

Marchmont led a dull life, working in a travel agency for Mr Parfitt, the manager, and with Miss Bartholomew, his assistant. But he didn't get really bored until he lost his driving licence on a breathalyser charge.

Fed up, he decided to pretend he was someone more important: a secret agent, for instance. He started giving holidaymakers heading for Iron Curtain countries little packages, addressed to previous holidaymakers, but containing nothing but junk: cigarette packets, toilet paper. In his world of let's-pretend, of course, the packages were code messages.

But suddenly, the fantasy came to life. Chief Inspector Marcus of the British secret police wasn't make-believe. Nor would he believe Marchmont's little packages were just a game. Marchmont was rescued, unexpectedly, by Kiki, who worked for Hunchback, the underground magazine; and by Blattner, the suburban Ruislip spy whose only desire was to get out of the spy business, give up laying minefields and return to his landscape gardening business.

At Blattner's home, Marchmont learns that his 'messages' have played a part in an international plot to kill the Pope and replace him with Popey, a mental patient who already believes he is the Pope.

And Marchmont is some kind of hero.

But it's too much for him; he desperately wants to get out of the spy game (where innocent people like Mr Parfitt are beaten up for 'information') and back to real life.

When he gets the chance, he uses Blattner's phone to dial 999, naively hoping he will be rescued....

MARCHMONT WENT BACK INTO THE living room. "Your phone's out of order," he said. "Makes a terrible noise."

Blattner turned quite pale and had to sit down. Not because the phone was out of order (it wasn't), but because Major Marchmont, hero of the revolution, had not recognised the sound of a standard intelligence scrambler.

"I don't mean the scrambler," Marchmont said. *Phew!* he thought. *Christ!* Mind you, it wasn't difficult to see that he'd dropped a rather lethal clanger. Blattner had practically fainted. "A sort of popping."

"Oh, I see. Yes, well," Blattner said, "give their scrambler time to come in and neutralise yours. I don't know what sort they're using in Whitehall at present. They change them all the time."

"Naturally," said Marchmont.

"Naturally," said Blattner.

He became thoughtful again after Marchmont had gone back into the hall. Marchmont knew he would, for even the most expert cover-up doesn't entirely fool nature's own sixth-sense antennas, and when he came back a few minutes later it was with something that might make Blattner trust him again. The point was, Marchmont did not want to get killed. The chances of getting out of that small house alive if he betrayed himself were something fractional to nil.

"Harry says okay," Marchmont said.

He obviously was not going to be able to contact PC Couper or get help. Heaven knew how Mrs Blattner ploned her butcher, but being Ruislip, he thought, the butcher would have a descrambler.

"Thankyou, Major," said Blattner.

Irma said, tentatively, since she was not to be shot: "What will happen to me?"

"Eh?" Marchmont said.

Blattner laughed. "Don't be afraid, Major. What must be must be. Eh, Irma?" and he slapped his wife's lovely Javanese bottom.

This gave Marchmont the penalty. "You have to whip her," he said. He rather thought this would go down well, and it did.

Irma Blattner whooped and hugged her husband in delight. Marchmont watched them hugging and kissing and crying and laughing all at the same time. Then:

"Let's all go up to the bedroom and bring the brandy!" Blattner cried.

"Not me!" Marchmont said. "It's nothing to do with me. I'll go for a stroll," he added hopefully.

The Blattners would not hear of this. Especially Irma Blattner would not hear of it. This was exactly what was required if Blattner was going to get another erection.

"You shall do the honours, my boy," he said, with a jolly laugh.

Gone, you notice, the deference to rank; forgotten the certainty that he would die that night, to hell with leakages and Popes and significant, perhaps, that he had no difficulty in finding a whip in the sideboard cupboard. Mr Blattner liked the idea of Irma's punishment which suddenly seemed quite sufficient and appropriate for endangering the fate of the civilised world.

Irma liked the idea of the punishment and especially the thought of this new young hero administering it.

Marchmont did not like the idea at all.

"Tie her on the mattress face downward," Blattner said when he had stripped his wife to her magnificent bone-structure, "and get cracking."

The whole thing blurs a little here in Marchmont's telling, but apparently he felt only disgust and loathing as he laid the whip in great lashes across Irma's back until suddenly Blattner was leaping upon her in triumph.

Marchmont, apparently, got out quickly but overheard Irma's voice gasping "Is that you, Fritzie?"

Marchmont says she sounded both shocked and astonished. It was likely, he reasoned, to take Blattner a couple of hours to fulfil himself and this would give Marchmont time to escape.

That was not to be.

6 IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DEEP PURPLE EVENINGS that you get in Ruislip. A chap in braces had just finished his grass cutting and was wondering whether to drag the mower all round the side of the house, clean it and put it away or leave the bloody thing where it was till the morning and cut along for a drink before the pubs shut.

"I say. Excuse me," Marchmont panted as he trotted up to the garden gate. "Mind if I use your phone?"

On the other hand, the chap thought, you leave grass mowings stuck on a mower and the next thing you're not cleaning your shoes and soon after that you're finished.

"Twenty-two people have been murdered and I want to ring the police," Marchmont told him.

Oh hell, might as well put the thing up and brush the worst of it off, the chap thought.

Marchmont trotted alongside the chap with the mower and pleaded to use the telephone but he was neither seen nor heard.

"Yoo hoo!"

The girl at the gate had a familiar shape that Marchmont could not identify until he got closer and she gushed on, joyously:

"It's himself, isn't it? You remember me. Molly Ryan?"

"Molly!" Marchmont exclaimed. "Am I glad to see you."

"Give us a kiss, then," said Molly. "It's mutual."

And when he'd kissed her, discovering that she smelled and tasted the same, she said:

"How's the espionage business? Have you booked any good reds, lately?"

"I want to tell you about that," Marchmont said.

"Where can we go that's quiet?"

"I've got to take you to Ingrid's," Molly said.

Marchmont was appalled. "You're not mixed up with these killers, are you?"

"Of course not," Molly told him, fervently. "I'm on your side. We're trying to wipe them out. That's why we're kidnapping the Pope — you heard what they did in Belfast? I've just got back and heard the news."

"What news?" Marchmont asked her.

"Your news — Major! You're a hero now. Well I knew you would be. I put in a good report."

Now he saw it. All that love, all that warm Irish philosophy, all that compassion about his driving disqualification — she had been spying on him all the time. The whole sinister plot had been spun around him long before he knew; there had been no real need to pretend to swallow pieces of toilet paper. Molly Ryan was one of Them.

"Just a minute, sir! I say. Excuse me! Can I use your phone?"

The gent with the lawn mower was now putting his jacket on as he hurried out of the garden. Marchmont had a suspicion that if he had not stepped quickly aside he would have been walked through.

"Ingrid's got a phone," Molly told him. "Let me hold your arm."

They walked together up Ruislip High Street.

"I thought you were still in prison," Marchmont said.

Molly Ryan laughed. "That was just a front. Colonel Hughes is master of our chapel — he was chairman of the magistrates, if you remember."

"Hughes? That's the magistrate who banned me from driving!" Surely his involvement didn't go as far back as that?

"You have to get as many people as you can on Shank's pony," Molly laughed. "You can't touch people in cars."

She was right, of course. None of this would have happened to the old seventy-miles-an-hour Marchmont. When did he get his licence back? Two months? He could drive away. He would jump in and drive straight up to Cape Wrath.

"Let's cut through here," the Irish girl suggested.

She led Marchmont into the recreation gardens.

Marchmont began to feel trapped. He didn't want to go to Ingrid's. He started thinking of ways to kill Molly Ryan and escape back to St Albans, link up with Miss Bartholomew and get Arthur to drive them away in his Land Rover. Mr Parfitt and P.C. Couper could also be relied upon. Marchmont's world had narrowed to four people he might be able to rely on. Molly Ryan was not one of them.

"Sit down here widger," said the Irish girl now.

She was manipulating Marchmont to a bench seat under a laburnum tree; a street light cast long rays through the gay yellow tails. She had not volunteered to fetch Marchmont for only party reasons; she had a big favour to ask him.

"Take me with you to see the Pope," she said.

Marchmont said: "I'm not going to see the Pope."

"Yes you are. You've been chosen. That's why Rapollo is waiting to brief you. Please take me widger, Marchy. It's

an Irish girl's dying wish."

"You're not dying," Marchmont told her, eager to grab at anything that would release him from further involvement. Besides, if they swapped popes (which seemed to him highly unlikely) the new Pope would be happy to go visiting everybody, door to door.

"Considering what I did," she said, not bitterly but something like it though sadder, "I never get any decent privileges."

"What did you do?" Marchmont asked her.

She said: "I'm the IBM girl."

"Oh?" Hands up who knows the IBM girl.

"But for me there wouldn't be any Operation Vatican."

"Quite," said Marchmont. It occurred to him that if he humoured this girl sufficiently she might allow him to escape.

Molly detected his increasing sympathy and was warming up, as one does when one finds somebody ready to listen to grumbles.

"Whatever they said about Fuchs —"

"Who?"

"Fuchs the spy. It wasn't him; it was the IBM which gave the H bomb to Russia."

"I didn't realise that," Marchmont said.

"I was a temp at the time," she said.

"Ah," said Marchmont.

She said, proudly: "My first ribbon is framed and hanging on the wall in the Kremlin."

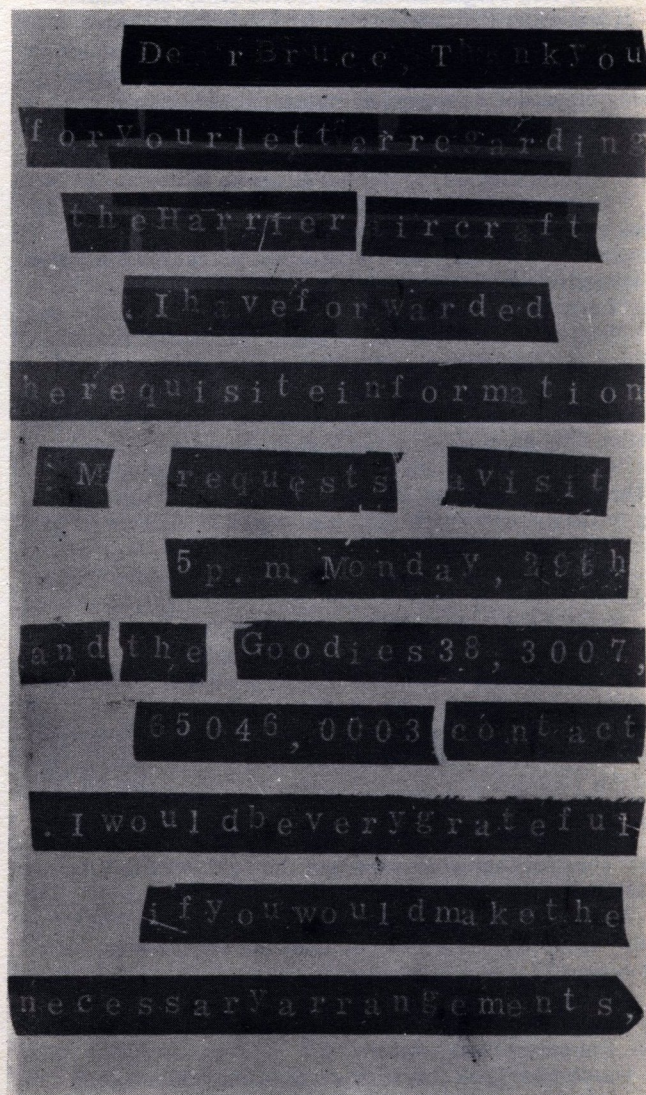
"Great," said Marchmont. "You mean your medal ribbon?"

"My IBM ribbon," said Molly Ryan. "Up until then everybody used Underwoods."

"I remember," said Marchmont. "How's he getting on?"

"Who?"

"Underwood — or are you talking about the poem?"



Dylan Thomson, wasn't it?"

Molly Ryan, Irish girl spy, now fell silent very much as Blattner had fallen silent after Marchmont's faux pas about the scrambler.

"No, Thomas, that's it," said Marchmont, but fruitlessly detecting the wrong slip: "Dylan Thomas, that's it. Underwood Milk. No, wait a minute. That's not right either. Or was it Remington?"

He'd got there, but too late.

Molly Ryan said: "You don't know anything about IBM, do you, Marchy? Don't worry, I won't say anything."

"Ta," Marchmont said, gratefully.

"Though I should shoot you, really," she added, paving the way for returned favours.

"I'll get you an audience with the Pope," Marchmont promised. "What's the IBM?"

"It's a typewriter. A modern electric typewriter. International Business Machines. They use carbon ribbons."

"Now I've got you," Marchmont said. He hadn't really got anything yet.

"I was working at Eagle Whitney in Portman Square at the time," Molly Ryan the republican girl spy began. "I was temping for SOS — a week here and a week there. Temporary secretary that is. The money's good except when you're sent to visiting Americans. There's some things worth more than thirteen shillings an hour. Do you mind if we walk across the park? I don't trust these bushes."

Together they walked across the park by the light of the yankee moon. Two ordinary young people who had both met their marbles during the ordinary course of their work.

"Whitney's security was supposed to be one hundred per cent spy proof," Molly Ryan told him.

She had had to fill in forms applying for permission to fill in forms to apply for the temporary post with the aeroplane company.

"They had burglar alarms on the tea urns," she said.

It was water-tight security with one glaring leakage which shone like a hole in an iron curtain from Abingdon to Yacutan; a free top-security information disposal system in many industrial, commercial, ministerial and scientific establishments, wherever IBM electric typewriters were used. It was just waiting for an Irish girl with a great sense of the Irish-ridiculous to put her finger on it.

"All the top-level confidential correspondence was under lock and key, scrap paper went into an exterminating machine — but every word written inside that building went was available to the first dustman that called."

"I met them," Marchmont said.

"Well I started the service myself," said Molly, proudly. "For I saw that all the used carbon ribbons were chucked free gratis into the waste-basket."

Marchmont said: "You can't read anything on typewriter ribbons."

"On carbon ribbons you can," Molly Ryan told him.

"They only go through the machine once. Hold the ribbon up to the light and there it all is in stencil — including the typist's letters to her boyfriend."

"You should have written to your MP," Marchmont told her.

"I did, I did," Molly Ryan said. "And here I am. Now tell me how you got recruited, Major Marchmont."

"You know how it started. Losing my licence. Chewing toilet paper on buses — you were there."

Molly said: "Honest to God, I thought that was just a clever front. Still look at us now — here we are doing a useful job."

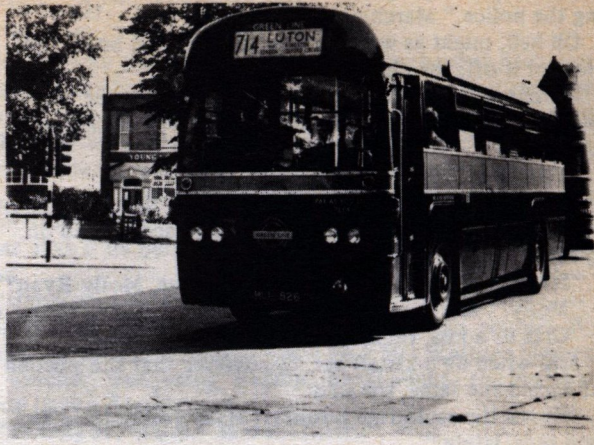
Marchmont said: "I'd rather be home in bed."

"And I'll join you again," said Molly Ryan. "But not yet. Time for that when we've got the right Pope in the Vatican."

Marchmont stopped walking, put his arms round her, held her closely: "They can do that. Let's go back to St Albans."

She caught something of his mood but wouldn't at first let him kiss her. "Sure you're testing me Major. It's not fair. I'm only a weak woman."

Marchmont took this as an encouraging reminder and



laid her on the grass in the dark.

"If I come with you will you marry me?" she murmured soon.

"I will, I will," said Marchmont, recklessly. He had said it many times before in similar circumstances.

"I'd feel safer if I changed me name," she explained.

Marchmont said: "We'll emigrate to Australia and start a family."

"Holy Mother!" Molly Ryan gasped. "I think we've just started one!"

In the sweet aftermath, lying on her back with the scent of honeysuckle in her nose and the stars far above her, Molly spotted the tail of a kite hanging not twenty feet above them and knew that they had been cleverly bugged.

"Will you stay here a minute, darling," she whispered, "while I go into the bushes."

Marchmont lit a cigarette and presently heard a muffled shout and a scream. His first instinct was to run away. If Molly had been murdered it was too bad, but at least he could make a dash for freedom. As he got up off the grass, however, Molly came back dragging a small boy by the heels.

"What happened?" Marchmont asked her.

"Little swine," Molly said. She was upset and short of breath, for she had just murdered the boy with a cheese wire. "He was listening in to our whole conversation — flying his kite just above our heads as we walked. There's a microphone in the tail."

"But he's just a child!"

"He's a midget," Molly Ryan told him. "Help me bury him in the sandpit. God knows who he's relayed his information to, but we'd better hurry back to Rapollo before we're put on the wanted list."

Helping her to bury the midget in the kiddies' playpit, Marchmont realised that Molly Ryan was beyond rescue; that she was already a marble.

"Who knows — perhaps we shall have a little boy," Molly Ryan said, mistily, as they left the park and headed for Ingrid's and the spy-in.

How long, gentle reader, before Marchmont himself turns into marble? Thank heavens he's still fighting against it.

"I must find a telephone," he told her as they crossed Ruislip High Street.

"There'll be one at Ingrid's. I'll take you on the bus," Molly Ryan told him. And she said: "Did you hear that Hailie Selassie and Spike Milligan are one and the same person?"

"Rubbish."

"But is it rubbish?" Molly chattered away, clinging to his arm as they came up to the Green Line coach stop. "You think about it. You never see them together in public."

The bus came up quite promptly as though waiting just round the corner for them to appear; they got on.

"Ingrid's," Molly Ryan told the driver.

Ingrid's? Marchmont thought.

He looked around the long coach as they took their seats in the smoking section at the rear. The bus was filled with a variety of passengers and, he suddenly realised with some disquiet, they were all made of plastic. Marchmont blew

smoke and narrowed his eyes to peer through it. After all, it was the life he had wanted. On a sudden impulse he leaned forward and pressed the glowing end of his cigarette behind the ear of a fat, pink man sitting in front of him who sizzled for a moment and then blew up with a loud *bang!*

"Oh!" cried Molly.

The driver looked round at them, briefly.

"He was listening to us," Marchmont told her.

The Irish Republican girl said, warmly: "You're very brave!"

Marchmont smiled, coolly.

The strange thing was that he felt it had been a brave thing to do. Burning policemen and strangling little boys with cheese wire did not seem too bad now. Whipping Irma, in retrospect, seemed quite enjoyable and he began to look forward to whatever it was they were going to do to the Pope.

CHAPTER SIX

1.

PROTINUS AERII MELLIS CAELESTIA DONA" said Popey, a little whoozily after four whiskey-macs.

"Isn't he lovely?" Molly Ryan said to Marchmont as they danced past where he lay on the floor, holding his belly and looking up the girls' skirts.

"Give us the dope, Pope," cried Ingrid (which was typical).

"Exsequar," quoth the ecclesiastic ringer, obediently.

"Hanc etiam, Maecenas, aspice partem..."

"Pass de winegar, Em," requested Cyril Krager, the recently liberated Rhodesian spy to his recently liberated wife, dipping his winkle in the salt and then sucking his fingers with relish.

"Heah come dat Joe," his wife murmured. "Keep yo wits about yo man!"

Joe the Cuban walked springily along the far wall of the parlour to guard his back; he was holding a bag of ripe peaches and looking for a chance to get Ingrid on her own and learn more about the switching of the Pope.

It was a party like other parties, yet Marchmont, dancing with Molly, felt uneasy; as if, perhaps, there was cyanide gas in the balloons. (There was.)

"Where's Rapollo?" he asked now.

But it was not as simple as that.

"First put this on," Molly told him. It was a green paper hat in the shape of a cockerel taken from a cracker with real feathers in its tail. "Now join the queue at the bottom of the stairs playing Postman's Knock."

With two neat cha-cha steps and a reverse she guided him out of the room. A number of young people, some in service uniform, were sprawled around the hall engaged in each other.

"Keep kissing me," Molly instructed.

They took third place up the stairs under a dim blue light from a Chinese lantern.

"Next!" cried a woman from somewhere in the darkness above.

A young USAF officer excused himself and went up the stairs on all fours.

"Who's up there?" Marchmont asked Molly.

"Nobody knows," she said. "That's the fun of it."

This time from some dark room above a man's voice called: "One more time!"

A middle-aged woman passing with a tray of drinks swerved quickly and went up the stairs.

"Take these, Major," she said to Marchmont, handing him the tray.

And in that brief moment, helpless with the tray of rattling glasses in his hands and with Molly lying across his knees, Marchmont was shocked to realise that he recognised the painted smile lit by the blue light — it was his landlady, Mrs Pierce.

Next moment the hem of the skirt was brushing his face as she vanished into the darkness above with a light mocking laugh.

What was she doing in Pinner?

Marchmont wanted to run. As though sensing this the Irish girl, her head hidden by the tray, began progressing him into the spirit of the party. It was from such a party as Ingrid's Mix-In that recently a young homesick flyer ran willy-nilly to steal a bomber and fly to his death in the belief that he was heading for Omaha.

"Next, please!" came a shout from above in what could have been a male or female voice.

Marchmont tipped back his head with the feathers on it and crowed, loudly: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

He didn't know why he did it, or how he knew the call was for him. Marchmont, walking up the stairs, no longer had control of his own actions. Marchmont had turned into one of his own marbles.

2.

RAPOLLO, MASTER-SPY, SAT LISTENING intently to morse code and taking it down as Marchmont came into the room. The piping sound of the radio-morse had brought him into this room rather than into any of the others where more frivolous things seemed to be happening.

"With you in a minute darling," Rapollo told Marchmont during a slight break in transmission.

Darling? Marchmont thought.

Still, it gave him a chance to study the international celebrity, who looked, now Marchmont could see him in a better light, like Liberace the American pianist/entertainer. In order to accommodate the radio-headphones he had taken off the wig which had made him look like Mrs Pierce.

"Okay," Rapollo now said, swinging round on a kind of cream-cheese box he was sitting on. "Message ends!"

And to Marchmont's astonishment he took off the headphones and switched off a record player. The morse code was coming from a 33 rpm LP.

"Honey," he said to Marchmont. First of all I want you to know that I'm never going to forget what you've done for me."

"That's okay," Marchmont said, unconsciously adopting a reflection of the master-mind's American accent.

"Oh gee, I love that!" cried Rapollo. He got up and kissed Marchmont on the mouth. "That British cool! Man, they'll never take that away from you. Have a cigar?"

Marchmont accepted a cigar and then watched Rapollo slop half a tumbler of rye whiskey for each of them.

"Okay? Okay then. Right. First of all — any questions?"

Marchmont's head was full of questions. Which one should he ask first? Am I awake? Am I sane? Is this really happening? When is a Pope not a Pope?

"What happened to Carroway?" was what he asked.

Rapollo gazed at him, fondly. "I like to hear that. Your first thought is for your own cell. He was eaten by sharks off Dubrovnik. Oh, don't worry, he didn't suffer. They cut him up first. Well, that's how it crumbles. But for that we shouldn't have got Mapplebeck and but for that I wouldn't be here talking to you. Ask me something else."

"What's the time?" Marchmont asked the master spy.

It seemed a safer kind of question.

3.

WHAT'S THE TIME?" INSPECTOR MARCUS asked, though he knew what it was. Sergeant Jock McCready gave it to him anyway.

It was five minutes past eleven p.m. by Nutting Park police station clock. Marcus, helped by a bunch of admiring young constables and the duty sergeant, Jock, was happily doing his thing: that is, brutalising suspects in an effort to make them tell him what they knew. They didn't know anything. This only made their suffering worse. One man whose head had been kicked in by willing police boots lay unconscious or dead in a nearby cell, an elderly woman had her arm broken and was sagging in a corner, half-supported by a woman police constable while two more people were being subjected to what is known in the force as the cakewalk treatment. While their feet were imprisoned under the constables' boots, their bodies were pushed to and fro and from side to side, back to front by a

circle of about twelve policemen; Inspector Marcus started this going again with a brief nod.

"You'd better talk," he said. "Marchmont has cracked. I know you're his cell. Who's Arnold Bennett?" he took a step forward and cracked his fist on a young woman school teacher's face: "Who's Arnold Bennett?"

"He's an author!" she cried. "He's dead!"

"Make a note of that, Jock," Marcus told the Scottie sergeant. "We're getting somewhere at last. Now then — all right, stop pushing her a minute. Now then, Miss — who killed him? Was it Marchmont? Or Blattner?"

"He just died. He was old —"

Inspector Marcus punched her in the stomach. As she jackknifed with pain the young constables resumed the cakewalk, crushing her tiny feet and shoving her around like a ball round a skittle-pole.

"You rotters!" cried the elderly lady with the broken arm.

The young policewoman, Ruth Beige, jabbed her coned fingers into the old lady's kidneys. The victims' names I have forgotten but you'll find them in Marchmont's log book; & their ownership of his old car was all that they had in common. The name Arnold Bennett had been found written in the school teacher's notebook and Marcus had shrewdly guessed it to be the name of one of the higher echelon agents who had recently been murdered.

"Who's the vicar?" Chief Detective Inspector Marcus suddenly snapped at one of the old car's first owners.

"Sir. Sir — jeest a meenit!" Jock the sergeant interrupted. "I think the wee mannie in number two is dead."

Marcus cursed. He thought he had detected a flicker of something at mention of the vicar. "Well you know what to do. Get the surgeon to attend the poor man. Be sure you're all agreed how he tripped and fell and knocked his head against the wall—"

"The door, sir. It was the door — five of the men happened to see it and old Uppers is rehearsing them now."

Behind them Inspector Uppingham, affectionately known as Old Uppers, or Uppers of Nutters, as Nutting Park was sometimes referred to, was even now measuring the relevant

distances in his short-arsed waddle between the detention room and cell corridor where so much happened in the life of a busy police station in the unwitnessed hours of the night.

"What vicar?" asked the subject.

Marcus was stumped. He didn't know what vicar. In three neat swoops, at Trade Winds Travel Agency, at the house in King Harry Lane and at Marchmont's, he had almost uncovered some tremendous issue on which depended the fate of the civilised world again — almost...

What had gone wrong? Marchmont was still alive, Blattner was laughing at him and Rapollo himself was reported to have landed at Northolt two hours ago. That meant that Runecrap was at last making a diabolical bid for world power.

How? And when?

Too late Marcus realised that he had let the wrong man go free. The little old clergyman, the insane vicar who thought he was the Pope.

4.

PINGUIBUS A STABULUS, MEROPESQUE, *aliaque volucres*, Popey thought to himself, happily, tucked up for the night in Joanna Southcott's cream cheese box at Ingrid's villa at Pinner.

Tomorrow he was to be the one and only Pope and they were calling him early.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1.

HOLY OVATION, TUMULTUOUS APPLAUSE, screaming, hysterical approbation and inspired adulation poured continuously and unchecked from the loudspeakers mounted on either side of the Pope's Rolls. It was a tape recording taken from some old Mussolini clambake of the Fascisti era. The only attempt to welcome the Pope to England with a live reception was intended to happen at Chiswick Flyover on the way from



London Airport where a huge, flapping, motorway-wide banner screamed in bright dayglow green on yellow:

POPE FUCK OFF!

But nobody had bothered to turn up to give it status.

To get the World Council of Churches to meet at Ayot St Peter, home and prime palace of Scientology, the Scientologists had neither bowed, scraped nor prayed, but just paid some money. There is only one God richer than the Scientologists' God and that is the Pope's God.

What they had this weekend at Ayot St Peter was a religious summit. On the agenda: *How religion can improve the state of the world and still show a profit.*

The Pope was switched halfway through, in the following wise without anybody noticing:

"Here he comes," Marchmont said.

It was a pure white marble lavatory with the bog itself raised on a pedestal. The metal plate to earth the Pope's feet while his piss connected him to the charged water in the pan had had in the end to be made of silver to allay suspicion. Marchmont, Rapollo and Popey stood in the huge bath in an alcove covered with a curtain.

"You all set, Popey?" asked Rapollo.

"*Quis deus hanc, Musae, quist nobis extudit artem?*" said Popey. (What God, oh Muses, was he who forged for us this device?)

"Stop babbling and put your skull cap straight, March-Marchmont said.

Marchmont had really got into the spirit of the thing now and couldn't remember much about the bank or the fish-and-ship shop or Trade Winds Travel.

He remembered nothing at all about Miss Bartholomew.

The Pope came in, shut the door and breathed a great sigh of relief. "All that crap!" he said to himself.

Marchmont and Rapollo looked at each other, thinking at first that the Pope had spoken in Latin. They remained waiting for the splash and then the death cry but it did not come and they peeped around the corner, drawing the curtain back.

The Pope was relieving himself by first of all scratching his arse and then taking off his skull cap and scratching his head. For anyone always in the public eye it seemed a reasonable thing to be doing: particularly as he had just delivered a two-hour speech to the assembly and blessed quite a lot of people from the neighbourhood who had paid ten guineas each.

He now went to stand on the silver plate but did not pee straight away; he scratched his balls for a full minute. The suspense behind the curtain was becoming unbearable. At long last the Pope started pissing. Instantly he yelled out and jumped high in the air, clutching his penis.

"Fock!" he shouted.

Then to the surprise of those behind the curtain he tried again — again he jumped back, yelling with pain and clutching himself. This time his skull cap fell off and Rapollo, who had not seen him without the cap when he first removed it to scratch his head, now exclaimed in sheer astonishment:

"Lucky!"

The Pope swung round, still holding his penis in anguish.

"Lucky Luciano!" cried Rapollo.

Marchmont said: "That's not Lucky Luciano — that's the Pope!"

The Pope glared at Rapollo. "Why don't you keep your fat steaming mouth shut. I'm the Pope."

"You're not the Pope," said Popey, who had been listening to all this in some distress. "I'm the Pope."

"Okay, for fock's sake, you're the Pope," said the real Pope, in great pain. "I just got myself a dose. What is it when you try to piss and it hurts like an electric shock? Syphilis or gonorrhoea?" He thumped his brow, remembering: "Fock! That stinking Sister Maria-Lascelles! Mind you, I can't blame her. They have to succour some very low-type cats."

"Listen!" said Rapollo. "I thought you were dead."

"Good. I thought you was in prison." He looked round at Marchmont and Popey. "Look, Giulio, who are these

guys? We gonna have to bump them off? For ten years I been the Pope now you do this to me and I got clap from a nun all the same time and there's bums out there waiting for another speech —"

Rapollo said: "You mean you switched Popes?"

The Pope (Lucky Luciano) said: "We ain't gonna stop just because our case man is stupid enough to get caught. Sure we switched Popes. I *am* the Pope."

"You're not the real Pope," said Popey. "How long have you been the Pope? Ten years? I've been the Pope all my life. Listen: *Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram!*"

"Huh?" said the Pope.

Rapollo explained: "We came to switch Popes for Rune-crap."

"Oh yeah? Did they brainwash you in jail or somep'n? You knew the Mafia was taking over the Vatican."

Rapollo said: "I thought it all fell through, honey. Ciano was going to be Pope."

"Ciano is in the Kremlin," said the Pope.

"Then who the hell is in Washington?" asked Rapollo.

The Pope said: "We should need somebody in Washington with Nixon in. And it wasn't easy, believe me — nobody likes rubbing out the good guys." He had another little tentative pee by pinching his foreskin and letting it through very gradually — but still he jumped back and this time because sparks flew off the end of his penis. "Holy mother!" he cried. "Whee-ooow! What a sister!" Then he spread his hands in supplication to a higher authority: "How does the Pope get treated for a social disease without causing gossip?"

"Okay," Rapollo told Marchmont. "Switch it off."

They explained to the Pope what was causing the pain. In view of what he thought it was his relief was touching to see.

Rapollo said, bitterly: "Anyone else it would have killed — Lucky!"

Marchmont said: "Does this mean it's all off?"

Popey said, plaintively: "Aren't I going to be the Pope any more?"

"Not so fast," said the Pope, who was fed up to *there* with being the Pope.

And that is how, albeit not entirely according to plan, it was accomplished.

2.

mOLLY RYAN, WAITING OUTSIDE IN THE car, couldn't understand how he could just walk out like that. Her Catholic Irishness, sometimes missing in her dialogue as you may have noticed, came back in full flood as she harangued the ex-Pope on the rear seat of Rapollo's Humber.

"Sure, when you stop being the Pope you go to heaven. Anywhere else after the Vatican would be an anti-climax. Go back, Father. Do I still call you Father?"

"Depends how things develop," said the ex-Pope, who was beginning to fancy her. "Maybe you could help me with my trattoria."

With freedom suddenly thrust upon him, Lucky Luciano had a million possible plans for the future, all of them simple, all of them to do with spaghetti and sex in the Italian fashion.

"Holy Mother," Molly cried excitedly. "Jest wait till I tell 'em I'm shackled up with the Pope!"

Everybody shouted with laughter and Marchmont felt intense relief; it seemed to him that he too was free again. Free and with more money than he'd ever had in his life, if the sewing machine really worked.

"Do you mind dropping me off at Bignell's Corner?"

Marchmont asked Rapollo, just to see if it was possible.

"Sure, honey," the agent said. And, conversationally: "You going straight into another assignment?"

Marchmont said: "Not if I can help it. What about you?"

"Ah ah. Back to the band. That's me."

The band? Marchmont thought.

Molly Ryan explained from behind them: Rapollo is a famous bass player. He's with the Rockentimer."

Click! Click! went Major Marchmont, much too late. Of course Rapollo was with the Rockentimer. Rapollo was not only Mrs Pierce, he was also that bass player. He was probably many other things.

Rapollo was smiling at him as if reading his thoughts. "And you're that chap in Trade Winds Travel, aren't you? And at the jazz club with Patsy?"

In other words, Marchmont now saw, everybody was many other things.

"The sky blue deep,
The waves that keep
On turning.
The moonlight and then,
The morning born again..."

Rapollo was singing as though to associate himself with his other job.

"I'm sure glad I ain't got clap," the Pope said, fervently. And 'Amen' murmured Molly Ryan.

It was a happy, non-marble moment. Marchmont found himself smiling idiotically at nothing. Unless it was the thought of seeing Miss Bartholomew again.

3. **'S**CUSE ME" MISS BARTHOLOMEW SAID, lifting her long legs over him to go and dance with somebody who had just called 'Patsy!' across the room.

"Wait for me," Marchmont told her. "You're going to dance with me."

"I'm already spoken for!"

"You don't want to dance with girls," Marchmont told her. "Get yourself a bad name."

She laughed. He was making her laugh again.

"So where's Arthur tonight?"

"You may well ask! You and your spy games. He can't walk. He'll never walk again. He's a paraplegic."

"I thought he was a Liberal," Marchmont said.

She said: "Mr Parfitt's got to spend the rest of his life on crutches."

"Oh yes — whose?" cracked Marchy.

And she was soon laughing again as they danced to the Rockentimer Fellowship Band. Behind his string bass, his spider fingers slapping and crawling the beat, Giulio Rapollo the jazzman, master spy, landlady, smiled his approval.

In the marbled existence of the everyday tabloid world only the innocent are crucified. Marchy and Patsy would dance on, he with a new car, she with a new nose, to love and marriage and the happy endings of a package future; to the mewings and mouthings and biological stains and the pitter-patter of little club feet.

4. **I**SUGGEST TO YOU THAT THIS IS ALL A FIGMENT, Mr Parfitt," the police solicitor said. He switched on a little endearing, piglike smile, to show the magistrate, Colonel Hughes, that even though the defendant was accusing the police of beating him up and breaking his ankle and stripping his assistant and locking him in a cell, throwing water over him and telling him to kill his bloody self, he and the police bore him no ill will. That they were in fact used to such accusations from members of the public who had been caught out in some misdemeanor like obstructing an officer in the execution of his duty.

"A figment?" said Mr Parfitt.

"That the incident is a figment, that the policemen you mention are figments, and even the place where it happened is a figment —" And to the magistrate he said: "One constable called at the travel agency to return the log book that had been found, your worship. That's all it was. There was no beating or stripping or getting dragged off to the police station. It was just a simple routine inquiry —"

"My ankle's broken!" cried Mr Parfitt. He couldn't stand up, even with crutches; a policeman had wheeled him in in an invalid chair. "One leg's shorter than the other!"

"Quiet, please!" the clerk called.

The solicitor had frowned momentarily at this interruption, but then went on as though it had helped to prove a point about the defendant's mental stability.

"These bullying police officers he mentions are pure fantasy, your worship."

"I should hope so, Mr Hale," said Colonel Hughes.

Mr Hale consulted his notes, deciphering the strange names with some difficulty. "There is no Inspector Marcus

or Inspector Uppingham or nasty little Scotch terrier of a sergeant called Jock. No W.P.C. Ruth Beige, no Frankenstein's monster of a constable who rips young ladies' clothes off —"

"And what's *his* name?" asked the magistrate, curiously.

"Police Constable Jimmy Williams," said the solicitor.

"Though there is no such policeman — in fact there is no such police station as Nutting Park! This is pure fiction, your worship."

"You make life sound very dull, Richard," said Colonel Hughes.

It was true that after Mr Parfitt's emotional testimony in which he had recalled his terrifying claustrophobia while locked in the police station cell, the solicitor's statement of the true facts came as an anti-climax. Gone the purple thunder of the ravishing Tontons Macoute and in its place — tedium.

Richard Hale, thumbs in waistcoat, fat face thrown back, stood in court like a little pig who, caught up in the cannibalistic rituals of the night had now been dressed in pin-stripes and sent to prove that it was not the fairies but merely the weather that turned the milk sour.

5. **P**OPE TO CANONISE FORTY NEW SAINTS. Marchmont, sitting at breakfast one bright morning in the Tudor-style semi-detached house up by the *King Harry* was briefly troubled by this news headline but couldn't think why. He had been briefly troubled by a number of obscure things since Mr Parfitt had gone to prison and he had taken over the managership of Trade Winds Travel.

Marchmont had been briefly troubled by the name of the landlord of the *King Harry* which was now his local.

Alfred and Mildred Marcus, licensed to sell tobacco wines and spirits was written above the lintel of the door.

He was a retired policeman, apparently, and a pleasant enough type so long as you didn't drink too much, patted his alsatian and got out smartly at closing time. And one Sunday afternoon while driving Patsy and the kids over to Amersham to see Uncle Arthur in the Home for Incurables, Marchmont had been briefly troubled when he stopped to buy some plants for his garden at a small nursery in Ruislip.

"Snottygobble Tree? What's a Snottygobble Tree?" he had inquired.

"It's only our name for it, sir," said old Blattner. "It's really a species of Yew."



"Me?" Marchmont exclaimed.

"Grow it over your refuse, give it plenty of humous and an occasional dressing of dry blood," old Blattner said.

"They say these little slimy berries are poisonous, but in fact if you don't eat them they're good for you."

"Ugh!" Patsy exclaimed. She had squashed a Snotty-gobble berry and was looking for something to wipe her hands on. "I've got it all on my fingers!"

"Mostly they grow in graveyards," said old Blattner. "They like that."

Marchmont had taken instead a potted chrysanthemum.

Another thing which had briefly troubled Marchmont was finding an old magazine called *Hunchback* among the rafters in the loft. The thing that had particularly alarmed him was a letter to a reader which had a strangely urgent though lunatic sound about it:

Dear Panic,

Do nothing hasty. Get the cat to taste the milk first and check all news bulletins with the BBC direct. You are safe with your doctor as long as you visit him in pairs. If it rains try to use a litmus paper on it before going out; if it's foggy take a gas mask. Examine your

children's homework for coded instructions and try to hide all sharp implements except at meal times. In these and other small ways you can obtain some measure of domestic security and live a reasonably happy life.
IMPORTANT: Wash all fruit!

Signed:

(Editor)

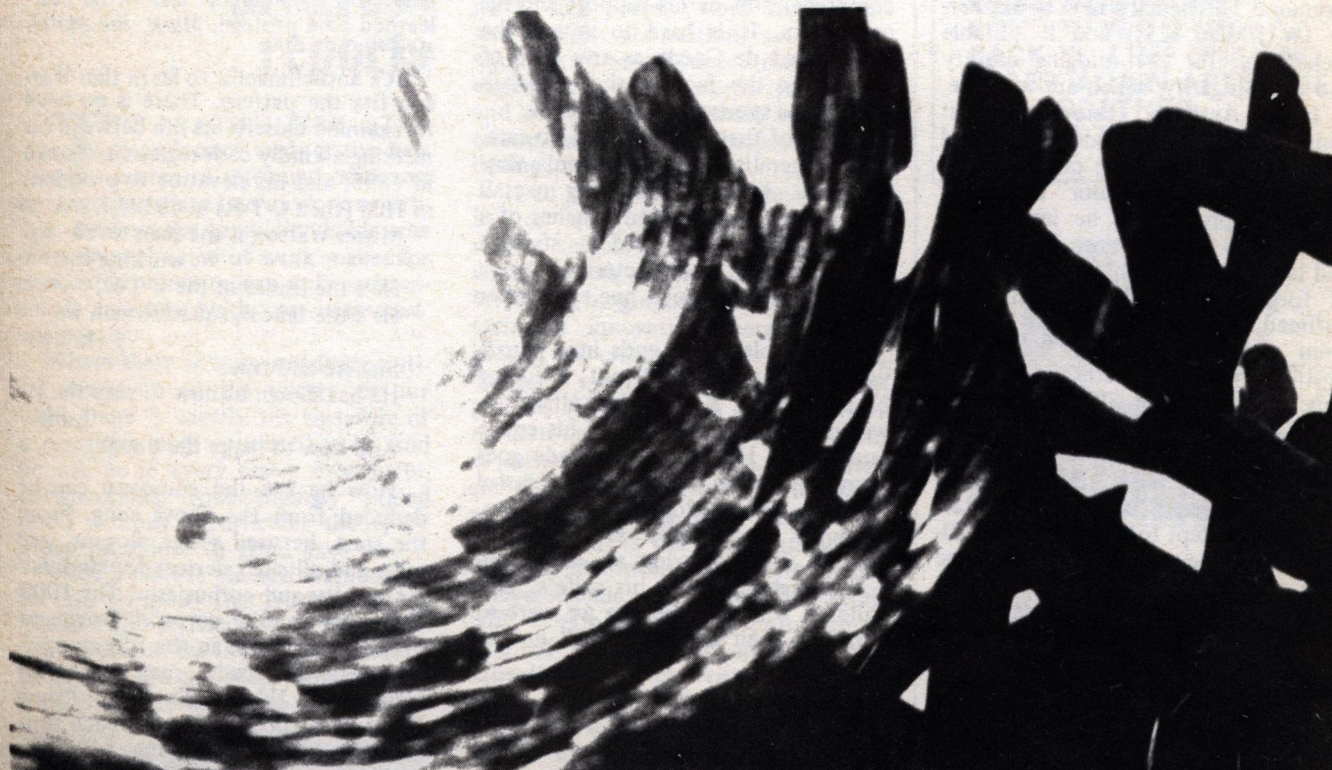
"It's just a science fiction magazine," Patsy explained when he showed it to her. "You remember Kiki? That was her job. She disappeared one night."

"Scuse me," she said now, as she put Marchmont's porridge in front of him. "Sorry about the lumps."

Her new nose had made a beautiful, mature, confident young woman of her, perfect except for her lumpy porridge.

"W.G. Grace?" Marchmont exclaimed, a moment later as he scanned the list of projected saints. "Wasn't he a famous cricketer?"

Old memories tugged at old dreams and he swallowed them down with the strong hot tea and the lumpy porridge. Patsy was yelling at the children and he heard horns and hooves clattering on the stairs. Nothing could touch him now. He was a solid citizen, his licence restored and safely buttoned into his back pocket. ●



A vid
James Sallis

Heads down, and the torch blinking
Along the sand, we follow. Here the tracks
Of feet with claws, disparallel lines
Sliding away and back on either side,
Like an exhausted polygraph. The batteries are old,
Dimming. Our breath, the fog
Gather toward the torch. And there,
Beside and behind them,
The path of something else, something
Like limp, trailing wings.

And now, ahead in the darkness,
There is a click, as of
Chambers revolving all together to the next
Warm corridor, beetles closing
On wings
In the carapace, coffin cases; The torch
Stammers, flashes. Flares. Dies. In your hand
Now, it is itself
Something else.

BOOKS

MIKE WALTERS: the labia of Hercules

THAT TWIN-HEADED MONSTER of praise, 'astringency and wit' always puts you on the defensive. It is brazenly reproduced all over the cover and fly-leaf of Raymond Hitchcock's new book, *Percy* (W.H.Allen, 25s) and is suitable preparation for the nudging crudity and coy vulgarity which are to come.

James Anthony Hislop, the first man in the world to undergo a genital transplant operation, is curious as to the identity of his donor. The book charts his progress as he investigates the various possibilities; his greater and lesser labours, amid many a scene of forgettable bawdy, are faithfully outlined, as James Anthony moves from widow to girlfriend to ageing mistress, Percy the picaresque penis his only geiger counter. The central episodic structure is slung casually over a sub-plot involving James Anthony's wife, unpleasant, insensitive Hyacinth, and his gauche friend, Willie. Characterisation is kept to a convenient minimum, and the tested women emerge as a series of cardboard grotesques. Moments of amusement flicker, but are remarkable principally for their similarity. James Anthony himself seems motivated by a peculiar brand of genital snobbery and is well suited to the female stereotype who locks him out of the bedroom. As for Percy; it becomes, thankfully, but the latest undignified victim of tissue rejection. Art's clichés evidently imitate those of life.

NOTHING AT ALL TO DO with ghoulish transplants, despite its sinister title and South African origins, is Etienne Leroux's *The Third Eye* (W.H.Allen, 25s). The ill-comprehending police captain Demosthenes de Goede is sent by the secret 'D' service in search of Boris Gudenov, practitioner of 'spiritual crimes'. Gudenov, it transpires, bears a marked resemblance to the good captain; a point which, continually emphasised, has manifold implications for character and idea. These, however, are never satisfactorily developed in a

plot that hovers between the excessive nightmare patterns of Kafka and the diabolic organisation of a Swiftian vision.

Symbolic women abound (Clara Bow has much to answer for); de Goede's nymphomaniac wife, Hope, is clearly deemed to merit many a chortle, despite her introduction in one of the clumsiest pieces of en passant since Jimmy Young. The Monroe-Harlow figure Bee Bee Doe is a stiff representational peg on which the author hangs a number of bizarre distortions, made altogether rather embarrassing and irrelevant by her superficial resemblance to actual persons living or dead.

Yet Leroux's intensity and dedication are redolent of Swift's method. Both uncompromisingly cut from under them the very ground on which they appear to make their stand; Leroux's cutting, however, is indiscriminate. He seems to have only a partial comprehension of his support and his opposition. It is hard to accept the bull-headed de Goede as any kind of positive in the face of the mass cultural chaos sponsored by Gudenov.

Much of the chaos, indeed, so carefully generalised, already seems very harmless. And the sweeping overall vision, with its laboured touches of a humour that is swamped by stylistic awkwardness, is characterised by a wilfulness that suggests one eye, rather than three.

The whole affair ends in a paroxysm of paradox and not unfitting black comedy. Responsible, albeit unwittingly, for the deaths of his entire family, the Herculean de Goede goes away mumbling about his successful 'trials' — the catalogue of past cases. Gudenov accidentally sets light to himself while wearing an old (symbolic) nightgown of his wife's. Our children will never believe we were so corrupt. Their scepticism will not be ill-grounded.

JOHN T. SLADEK: up from cash register

A review of *Think* by William Rodgers (Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

THIS HISTORY OF THOMAS J. Watson and IBM is unsatisfying. Written without the company's cooperation, it operates like a senile memory: Recent doings

are vague, while the distant past is as rich with ornament as a vintage cash register, one of the kind T.J.Watson was selling around the turn of the century.

"I will," said Dick, resolutely. "I ain't always goin' to black boots for a livin'."

"All labour is respectable, my lad, and you have no cause to be ashamed of any honest business; yet when you can get something to do that promises better for your future prospects, I advise you to do so. Till then earn your living in the way you are accustomed to, avoid extravagance, and save up a little money if you can."

Every Horatio Alger hero, like this one (*Ragged Dick*) has a series of illuminating conversations with his mentor, usually some kind of businessman. As a result, and through a combination of pluck, luck and Protestant morality, he rises to the top. *Ragged Dick* then passes on the valuable lessons he has learned to a protegee, *Mark, the Match Boy*.

It's anti-climactic to learn that Watson fits the pattern. There is no need to examine closely his life between his meeting a kindly cash register salesman in 1895, and his elevation to president of IBM (then C-T-R) in 1914:

Mister Watson is the man we're
working for,
He's the leader of the C-T-R,
He's the fairest, squarest man we
know;
Sincere and true.
He has shown us how to play the
game
And how to make the dough.

How he ran the company can be deduced from the above song. From the start, he used songs, slogans, pep talks and all such devices for stimulating loyalty and enthusiasm. The 100% Club was an elite corps all privileges of which were (as in the SS) compulsory. As the reader may remember from Kurt Vonnegut's book *Player Piano*, the 100% club met each summer for some clean living and Kraft durch Freud team sports. It might be appropriate here to mention that Hitler decorated Watson, and that Watson remained a supporter of Mussolini until it was embarrassing (and bad business) to do so.

Most of his ethic can be found in Dale Carnegie or Norman Vincent Peale. IBM employees were all but forbidden to smoke, absolutely forbidden to enter a bar, compelled to wear the conservative dress that has by now become a uniform, and compelled to attend each Sunday the church of their choice — a choice narrowed by Watson's policy of not hiring Catholics, Jews or those of the Negro persuasion or the feminine sect.

A chapter on the invention of the computer pads things out nicely at

this point, and we have the inevitable picture of Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. Suffice to say that IBM, already an enormous business, threw a few million into making the infernal contraption, and pluck and luck made them forge ahead.

In 1955, T. J. Watson turned over the company to his son, Thomas J. Watson Jr, expressing his support for him in a memo of six words, lined up vertically as in a pep talk chart:

- 100%
- Confidence
- Appreciation
- Admiration
- Love
- Dad

DOUGLAS HILL: progress reports

THE PRACTITIONER, EZRA Pound once said, is the best source of informed comment on any specialised line of work or activity. Perhaps the generality holds true only when the line of work makes for reasonably communicative practitioners. It certainly holds true with modern poetry.

Where there is truly satisfying critical comment on the poetry of our time, there is usually the signature of a practising poet appended to it. And he will be in every case a thoughtful, conscientious, wide-rangingly skilled poet, without a particular theory or group or school to grind axes for.

Such a poet is Michael Hamburger. He also brings to *The Truth of Poetry* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 55s) extensive reading in the literatures of several languages, and the deeper involvement from his position as one of the most

effective translators among living poets. For the task he sets himself he needs all these varied skills functioning at full output. Visibly, they are.

His book confronts a huge question: does modern (post-Baudelaire) poetry differ from any that preceded it in the kinds of statements it makes? To deal with the question, Hamburger sets out to display the tensions, conflicts, confusions, dilemmas, paradoxes of modern poetry - all parts of a common tendency toward paradox and ambivalence in every major "modernist" since the 1850s.

The beginning, on Baudelaire, provides an incisive and instructive progress through that pioneering expression of paradox or dilemma. And soon the features of the dilemma grow more and more discernible, as Hamburger passes his illumination over a series of poets. Imaginative inwardness confronting outer experience; identity loss, masks and poses, "word scepticism" and escapist abstraction, social alienation versus social commitment, facile experiment versus sterile formalism, and so on. Each of these worthy of enormous books to themselves, and having had their share.

It all makes for an inordinate number of trees, but Hamburger never wholly forgets the appearance of the whole forests. Even when tangents bring in a biographical allusion here, a technical innovation there, a background of critical climate elsewhere, the book's parameters hold: Hamburger has sifted through all the major modern names and a startling number of minor ones to find out where they stand, what kind of poetic truth they are trying to get at, or avoid, or both.

The result is the most outstanding work of historical criticism for years. Encyclopaedic yet focused, packed with eye-opening perceptions, rich in pointed contrasts and parallels and cross-linkages, and written in a hard-edge prose superbly under control.

In the end, the initial question - about modern poetry's differences from any preceding poetry - is not expressly answered. But by then the reader has at hand all the relevant material about the special features of modernism, and the question can be seen to have been answered implicitly - at least, up to the 1960s. For of course modern poetry, and its sub-segment "modernist" poetry, is still alive and well (though arguably living more fully outside Britain).

Hamburger sensibly stops short of avoiding an entanglement with trends and the danger of false predictions. He worries a little, as many serious poets do, about fads like pop and sound and concrete - but he knows about poetry's resilience, and the inevitability of countermeasures or counterfads which may not restore a balance but will at

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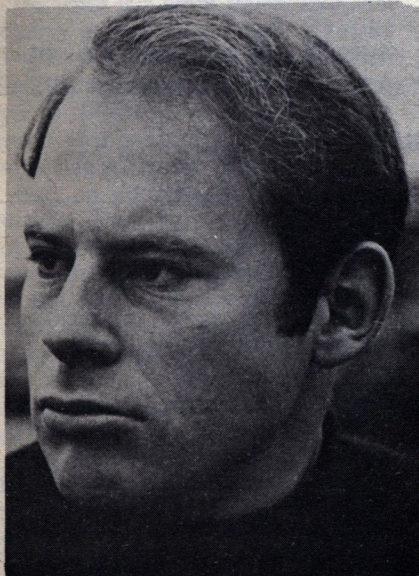
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D. M. Black: violent imagery

least keep something valuable alive.

Much of the something valuable, in his view, is the ceaseless effort of good poetry, "whatever its programmes, pre-occupations and techniques... to relate the inner world to the outer". This effort is the most fundamental feature of the stuff, in our time — and it is the most productive of the poetic ambivalence that forms the heart of Hamburger's thesis. A clear echo of this view comes from D.M. Thomas, introducing a recent new collection by Peter Redgrove: *Work in Progress* 1968 (Poet and Printer, 13s 6d, published 1969).

Redgrove, the introduction suggests, is a poet of opposites reconciled — sexual opposites, or the cosmic opposition of matter and spirit, or the poetic one of inner and outer landscapes. Thomas has served his subject well; the poems, in turn, live up to their resonant introduction. Redgrove is assuredly one of the few truly gifted poets — as opposed to the merely competent — in these isles now.

His book is aptly titled: his work is always in progress. He has been for years carving out a poetic line, a frame of expression, that is entirely his own. And he is still carving — not lying back on a half-achievement and imitating himself in a succession of books. His poetry grows ever more tumultuous, combining onrush and density, scorning politeness and current



kinds of tidy cleverness in favour of a plunging chthonic potency. Myth and fantasy and outer experience clot together with explosive images of violence, death, regeneration; the result is demanding, disturbing, unforgettable poetry.

D. M. Black has in his way a strong line in violent imagery, but tending toward cool dismembering more than passionate exploding: see the title poem of *The Educators*, his second book (Barrie and Rockcliff, The Cresset Press, 16s).

His understated, choppy free-verse forms match his prevailing tone — throwaway lines, finales in a dying fall, bleak flat ironic statements. Sometimes the underlined ironies and point-makings pump up a potentially fine epigram or aphorism into a loose, nearly banal paragraph. And such slips are dangerous in long fragmentary poems that can only precariously hold a reader's concentration. But in all the concentration will usually be rewarded — with passages of blinding intensity, oblique perceptions that suddenly flower into vast panoramas of meaning far beyond the poem's compressed framework.

Irony, again, provides much of the flesh and spirit of Anthony Howell's first collection *Inside The Castle* (also Cresset Press, 16s). So, regrettably, does a compulsive verbosity and a failure to perceive the expressional limitations of the rhymed quatrain and the high-speed prose fragment.

Howell seems to be splashing about in different forms and tones, as if not wholly sure of what he's doing or wants to do in any of them. Yet it is clear that when he does get a glimmer of what he wants to do in his poetry, and what kinds of verse will carry it, the product will be worth our patience. now. This book has flashes of true wit, some highly individual conceptions, undeniable energy and flair. Which is not bad for any man's debut.

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MUSIC

RALPH T. CASTLE: blues and booze

Johnny Winter pretends that that is his real name. He is like something out of the gimmicky, image-built fifties: a 'mature' looking singer and guitarist with a large nose and straight bleached-white hair hanging to below his shoulders.

Some of his influences come from the fifties as well. But that's as far as the similarity goes.

On *Second Winter* (CBS records, 3 sides and one blank side making a 'double album' for 43s 9d — cheap) he emerges as a first rate, fluent guitarist completely in control and with instinctive grasp of the essence of all that's fundamental in rock/blues.

The sound is heavy, but never messy; gritty but never jarring. The material ranges wide: side one is blues-derived and more or less in contemporary guitar idiom; side two includes rock and roll standards *Miss Ann* (Little Richard) and *Johnny B. Goode* (Chuck Berry), extending their range with excellent, well-phrased solos that somehow mesh perfectly with the rock and roll framework, though musically far above it; side three includes a lightning-fast, jazzy, Ray Charles type number with pure guitar tone that is final proof of Winter's versatility.

His voice is a weak point: like Jimi Hendrix, but he tries to make it gutsier by growling and shouting. Another disappointment is his version of Bob Dylan's *Highway 61*; he just can't give it real meaning. It becomes unconvincing and embarrassing.

But on rock/blues the group is faultless. They have confidence, control and capability lacking in almost every other group on the scene; Winter and his men — particularly the pianist/organist and tenor sax player — are professionals. They know what they want to do, they know exactly how to do it, and the result is in the real uplifting spirit of beat music.

Smoother and softer: *Liege and Lief* (Fairport Convention, Island records) perpetuates this group's obsession with quaint English customs:

morris dancing, the burry man, Padstow hobby horse, and so on. Sweet, pure sounds sometimes bordering on whimsy. Pleasant, but nothing to bite into.

In the same vein, but with much greater substance, is *Renaissance* (by the group of the same name, on Island). They've worked hard on their fusion of influences: the result is sometimes formless, sometimes over-dramatic. But these are the occasional weaknesses. Overall, the sounds are cool and clean and inspirational, the intrusions of classical piano slot in perfectly, and Jane Relf's voice is exquisite, clear, level, perfectly in tune. Well sung and well played and very well produced in excellent stereo, it seems Keith Relf really has formed a group with some true feeling and purpose. The Yardbirds were never like this.

Trout Mask Replica (Captain Beefheart, Straight records) is deliberately jagged, ragged, undisciplined, demanding. Free-form, belly-laugh poetic, modern serious, messing-around and a number of other music categories are mixed in with a sense of the absurd. The Mothers of Invention might sound like this after a few drinks too many. It's entertaining, but listening to the relentless discords can become a bit tiring. Basically what are needed are Frank Zappa's exceptional talents as a composer, as well as a producer.

Do you remember the first record by the Bee Gees, *New York Mining Disaster*? For a while they looked like developing into a good group, for the simple reason that they started off by sound like the Beatles.

It's a similar situation with *Badfinger* (songs from *the Magic Christian*) on Apple. From the first McCartney-composed track, side one sounds very like the Beatles around the time of *Rubber Soul*. This alone is enough to class *Badfinger* above most of the dismal music scene; if only they had modelled themselves on the Sergeant Pepper Beatles period, rather than the tarnished Get Back period... but maybe that's asking too much.

The tunes are good, the voices har-

monise well, there is a feeling of melody and quality. Arrangements are dull, but the mood sustains the music.

Side two is much weaker: mostly dull, unoriginal, cliché-laden ballads reminding us of the direction the Bee Gees took after their interesting beginning. If this stuff is *Badfinger's own thing*, let's hope they have sense enough not to persist in doing it.

Another new group, *Creepy John Thomas*, has an LP out under that title on RCA. A good first attempt, but the sound is a little thin (only two guitars and drums) despite double-tracking.

The songs move along fairly well, though, and *Creepy John* has a strong, powerful voice. A moderately heavy beat, but the sound could be a bit more distinctive.

For fans of original rock and roll, the *Little Richard Volume Two* LP of more than a decade ago has been re-issued as *Good Golly Miss Molly and Eleven Other All-Time Hits*. On the US Specialty label, this is the first of a series of 15 revivals of names like Larry Williams and Lloyd Little.

This is the best LP Little Richard ever made or ever will make. It is the real core of raving rock and roll, and even if you don't like the music, it has value as a social document of a very American period of totally naive teenage life.

Lastly, for Irishmen and others who prefer drugging themselves senseless with alcohol rather than the more sophisticated (and introverted) trips now available, Hamish Imlach sings *Ballads of Booze* on Xtra. With progressive pop (as it is unhappily known) still emerging from the dreary worship of LSD, it makes a change to listen to songs in praise of drunkenness. On the album sleeve is an almost life-size picture of Hamish himself, flat out unconscious. Rollicking stuff, and some of the songs are quite funny; but no matter whether you laugh at it or with it, at least it shows some kind of sense of humour, missing from most of the acid-induced mind expansion. "Drunk, Drunk Again," sings Hamish. They all sound as if they're having a good time.



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