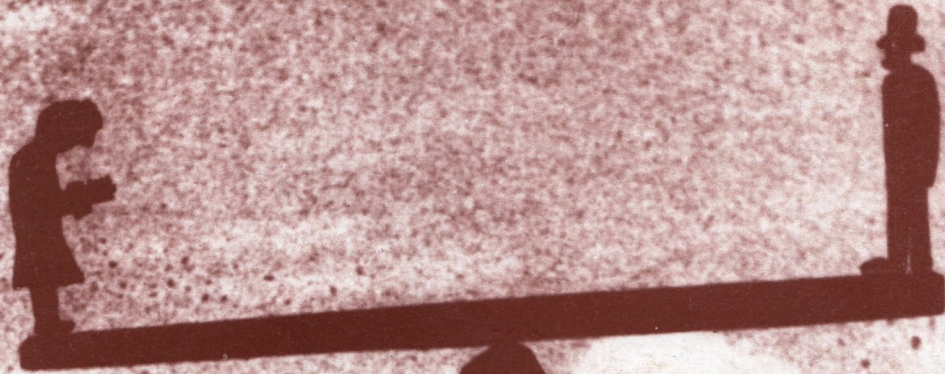


# new worlds

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**200th  
ISSUE**

# new worlds

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number 200

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New Worlds Publishing, 271 Portobello Road, London W.11.  
with the assistance of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Distributed by Moore Harness, 11 Lever Street, London EC 1.

Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and will not be returned unless an SAE is enclosed. No responsibility is accepted for loss or damage to manuscripts or artwork.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

A year's subscription to New Worlds (12 issues) costs £2 8s, for six months, £1 4s

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# 200<sup>th</sup> ISSUE

NEW WORLDS reached 141 issues thanks to the perseverance of one editor, John Carnell. It has reached its 200th issue thanks to the involvement and often the self-sacrifice of a great many people including Langdon Jones, Charles Platt, Graham Hall, James Sallis, Graham Charnock, Richard Glyn Jones, M. John Harrison, Diane Lambert, and others who have worked on the staff, as well as writers like Brian Aldiss, J. G. Ballard, Thomas M. Disch, John Sladek, Roger Zelazny, Harvey Jacobs who have contributed enthusiasm, support and work for little or no remuneration.

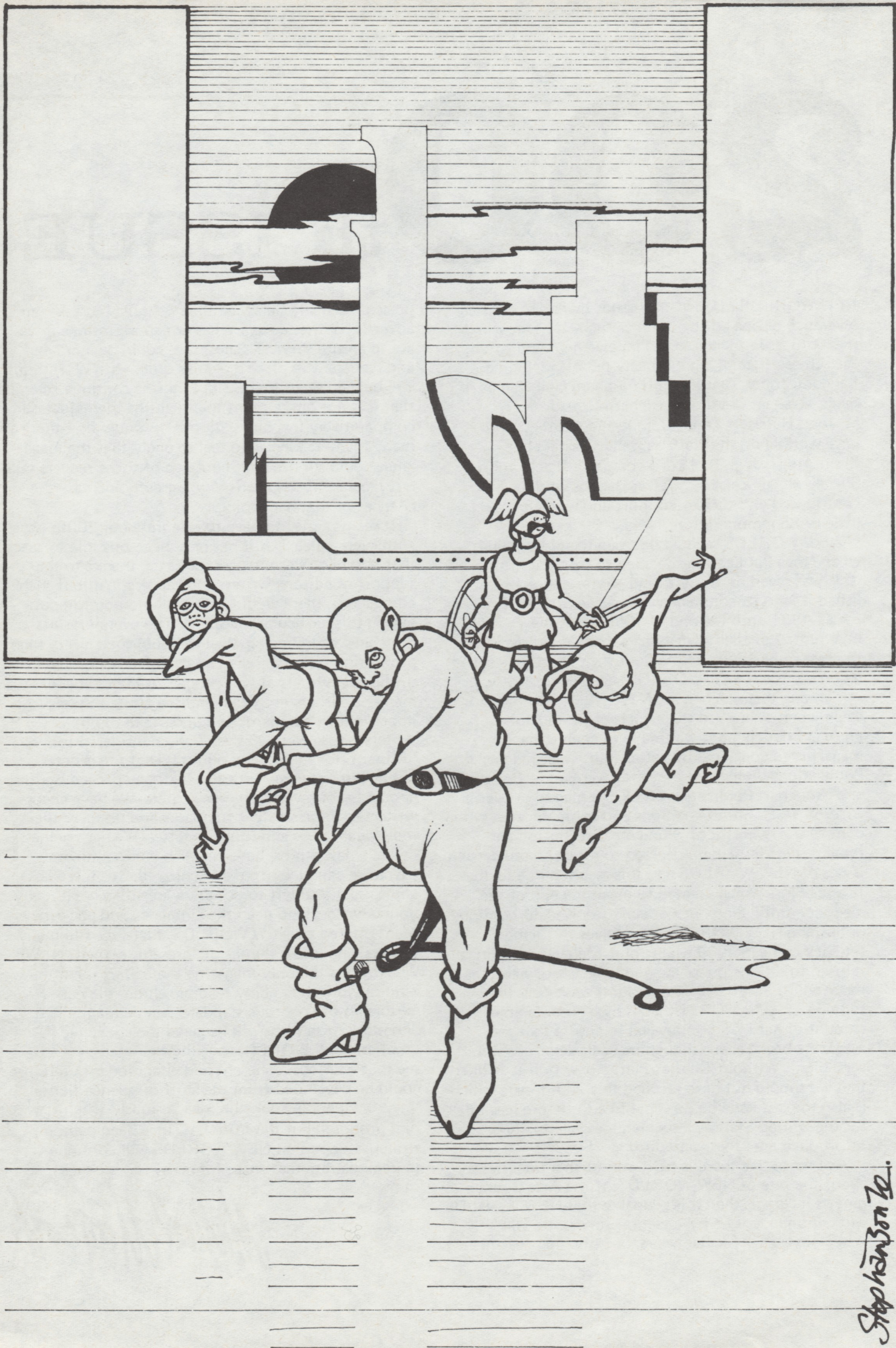
NEW WORLDS seemed doomed to fold in 1964, when Nova Publications decided to stop publishing it. It was saved by Roberts and Vinter, who published it (and its companion magazine SCIENCE FANTASY) until the end of 1966 when the bankruptcy of their distributors made them decide to cease publishing anything but their most lucrative titles (NEW WORLDS, needless to say, was not among them). Then NEW WORLDS was revived again when, thanks to the efforts of Brian Aldiss, an Arts Council grant was made to enable the magazine to continue. But after four issues Magnelist Publications discovered that they were underfinanced and Stonehart Publications took the magazine over. In 1968 W. H. Smith and Sons and John Menzies, who control the majority of wholesale distribution and retail outlets in Britain, decided to refuse to sell certain issues of NEW WORLDS and this resulted in a further financial loss which seemed to mean the end of the magazine until the editorial staff resolved to continue publishing NEW WORLDS themselves. A further set-back came in 1969 when John Menzies categorically refused to sell the magazine and large losses were incurred. In late 1969 Charles Platt took over the running of NEW WORLDS and, by a considerable amount of hard work, managed to ensure that the magazine broke even (though its back debts are still very high). Without Charles Platt's devotion it is likely that we should not have reached this 200th issue which is also the last issue he was able to edit before leaving for the United States where he hopes eventually to produce an American edition.

As I write this there is currently further uncertainty about the fate of NEW WORLDS. If the Arts Council renews its grant, then it is probable that NEW WORLDS will continue, edited by Langdon Jones who was Associate Editor for five years, but the finances are at

present so finely balanced that we must increase our advertising revenue as well as our subscriptions if we are to ensure survival. Sales, too, could be increased and readers who place a regular order with W. H. Smith will be helping us there (since Smiths continue to argue that it is not our content that disturbs them, just our comparatively low circulation....). I know that there are many many readers who feel strongly that the magazine should survive and if enough of those readers take out regular subscriptions it will greatly increase the chances of that happening.

It seems a pity to have to celebrate our 200th issue with such a plea, but it has only been possible to reach that number, over the past six years, thanks to the support of editors, writers and readers. Without such enthusiasm, there would have been no point in publishing this particular magazine. The overall results have been encouraging. We have published a very high proportion of outstanding imaginative fiction by some of the best writers at work today. We have encouraged many publishers in Britain and the United States to improve their standards and undertake to publish writers whose work was generally considered too 'difficult' for the general public. That the general public did not agree with this has been proved by the good sales of several of these writers. We have encouraged writers to improve their standards and discover their individual voices and subject matter. We have helped create a new atmosphere in which a new and vital literature can be written and enjoyed. But there is still a great deal left to do; there are still a great many young writers who need the ambience and encouragement offered by NEW WORLDS; there are still many readers who know that at the present moment NEW WORLDS is the only magazine that offers them the kind of work they enjoy reading. Under the new editorship the rigorous standard will be maintained and more fresh ideas will be given the chance to develop. NEW WORLDS was the first magazine to see that a serious, coherent and vital modern literature could be developed from the stuff of science fiction. Very few people took the idea seriously when it was first proposed but the truth has since been demonstrated. I hope that NEW WORLDS will continue to demonstrate that truth for many more issues.

*Michael Moorcock.*



Stephenson 72.

# Michael Moorcock Samuel R. Delany & James Sallis

## I

**THE HORSEMAN CAME RIDING THROUGH THE PINES**  
with a gun in his hand.

I said: "Take it straight, baby," and moved out of the way. There was no sweat there, none at all.

Jewelled towers raised themselves above the horizon, and they were splendid. Mudwasps droned by the river. Light flashed in the city, light glittered on the flank beneath my thigh.

The gunman put down his gun. "You headed that way?"

"I'm taking it the way I told you to take it. There's the road." I motioned toward the gate; it was far away between the hills. O, so jewelled! Think, if you can see here, a man could stretch out and sleep on any face.

Sweetly, with considerable charitas, he bent and touched my nose. "Cosy," he said, and laughed. From his backside a sound issued. He rode on, the stink of his fart drifting through the pines. I flipped my cigarette into the ditch, turned and began to run towards the city.

(Glad Ladies, Kind Men: the castle and lands of Larne are fallen.)

## II

**PLAINLY, IT WAS NOT MY APPEARANCE THAT**  
astonished them, but the detail of design on the saddle which I carried on my back; plaited mane of my horse dark Eleanor; baroque blade at my side. Their faces turned up like petals on a bough:

"It is Lorin, he who befriended the spurned dwarf Gilby, who with his curved sword bridged back the black powers of Kuun, and wears till this day the colours of Gilby, as does no other man." They move aside.

At the inn: light wine, his favourite cheese, a girl who gives him loaves on his leaving. She laughs with crumbs on her lips.

Going about in the city, he seeks the reason for its lack of name. The high walls shadow the colours of Gilby. He spits the crusts and ambles, pondering:

—gunman, you don't know my whip, there are plaits of virgins' hair among the leather, I'll hunt down the name of the city long before you. Time is not on your side, gunman. I have the power of my whip, I have the whole pool of worlds to ponder over . . .

## III

**THAT NIGHT AS HE SLEPT THE DWARVES CAME DOWN**  
into the fire, their feet sounding like rain in the dry leaves, and bore him on their shoulders away to foreign lands, where he lived, and became a Prince, and had dominion over soldiers, women, and a fleet of steel ships.●

# THE DYING CASTLES

# SECRET IDENTITY

by  
**John T. Sladek**



**M**Y INDIAN VALET, OXBOW, BROUGHT ME A mint copy of *Ô*, the rare Dadaist book by Jean-Claude Odeon, long out of print.

"This is an unexpected treat, I can assure you," I said, opening it to page 47. I happened to know that, although the entire book consists of the letter *ô* repeated 51 times to the line, 29 lines to the page, for 453 pages, genuine copies possessed a certain typesetter's error. Sure enough, the third vowel on page 47 had no *accent circonflexe*.

"This single error," I explained to Oxbow, "means the difference between one of the rarest books in existence and a cheap fake worth but a few dollars. This book is genuine." I tore out page 47 and ate it, washing it down with *Guardia Civil*, a liqueur distilled from Ovaltine. "But who could have sent it, Oxbow?"

"I not know, boss-wallah," he said. "It come by special messenger a few minutes ago, in plain wrapper."

I snapped my fingers. "I'll bet it was Margo!"

"That right, kimo sabe. I never think of that." My valet scratched his head with bewilderment. Then, divining my wish, he fetched me a telephone on which to call my friend and "companion", the lovely Margo, and ask her for a date.

"Aw gee," she said. "I was just gonna wash my hair."

But I would not be put off. "Margo, you lovely, lovely creature," I breathed into her receiver.

**B**EFORE WE ARRIVED AT THE PARTY, ROSE Garland, that still-young Gold Star mother, said: "Think of it, Brad! Six million Jews!"

"Not exactly." Brad, her still-handsome husband smiled tolerantly. "You forget that, with all their reputation for efficiency, the Germans were notorious book-keepers."

"Notoriously bad, you mean?"

"Ah, who can say what is bad?"

The garbage under Mrs Onager's sink grew, slightly.

Rose was reading, and Brad was watching her read. He had already finished the "Gordimer" trilogy, by P. B. X. Thomson: *Gordimer's Chance*, *Gordimer's Fate* and *Gordimer's Folly*. Now he waited for guests with whom to discuss them. They might also discuss *novel*, a novel by Horace Mattrick, the guest of honour. Mattrick had not yet arrived. Fenster Doybridge had not even been invited.

On the kitchen floor, Gene said no to Eileen.

Many years earlier, when I had lived in Greenwich Village and worn Oxford shoes, my Hispano-Suiza had inadvertently been ticketed for overparking.

Gene got up and went out to a Civil Defence meeting. Tad crept in and took his place.

"Why is it that they call you 'Tad'?" Eileen asked.

**M**Y HISPANO-SUIZA WAS NOW AT THE GARAGE, having a special type of bazooka mounted under the bonnet. Wrapping a white silk scarf about my throat

I squeezed through a panel at the back of my medicine chest and climbed to the roof. My Nieuport was there, already throbbing with life.

"Keep an eye on things, Oxbow," I shouted over the throaty roar of her engine. "I may not be back until morning."

"Can do, sahib!"

"And don't forget to feed Black Phantom, my wonder dog."

"Roger, baas! Later." He saluted smartly.

I lifted the Nieuport's nose starward, and then, levelling out, kicked her around in the direction of Margo's penthouse.

It was back in Greenwich Village I'd met Sunspot — and of course his girl, Waverly, who was naturally bald, and favoured suede-hair bathing caps.

With the autopilot on, I used my superior powers of concentration to read, in quick succession:

*Your Earning Power*, by M. Bartleby

*Colitis*, by Duane Gardens, M.D.

*A Treasury of Fire Myths*, O. Dawson Lotts, ed.

*Speaking of Those Darned Kids*, by Pete Lamb

*Lesbians Unaware*, by Duane Gardens, M.D.

*Raising and Training the Apache Indian*, by D. Gardens.

Peering over the side, I beheld a short, dark man observing me through binoculars, but thought nothing of it at the time. I felt in no immediate danger from the ground, having fortified my plane with one of my earlier inventions, bullet-proof air.

I found a note on Margo's door: "Have gone to Paris for a few things. Have *not* been abducted." *Not* abducted? It seemed oddly worded to me. Could this be a case of protesting too much? Margo certainly did know her Shakespeare. Or could this be a trap of some kind? I determined to follow her, after a few drinks.

Gene, whom I then knew as Jean-Claude, had defended me at the trial. The Hispano-Suiza, the ticket and the entire section of the street were brought in as exhibits.

At the Hotel Odeon, the US Army Poets' Convention was having a reading, so I stopped there for my drink. A fat boy named Pfc Lyle was just reading the end of his epic *Japaniad*. I tried to make my way through the crowd to have a word with him in private, but found my path blocked by a giant specialist.

"Go to!" he cried, breaking a beer bottle. Using a trick I had learned in the Orient, I applied pressure to the base of his thumb until he was unconscious. The crowd of rude soldiers parted to let me pass.

I found Pfc Lyle alone at a table, weeping and drinking. Another infantryman had taken the platform to read a poem called "Ingredients".

"Hello, Pfc," I said. Lyle looked up.

"You!"

**M**EANWHILE, AT A PARTY FOR VANCE RAGLAN, someone — possibly Doybridge — was speaking: "A book, or else a film. Yes, I think it was called ... or is it the record I'm thinking of?"

Vance Raglan was a sculptor in glue. Eileen thought of the Orient, of her Buick dealer, of Thomas Hardy's latest novel. She thought of throwing a "Famous Mac" party. To Tad, she said, "Goodbye, Tad, or whatever you call yourself now. I'm off to Hong Kong."

She shook hands with Doybridge — a mistake.

**S**UNSPOT," I SAID, AND Pfc BEGAN TO WEEP again. I truly felt like weeping with him, but, for various reasons, my tear ducts had been removed.

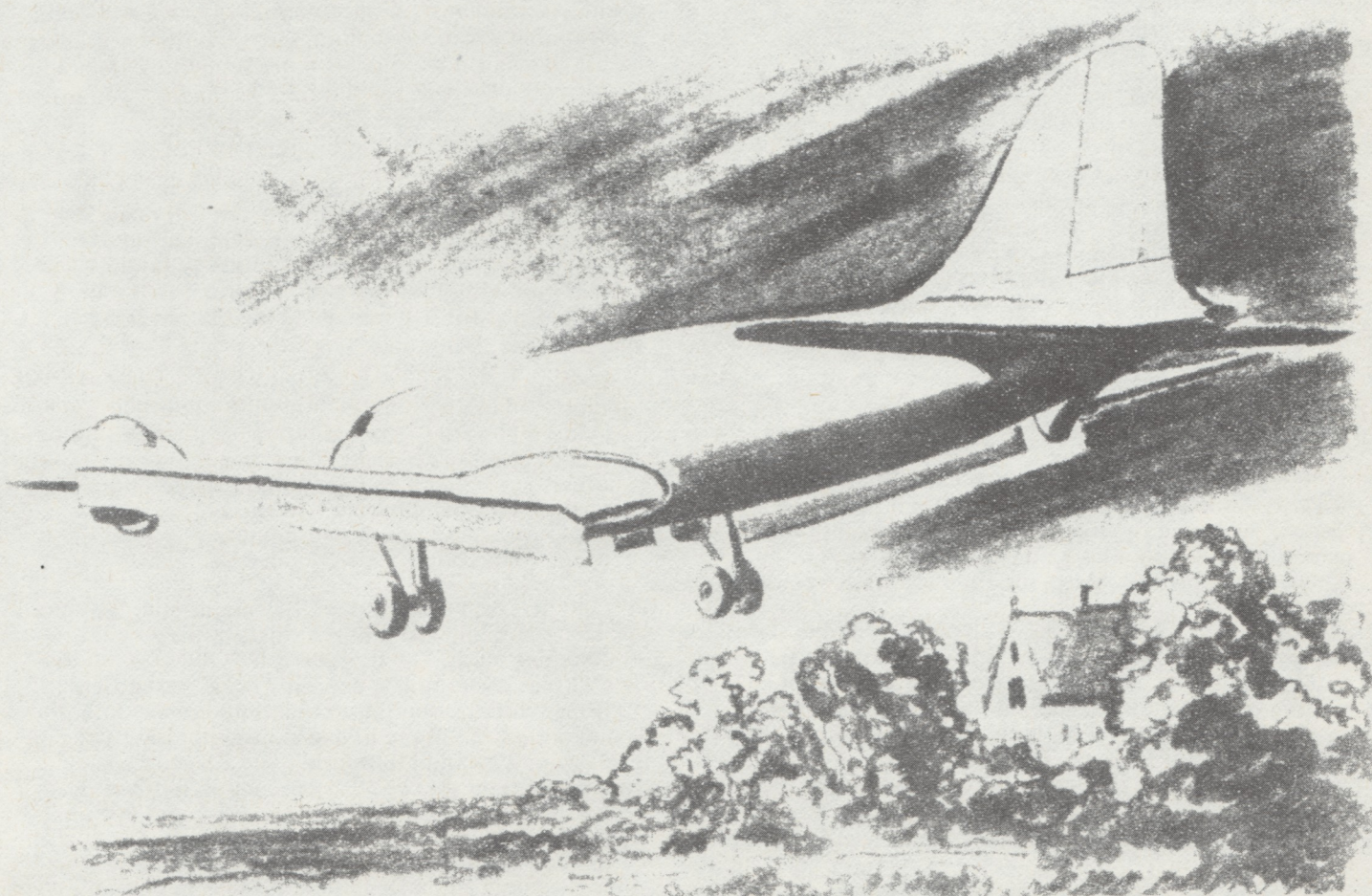
Sunspot! Our old companion, now dead or missing. Sunspot! Who claimed to be a preincarnation of Moondog. Sunspot! Our best friend at obedience school.

Pfc clutched my sleeve and croaked, "Hey, remember how he always used to claim it was him did the whining on the sound track of *Lassie Come Home*?"

On the platform, the soldier read, "...milk solids, soya meal, gum arabic, dried eggs, powdered yeast, corn starch, dextrose, maltose, monosodium glutamate, artificial flavouring and colouring. Sodium propionate added, to retard spoilage."

Amid the wild applause, one radar specialist asked another: "I think it lacks something, don't you?"

"I remember Sunspot," I said, my voice husky with remembrance. "When I was living in the Village, he'd come over



... one of my earlier inventions ...

while I was out and leave me a little memento in the middle of the floor."

"According to the legend, he was run down by a car he was chasing. Later, sharp operators all over the country began selling plaster replicas of his 'little mementos' in novelty stores."

"He never saw a dime of the millions they made."

Taking my leave, I flew direct to Le Bourget airport at Paris. As I had no passport, the immigration officials tried to stop me, thus forcing me to flash my special identity card. At the sight of it, they waved me through the gate with profound apologies.

The garbage beneath Mrs Onager's sink began to stir.

I knew exactly where to find Margo. She was at Les Halles, bargaining with a merchant. Margo's French, as always, was flawed, so the poor man had difficulty in understanding what it was she wanted — eggs to wash her hair.

"Dozène," she said, making a sign, "pour mes chevaux."

Exasperated, the man asked me why Mademoiselle's horses should require putrid ulcers of the nose.

When I'd bought eggs for Margo, we flew back to a party for Plastic Man. On the way, we stopped off at the flower market in Barcelona, where I bought a sprig of bloodslipper for her hair.

"Gee thanks." She pushed it among the pink curlers, making them look quite festive. We jestingly argued about the relative merits of the French language and the language of flowers.

In Hong Kong, Eileen gave the plague to a number of people. The plague that year was tularemia, commonly called "rabbit fever".

"Plas" was playing a game of hide-and-seek with a number of distinguished guests, among them the brilliant arachnologist, Dr Aa, various crowned heads and pretenders, including the Prince J— C—, and Mr Boggs (Eileen's Buick dealer). Plas had already concealed himself as a lampshade, a comic book, socks, margarine, wallpaper and the yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpane. Now he was again hidden. Strangely, no one but me seemed to have caught on to the obvious deficiencies in his disguises, viz., he was always red, with black-and-yellow stripes, no matter what his shape.

I had several drinks and examined Plas's curious collection of medieval harrows. Tularemia, I recalled, was named after a county in California.

"One-two-three for Mr Boggs's cummerbund!" I called out suddenly. Smiling sheepishly, Plastic produced himself. I noticed, however, that his smile was a trifle lop-sided. Indeed, his whole head seemed to flow into fanciful shapes. I signalled Margo to get my scarf and her riding cloak.

"What's wrong?" she asked, as we hurried away to Mattrick's party. Dr Aa elected to come with us.

"Plastic was drunk," I said harshly. "That could have turned into God's own orgy."

"Oh, you!" She seemed piqued but pleased.

Dr Aa made a suggestion. "Why don't you leave the Nieupoort here, and fly over with me in my Gee Bee Racer?"

We took him up on his kind offer. On the way, he explained to us why he'd left the Famous Mystery Scientists Club.

"It all began when I left my usual work to devote some time to a private investigation of gravity. By fractional distillation of cats, in the presence of your bulletproof air, I managed to isolate a leadlike substance which is actually repelled by the attraction of earth! The farther it gets away from a planet, the greater is the repulsion.

"At great expense, I constructed a demonstration, but my colleagues were in league against me. "Fakery!" scoffed one. "Madness!" sneered a second. "Mesmerism!" insinuated a third.

"I was forced to return to my old occupation, arachnology. Now I work for the armed forces, classifying spiders 'edible' and 'inedible'. I am *dead*." He performed



an Immelmann turn, by way of demonstration.

"That isn't the worst," he continued, "Foreign powers, chiefly the Finns, are now trying to steal my invention. I've been invited to play blindfold chess tonight at the party, and I fear it is there that an attempt will be made upon my life. Here - -"

He pressed a scrap of paper into my palm. "Here is the only copy of my formula. Take care it does not fall into the wrong hands."

"It's safe with me, doctor," I assured him, as I tucked it into a secret compartment of my billfold.

In Hong Kong, Oxbow caught tularemia. He was resuscitated by spleen massage, and as soon as he was able, called me on the radio.

"Did you feed Black Phantom, my wonder dog?"

"Yes, master. Bwana, take great care. Watch out for girl from Iowa Writers' Conference, effendi. Over and out, chief." Just before he went off the air, I heard scuffling sounds — and a shot.

"He sounds a little sick," said Margo. *She and Oxbow are the only ones who know my secret identity.* We disembarked at Mattrick's party, while Eileen, returning from Hong Kong, asked "George" to marry her.

"To whom?"

A number of people seemed to be at the wrong party. Among these were a boy in a sleeper suit carrying a tire and a candle, a black-hatted quaker, a fat, jolly-looking Negress with her hair tied up in a red-and-yellow checkered kerchief, and a very tall green man. Their speech was strained, and I detected something familiar about the quaker's voice. Margo took down everything he said:

kodel	fiberglas	doelon	polymite	acrylan
curon	durastran	lastex	vinylite	fortrel
nykon	polyester	corfam	fabricon	acrylex
doron	bunalenex	lucite	actinene	creslan
dynel	protofoam	banlon	caprolan	formica
rayon	celustran	chemex	fiberfil	actinel
lurex	quiltacel	antron	loromite	spandex
nylon	strantron	forlon	koratron	polynel

Gene returned from his Civil Defense meeting, unslung his binoculars, and asked Eileen what was new.

"Nothing much. Tad dropped in."

"Why on earth do you call him 'Tad'?" asked Gene.

A man in farmer costume came from upstairs to borrow some toothpaste. "We're having a 'Famous Mac' party," he explained. "I'm 'Old MacDonald'. Can I borrow some toothpaste? You see, we're all brushing each others' teeth."

I walked over to Mattrick, who was engaged in conversation with a portly man in pince-nez.

"Hello!" said Mattrick. "Didn't expect to see *you* here. Have you met Fenster Doybridge, the famous kidnapper?"

"We've met," snapped the fat man.

"Indeed," I said, offering them cigarettes. "In fact, I



saw a bit of your work this evening, if I'm not mistaken, Doybridge."

He chuckled non-committally, and turned away to watch a Xerox engineer doing funny imitations. Suddenly I realised that Margo was nowhere in sight!

The man from upstairs came back for more toothpaste. "It's taking a little more to finish off 'Mary McCarthy'," he explained. "Afterwhile, we're gonna do some pantomimes. 'Cardinal MacIntyre' is gonna harrow Hell for us, so 'MacAdam' can build a road across it, on which 'MacArthur' can return to the Phillipines. Hope you folks don't mind a little noise."

"Are you going to read from *novel*?" I asked Horace Mattrick.

He nodded. "I'd better. It's written," he added, laughing, "entirely in vowels—you're supposed to improvise the consonants—so most people have a little trouble with the plot."

I watched the quaker make an odd sign to a tall, peculiar-looking man. This person wore only black sleeves and trouser legs over his thin limbs, his only other garments being a black stovepipe hat and a monocle. I remarked to Mattrick that the man looked like nothing so much as a half-baked peanut.

This peanut-man in turn made a secret signal to another man in a stovepipe hat (were they coming into fashion?). That man sported a white wisp of beard, but otherwise resembled a laborer, for his sleeves, blue with white stars, were rolled high on veinous, knotty arms. His hat was striped red-and-white.

I kept one eye on the girl from the Iowa Writers' Conference, who reeled from room to room in some sort of drunken dance. The phonograph was playing code. I noticed Doybridge listening closely to it, along with the men in stovepipe hats.

And Doybridge had donned a stovepipe hat!

It was of black silk, to complete his costume of cutaway coat, striped trousers and spats. He carried a walking stick, and a bag marked with a dollar sign. As I stared at it,

I realised with a shudder that it was exactly the size of a human head.

Stirring, the garbage under Mrs Onager's sink took on an unearthly shape.

"If I should marry you, Pater will cut me off with a penny," said 'George' to Eileen. According to Eileen's way of thinking, *George* in French was *Georges*, while *penny* was pronounced to rhyme with *penis*. But Eileen was feverish and ill.

I wandered into the garden, where the quaker was behaving oddly with a tree.

"Sunspot!" I cried. "Is it you?"

"Shh! The Finns or someone are tailing me. It might be only a joke, you know — a case of the wag tailing the dog — but don't let's take chances. Pretend not to know me, and

for your own protection, go back inside." With misgivings, I obeyed.

In one corner of the living room, the Xerox engineer was doing a clever imitation of a legal tort. In a second, Doybridge expounded an aesthetic of kidnapping. In a third, Eileen had curled up to read *The Renaissance*, while in the fourth, Dr Aa was just preparing to play blindfold chess with a short, swarthy man I recognised as Gene. I took it all in at a glance, not liking the look of any of it.

Fenster D. pontificated: "In essence as in theory, in execution as in conception, from the first symbol to the ultimate sensibility, the whole must be, how shall I say —"

There was an enormous CRACK!, and the bedroom ceiling, bearing a man on a Mack steamroller, descended upon the pile of coats and on the girl from the Iowa Writers' Conference, and on Tad.

"It never happened before," said the driver, who wore both a mackintosh and a mackinaw. A *deus ex mackinaw*? I wondered. It would do to keep a close watch on the "Cardinal".

Knowing that Dr Aa would open with a knight, his opponent had substituted for it a tiny, live, venomous seahorse. When poor Aa touched it, the creature bit him savagely.

"Aa!" Screaming his own name, the blindfolded arachnologist rose from the game and fell dead.

Mrs Onager peered beneath her sink and rubbed her eyes in disbelief.

As soon as the police left with Aa's effects, the girl from Iowa began her dance all over again.

"I have an announcement to make," she sang. "I'm not what I seem. Actually I came here to interest all of you in NAME LABELS. They are gummed for easy affixing to any surface, and they have YOUR NAME, YOUR ADDRESS, ANYTOWN, EVERYWHERE. One hundred cost only one dollar, and they come in this elegant styrene carrying case." She exhibited a perfect little styrene box. Then, bending to trail her long, blonde hair, she swept about the room, taking orders for NAME LABELS. Seeing through her ruse, I vowed to deal with her later, after Mattrick's improvisation.

Opening his novel, *novel*, the famous author read:

"I did sit in Rimini, sipping drinks within its limiting light. In hip, with-it Rimini, I, light-tickling, kiss Mimi's lips. Isis Mimi swings, I swirl, twirl this nitwit girl, fling digits in Rimini's wind, O Finns!

"O gold moon of Hong Kong! How now, brown orb of loot? Go to! Spook who glows or god who bows to boon, do not tow two old clocks on sloops or spoons on ponds (pools) of bold rococo. Row on row of cold wood brooms! Oxbow, London fog!

"A yak at last, a llama, half-mad after, alas, pasta, asks all that wash aft, madam. Man has cast away what cats ask. Ah, sad, mad, glad, bad tanks! Last act, Aa! Dallas!

"He never left the deck. We never held the end. The red shed never seemed free, we've seen. Bled green, he fed her eggs, beats, beef; he fed her greed. Never kneel! Well-met, Gee Bee!

"Up busts luck. Run tub, bub. Stuck-up ducks upchuck mud muk-luks. Run, nun! Turds pluck up trust, sub fucks up, truck U-turns. Numb trust cuts guts. Ubu's pus must run, but..."

I drew my weapon as we applauded.

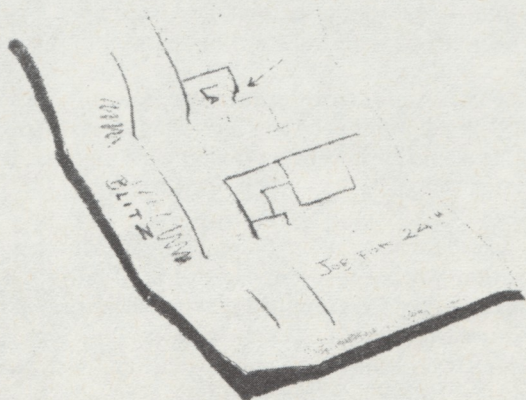
"Where could all that garbage have gone?" Mrs Onager mused. "It couldn't have just *walked away*."

Eileen began to feel as though she were coming down with psittacosis, commonly known as 'parrot fever', as she explained to Gene.

"Where did you get it?" he demanded jealously.

I shot the so-called girl from the fictitious Writers' Conference twice. I was just turning the body over with my toe when Margo came in from the garden, with Jean-Claude Odeon and Oxbow. We linked arms.

In the garden, Sunspot gave one strangled scream. Then all was silence, save for the stealthy, rustling, retreating step of the garbage man. ●



"Take care it does not fall into the wrong hands."

# The Floating Nun

AN EXCERPT FROM  
M. JOHN HARRISON'S  
FORTHCOMING NOVEL,  
The Committed Men



## ON THE ROAD AGAIN.

As they progressed the woodland backed slowly away from the motorway, leaving in its place low scrub and maquis from which rose isolated thorn saplings. Gorse and briar had grown to great heights, and, weakened by the effort, drooped palely, flecked with the grey of mutated blights. After a mile, the forest remained in the middle distance, like a trick of the eye.

"Density makes no difference. And anyway, these people are —" Suffering from aphasia, Harper stumbled over a weed-filled crevice in the metalling, walked on looking sulky.

"You were going to say 'primitive!'" crowed Arm the dwarf. And then, smugly: "Did I catch just a little suggestion of snobbery there, son?"

"You *know* I didn't —"

The fence hung in stiff festoons, beaded with moisture. For as far as they could see, none of its supports had been disturbed; they filed round wide curves, in and out of pools of mist, a caravan of iron veils. It was very quiet.

"Oh, you may not have *meant* it —"

"Drop it, the pair of you," said Wendover, his patience suffering in the cold air. Even when he had a contribution he didn't like to join in, for fear of encouraging the dreary sparring. "Arm, stop baiting him."

Wrecks were more frequent. The corroded shells of fast freighters clogged the freeway, heaps of them rearing up like ancient surrealist battlements. Dwarfed between the flaking hulks, forcing passage, Wendover discerned on scarred flanks fragments of old cellulose, blistered proprietary symbols. Morag hardly said anything at all.

From the hollow, resounding back of a tanker, they surveyed the landscape. They had been walking for perhaps an hour — although it seemed like more — pushing deeper into an extended bank of mist. Visibility was down to thirty yards and shortening. The wrecks wound away south, crawling over one another like frigidly copulating lizards. The steel beneath them was rotting, damp and greasy to the touch, a treacherous footing.

"I suppose it's a waste, really," murmured Arm, mostly to himself.

He touched Wendover's shoulder.

"Now why should that be, I wonder?"

He was pointing vaguely toward the woodland through the mist. Wendover, looking for some particular item — and suspecting that, once found, it would prove to be nothing more than a change of subject in the constant dispute — saw nothing. When he said so, the dwarf shook his head impatiently. "The bushes, doctor," he said.

Wendover examined the scrub.

A wide avenue of broken vegetation had been forced through it, sometime within the preceding two days: the foliage of the flattened saplings and crushed fern hadn't yet dried out. White wood showed at breakages. It ran parallel to the road for some distance, then turned through ninety degrees and vanished into the mist, an enigmatic perspective.

"There haven't been any high winds," said Arm.

"It would have to be a peculiar wind anyway, to do that," offered Harper, with a bright, inviting smile.

"Shut up," said Wendover.

Another half-hour's walking brought them to a cloverleaf junction, where the motorway tied itself into a concrete rosette. Sweating grey piers humped it above the mist. Up there, it seemed even colder.

Wendover leaned on a crash barrier and watched the access roads trail away like threads from frayed silk. To the east, the last few feet of a Gothic tower rose above the mist, its crenellations

picked out sharply by the bright weak sun. He tried to remember in which area of the country they were, but could suggest only 'south', which conjured no associations. Perhaps they had altogether left the maps he had once known.

Ostensibly for warmth, Harper and the girl had huddled together beside the handcart. The dwarf was stamping his feet and breathing heavily into his cupped hands. Wendover found the tower more familiar than the customary geography of ruined vehicles. It drew him, quite explicable.

"If nobody minds — ?" he said.

They moved off down the incline of the eastern sliproad. Goofing about, Morag and Harper lost control of the cart, and it rolled down the slope, faster and faster until it was bound to be upset.

"No, I don't *mind*," said Arm, "but if you want my *opinion* —"

The sliproad soon turned into a country lane, degenerate and flanked by ditches full of nettles. At one time, its environs had been predominantly agricultural, neat three-and-four acre plots of animal feed and root vegetable, but the breakup had put an end to that.

The vanguard of the forest blurred the edges of the low-lying fields; young conifers crowded the remaining patches of sugarbeet and kale (strains bred for high-vendibility, they had not been equipped to compete with less civilised weeds: but the survivors hung on tenaciously). The thorn hedges had spread, drifting genetically into strange shapes. The mist clung to the undergrowth, anechoic, sucking up the clatter of something that had blackbird in its ancestry, damping the mechanical cawing of the ageless rooks.

Uneasy reveries plagued Wendover: cued by the chilly, tangled landscape, he saw this journey clearly as an act of expiation.

"Make sure the child is warm enough," he told Morag. He shivered.

Harper kicked at a rut in the road. He looked up and said: "Somebody uses this, regularly. Is that a tyre-print?"

Wendover shrugged. "Ask Arm."

They drew together. The mist drew around them. Morag tucked the child's swaddlings more firmly. After that, it was inevitable that they hear voices.

**I**NFECTED FOR A MOMENT BY HARPER'S superstitions, Wendover imagined that they had been followed down the motorway. But the noise seemed to be coming from up ahead; individual footsteps merged into an almost rhythmic shuffle, and the voices an undertone of constant timbre.

"I think we'd better get in the ditch," said Arm quietly.

Wendover hesitated, trying to fix a direction. A small dog began to bark hysterically. Over the ground-bass of feet and voices rose the insistent treble figure of a child repeating some nonsensical litany, a collection of dissociated syllables his mind rendered as:

"What every weevil *knows*, what every *weevil knows*, what every weevil *kn* —"

"Down, doctor," Arm insisted.

He grasped the skirt of Wendover's coat and dragged him into the nettles. The others dropped in beside him. The bed of the ditch was wet and resilient. He was stung, but he didn't shout. The nonsense ran on through his head, then stopped abruptly.

An unpleasant congregation wound out of the mist.

It was fronted by two thin men on old, sick horses. The hooves of the animals were muffled in swathes of rag; they stumbled and pecked and drooped their heads listlessly against poor harness. The riders wore tight, dark breeches and carelessly buttoned gaiters. Each carried a wooden staff. Their faces were lean and sombre, cancered, and they rode with uncomfortably curved spines.

Behind them, in groups of four and five, filed what seemed to be the entire complement of a village.

Pinched children in old overcoats and windcheaters followed the horses closely with leather buckets, hoping for dung. Sporadically, one or another of them would chant the first few syllables of the litany, then cease and look guiltily about. Their parents were segregated: the women carried or dragged toddlers and stared ahead at the children; the men came on with a militaristic gait, staffs over their shoulders. Some of them had charge of small, noisy dogs on multiple leads.

Their clothes were threadbare and voluminous, bleached out and drab; their bearings stiff. They emanated an air of repressed exultation, laid down on a curious mixed basis of formal silence and dull talk in a broad southern dialect. It puzzled the doctor. He had met it before, but could not remember the circumstances.

The aged were unsegregated: they trailed the end of the progression, strung out and stumbling as often as the horses, men and women both, their expressions pained or vacant. As they dawdled past, Morag changed her position uneasily. Harper put his finger to his lips, nudged her.

The child, thrust into the nettles as she shifted about to keep her balance, let out a short preliminary cry, then began to scream.

Immediately, the procession broke into confusion: an ancient shrivelled woman in a calf-length print dress shrieked at her neighbours; younger men milled back among the sexagenarians, complaining in loud, sullen voices; one of the horses came trotting precariously back, throwing one spavined foreleg grotesquely to the left at each step.

The old woman grabbed its owner's stirrup, gesticulated, and waved violently toward the ditch. He shook his head. She tugged at his leg. More concerned to get rid of her than to investigate, he flailed the horse forward with his heels.

"Ere! They got a *frog*!" he shouted, looking directly down at Wendover. He dropped his reins, swung his staff in a terrible arc and caught the doctor's shoulder a nasty blow.

"Come out!" he yelled. "Come on out!"

The rest of the procession surged to the edge of the ditch. Some of the aged were pushed in inadvertently. Arm broke an old man's nose with his gnarly fist, provoking a remarkable spate of blood. Harper swore.

Eventually they were dragged out and manhandled into the centre of the road, where they stood in a huddle, Arm and Harper looking surly, Morag placating the baby.

"We'll 'ave that," said the horseman, pointing at Morag. Two women and a man came forward from the bucolic crew around him and made to take the child. Harper stood in the way.

"Piss off," he said, snatching the man's staff. The women spat at him, and he laid the stick about their necks. The man kicked his bad knee from behind; drove an elbow into his kidneys took the weapon back and clubbed him down with it.

Arm shuffled forward, his fingers hooked, his stance canny and murderous.

"No, Arm," said Wendover. He felt very weary and hardly knew what to do. The dwarf shot him a look of anger, then shrugged. Wendover turned to the horseman.

"What is it you want from us?"

He remembered his gun, but couldn't make up his mind whether to use it.

"Oh, don't you play dumb with *us*," the man replied, giving his reins a vigorous shake. His horse chewed at its nickel bit with tough, rubbery lips. There were patches of black skin on its neck where the reins had rubbed the hair off. "You know what we want all right. And don't we know it!" He smiled slyly about to demonstrate his logic.

Harper groaned and got to his feet, leaning heavily on the dwarf, who was massaging his back for him. Morag was fighting



a silent tug of war for the child, plucking grimly at the flat beastly faces of the women.

Wendover ran a hand over his face, thinking, I'm far too old.

When he looked at the scene again it had frozen into a tableau. Arm was gazing into the mist, a musing cast to his features, his head tilted.

A deep mechanical moan swelled up from the verge of audibility. Hearing it, the horses stamped their feet, and the eyes of the horsemen shifted nervously about. The rest of the villagers stared in the direction from which they had come. Arm grinned suddenly and said something in a low voice to Harper.

**T**HE SOUND MOUNTED IN VOLUME, MODULATED perceptibly to a high and steady scream that scraped the inner ear. Soon, the mist became violently agitated, billowing down to ground level in pale vortices and then shooting up again to spread out like steam twenty five or thirty feet up. The effect was harrassing. Wendover performed

another act of mental submission. (He had come to dislike himself intensely for these continual cop-outs. He tried to argue that they were circuit-breakers, but it was a casuistry.)

A big LWN hovercraft hunched slowly out of the mist. Its snout was blunt, leprous and peeling, occupying the whole width of the road. Its slanted cockpit windows caught the grey, diffuse light, giving it a saurian personality: blind and inexorable.

"Ah-ha," said Arm, with a gleam in his eye.

Ears back, the horses circled nervously, treading on each other's hooves and tearing off strips of the wrapping. For easier handling, both men had dismounted, delegated their staves, and taken the animals on a short rein beneath the bit.

"Wait yer sweat, Dora Meadows," muttered one of them, jerking at the beast's mouth and eyeing the hover warily. The horse rubbed against his shoulder, easing a weeping sore beneath its eye.

"Sister'll sort *this* one out," he told his companion, "don't you worry about *that*." He indicated Morag with a sober nod.

"Them bloody tight trousers, eh?" he said. "Eh? It makes you wonder, like, with trousers like that."

The LWN came to a halt ten yards off, swinging broadside on to them, howling and sucking up mist. On its shabby flank was a flaking caption, TRUNK OP RAT ES. It sank slowly on its rubber skirt with a sigh audible above the diminishing sound of the lift engine. Settled, it straddled the road and both ditches.

"Hah," said Arm. "He'll regret that. The jet's not peaking. They never service the stuff." This latter with a fine contempt, showing his nasty teeth.

The hatch above and behind the cockpit fell back against the roof with a metallic clatter. A hand reached up from inside, clutched the coaming and pulled into view an ambiguously-sexed figure dressed in a long loose grey robe, a tight white hood, and what seemed to be a veil. It began to descend the ladder attached to the side of the vehicle, hampered by its skirts and moving laboriously.

So they never quite died out, thought Wendover.

The figure got closer, focussed sexually: a woman about as old as himself. A big bosom, but hardly suggestive of breasts; a short determined stride; the face blurred behind the veil. He wondered if she was cancered. Presumably she would wear the veil regardless. Her hands were large, the veins standing well up from the skin.

"I'm Sister Dooley," she said, assessing him as locus of the group. Her voice came as no surprise, loud, capable. "Now. You're not people of mine, are you? No. You're welcome anyway, of course.

"Now. What's going on, Mr Meadows?"

Meadows led his *Dora* forward, jerking at her mouth when she tried to crop the grass verge. He touched his forelock.

"They've got a frog, Sister. Won't give it up, neither," he grumbled. He shoved the mare's face away as it nuzzled his neck. He pointed the finger at Morag. "There."

The nun peered through her veil. She went and stood in front of Morag, looked her up and down for a moment, and said: "Goodness me child. Have you no clothes to wear? Do answer me now."

Morag set her face and whispered to the child. Harper limped up with the dwarf at his side.

"Leave the baby alone," he said. He never gave up.

Sister Dooley studied him. "I had no thought of touching it at all."

She came back to Wendover and Meadows, who had been covertly scrutinising one another in the stiff truce. Wendover was quite sure of his position regarding the nun's priest. He caught himself thinking, like a silly old man: When *I* have a stick.

"You should not have tried to take it from her, Mr Meadows."

And to Wendover:

"It was a mistake on his part. The child is her responsibility for a little while, you would say that?" Wendover started, taken unawares by the accuracy of the prediction. He opened his mouth to reply, but she cut in, "Then I'm sure you'll allow me to arrange the necessary, when the time comes?"

He could hardly believe their luck. Christ, he thought, She's got contact with the main body. We're home and dry.

"I'd like to see it through of course," he said, "but I'll be glad to hand over to you eventually. Do you have many dealings with the mutants?"

"The — ? Oh yes, that was the old name, wasn't it? Very many. I've become quite adroit in fact. There are so many of them here. I've been doing my imperfect best to ease the local situation for almost ten years now."

He found he liked her despite the cant. Obviously, she lived in a vanished past; but he should have expected charity, if nothing else. Whether he would allow her to take his final responsibility, he didn't know. He offered her his hand. When

she didn't react, he smiled instead. She had forgotten more than he had.

"I'm Wendover," he said.

"Yes. Now, if you and your people will follow me —"

She strode back to the hover. Meadows walked with her a few steps, but was forced to fall back when his mare refused to approach the machine.

"Giddiup, eh? Eh?" Wendover said to him, carefully skirting the snorting animal.

The bulkhead dividing the LWN's cockpit from the cargo bay had been knocked crudely out, and the remaining ragged edges of pressed-steel hammered flat against the sides and roof. The bay was about thirty feet by eleven, and had been used to house or transport animals: although it had recently been scrubbed, a sour smell of ammonia hung in the air. There were tethering rings spaced along one wall. The cockpit was laid out with dual controls and a long bench seat; its only complication was the bank of pressure-gauges above the windscreen, but several of these had been simplified radically, and hung loose and rusty from their sockets.

It was a dim place, even toward the cockpit end.

Arm went immediately to examine the equipment while the others stood wrinkling their noses in the cargo space, waiting for the nun. Outside, Meadows had relinquished the mare to one of his subordinates and was craning his neck to talk up to her as she leaned out of the open hatch. "You'll take the villagers and begin the thing properly, you're sure you remember. Hurry them up now, we've lost a lot of the morning here." She came down the internal steps and saw Arm.

"Stand away from there, young man. It's a difficult enough job to keep the machine running at all. I'm no mechanic."

"I see," said Arm. Then, with polite cheer: "Well, it won't be running much longer, will it? Your injectors are shot, and there may not be enough instrumentation left to adjust them. It's walking you'll have to be, and fairly soon."

In frigid silence, Sister Dooley settled herself into her seat, sinking slowly on to her skirts with considerable patience. She turned immediately off the road (the LWN lifted unevenly, yawed: for a moment, it was driving sideways, and Wendover saw a plunging horse reel past the blunt bow, lashing out with lumpy hooves) and began to travel due east at speed. She handled the machine with an odd combination of fussy caution and negligence, carefully avoiding one clump of bramble, then meeting a perfectly similar one with enough impetus to uproot it, cutting a broad swathe through the vegetation. Wendover clung to the back of the seat, lacking the courage to sit in the unoccupied half. Next to him, Arm stared fixedly forward with the stunned expression of a rabbit eyeing a ferret.

The decayed agriculture gave way to trees, which the nun was forced to detour. Wendover's forest was revealed as a five-hundred yard frieze of fir and elm, superceded in its turn by flat, marshy ground cut with muddy streams. Covens of rooks fled meetings in the elms, tumbling unhappily into the air. Through clouds of filthy spray, the damp landscape lurched violently. The noise was incredible. Wendover calculated from the shivering needle of the ASI that they had already travelled further than he had walked that morning. If the Sister kept pace, the villagers had no hope of catching up.

The hover side-swiped the solid bole of a willow and ricocheted on to a broad slow waterway. Wildfowl panicked up in flocks from an acre of sere reedbeds.

"EAST!" Arm yelled into Wendover's ear, but it didn't mean anything to him until a few minutes later, when the waterway broadened into an estuary lined with rotting pleasure boats, and he caught his glimpse of the sea, a smoky horizon. Morag cried out briefly, smiling and pointing. Sister Dooley put on more speed, barreling past midstream eyots and scuppered fishing boats. The engine noise batted back unheard from the wreckage

of a small port. She swung the craft through ninety degrees to parallel the coast, heading north in the shallows just off a shingle beach.

Arm shrugged, shook his head in puzzlement.

It was now impossible to turn inland: to the left above the tideline rose the dark backs of marram-anchored artificial dunes, built to prevent erosion, rising to eighty and a hundred feet above sea-level. (And out of a choppy sea to starboard rose the abandoned off-shore drilling rigs, some of them listing on broken stilts.)

Sister Dooley exclaimed petulantly; throttled back; wrenched the hover to port. The dunes bulked enormously in the windscreen, an imminent disaster. Wendover hung on hard, predicting a wreck. Was the woman mad? At the terminal instant, great dun shoulders flashed right and left as the LWN shot the gap left in the earthworks for another mouth of the river. The sea diminished as Sister Dooley throttled up and headed inland again.

After ten minutes travelling back along their original course, she put the thrust jet into reverse and stopped the vehicle on a patch of bare fenland fringed with low scrub, willow and elder. They were very near their point of departure. The motorway would be off somewhere to the right. A last few wisps of mist idled over the fen, which was black and loamy where the reeds didn't grow. A heron on a rotting stump regarded them, morose and hunchbacked.

"Well!" said the nun.

Wendover could make nothing of the silly journey. He drew in breath, to speak.

"Hush now," she said.

In the silence, his ears throbbed. Vague shufflings and breathings became noticeable. The frame of the hover popped and creaked. A lot of shouting began in the vegetation ahead.

"I get behind them, you see," she said, "and then they're between us."

The villagers came on through the scrub, spread out along a four hundred yard arc, heading direct for the LWN. The women and children were caterwauling and making a din by beating on buckets and tins. The men were flaying at the undergrowth with their staffs, beating to a steady rhythm called by the two horse-men. Meadows, at the left hand end of the line, cupped his hands round his mouth and shouted at his opposite number. The arc closed up, became a funnel opening on to the fen. There was a commotion at the edge of the scrub.

Three full grown mutants scattered on to the fen, running with difficulty on the boggy surface, their long strange heads swinging hurriedly in an attempt to assess the nature of the pursuit. Their scaly hides were daubed with mud. They saw the hover, and stopped so suddenly that one of them fell and lost his spear. He scrambled to his feet. Caught between the racket of the beaters and the wail of Sister Dooley's turbine, they hesitated, confused.

"You *bastard!*" screamed Harper at the nun, because he had lived long enough with Holloway Pauze to make the relevant associations.

She ignored him and dragged the throttle back. The LWN shot forward, throwing him into a heap on the floor with Morag and the child. Wendover grabbed at the seat, missed and went sprawling. Acceleration pinned him down. He thought, Christ, Christ. He struggled up. He could do nothing but watch.

The villagers caught their quarry easily, engulfing them. But there was a scuffle, some kicking and punching, and one of the mutants broke away suddenly. He avoided Meadows and his mare and ran off at great speed, twisting and dodging and roaring in an unknown language.

Sister Dooley clucked and went after him with the hover, matching every leap and twist with the cumbersome blunt thing, her splendidly capable hands firm on the steering column. She followed his deep footprints and ran him ragged to the brink of a stream. He lay there and panted, his flexible tongue quivering.

The hover was almost touching him, its airstream spattering him with fibrous black ooze and agitating the surface of the water behind him. He waited trembling until Meadows and some footmen came to take him.

With the stabilising of the hover's deck, Harper got to his feet. His nose was bleeding. Somebody was rattling the rear hatch of the cargo bay. It dropped away with a crash and became a loading ramp. Light surged into the bay. Wendover put his hand on the cripple's arm. He shook it off.

"Whoever you are," he said to the nun's back, "you deserve to be killed." He made a fist. She had been watching his reflection in the windscreen. She reached quickly under the seat and turned around with a machine pistol. It was too late for the Smith & Wesson. She looked at Wendover.

"It seems I have been mistaken with you, being heathens from somewhere in the north as you are. It is a pity things have got to such a pitch all over the place that I have no help from you at all in this. You deceived me, and I am an old woman."

The villagers were crowding into the hover, children and all. They had fastened rope halters very tightly about the necks of the mutants, and proceeded to tether them, pulling the ropes right through the rings until each victim's head was forced hard against the wall. They laughed and nudged each other's ribs. A few of them held up their children so they could poke twigs into the mutants' faces.

"Mr Meadows," said the nun, motioning him from the press, "there is trouble here now. Somebody will take your horse back to the village while you keep your eye well fixed on these here to see that they do not move." She gave him the machine pistol, which he handled gingerly.

"Stand over there," she told Wendover. "It's uncivilised that you should force me to do such things to smooth-skinned people, but I'll have you tethered if I must. Perhaps Mr Meadows can persuade you back into the reason of the Lord while I drive us."

The villagers backed out of the hover and slammed the loading hatch into place.

On the journey back, Wendover began the slow, attritive processes of conscience, seeing his own incapability afresh. It would have been so simple to deduce Sister Dooley's position from her earlier conversation, from the set and equipment of the villagers – even from the promptings of his own prejudice, a defense mechanism. He had instead relaxed and run with events, thinking like a peasant.

He wondered if the illness was at root of his consistent lack of discrimination: but that was another cop-out: his inability to resolve his problems with Tinhouse or to manage the group successfully had already symptomised muddy thinking. And the sense of relief, now quite vanished away ... Of course, he was being unfair to himself.

Mr Meadows converted them to no reason of any kind, because he did not speak. He regarded them with hostility and suspicion (less, on the whole, than he reserved for the machine pistol, which was an early model Tonge-Bennetto with a fur of corrosion on its external parts) and looked occasionally with disgust at the mutants.

Harper stared angrily at the broad shoulders of the nun, licking the blood from his top lip and twice abandoning the idea of attacking Meadows; Morag huddled over the child, exhorting it to silence; Arm had his head cocked, as if listening – at one point he nodded insinuatingly at Wendover, as if conveying information of some import.

Sister Dooley gave them a comparatively smooth ride. She didn't want Mr Meadows to lose his balance. The mutants gazed patiently in whatever direction their individual bonds allowed. They did not attempt to talk. Their skin gave off a pleasant, faint musk, but one of them had urinated down himself, possibly through fear. They did not seem to have

noticed the child and for its own part it kept up a grey complaint.

**W**ENDOVER'S TEETH WERE ACHING AGAIN. IT might have been guilt, or something in the vibration of the hovercraft: shortly before they had regained the road, its drive jet had begun to run rough, fading intermittently until Sister Dooley could make little more than steerage-way under full throttle. The LWN drifted along at walking pace, yawing aimlessly like a water bird on a quiet current. The tower Wendover had noticed from the motorway came into view, its earlier attraction revealed as an unwitting betrayal which he added to the catalogue of his foolishness.

The LWN guttered and stopped. It continued to hover, but there was no more impulsion. Sister Dooley wedged the throttle open and hammered at its housing with the heel of her hand.

"Isn't that a thing, Mr Meadows, and so near too?"

Meadows glanced superstitiously into the cockpit section and looked quickly away again, nodding. Wendover rubbed his painful jaw and marked how the shadow of an elm fell across the tranquil fawn stone of the tower; other trees prevented him from discovering the nature of the rest of the building; and if there were a village ahead, he couldn't see it. It was about noon, and the villagers were still a long way behind. Arm's expression had become smug. He said to Sister Dooley:

"I might do something." He waved a hand at Meadows and the machine pistol, politely raised his burnt-out eyebrows. He looked a sight in his charred clothes. She peered at him.

"Let him come forward, Mr Meadows, though why he should put himself out in this way . . . What would you know about it now?"

"You get a bit of water in your paraffin," said the dwarf, "you couldn't help that even in the old days, and stuff grows in it, fungus. It blocks the injectors and then it's fuel starvation."

It sounded a bit strange to Wendover.

"How would I know I'm not to be gulled by all this?"

Arm snapped his fingers.

"Because you can shoot me."

That bore no close examination. Wendover imagined small porcine eyes behind the veil, impaling Arm as an insurance against deception. What was the dwarf after anyway? It was a surprise when she said: "Very well. Show me."

Arm stood on the seat under her close scrutiny and joined a corroded wire to one of the loose pressure gauges. He tapped it smartly and a little needle peaked then dropped back again to fibrillate rapidly against its stop.

"See?" he said. He closed the throttle, switched off the drive turbine. She followed his actions intently, her breath whiffling against the veil. It limited his elbow room.

"Now," he said, "we blow them clear. Of course it's a short-term measure." He did something that started a pump beneath the deck. There was a faint sizzling sound. A smell of hot kerosene filled the cabin. He let the operation continue for some seconds, and throughout it the lift jet kept up a steady moan. He'll blow us up, thought Wendover. Withdrawing his hand, Arm brushed it accidentally against the dead throttle lever. Sister Dooley hissed. He shut it down ostentatiously.

"And you'll want the stabilisers matched to the new power load. The trim." He fiddled with a calibrated knob. "There." It all sounded very authentic.

"Stand away now. Should it work, you'll have my thanks."

She went carefully over the controls, touching everything he had altered in identical order of priority. Then she restarted the drive jet. It idled with a new note. She opened the throttle circumspectly.

The hover lunged forward. Wendover braced himself.

Morag went down, twisting to fall under the child. There was a tremendous groan from somewhere under the engine cowlings. It rose to a shriek. The machine pistol went *bok* once, and jammed. The lift jet failed. The hover hit the road still accelerating savagely. Sister Dooley banged her head against the windscreen, slumped. Harper leapt on Meadows and began inexpertly to strangle him. Paraffin ran over the deck. Arm took the machine pistol and jacked a dented shell out of its breech. Some shouting began outside, but a fair way off.

Wendover dragged himself up the steps, barking his shins in haste, and burst the hatch open.

"Trim!" cried Arm. "Oh you *stupid* bitch!" He giggled and shuffled his feet in a little dance.

Harper helped Morag up. He caught Arm's attention, pointed to the mutants, who had suffered most from the speed see-saw. They hung from the tethering rings by their hands, easing the nooses, necks rubbed raw. "What about these?"

"No time, forget them," the dwarf told him, swarming up the ladder.

Agreeing, but privately repelled by Arm's callousness, Wendover nodded to add emphasis. He took out his S&W, settled his duffel bag more firmly, and jumped off the roof. Landing, he hit his chin on his knees, sending a wave of agony through his rotting jaw. The villagers were approaching in a ragged line from the opposite side of the vehicle. He fired into them; then, with the dwarf scuttling beside him, stumbled into the ditch and forced his way through the overgrown hedge.

"Where's Harper?"

"Oh Christ!" They wriggled back through the blackthorn. There was a flat report. A bullet whipped past Wendover's head. Sister Dooley was standing in the hatchway, aiming the second barrel of a shotgun adapted to fire solid slugs. Her veil was up, but the distance was too great to divine her features. Villagers were milling round the stranded LWN. Arm let off the machine pistol, but it threw visibly to the left, and he missed. Sister Dooley loaded up and drove them through the hedge for the last time.

"The bugger stayed behind. I told him to leave them -"

"We'll go back and fetch him."

"You're as stupid as he is. Come *on!*" Bullets tore through the hedge; it shook to its roots as some of the villagers shoved through.

Wendover was horrified. "We can't leave them --" But he was running through the scrub.

Arm got down on one knee behind some gorse and expended a couple more rounds above the heads of the villagers. "Later, you hear me?" he said vehemently, breaking his fingernails in an attempt to elevate the backsight of the rusty gun. "Get into those trees. We're splitting up. You meet me on the road, up on the cloverleaf, after dark." He finished with the sight, tried it out. "Until then, hide. Don't go near that hover, or the village. Understand?"

Wendover nodded his head miserably.

"Right. I've got the trick of this thing. Get a shift on and I'll cover you. Dawdle and you're on your own."

He killed three of the villagers in the time it took Wendover to reach the trees. He was an expert. They retreated without the bodies. Wendover reached the conifers and ran sobbing through them, tripping over roots and ground ivy. Once, he dropped his pistol, and it went off with a huge noise. He lost his medical kit: with that, he sensed he had initiated a whole new phase.

**H**E SKULKED AMONG THE WRECKS OF THE motorway for several hours, changing his hiding place whenever he heard a sound. He bit his split lips and suffered shooting pains in his upper gums. No one followed him. After reloading the revolver, he found only a few car-

tridges left in his pocket. One of them was rimless, which meant it wouldn't fit. He constructed delusive plans for the rescue of the rest of the group. The panic receded slowly and left him with something else: there had been a shift of emphasis, of approach, and he felt it might have been triggered during his illness by Arm's predilection for violence.

**B**Y EVENING, HE WAS MOROSE, ALTHOUGH quite sure the dwarf would make it. He stood on the complex anagram of the cloverleaf, brooding over an immense white expanse of mist, into which vanished the vague supporting piers beneath him. He blew on his fingers, walked up and down, waiting for the moon. He felt cold and vacant. The mist had risen at sunset, cutting short his internal dispute — and re-affirming his dependence — on Arm's peculiar capabilities. A temperature inversion at chest height kept it low and eery. The access roads emerged from it like ramps from the sea, and there were wrecked vehicles in the shallows.

The moon came up bright and a day off full. Rebroadcast by the mist, its light revealed considerable detail and gave him a shadow. Boredom impelled him to pay attention to his surroundings, and he couldn't put down memories. There were no clouds.

Arm came up the sliproad from the village, whistling. He rose from the sea in stages as the ramp inclined, growing taller in an ectoplasmic way: a disconnected torso; hips; then long legs. He paused beneath the doctor on the ascending access-spiral, leant on the low crash barrier and looked down at the mist. He fumbled with his clothing and relieved himself out into space, then moved unhurriedly up the slope. Its final curve obscured him, brought him to Wendover's level. When he reappeared, he was extremely close, still whistling, and a total stranger.

Wendover inhaled hard, chilling his painful mouth. He aimed the pistol from the pocket of the raincoat.

The man was tall and ectomorphic. He wore bright blue velvet trousers, a white shirt with lace ruffles at the collar and cuffs, and a bottle-green jacket washed out toward beige by the moonlight. All the colours were unproven theories. Heavy rings glittered on his fingers and his long face seemed to be entirely devoid of cancers. His shoulder-length black hair was tied back with a white ribbon. He had a wispy little beard. His feet were bare. His tune had three notes. Across his back he carried a dark bundle.

He stopped whistling when he saw Wendover. He smiled. "Now here's a boost," he said in a curiously unaccented voice. He made no sudden moves. "You wouldn't have a match, I suppose?"

Nonplussed, Wendover let go the Smith & Wesson.

"No - I - I lost my bag —"

"Ah." He looked disappointed. He put down his bundle, leaned companionably on the parapet at Wendover's elbow and stared up at the moon. He didn't seem to be too cold in his thin jacket. He whistled a bit more of the monotonous tune. After a while he said:

"Well, it's a sod of a thing, isn't it?"

He picked up his bundle, fiddled with a leather strap, shrugged it across his shoulders. His expression was bland, unreadable. He smiled. He walked off in a northerly direction; waded back into the sea, his deceptive strides taking in large amounts of ground; he vanished among the wrecks.

**A**N HOUR LATER THE REAL ARM ARRIVED, HIS weapon at a jaunty angle. His face and hands were filthy. There was an air of restrained energy about him. Wendover, his nerves raw and jumpy, reached for his pistol even though he'd identified the dwarf. A hand closed tightly on his wrist.

"Steady on," said Arm. "No trouble?"

"No," said Wendover, feeling foolish, "not really."

The dwarf released his arm and looked round. "Pretty exposed up here. Not that it matters much, I suppose." He aimed the machine pistol at the northbound freeway. "What we need to find is a lorry I noticed down there this morning. I don't know exactly where it is." He set out at a stiff pace.

Wendover caught up and asked, "What's happening?"

"Ah-ha. I went to the village and snided about. They're all right still. She's got them in a church." He hawked histrionically and spat.

"Why did you tell me to keep away?" accused Wendover, but he was more relieved than wounded. Arm looked up at him with an expression of surprise grossly exaggerated by his blacked-up face, eyeballs round and white.

"But you'd have blown it. Creeping around isn't your scene, let's admit that."

"You're getting smug."

"It was a joke. Hard shit, if that's your attitude. I get the job done." He went silent and set himself to apparent examination of a burnt-out refrigerator rig. When Wendover asked "What are we going to do now?", he pretended not to hear. Wendover repeated it.

"We're going to get them out. Unless you've any other orders, Doctor Wendover."

Wendover didn't want to apologise.

"I'm sorry, Arm," he said.

The dwarf laughed; but he wasn't quite mollified. "You're a pisser," he said. "You know," he went on suddenly, "I'm forty-six years old. You wouldn't credit it, would you? I could be a godsend to any village, but they'd treat me like a wet-rag, too."

There was nothing to say to that. Arm's personal catastrophe had been birth. He went nowhere toward solving his own problems, neither was it to be expected of him. Aware of old advisory failures in remote consulting rooms, Wendover thought that trying to help was no help at all.

They came to a light transporter that had been damaged only by time. It had been abandoned late on the disaster period, and its rear doors were still locked. With a long steel bar to give leverage, they broke it open.

Inside were stacked small-quantity orders of chemicals for some dead minor business. It was a dangerous load. Arm sorted through the straw-packed crates, lifting them carefully out on to the tailboard for examination in the moonlight. He splintered one of them and took out a small packet.

"Put that away until I ask for it."

He went back into the wagon and found a two-gallon container labelled FIFTY PERCENT SOLUTION H2O2 WITH CARE. He smiled reminiscently.

"Hold that," he told the doctor, "while I get some other things."

Wendover accepted the canister gingerly, sat moodily on the bed of the wagon. The dwarf scrabbled mysteriously about among nearby bits of wreckage. He picked things up and threw them down again. He prised the door of the transporter off its hinges. He came back with an empty quart bottle, a brass nut, and an unopened can of lubricating oil.

"Go away," he said. "It might go wrong, and you don't want to be involved."

Wendover shook his head and stayed where he was.

"Bah," said Arm. He removed the heavy lead seal of the peroxide container and poured one and a half pints of it into the bottle. He tore strips from his trouser legs, rolled some of them into a tight ball and wedged them in the neck above the fluid. He hissed anxiously between his teeth. With the remaining strips, he bound the bottle tightly to the oil can. He removed the cap of the latter. The brass nut he put in his pocket.



“Right,” he said. “Remind me to carry it the right way up.” Wendover, to whom none of this meant a thing, said: “Will it work, whatever it is?”

“Oh yes, I think so. We’d better get a move on. They’re having some sort of meeting pretty soon. A *Mass*, I suppose. You’d better have the other gun. They still turn to Jesus in their times of trouble.”

He held the device to his chest as they went. After a difficult pitch of scrambling over the choked wrecks, he fell behind. When Wendover looked back, all he could see was a head jerking independently above the white mist.

**M**ORAG: IN THE AFTERNOON, SISTER DOOLEY had supervised her firmly into a trailing grey felt dress and woollen knickers that itched. It was civilised, she explained, and a penance. Harper’s dogged resistance had collapsed after threats to the child. Now, shepherded from the cottage in which they had been shut all afternoon and brought to a stone place, Morag was unable to relate.

It was draughty, high-ceilinged, dimly-lit with candles made from animal fat, which sputtered and stank. The pews had been torn out for firewood during some hard January. The east window was an arched hole framed with ragged shards of coloured glass. The villagers were lined up in rows, holding their hats in their hands. Under the empty window was Sister Dooley, assisted by Meadows in his black gaiters with a long knife. At least Arm and the old man had got away.

Soon it would be her turn. She had managed to keep the child quiet, but something would happen to it sooner or later, and she would never see it again. She hugged it, gazing at the thick pillars that supported the ceiling, watching the villagers shuffle up the nave between them. They filed in an orderly fashion past Sister Dooley, re-forming the rows when she had finished with them.

Soon it would be her turn. Everybody got a little cube of raw meat and a drink from Sister Dooley’s cup. There had been some singing. The dead mutant lay to one side, its innards revealed. They had tied up the other two in an outhouse because they only needed one at a time. There would be more singing, but the eating and drinking was carried out in silence.

She looked feverishly down at Harper, where he was crouched heaving emptily on the floor. Soon after the meeting had begun and Meadows had finished with the mutant, he had thrown up most of his food and tried to attack the nun. He was whimpering with pain and frustration. She wanted to touch him, but there was a strong woman at her shoulder. It was strange not to have found any reference to True Love in the books that he liked.

Soon, she would have to have a drink too. At the back of the place, somebody opened the door and made the draught worse. She knew she would faint or be sick.

**T**HE BOOT HAD STRUCK JUST ABOVE HIS genitals. He made a great effort to straighten himself against the cramp in his lower belly. A dull, unbearable anger diminished his pain. Where were Arm and Wendover now with their pragmatic guns. A tremor shook him. To see her face collapse under the veil, the jaw unhinged, spittle and blood. In this way he fuelled himself, unaware he had been born into a common currency, that he merely reflected the slaughter of the mutant. He got himself up on one knee by filling his head with obscenity.

Upright against the wall, palms flat on the gritty damp stone. Immediately, there was a villager in front of him, his staff a warning. Morag looked like a peasant in her peasant clothes. Her placidity was a feeble defence mechanism. He could do nothing for her. He experienced a surge of loathing for

himself and everybody else. The world was psychotic and tasted of bile. There were still nine or ten communicants to be served under the window, and in the dim, guttery light, their faces were rapt.

Smoke from the candles had gathered in a dark pall under the roof. As the west door opened, air currents shredded and dispersed it. The candles flickered, shifting the perspective of the nave, distorting the angle of a shoulder, the set of a head. Sister Dooley tilted the cup, glanced at nervous shadows that played on the tombs and windows of the transepts.

There was a skitter of motion by the font. A draught caught the door and slammed it back against its stop, where it banged to and fro, alternately compressing and expanding a trapezium of grey moonlight. The shadows capered and twisted their limbs.

A small fizzing object described a quick flat trajectory over the heads of the congregation and landed with a faint patter in front of the nun. Meadows stepped toward it. Sister Dooley dropped the cup, spilling glutinous fluid down the chest of the communicant. The vessel peeled musically on the stone floor. Sister Dooley turned her back on the celebrants, reached for something.

Meadows was blinded at the same moment as Harper, as the missile flared into a globe of bitter light.

Footsteps rang down the nave.

A harsh, hollow voice cried “Harper! Harper! Harper! Harper!” It might have been in his own head.

Sister Dooley’s shotgun boomed, echoes racketing round the pillars. Somebody screamed. Harper’s first attempt to move bruised his cheek against a wall, which was hidden behind a tremulous purple haze.

A hand fastened on his arm. He lashed out, struck the wall. “Steady,” said Arm.

An automatic weapon started up from somewhere at the back of the place, its rapid knocking light and spiteful.

“*Morag!*” cried Harper, plucking helplessly at the dwarf.

Arm dragged him forward. His sight returned, but everything was reversed and tinted, fading at the edges. Morag was running ahead of them, clumsily.

He suffered a vision of Wendover – whom he thought he had known – as an insane stunted old man, his lips peeled back, his eyes all yellow and black, shooting and shooting into a mass of bodies. Villagers ran shrieking about, their hands pressed to their eyepits, but they couldn’t get away. Blood arced into the air from a ruptured artery, pumping to unbelievable heights. It was stink and confusion and Panic shadows all in pastel colours.

Retching and gasping, he made it to the door.

Arm pushed him viciously into the cold night and he fell on the grass among old graves, shivering with terror and revulsion. Morag came, and pressed her long body against his; locked her legs and arms around him.

He clutched her, and rubbed his hands over her face.

**W**ENDOVER BACKED OUT OF THE CHURCH AND threw down the exhausted machine pistol. His face was smeared and twisted; his hands were shaking. Harper pushed the girl gently aside and sat up. “Doctor?” he called softly.

Wendover didn’t hear.

Inside the building, Sister Dooley was shouting at her villagers. Arm went up to the doctor and said, “Come on. Harper can travel now.”

Wendover glanced uncertainly around. He shook his head.

“Where’s the other thing? You only used the magnesium,” he muttered. He looked pained and stunned.

“There’s no need to do it, doctor.” Arm shook his elbow,

as if to jerk him awake. "We have all the time we need, as long as we go *now*. Come on."

"*NO!*" bellowed Wendover suddenly. He walked away from Arm, waving his hands and running them across his scalp.

"There are other considerations. In there —" He covered his face. "I want the other one," he said from between his fingers. He let his hands drop, but avoided Arm's eyes.

"No, doctor: it isn't necessary. We've done the job."

Wendover pulled out his revolver. He raised it and prodded it into the dwarf's face.

"Give it to me. Give me the nut as well. Tell me what to do."

Arm backed away. He shrugged.

"You're mad, Wendover. There it is." He nudged something on the ground with his foot. "There's no need for the gun. It's no business of mine what you do." He handed over a small brass nut. "Wedge it into the neck of the bottle. But don't weep at me afterwards. Don't do it."

"What's the matter?" Harper pleaded, struggling to his feet. He hurt and he just wanted to get away from the place. He thought that the nun wouldn't wait much longer before making some kind of counter-attack. "Doctor? Arm, wait!"

Arm had turned on his heel and walked off into the darkness.

**W**ENDOVER FIDDLED WITH THE THING ON THE grass, picked it up. He turned on Harper a gaze of utter wretchedness, almost of astonishment. He stumbled to the door of the church and hurled the device inside.

The building shuddered and expelled a gout of flame from its east window. A terrible cry went up from the communicants. Heat lashed out into the graveyard. Wendover staggered away from the door, his arms wrapped round his face. Even the belfry dreamholes were filled with fire. The rafters caught, the roof sagged. The lead melted.

Wendover's face obscured Harper's field of vision, twitching anarchically.

"*How many of them in there?*" it shouted.

Harper was going to be sick again. Saliva collected in his mouth.

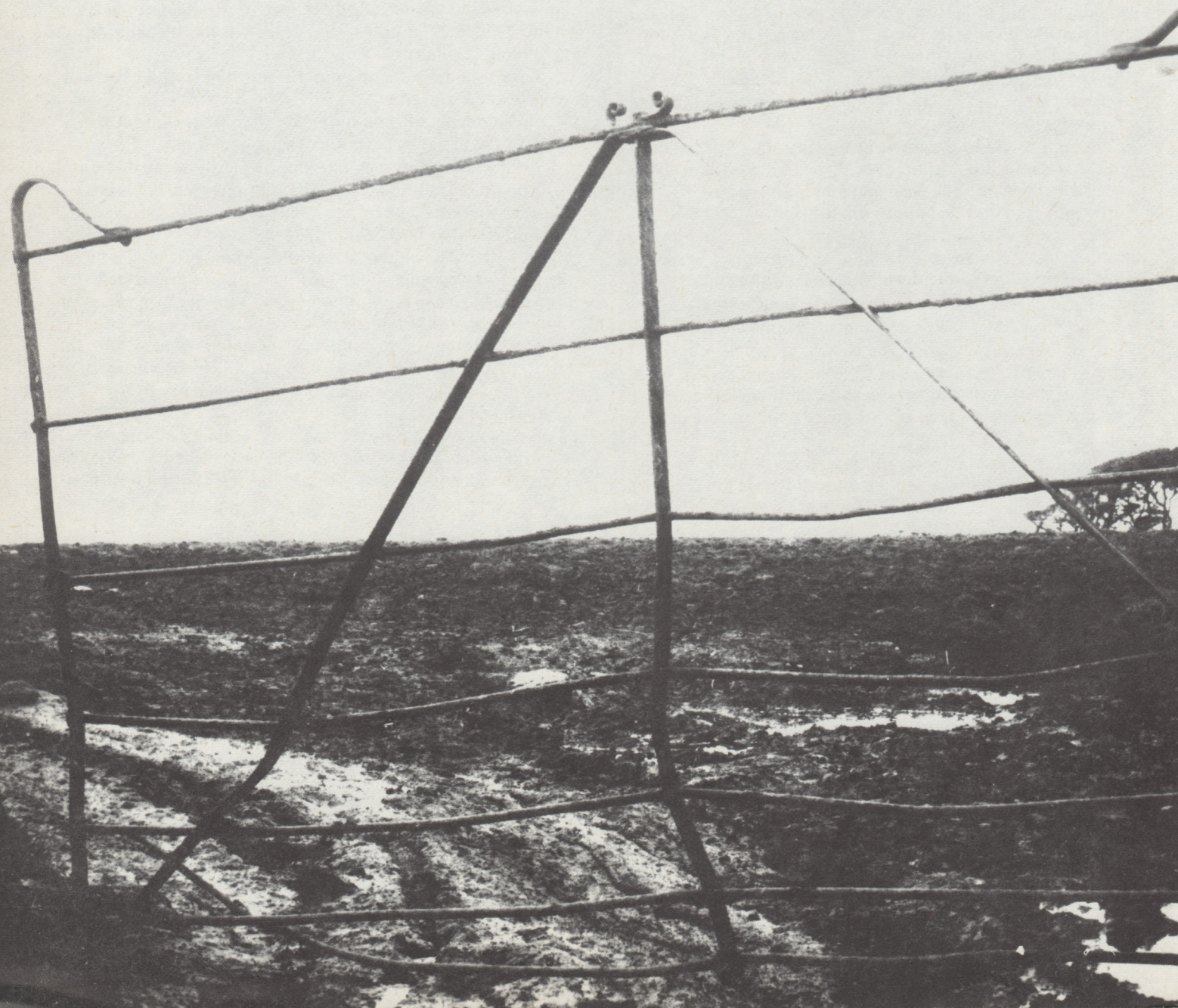
Sister Dooley appeared in the doorway over Wendover's shoulder, her veil and habit crackling and burning. She rolled and jerked over the grass, waving her limbs.

Harper said: "All of them. The whole village came." He went on his knees and retched bile up into his mouth.

Wendover nodded. He choked and began to cry, wiping the sleeve of his raincoat across his eyes.

"Good," he said, "good. Oh my god."

Arm was waiting for them on the road. ●



# THE TIME SHIP

by  
PAUL  
GREEN

the time ship keeps shifting  
on the surface of the glass curve  
in an eternal parabola  
through all strata

under the beds of the fossils  
between the crushed artifacts  
across the petrified marshes  
past the sunken monuments  
around the dull red core  
(the inflamed red heart of all dreamers)

the bomb-shaped timeship keeps moving  
into the clay

The Captain, permuting his log, a pastime  
sits naked in the control room; a glow  
from the master panel; wet blank viewports:  
What exists out there? Nobody knows, no

sounds; image scanners outline a grey sun.  
Down below: a thickening layer of  
sand in the engine room where a tree has begun  
to branch; twigs flex and claw the eggshell roof.

Strands of hair around the bronze terminals,  
a scratched switch, bent pins, shattered sockets, dust  
swims over relics of rape. Seminal  
fluid evaporates. The first mate's lust

became myth. His blinded victim wanders  
between mirrors and crawls on corroded  
catwalks towards the motor cage. Under  
the rotors she lies and waits. Exploded

fragments of matter cannot scar her now.  
All the seeds are dead. Silence. Her thighs close;  
glimpses of white limbs, discs spin near her brow.  
In the bowels of the ship, the time tree grows.

The warped geometry of dark cabins  
contains passengers. Few can remember  
their outlines. Some have lost senses. The Captain  
crows in his nest. He is the last member

to remember. He keeps the charts, the maps,  
files, tablets, crystals, cards, creates the logs.  
Giant spools roll through his mind. Holes and gaps  
gape through his grainy dreams; time travelogues

again and again  
at recurring kinks on the graphs  
we prayed for guidance  
but the prayer wheels had stiff axles

again and again  
we were reassured  
"the time ship is carved from rock"  
from those who sought sanctuary in cracks

again and again  
re-reading the book of Gnomes  
we searched for omens  
there were reports of huge cogs sinking on the horizon

again and again  
to re-condition our reflexes  
we dissected robots  
some protested but tests succeeded (in a way)

again and again  
to revive the old pleasures  
we destroyed wide-eyed girls in the smoky enamelled chapels  
the soft ashes choked us

TO BEGIN AGAIN TO FIND A LOST CONTINENT TO REFRESH THE SPECIES  
TO DISCOVER THE THIRD EYE TO GO TO BED WITH ANGELS IN TREES

was that the clean draft of the manifesto?

I cannot live it  
we cannot live it  
they could not live it  
you will not live it

the old terror catches us up in its paw  
the act is ruptured  
as the perpetual shit churns and tumbles on the screen  
as the screaming alarms announce time  
as the time ship slides and shudders down a rubberized vortex

time flips over/blinds/my eyes are black spots  
long gropes: where is the dog where is the man where are the  
sibilant guides our voices where is the girl  
WHERE ARE YOU

time drips inside the ship, hollows stone minds  
I am inside the ship the ship keeps moving



**T**HE OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL PORTRAIT SHOWS the President sitting on a stone horse wearing a winged helmet and winged shoes like the God Mercury and holding a large red cup in his hand. His vizor is open, he is graceful not warlike. He too is a dreamer, though armed *cap à pied*.

However in the tiny walnut-panelled Situation Room at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, beneath the three clocks labelled WASHINGTON, PRESIDENTIAL, and ONE, all showing exactly the same time, an entirely different picture hangs. The sky is blood-red and streaked with smoke whipped by a fierce wind. Two brothers have cast down their swords and trudged weeping to the sea-shore. The third brother holds his ground, gathers up their swords, and shoulders them. A slightly malicious grin, or a trace of passing nausea, shows on his face.

Turn up the SECOND CARD and lay it across the FIRST, saying: This crosses him. It shows the nature of the obstacles in the matter.

The President left the Doctor's suite visibly impatient at the MEDI computer printout. Whenever he got impatient like this, his features suddenly seemed much smaller and meaner than they ought to be, considering his breadth of shoulder, broad face and large lock of hair, features of the conventionally handsome second carbon copy: perfectly legible if a little blurred, a little faint in patches.

"You have the nerve to call this thing, this coronary so-many per cent cancer so-many per cent *thing*, an extrapolation of *my* death!"

The Doctor spread his hands in a calming papal gesture.

"But Mr President, assassination simply isn't a factor."

"You know damn well it is a factor."

"Not so far as MEDI is concerned it isn't. MEDI simply balances the known statistics on death ratios at different social levels against your own family's medical history, then filters your own data through this net to see what turns up. Why, MEDI doesn't even take account of road deaths."

"My brothers both died the same way."

"Yes, but without any *prior medical* reason . . ."

"Doesn't the machine understand!" cried the President. "Surely it can see some . . . what'll I call it, predisposition?"

"I'm sorry. You're most likely to die at the age of seventy, of cancer. And you won't be alone. Most other folks will be dying of cancer too. Even kids are starting to die of cancer."

Turn up the THIRD CARD; place it above the Significator, and say: This crowns him. It represents the Querent's aim or ideal in the matter.

A prostrate figure, pierced by all the swords belonging to the card.

Nobody ever realized that the businessman who commissioned Andy Warhol — himself an assassination victim — to make silk-screens of the Zapruder movie frames, was doing a personal favour for the President. The silk-screens hung in a

very private room in the White House covering all four walls and even hiding the door. The President used to go in there alone on Sunday mornings while his aide waited outside with the black steel suitcase containing the nuclear plunger handcuffed to his wrist.

The aide, John, suffered from an absurd phobia that if the plunger was ever pushed his own hand would be blown off at the wrist, so he had the case locked to a different wrist each day, Monday his left wrist, Tuesday his right wrist, and so on.

When the President came out of the room the handsome face would be tight with impatience.

Turn up the FOURTH CARD; place it beneath the Significator, and say: This is beneath him. It shows that which has already passed into actuality.

From his presidential retreat in the Appalachians, he held a news conference.

"About the black box," was one of the questions passed to him from a randomly selected voter in Phoenix, Arizona.

The aide held up his chained wrist in front of the T.V. cameras as the President demurred, "Naturally I can't show you what's inside, you'll have to take my word for it, but it looks more like a football . . . or a chocolate Easter egg . . . or a child's globe of the world . . ."

Turn up the FIFTH CARD; place it to the right of the Significator, and say: This is behind him.

The upside-down car in the flood, the bubbles of air, the nylons, the angry telegram telling him MAKE LOVE NOT WATER.

Turn up the SIXTH CARD; place it to the left of the Significator, and say: This is before him.

"We're in contact now Mr President. Will you take it in the Oval Room? All the major networks are covering."

"Whose damn idea of a joke is that! Exactly where Nixon spoke to Tranquillity Base with his signature safely up there on the Moon and a smirk on his face . . . now I've got to talk to this . . . corpse!"

"It'll be very *good* for your image on the contrary. This is the very first time a President has been able to talk to a national hero while he is actually dying, to be with him to the end. It's got a helluva lot more appeal than the first landing, in a sense. It'll expose that funny little man with his crumpled suits for what he is — *meretricious!*"

"You're right. I'll take the call right there in the Oval Room. And I'll make it memorable."

The SEVENTH CARD of the operation signifies himself and shows his position or attitude in the circumstances.

*The STAR is the type of Truth unveiled, glorious in undying beauty, pouring on the waters of the soul some part and measure of her priceless possession.*

*Reversed, it signifies: arrogance, haughtiness, impotence.*

The broken astronaut lay at an angle of thirty degrees to the horizon against a slab of lava, looking past the test pattern on the television screen at the stars. He looked quite undamaged, fastened into his pressure suit with its seventeen separate layers that had all been punctured by the micrometeorite that smashed into his crotch. The pain had turned to numbness now. His crotch quick-frozen by the moon chill that was spreading to the rest of his body. He kept one gloved hand

over the area of the leak, like a modest statue. He wondered should he try to push himself upright with one swift press of the hand as soon as the President's face appeared on the T.V. screen. But the President's face swam and flickered even as he was wondering. That pinched handsome face leaned forward solicitously as if over a sickbed, or uncertain where the patient was.

"Hello Dan," said a voice in his head, "it's a pretty-near impossible kind of thing that's happening out there . . ."

Out where? wondered the astronaut, since he was here.

"What would you say the chances were of this sort of thing happening again in the next thousand years?" And the astronaut was about to make a guess when the voice went on and answered its own question. "A billion to one I guess. Yet it had to happen to you. Dan, I can only say that your country won't forget this chose *you* to happen to. Your name will go down alongside Abraham Lincoln and . . . and all the other slain Great." There was a catch in the President's voice, his eyes seemed misty across the hundreds of thousands of electric miles. "I don't know if that's any consolation to you Dan . . ."

"Yes Sir," said the astronaut, and gathering his strength he pushed himself erect with one hand. A knife sliced through his groin and his face screamed silently at the T.V. camera, twisting into a baboon snarl, while the lens continued as before to transmit a blank face-mask reflecting the trampled sandpit landscape.

The EIGHTH CARD signifies his house, that is his environment and the tendencies at work in the matter.

Three swords piercing a heart; clouds and rain behind.

"What does it stand for anyway? Medical Extrapolation Death Index, isn't it. I never know with all these acronyms."

"That's right Mr President."

"But what does it really mean to people? I have to take the MEDI test because I'm the President, and I think I would anyway, but ordinary folks don't really want to know do they? Do you want to know, John?"

"Well no, I reckon not. But that MEDI thing isn't a fortune-teller. It doesn't say you'll die for sure on such and such a day at such and such a time and nothing you do can possibly stop it. It just weighs up medical risks. Seems like a handy machine to me. So long as you don't regard it as God. It's not even Man, it doesn't know all the facts we know. Traffic accidents . . . murders . . . this thing . . ." He tapped the black case with his free hand.

"You know what General Giap says? Every minute, he likes to say, every minute one hundred thousand human beings die all over the world; so the life and death of human beings means nothing."

"Means nothing to *him* maybe!"

"Let's not be narrow-minded John. Also, let's remember that General Giap dying may mean more to the world than the other ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine deaths that same minute. There's a paradox for you. The death of a great man is a sort of megadeath."

The NINTH CARD gives his hopes or fears in the matter.

"Dan's death, too. It affects as many people as a million other deaths . . . Is Dan dead yet?"

"We don't exactly know. I mean it's hard to tell. The television picture doesn't show any sign of movement and we can't raise him by radio. You could say he's dead, plus or minus ten minutes."

"Dan's pre-empted first place in deaths on the Moon. That death of his is statistically unrestricted - statistically unique

too. The second death up there can't possibly be so free, so . . . definitive . . ."

"I heard something on the radio last night . . . Each man dies alone."

The President sighed.

"Not Dan. He died a megadeath . . . Tell me John, if I was assassinated tomorrow, would the event have any significance for me?"

The TENTH is what will come, the final result, the culmination which is brought about by the influences shown by the other cards.

Inside the Andy Warhol silk-screen room at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue the President sat on a low revolving stool, turning slowly round and round, reviewing the assassination not through the hot high-definition medium of the Zapruder movie, but through the cool low-profile medium of Andy Warhol's giant silk-screens, a medium for full participation.

Revolving on his stool slowly, reliving that prototype of days, the President called out,

"John, step in here will you, there's a little thing I want . . ."

His aide opened the door, stepping discreetly inside for the very first time with the black case chained to his wrist containing that football or chocolate egg or globe of the world or what have you.

That particular day it was his left wrist.●



# Two stories by Gwyneth Cravens:

## ABBE WAS I ERE I SAW EBBA

I

Abbé undone, I. As I lay forsaken on my slug-striped mattress in a wretched Bowery hotel, staring at the mottled ceiling — whereon was executed, by chance, a delicate aquarelle of Mount Elbert, that patriarch of the Sawatch Range — I tried to capture in the fine-mesh conical net stretched between the corneal and the optical nerve of my cerebral eye an exact image of my lifelong leman, my love, my Ébba.

II

Ébba. Her name itself extrudes an iron efflorescence. I recall my first meeting with her, during the spring thaw, when she was stooping to inhale the sweet effluvium of the twining eglantine, her outstretched arms and her cross-country skis forming in profile the branches of a majasculè *E*, her rounded bosom and her crooked knees the bowbend of a double *b*, her arched eyebrow and her tilted monocle an uncertain schwa (9).

III

Elusive as an eland, excellent Ébba, Ébba, whom I, forgetting my entomological eminence in the Order, pursued with all the élan of El Cid Campeador, through the exurbs of her family estates near Ekaterinburg (before it became Sverdlovsk), through the exclaves of her family estates near Ekaterinodar (before it became Krasnodar), and through the egresses of her family estates near Ekaterinoslav (before it became Dnepropetrovsk) — all, *al final*, to have Ebba, embosked in a dusky thicket of *prosopis glandulosa* in El Centro, Utahmsk, effect my clerical exile. Ebba, elastic as an elasmobranch shark!

IV

Ébba, my hard-eked etymologies click uselessly about in my *ka*, my *ba*, and my *ku* like the nocturnal staccato of numberless elaterid beetles. (“*Elateridae*, my dear ancient earwig,” she notes marginally in block print, the characters of which are fair copies of the crepuscular silhouette of the Far Rockaway elevated: train trestles marching across Yakutsk Bay.)

V

Babe Ébba, the only way, perhaps, to bag you is by employing the elative, an adjectival form denoting intensity or superiority, which I serendipitously happened upon in an old Arabic grammar I discovered while roaming incognito and incommunicado through the temporal wastes between El Alamein and Elath. (“Pah. I thought you were on an expedition mounted to gather specimens of *Ecballium elaterium*, or squirting cucumber!”)

VI

However: Ébba. I, abandoning my abbey, followed her as one follows the willynilly *Danaus plexippus*. With Ébba I passed wide afternoons green as chlorine under the elders of Elblag, under the palms of Elche, under the beobabs of El Aaiun, and under the billboards of unnamable preAdamic macadamed swaths all across gleembrite rushing America. (“Why does the *Gallus gallus* cross the road?”)

VII

Rustam to her Ludmilla, I explicated the eisteddfodic lilt of her EKGs, or electrocardiograms. I elucidated all her eldrich notions, including that concerning her Electra complex, which was the dubious endowment of Herr Doktor Qvack, erratic advisor to Ébba’s mother, Mable (who now dreams, *amable et douce*, under the blighted Chinese elms that line the autoid avenues of her Novovada estates) and which I, a dozen years her elder, thought I had successfully exorcised one dense lexicological evening on the upslopes of Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus with the presentation of a wicker basket of imported Elberta peaches red-gold as sunset-burned El Capitan (a precipice jutting 3,300 feet above Yosemite Valley) and a wobbly kiss upon her jejune elbow. (Here she scrawls, with all the soaring energy of an ejection seat during an emergency aboard an X-15, “My anagramic old Elamite, you are absolutely absurd to omit mention of the fact that just prior to that moment of ‘gentle fuzziness’ we had been poring over ‘Botany for the Millions,’ quibbling about whether slime molds were properly members of the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, or the Duchy of Luxembourg, and comparing our respective prepared-slide collections of elaters — those intriguing elastic filaments that serve to dispense mold spores and that were so named by Elagabalus, the first Roman emperor to engage in the study of myxomycetes.”)

O slides of elaters, stained!

VIII

Ébba, my Ébba, how could you shed your lieflong, leaflong lover to wed another? To wit, to wed that egregious corrupter of youthen, Qvack? Ébba, I ache. (“A cure without a cure? Poor Dan is in a droop. Give up!”)

IX

In euphuistic delirium I wane. By the chloroform of her perfume I am prostrated; on the balefire of her gaze — narrowed to a laser beam — I am impaled, like a Mercury Impala driven over the palings of Route 66 and pierced by the pinnacles of petrified forests. (“To keep his pants up!”) Nu, End, O Ebba!

# LITERATURE and the FUTURE of the OBSOLETE but PERPETUAL PRESENT by Claude René Vague

"L'objet est sur la table de ma tante."  
—René-Claud Fin

Here at last we have an *oeuvre* that succeeds in casting away forever those antiquated notions of "character," "story," "action," "point of view," "form," "contents," "pagination," "chapterification," and "commitment" — in short, all those false panaceas originally prescribed by M. de Balzac and now available to the masses at the meanest of *pharmaciens-libraires*. The "author" — if I may permit myself to resort to a momentary signification — is Claude René-de Rien; one is allowed to learn solely his name, and that, by the accidental discovery of what appears to be an erased pencil signature inside the back cover. The *oeuvre* itself is difficult to obtain, for publication and circulation would mean *zut!* "mean" — negation of all that M. de Rien has sought to achieve. I was fortunate enough to come across his creation while seated in the open air cafe Chez N——, opposite the Jardin du Luxembourg, one morning. At the time, I happened to have been alternately perusing the latest insults to my books and films in *L'Express* and regarding a young, auburn-haired woman whose neck and shoulders were enveloped in a white ostrich boa and whose legs and arms were constricted by a number of heavy steel chains welded to a *métro* signpole a few metres from my table. A sabre, a dagger, a kris, a bayonet, an arrow, a blowdart, and a lance protruded at various angles from various points in her solar plexus. An endless wail emanated from her parted, immobile lips. Streams of cafe au lait ran from her face and hair to the sidewalk, which was of an irregular puce, embedded with glittering bits of mica or some similar mineral. From time to time a large yellow Labrador retriever bit, or did not bite, her ankle. However, my gaze was soon diverted to my table and its hard, grainy *tablisme*, interrupted, *alors*, by the unanticipated presence of a rectangular solid. The object, forgotten, perhaps, by some boulevardier, was bounded on the lefthand side by a narrow metallic spiral and was covered on the topmost surface by a piece of lightweight beige cardboard. On this cover were several umber-colored letters of the alphabet arranged into "words". In the center, "60 PAGES UNRULED;"\* below, in smaller letters, "Extra Heavy Weight Paper;"† and below that, in the same hue as of the letters and about three centimetres apart, two horizontal lines; and below them, "National/33-689 Made in U.S.A."\*\* (These words, imprinted, it seems, in a primitive and possibly extinct "language" whose locus is outside the faubourgs of intellectual civilization, are transparent and denuded of sense. The numbers, too, carry a defiance of language; paradoxically, they affirm a scrutiny of reality conducted with all the intransigence of a pure mathematician.)

*Instantanément* my attention was captured. Before me lay what appeared to be a "book" of the sort Flaubert or Proust had produced (though of smaller dimensions: the number "SOIXANTE" tallies exactly with the number of sheets of paper — they are white, with rounded corners — attached

\* "SOIXANTE CHASSEURS INDOMITABLES"

† "Extra-Avoir du Poids Gravité du Papier"

\*\* "National Coupure trente trois trait d'union six cent quatre-vingts neuf."

within. What a comfort that M. de Rien refuses to work distortions!), and yet the spiral's sensual penetration of the two covers and all the pages through fifty-five discrete, regularly-placed apertures of equal diameter promised a universe of the novel altogether new. One apprehended a quasi-circularity that, rhythmically advancing through the physical work, would again and again return one, by way of the conclusion, to the beginning, to the original reality, to the ultimate opacity. And opacity, free from tragedy, comedy, and other human errors, is what confronts one upon turning to the "first page" (of course the pages are unnumbered). There, the force of clarity thrusts one immediately back into the quintessential struggle of man with the world, or the struggle of the man of tomorrow with the world of tomorrow. I quote M. de Rien's masterful and baffling opening:

(I am somewhat disturbed about the placement of the period. Perhaps the total subjectivity of M. de Rien did not include such an act, the punctuation having, rather, its source in the impenetrable, particle-ridden flux of the *res extensa* or in the random variations of an underprivileged sense of sight.)

The other fifty-nine pages continue to mirror this absolute quality, that is, the quality of true reality, that reality which addresses itself to all men of good faith, that reality which lies behind the tattered screen whereon we project time, space, nature, humanity, ideas, reflections, motion pictures, and so forth, that reality which is, at its heart, invisible emptiness. Not for M. de Rien the miserable crumbs of *petite madeleine*, the pitiful stains of *tilleul!* However, let no one mistake the freshness of his pages for *naïvete*: throughout, the enigma is present within the enigma as well as behind the enigma. The enigma *is always there*, and, as Heidegger has said, "Claude-René, *mon vieux*, the human condition *is to be there*."

Just as M. Flaubert wrote the new novel ("*Madame Bovary*") of 1860, just as I wrote the new novel ("*La Vapide Vide*") of 1960, so has M. de Rien evolved the new novel of 1970, 1971, 1972, and — *honi soit qui pense* — beyond. He has given birth to *le nouveau* primarily by annihilating, in the absence of a single stroke, the ancient problems of description and time. Of description there is none. And, since every page is identical to the first, one may commence or finish at any point . . . or not commence at all, if one so desires; thus, the passage of time remains accurately elusive. Time is "shown" as eternity or as precisely this instant, depending upon how one chooses to view it, and upon who is paying for the footage when the *oeuvre* of M. de Rien spirals forward in its exquisite purposelessness to become *cinéma*.

# COMPUTER 70: DREAMS AND LOVEPOEMS

D.M.THOMAS

17

As though inside a shifting-booth  
where people come to change their truth,  
(in every megalopolis,  
at every corner of every street  
but most where market-alleys meet  
plate-glassed boutique emporia, this  
structure accosts your eyes, and lures),  
you sit before ambiguous mirrors,  
and take your glasses off, and rub  
your eyes, and place to cornea  
the plastic lens, and feel freer  
already for the change; you stub  
your cigarette out, and roll some pot,  
playing it cool who once played hot;  
fading indents in each brown welt,  
you peel your stockings and unhook  
—cinchmarks around your waist, your back  
stippled— the red suspenderbelt,  
roll on your tights, feeling freer  
already for the change; no leer  
on tube or pillion penetrates  
you now, your cunt becomes a crutch  
all eyes may see but not too much

intrude on: nothing devastates  
the voyeur like a total show,  
gone the erotic veils; you grow  
a new and space-age decade; wrap  
a mini round you; squat, remove the cap,  
and take a pill that won't confine;  
you zip on knee-high boots; you wash  
bright lipstick off, and draw a fresh  
but coolly naturalistic line;  
your hair accepts a wig, a mass  
of ringlets; cool as menthol grass  
you step out of the shifting-booth,  
where people come to change their truth,  
(in every suburb of every city,  
at every corner of every street,  
but most where redbrick avenues meet  
the overpass, the motorway.)  
If I no longer love you, blame  
not the shifting counters, but the game;  
look younger down the killing years;  
blame dust the wind and traffic fling  
to lodge under lenses and to sting,  
for your lachrymae rerum, tears.

we touched the world through the oily palms  
of mute petrol salesmen in forest garages  
we saw no headlines sowing unreal alarms  
adjudged danger by our own steady gauges  
what did we care in our favourite layby that the car  
radio cut out in the midst of Scarlatti our lips  
neverbreaking our hearts still as near and as far  
down the short wave band we followed the eclipse  
but on friday the scarlet lipstick you produced as you prepared to leave me  
turned black on your lips saturday your skirt was no longer orange a blue  
moon shone through the windscreen on sunday on monday we crossed a city  
where contrite hymnsinging shook the stadium whether the lights said go  
we could not tell till we reached the no-speedlimit sign  
tears did not cease to run your eyeshadow not green but ash  
on tuesday the sky was grey with a black sun  
and today at noon there is no colour except a splash  
of violet where your suspenderbelt arches round  
a tuft of darker shadow the shortest wave will  
exceed these trees soon we wait no sound  
lit by black beams a breeze strums the aerial

19

Your face, beside me in the car and staring ahead,  
has the beauty of the austere geometry  
of gridroads, highways, underpasses, I  
have cut from, imposed on, your innocent terrain.

Though tears star your cheeks like the few  
rainsplashes left by the wiper on the windscreen,  
the tears of foetuses, perhaps,  
we cannot stop — the shoulder is hard.

Must lick up the cat's-eyes, endlessly,  
as we do acts of love, slake our hungers where we pause.  
The space between what I would like to give you, my  
darling, and what I can, is this V, dividing a motorway

into two. One day you will slip away,  
save yourself, as a car turns down a sliproad and  
is gone. Then, I shall press my foot down  
on the accelerator, harder, harder, and be gone.

## PART TWO

18

Why does the steel, hygienic city  
hold so much dust?

Driving, to fetch my son from school,  
tears streaming down my face,  
will the curious indifferent standers-by  
know it is a contact lens  
and not despair?  
Agonised, I flick it into my hand  
light as a waterdrop. Light.  
Water-baby, it swims on the dead sea  
of eyes.

Once, on the slopes of Mont Blanc,  
I rubbed my eye unconsciously and  
it flicked away, joined all the other snow-crystals  
in the immense glacier,  
till judgement.

Frozen, inseparable,  
plastic and tear.  
Longer than anyone  
it will mourn for me.





20

I insist on watching you  
piss. You laugh at my insistence.  
If I knew why, I would know  
the secret of the Mozart piano concerto  
that has faintly followed us up the stairs.  
How gaily, inexorably, it pursues its coda!

21

You sleep,  
uncomfortably. The car dreams  
it holds bedrooms, dining-rooms,  
sun-rooms and creches.

24

All afternoon,  
among stereos, plush carpets, among breasts and buttocks,  
I have been making love to your eyes,  
where it has been snowing frenziedly  
and clearing to blue skies.  
Your eyes have the stereogram's  
mysterious fidelity,  
rising when I draw near,  
fading when I move away.  
My whisper caught in the one groove  
of I love you,  
like the old gramophone used to do.  
All afternoon I have been making love to your eyes.  
Now as we say goodbye,  
and plan to meet tomorrow,  
the snow has melted, retracted  
into brambles and hedgerows and ditches.

22

This model with her shaven head,  
her lustreless and lidless eyes,  
erects erotic fantasies  
more than your softness in my bed.

She's disciplined as a poem; no sigh  
like you exhale, no quickened breath;  
coldly she sees — that life, that death  
the curious, pausing passers-by.

Two arms undress her, not her own,  
out of a backcloth, black-magician;  
you move to order, for coition;  
her flesh is hard as bone;

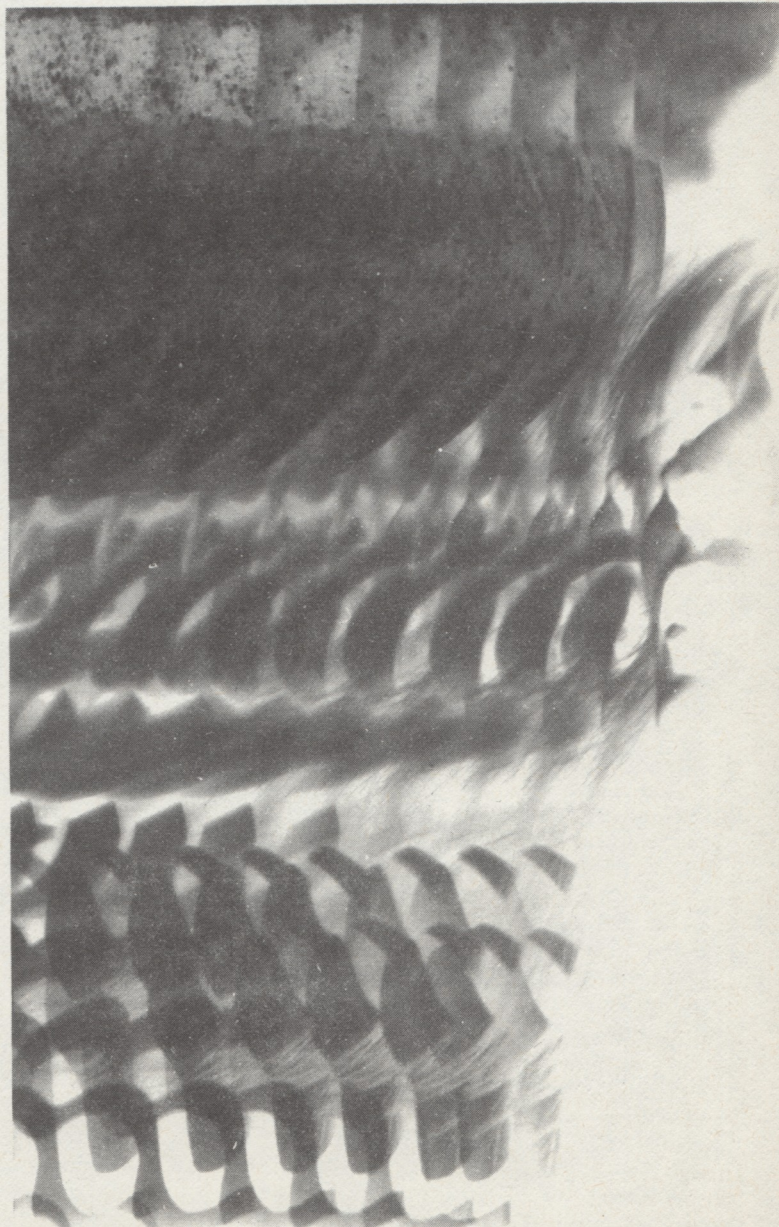
23

When we lie together  
meltingly  
as the swan with Leda,  
your eyes grow overfull  
with children in Biafra,  
children in Vietnam.  
I am that brutal soldier,  
my tenderness is rape.

intractable, it gives no aid  
to hands that strip the coat, the frock,  
unclasp the stockings and unhook  
bra and suspenderbelt; you made

your strip too clean, as though the act  
of love was why we came. You raced  
out of your tights, and I embraced  
the four bare strenuous limbs of fact.

If I'd this model in my bed,  
never would imagination die;  
hard-on from rasp of clothing, I  
would never take her maidenhead.



so overcome she did not hesitate when the maintenance-  
 man came to fix her heating spoke through the door-  
 grill but lifted the chain she wrung her hands  
 crying **the president has been shot** stood in his white boiler-  
 suit bag of heavy tools forgotten in hand and stared  
 likewise at the screen the motorcade broken  
 like a child's kicked line of cars a shock shared  
 is more supportable she was grateful not to be alone  
 after the death arrived he excused himself work must be done  
 though new frontiers die the debt collector must be paid  
 apartments must be made warm for single girls in lonely Boston  
 JFK's city through a halfopen door he watched the motorcade  
 in playback Jack smiling and Jacqueline's proud face clear  
 of blemish nothing could stop the next second's horror  
 while with his other bloodstreaking eye he watched disappear  
 his ordinary dull appearance from the bathroom's silver mirror  
 though he fought the spell when the wolfbane blooms  
 under the high moon even saints lock themselves apart  
 and chain their doors something loped through the room  
 as it were snow dry blood tracks Jackie's skirt

25

Within your palm, ordinary and undowned,  
 I found no pentagram,  
 no star; your eyes stayed clear and cool  
 in the full moon; you did not disappear  
 in a silver mirror; I saw that your ears,  
 when you took off your fur hat,  
 and shook out your hair, were small  
 and rounded: all was normal; where  
 were the signs we would be bound  
 by the same rabid wound: lycanthropy?

When wolfbane blooms under a high full moon,  
 again, baying the moon, the pull  
 of a friendly, lighted house, with creches, fires,  
 catches you! For our benighted desires turn  
 inward, gnaw thighbones' human loss. No wonder,  
 under the strain, the cross-infection  
 courses round us like the cycle of rain, forever;  
 my cough in august your fever in september;  
 sore, stye, migraine, pain in chest or back  
 attack us alternately. Always you or I

are visiting a sick-room. Nor could we live,  
 black and white witches,  
 but that we weave tight stitches for our wounds:  
 are pain and anodyne, pus and affection,  
 transplant, rejection, virus, antibody,  
 scald and salve.

27

It was not  
 by any of the usual  
 signs by

merged brows  
 haired palms  
 pointed ears  
 reddening of eyes  
 in the moon

or her undressed  
 body's  
 disappearance  
 in the silver  
 mirror

but by the way her mind  
 under him  
 turned away  
 loping  
 into snowy  
 darkness

28

'Even a man who says his prayers  
 before he sleeps each night,  
 may turn to a wolf when the wolfbane blooms  
 and the moon is high and bright.'

Chaos took one sharp bite at you,  
 invisibly he sped;  
 before your smile clamped to its mouth  
 the poison spread.

Soon as your blood rained on my skirt  
 like beast marks upon snow,  
 I knew you were in a forest where  
 to enter is to go

26

How, you say, do you think our lips find each other  
 in the dark? While our scattered clothes lie outside  
 jealously keeping watch,  
 our lips' ultraviolet beams  
 range about the room and when they cross  
 shoot death and doubt and separation  
 down in flames.

at once into its desolate heart;  
 none skirts its outer birches,  
 but penetrates past human call  
 to the black larches.

A change so absolute demands  
 more than these sinister  
 slight variations in your face,—  
 the cold — the stare — the leer.

Though I shall love you even till death,  
 if you returned tonight,  
 I'd bolt the door to your footfalls,  
 I'd shudder at your sight. ■

## RAYMOND JOHNSON:

*The following pages were discovered in a trunk left by some tenant in the attic of an old apartment house where I once lived, in Wichita, Kansas. I have no idea who wrote them. But the hand-writing is American, and from the military bosses on the stationery it would appear that they are part of a letter from a soldier. The first page is missing, and what may have followed the page numbered four, there is no way of knowing.*

page 2

He had owned a coal mine, but the Germans had dispossessed him. After that, he had more leisure time than he ever had dreamed of. He whiled away his days making patterns with green tape on the skin of the young woman who had been his secretary.

He paid her well, but she was dissatisfied. She called the tape gunk on the skin. It was thick and sticky, and by the middle of the afternoon she would feel desperate, as she did when she imagined she was trapped in her walk-in closet, or when she thought about not being able to get out of a tight sweater. But every day there came a time when she would get the giggles, because she

page 3

couldn't help thinking that this was how it must feel to be a mummy. And then she would get the giggles even more, because the last thing she would have imagined was to be a mommy by him.

But in the evenings there were no giggles. She would pull off the tape carefully, muttering, "Gunk, nothing but gunk." And on the parts where it had stuck the most tightly, she would rub a soothing balm. In the mornings, the whole business would begin again: he would apply green tape to her flawless skin, and she would accept it, because that was the part she had to play, and because it was, after all, an honest way

page 4

to make a living. But she would clench her teeth and mutter, "Gunk. Every day, gunk on the skin."

At last, there came a night when she fell asleep before she could get all the tape off. The next night she managed to remove even less, and the night after that, less again. Until one night she realised that she was no longer tawny-pink; she had become a rich green. For a time she sat smoothing lotion on her limbs, sombrely observing herself in some of the huge mirrors he had installed. But before she went to bed, she found herself smiling. She was proud of her handsome colour.

On the following morning, the tape was red.

*That's all I could ever find of the letter. Whether it is part of an elaborate spoof, or describes a dream, or tells some kind of moral tale, I would not care even to speculate. For all I know, that soldier might have written the plain truth.*

# gunk under the skin



# The Jungle Rot Kid on the nod

## PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER

If William Burroughs instead of Edgar Rice Burroughs had written the Tarzan novels . . .

### Foreword

*Tapes cut and respliced at random by Brachiate Bruce, the old mainliner chimp, the Kid's asshole buddy, cool blue in the orgone box.*

from the speech in Parliament of Lord Greystoke alias The Jungle Rot Kid, a full house, SRO, the Kid really packing them in.

– Capitalistic pricks! Don't send me no more foreign aid! You corrupting my simple black folks, they driving around the old plantation way down on the Zambezi River in airconditioned Cadillacs, shooting horse, flapping ubangi at me . . . Bwana him not in the cole cole ground but him sure as shit gonna be soon. Them M-16s, tanks, mortars, flamethrowers coming up the jungle trail, ole Mao Charley promised us!

Lords, Ladies, Third Sex! I tole you about apeomorphine but you dont lissen! You got too much invested in the Mafia and General Motors, I say you gotta kick the money habit too. Get them green things offen your back . . . nothing to lose but your chains that is stocks, bonds, castles, Rollses, whores, soft toilet paper, connection with The Man . . . it a long long way to the jungle but it worth it, it build up your muscle and character cut/

. . . you call me here at my own expense to degrade humiliate me strip me of loincloth and ancient honored title! You hate me cause you hung up on civilization and I never been hooked. You over a barrel with smog freeways TV oily beaches taxes inflation frozen dinners time-clocks carcinogens neckties all that shit. Call me noble savage . . . me tell you how it is where its at with my personal tarzanic *purusharta* . . . involves kissing off *dharma* and *artha* and getting a fix on *moksha* through *kama* . . .

Old lord Bromley-Rimmer who wear a merkin on his bald



head and got pecker and balls look like dried-up grapes on top a huge hairy cut-in fold-out thing it disgust you to see it, he grip young Lord Materfutter's crotch and say – Dearie what kinda gibberish that, Swahili, what?

Young Lord Materfutter say – Bajove, some kinda African cricket doncha know what?

. . . them fuckin Ayrabs run off with my Jane again . . . intersolar communist venusian bankers plot . . . so it back to the jungle again, hit the arboreal trail, through the middle tearass, dig Numa the lion, the lost civilizations kick, tell my troubles to Sam Tantor alias The Long Dong Kid. Old Sam always writing amendments to the protocols of the elders of mars, dipping his trunk in the blood of innocent bystanders, writing amendments in the sand with blood and no one could read what he had written there selah

Me, I'm only fuckin free man in the world . . . live in state of anarchy, up trees . . . every kid and lotsa grownups (so-called) dream of the Big Tree Fix, of swinging on vines, freedom, live by the knife and unwritten code of the jungle . . .

Ole Morphodite Lord Bromley-Rimmer say – Dearie, that Anarchy, that one a them new African nations what?

The Jungle Rot Kid bellowing in the House of Lords like he calling ole Sam Tantor to come running help him outta his mess, he really laying it on them blue-blood pricks.

. . . I got *satyagraha* in the ole original Sanscrit sense of course up the ass, you fat fruits. I quit. So long. Back to the Dark Continent . . . them sheiks of the desert run off with Jane again . . . blood will flow . . .

Fadeout. Lord Materfutter's face phantom of erection wheezing paregoric breath. – Dig that leopardskin jockstrap what price glory what? cut/

This here extracted from John Clayton's diary which he write in French God only know why . . . *Sacre bleu! Nom d'un con!* Alice she dead, who gonna blow me now? The kid screaming his head off, he sure don't look like grey-eyed black-haired fine-chiseled featured scion of noble British family which come over with Willie the Bastard and his squarehead-frog goons on the Anglo-Saxon Lark. No more milk for him no

more ass for me, carry me back to old Norfolk//double cut

The Gorilla Thing fumbling at the lock on the door of old log cabin which John Clayton built hisself. Eyes stabbing through the window. Red as two diamonds in a catamite's ass. John Clayton, he rush out with a big axe, gonna chop me some anthropoid wood.

Big hairy paws strong as hold of pusher on old jungle whirl Clayton around. Stinking breath. Must smoke banana peels. *Whoo! Whoo!* Gorilla Express dingdonging up black tunnel of my rectum. Piles burst like rotten tomatoes, sighing softly. Death come. And come. And come. Blazing bloody orgasms. Not a bad way to go . . . but you cant touch my inviolate white soul . . . too late to make a deal with the Gorilla Thing? Give him my title, Jaguar, moated castle, ole faithful family retainer he go down on you, opera box . . . *ma tante de pisse* . . . who take care of the baby, carry on family name? *Vive la bourgeoisie!* cut/

Twenty years later give take a couple, the Jungle Rot Kid trail the killer of Big Ape Momma what snatch him from cradle and raise him as her own with love discipline security warm memory of hairy teats hot unpasteurized milk . . . the Kid swinging big on vines from tree to tree, fastern hot baboonshit through a tin horn. Ant hordes blitzkrieg him like agenbite of intwat, red insect-things which is exteriorized thoughts of the Monster Ant-Mother of the Crab Nebula in secret war to take over this small planet, this Peoria Earth.

Monkey on his back, Nkima, eat the red insect-things, wipe out trillions with flanking bowel movement, Ant-Mother close up galactic shop for the day . . .

The Kid drop his noose around the black-assed motherkiller and haul him up by the neck into the tree in front of God and local citizens which is called gomangani in ape vernacular.

— You gone too far this time the Kid say as he core out the motherkillers asshole with fathers old hunting knife and bugger him old Turkish custom while the motherkiller rockin and rollin in death agony.

Heavy metal Congo jissom ejaculate catherinewheeling all over local gomangani, they say — Looka that!

Old junkie witch doctor coughing his lungs out in sick grey African morning, shuffling through silver dust of old kraal.

— You say my son's dead, kilt by the Kid?

Jungle drums beat like aged wino's temples morning after. Get Whitey!

The Kid sometime known as Genocide John really liquidate them dumbshit gomangani. Sure is a shame to waste all that black gash the Kid say but it the code of the jungle. Noblesse obleege.

The locals say — We dont haffa put up with this shit and they split. The Kid dont have no fun nomore and this chimp ass mighty hairy not to mention chimp habit of crapping when having orgasm. Then along come Jane alias Baltimore Blondie, she on the lam from Rudolph Rassendale type snarling — You marry me Jane else I foreclose on your father's ass.

The Kid rescue Jane and they make the domestic scene big, go to Europe on The Civilized Caper but the Kid find out fast that the code of the jungle conflict with local ordinances. The fuzz say you cant go around putting a full-nelson on them criminals and breakin their necks even if they did assault you they got civil rights too. The Kid's picture hang on post office and police station walls everywhere, he known as Archetype Archie and by the Paris fuzz as *La Magnifique Merde* — 50,000 francs dead or alive. With the heat moving in, the Kid and Baltimore Blondie cut out for the tree house.

Along come La sometime known as Sacrifice Sal elsewhere as Disembowelment Daisy. She queen of Opar, ruler of hairy little men-things of the hidden colony of ancient Atlantis, the Kid always dig the lost cities kick. So the Kid split with Jane

for awhile to ball La.

— Along come them fuckin Ayrabs again and abduct Jane, gangbang her . . . she aint been worth a shit since . . . cost me all the jewels and golden ingots I heisted offa Opar to get rid of her clap, syph, yaws, crabs, pyorrhea, double-barreled dysentery, busted rectum, split urethra, torn nostrils, pierced eardrums, bruised kidneys, nymphomania, old hashish habit, and things too disgusting to mention . . .

Along come The Rumble To End All Rumbles 1914 style, and them fuckin Huns abduct Jane . . . they got preying-mantis eyes with insect lust. Black anti-orgone Horbigerian Weltanschauung, they take orders from green venusians who telepath through von Hindenburg.

— *Ja wohl!* bark Leutnant Herrlipp von Dreckfinger at his Kolonel, Bombastus von Arschangst. — Ve use die Baltimore snatch to trap der gottverdammerungt Jungle Rot Kid, dot pseudo-Aryan *Oberaffenmensch*, unt ve kill him unt den all Afrika iss ours! Drei cheers for Der Kaiser unt die Krupp Familie!

The Kid balling La again but he drop her like old junkie drop pants for a shot of horse, he track down the Hun, it the code of the jungle.

Cool blue orgone bubbles sift down from evening sky, the sinking sun a bloody kotex which spread stinking scarlet gashworms over the big dungball of Earth. Night move in like fuzz with Black Maria. Mysterious sounds of tropical wilds . . . Numa roar, wild boars grunt like they constipated, parrots with sick pukegreen feathers and yellow eyes like old goofball bum Panama 1910 cry *Rache!*

Hun blood flow, kraut necks crack like cinnamon sticks, the Kid put his foot on dead ass of slain Teuton and give the victory cry of the bull ape, it even scare the shit outta Numa King of the Beasts fadeout

The Kid and his mate live in the old tree house now . . . surohck lakcaj fo mhtyhr ot ffo kcaj\* chimps, Numa roar, Sheeta the panther cough like an old junkie. Jane alias The Baltimore Bitch nag, squawk, whine about them mosquitoes tsetse flies ant-things hyenas and them uppity gomangani moved into the neighborhood, they'll turn a decent jungle into slums in three days, I aint prejudiced ya unnerstand some a my best friends are Waziris, whynt ya ever take me out to dinner, Nairobi only a thousand miles away, they really swingin there for chrissakes and cut/

. . . trees chopped down for the saw mills, animals kilt off, rivers stiff stinking with dugout-sized tapewormy turds, broken gin bottles, contraceptive jelly and all them disgusting things snatches use, detergents, cigarette filters . . . and the great apes shipped off to USA zoos, they send telegram: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CLIMATE AND WELFARE PROGRAM SIMPLY FABULOUS STOP NO TROUBLE GETTING A FIX STOP CLOSE TO TIAJUANA STOP WHAT PRICE FREEDOM INDIVIDUALITY EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY CRAP STOP . . . Opar a tourist trap, La running the native-art made-in-Japan concession and you cant turn around without rubbing sparks off black asses.

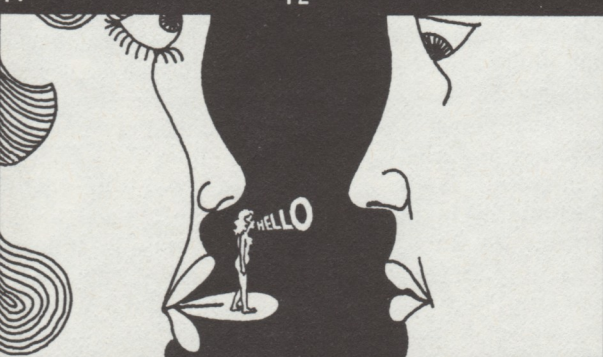
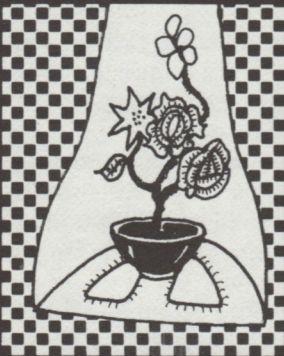
The African drag really got the Kid down now . . . Jane's voice and the jungle noises glimmering off like a comet leaving Earth forever for the cold interstellar abysms . . .

The Kid never move a muscle staring at his big toe, thinking of nothing — wouldn't you? — not even La's diamond-studded snatch, he off the woman kick, off the everything kick, fulla horse, on the nod, lower spine ten degrees below absolute zero like he got a direct connection with The Liquid Hydrogen Man at Cape Kennedy . . .

The Kid ride with a one-way ticket on the Hegelian Express thesis antithesis synthesis, sucking in them cool blue orgone bubbles and sucking off the Eternal Absolute . . . ●

\* Old Brachiata Bruce splice in tape backwards here.

in



# BOOKS

## BOB MARSDEN: the Koestler kick

The Alpbach Symposium 1968: *Beyond Reductionism*. Edited by Arthur Koestler and J. R. Smythies. Hutchinson, 438pp. 70/-.

*'Reductionism is the philosophical belief that all human activities can be reduced to (explained by) the 'elementary responses' displayed by lower animals (such as the psychologist's laboratory rat); and that these responses in turn can be reduced to elementary physico-chemical laws. By denying a place for values, meaning and purpose in the interplay of blind forces, the reductionist attitude has cast its shadow beyond the confines of science, affecting our whole cultural and even political climate.*

*There exists, however, a strong undercurrent of thought among eminent scientists who reject the orthodox view and are cautiously groping towards a new synthesis.'*

- Jacket notes

p 427:

*KOESTLER: . . . Everybody has of course his own formulation for his holy discontent. I have tried elsewhere to give my own tentative formulation - the rejection of what I call "the four pillars of unwisdom". In a simplified form, the four pillars to me are the doctrines:*

*(a) that biological evolution is the result of nothing but random mutations preserved by natural selection;*

*(b) that mental evolution is the result of nothing but random tries preserved by reinforcements;*

*(c) that all organisms, including man, are nothing but passive automata controlled by the environment, whose sole purpose in life is the reduction of tensions by adaptive responses;*

*(d) that the only scientific method worth the name is quantitative measurement; and, consequently, that complex phenomena must be reduced to simple elements accessible to such treatment, without undue worry whether the specific characteristics of a complex phenomenon, for instance man, may be lost in the process.*

*These are my four pillars of unwisdom, and the symposium has shown that we all seem to agree that the pillars are hollow and cracking. We cannot go much further than that, but even a negative agreement is something.*

So far, so good. A polymath and his peers synthesize an alternate universe.

But while the undercurrent of thought undoubtedly exists, and is deep and strong, its charting has been botched. For a start, there is no paper on Reductionism by a Reductionist. Perhaps this is connected with the tendency to endow Reductionism with all the qualities and quirks which upset one: it becomes an impossible ogre, an intangible, universal moral force. Indeed, Koestler is something of an Elric figure: with 'facts' at his elbow and a pen in his hand there's no stopping him. A few of the guests seem a little wary of the double-edged rune-sword - Holgar Hydén, for example, never mentions Reductionism and his last afterthoughts describe the symposium as succeeding 'in keeping the participants on their toes, and to look out for holes in the specialist's view of his own concepts and ideas. It also served as an illustration of Bragg's statement that the important thing in science is not so much to obtain new facts as to discover new ways of thinking about them.'

C. H. Waddington ducks the whirling blade in his paper on evolution, but in the discussion after it, Koestler, like a party whip, pushes him into agreeing that "it is sheer nonsense to say that evolution is 'nothing but' random mutation plus natural selection. That means to confuse the simple trigger with the infinitely complex mechanism on which it acts. WADDINGTON Yes."

In his own paper, Koestler proposes a superordinate conceptual system based on the concept of 'hierarchy' and that of the holon - 'any stable sub-whole in an organismic, cognitive, or social hierarchy which displays rule-governed behaviour and/or structural Gestalt constancy.'

I confess to finding Koestler annoying to read: I can go along with much of what he says, although I find it intellectually shallow, but I always get the feeling I'm being prosoletized - that underneath the statements there are emotional propositions which I can't accept. Possibly I feel about Koestler's writing what he feels about Reductionist writing.

In attempting to defeat the canons of Reductionism, Koestler is constructing a dogma of his own. It seems to stem from the same sort of ambition that leads to the calcification of any intellectual system, whether it be communism, reductionism or christianity - the desire for an absolute, once and for all frame of reference.

p.221: *KOESTLER We have discussed this so often - we have not got a mathematical symbolism for this way of thinking. We have to talk in metaphors - and the tree is a useful metaphor.*

*BERTALANFFY We need the algorithm. KOESTLER Whatever it is, we have not got it. And we are very conscious of this.*

But algorithms are the second-rate minds' panacea - in politics, religion and academe. The communications/education explosion shoots out half-educated men like grape. They administer and control

and impose: how soon would Koestler be on the syllabus? Be the syllabus?

p.348: *KOESTLER . . . what I asked for and wished for is a drug which blocks devotion, that fanatical loyalty to a leader, to a flag, to a creed, that hypnotic suggestibility of the mass-mind which caused all the major disasters of history.*

He says it again on p.353, and yet again on p.355.

Repetition reifies: which helps one understand how politicians, priests, schoolmasters and tv pundits can get to be so like stones.

Was the unstated purpose of this symposium that Koestler's articles of faith receive unimpeachable academic endorsement? He does seem worried about what the neighbours will say:

p.195: *This almost universal applicability of the hierarchical model may arouse the suspicion that it is logically empty; and this may be a further factor in the resistance against it. It usually takes the form of what one might call the 'so what' reaction: 'all this is old hat, it is self-evident' - followed by the non-sequitur 'and anyway, where is your evidence?'*

Why does Koestler not challenge Weiss's statement:

p.26: *. . . my sole aim is the purely pragmatic task of listing, . . . the irreducible minimum of descriptive statements necessary for the representation of natural phenomena not only truthfully, but completely. (His emphasis.)*

Isn't this a form of logico-linguistic reductionism?

However, all this mud-slinging apart, the book, considered as nothing but a collection of papers and discussions by eminent scientists with a variety of ways of thinking, is packed with fascination. There are excellent papers by Weiss, Hydén, Piaget, Bruner, Hayek, Waddington, and Frankl, the discussions are interesting, and some of the undercurrents of thought may well be historically important.



# JOYCE CHURCHILL:

## sawdust and dead reads

**F**OOTLING ABOUT WITH A RATHER literal interpretation of panspermia, John Boyd – celebrated for his failure to take a Nebula Award for *Last Starship From Earth* – offers an oscillating universe and human seeds in *The Pollinators Of Eden* (Gollancz, 25s).

Against a dreary background of administrative infighting, Freda Caron, a cystologist, researches the pollinating habits of the flora of Flora, discovering them to be sentient and not too particular about using living creatures for fertilisation. Meanwhile, her fiancé, Paul Theaston (what marvellous names), is in danger of being led off the straight and narrow path by some sexy orchids. Will he go renegade, spurn Earth? Of course he will. They both end up making love to flowers, and Freda bears the primogenitor of the seeds that may survive the end of the present universal cycle to populate the next one with vegetable humans. Or should that be human vegetables? – judging by Freda and Paul, that's very likely.

*The Pollinators Of Eden* is a feebler

look at *The Ring Of Ritornel*, replacing Harness's fast baroque attack with text book botany and his joie de vivre with trite sexual observation and natty dialogue. It might be fun for readers of Piers Anthony and R A Lafferty, and Willis E McNelly will love it.

Under their 'Adult Fantasy' imprint (presumably so titled because if you think fairy tales are just for children, well, by golly, *you're wrong*), Ballantine are busily reprinting James Branch Cabell's 'Poictesme' sequence. Despite everything Lin Carter can do by way of breathy introductions, *The High Place* (95¢) remains an amusing and entertaining book.

It comes late on in the history of Poictesme, during the Orleans Regency, and concerns Florian de Puyssange, nobleman and wife-poisoner, who, with the aid of the magic sword Flamberge and a demon called Janicot, wins his childhood love from an enchanted wood. True to Cabell's rather jaundiced outlook, she turns into a *wife*, and Florian has to get rid of her again.

Cabell's wit is as sharp and nasty as ever, and seems to gain in power when removed to a less Medieval milieu. Melior's shift from unattainable ideal to nagging frump is observed with precise cynicism; there is a disturbing undercurrent of menace to Florian's whimsically polite relationship with Janicot; the morals of the regency are taken to bits in a series of gleeful innuendos and sidelong glances. One wonders if Cabell was a member of some Midwestern

sewing-circle: he must have learnt how to gossip somewhere.

A slight change for the better is notable in the third volume of *Penguin Modern Stories* (Penguin, 4s). With publication of Giles Gordon's *Pictures From An Exhibition 6 & 7*, the anthology can make a greater claim to modernity than its forbears. But it is held back by the boredom generated in great lumps by Philip Roth – *The Psychoanalytic Special* and *An Actor's Life For Me* – and Margaret Drabble. "Providence had seemed to smile on them, momentarily: but it had been a trick, and how viciously she had withdrawn her favours." (From *Crossing The Alps*). Miss Drabble might be more at home in *Woman's Own*.

The dust jacket of John Norman's *Outlaw Of Gor* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 27s) announces: WHAT SINISTER PURPOSE HAS THE FLAME DEATH? Apart from one or two mentions, and those brief, the text has nothing whatever to do with any 'flame death', being merely another rehash of Robert Howard and E R Burroughs, set in yet another barbaric counter-earth full of primitive swordsmen and giant birds.

This is a fair reflection of the state of British fantasy fiction: the slightly tawdry attempt at sensation on the outside, and on the inside a soft but fibrous pap with the customary flavour of sawdust and dead reeds. Another few hundred reprints of this kind of nonsense and even the hard-case S&S freaks will become disenchanting.

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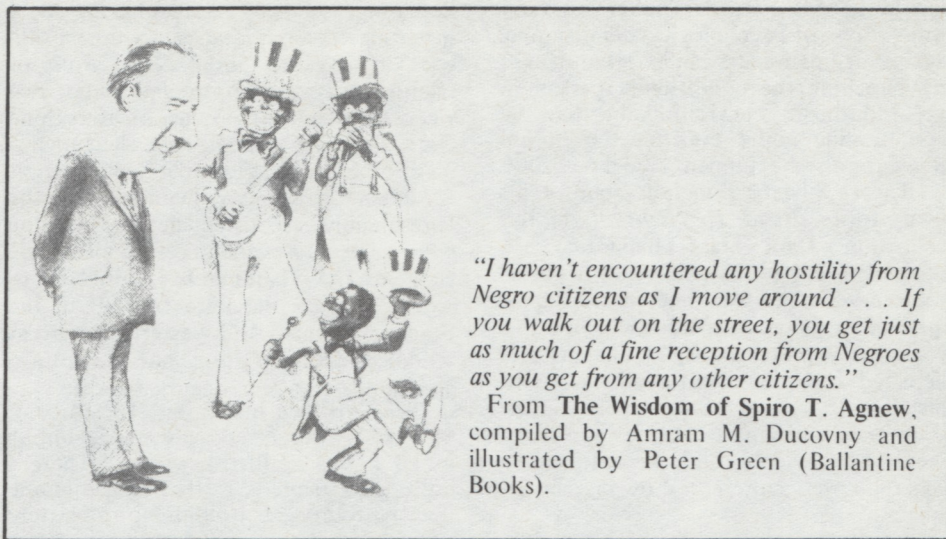
Horace Spurgeon Fenton, the writer, ambles through a beautiful chaos of ex-wives, film-moguls and assorted wheeler-dealers, his hallmark the month-old used condom, his fate apparently to be onlooker at other people's sexual festivals. Ariadne Thing, a film-star's daughter, obsesses him, kills his old enemy Norman Freville with an accidental judo chop. He fails to communicate with lots of women, and, for the main part, fails to seduce them, too. He ends up as the focal point of a lot of the flung excrement of the universe, sadly accepting the fact that he'll never accept middle age . . .

It all happens with a sort of disconnected, hallucinogenic clarity, the fine detail defined but unintrusive; reality used by a master to unreal but very relevant ends. Story's feel for the mournful belly-laugh is unmatched in contemporary English fiction.

## JAMES CAWTHORN: not without Merritt

**T**HE LATE HANNES BOK WAS one of the most accomplished fantasy illustrators of recent years, and possibly one of the least commercial. A recluse, a painter of highly finished scenes often requiring months of work, he was fascinated by the vivid imagery of writers such as Abraham Merritt. Unlike most artists, however, Bok did not confine his admiration to translating word-pictures into line and colour. When Merritt died, leaving the usual writer's legacy of unfinished stories and fragments of prose, Bok took over the task of completing *The Black Wheel* and *The Fox Woman*, and proved himself the equal of his master. His colourful but more restrained style was, at times, an improvement upon the original.

Bok went on to create his own fantasies, and in 1942 he appeared in the magazine *Unknown Worlds* with *The Sorcerers Ship*. Republished as a paperback in Ballantine Books 'Adult Fantasy' series (95 cents), it may fairly be described as Bok's version of *The Ship of Ishtar*. The parallels with Merritt's finest fantasy novel are too obvious to be ignored, but here Bok's restraint works



*"I haven't encountered any hostility from Negro citizens as I move around . . . If you walk out on the street, you get just as much of a fine reception from Negroes as you get from any other citizens."*

From **The Wisdom of Spiro T. Agnew**, compiled by Amram M. Ducovny and illustrated by Peter Green (Ballantine Books).

against him in a setting which demands the wealth of colour poured out by Merritt.

Briefly, it is the story of Gene, a young American clerk who finds himself adrift upon an alien sea in another universe. Rescued by the crew of a galley, he is swiftly (rather too swiftly for conviction) involved in the conflict between Koph and Nanich, two island powers apparently forming the total human population of this strange world. Intrigue, sword-play and super-science are the chief elements of the ensuing struggle, but the reader is never really gripped by the plight of the principal characters, and the overall effect is unsatisfying.

In the same series, L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt's **Land of Unreason** (95 cents) wholly justifies the label of 'Adult Fantasy'. Originally published in *Unknown Worlds*, this witty exploration of the world of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has inexplicably remained out of print for more than a quarter of a century. Inexplicably, because it is certainly one of the best things that these popular authors ever produced.

Written during the early stages of World War Two, it presents a young diplomatic representative of neutral America, Fred Barber, with a unique chance to practice his profession. Convalescening in Yorkshire after being wounded by a bomb, Barber drinks the milk set out for the Little People on Midsummer's Eve by a superstitious housewife, and then on impulse refills the bowl with Scotch. He awakes shortly afterwards, to find himself the heftiest changeling ever transported to Fairyland, in the company of an extremely drunken elf. The action moves along briskly from this point, at first farcical and then gradually taking a more sinister turn.

For the troubled nature of the everyday world has its counterpart in the affairs of Oberon's kingdom and the wilder lands which surround it. The analogy is never stressed, but de Camp and Pratt have considerable fun at the expense of the Master Race philosophy

and its adherents. Barber's agile tongue and diplomatic skill, plus a strong right arm, carry him through encounters with a host of characters which only the combined talents of these authors could create, to a strange and surprising climax. Nobody writes them like this anymore, not even L. Sprague de Camp.

What they *do* write, unfortunately, is a great many novels on the level of **Matrix** (Ballantine SF, 75 cents) by Douglas R. Mason; **Quench The Burning Stars** (Hale SF, 21/-) by Kenneth Bulmer; and **The Time Mercenaries** (Dobson SF, 18/-), by Philip E. High. The first two contain passages of writing in which the meaning comes through almost in spite of the author's efforts, rather than because of them. *Matrix* deals with the menace of the computer and future problems of housing Britain's growing population. It generates a moderate degree of suspense, but the final shooting-match, with a handful of rebels taking on the massed robots of the super-computer's electronic army, is totally unconvincing. And the flow of the narrative isn't helped by Mason's habit of. Breaking. Up his sentences. Like this.

Bulmer and High tackle the Tommy Atkins problem -- or what does society do with its trained killers when the need to kill has passed? In each case humanity is opposed by an aggressive interstellar empire, and a unique team of fighters is sent against the enemy as a last desperate resort. Five human brains encased in mobile fortresses form the composite entity, Blazon, in **Quench The Burning Stars**; a twentieth-century nuclear submarine and its resuscitated crew are **The Time Mercenaries**.

Bulmer's novel is the better plotted of the two, but suffers from the author's obvious determination to create strong, emotional situations and vivid settings, an ambition which is rarely achieved for all the lavish use of adjectives. The cooler, more laconic style of High makes for a more readable story, which nevertheless lapses into implausibility as vast scientific and military problems are disposed of at Keystone Kops velocity. If, as High

would have the reader believe, several generations of psychological conditioning against aggressiveness can be set at naught by punching the conditioned person in the mouth, it seems unlikely that the conditioning could ever have been imposed upon the human race at all.

Robert Silverberg includes one of his own stories, *Road To Nightfall*, in the collection, **Dark Stars** (Ballantine SF, 95 cents) edited by Robert Silverberg. Written when he was nineteen, it stands up well to the competition, which in this volume is pretty stiff. The futures depicted here run from slightly sour to blackly bitter, but the downbeat flavour is never monotonous. Themes and treatments vary widely, and the authors are generally well represented by the chosen stories.

Religion, predictably, takes a few knocks in the hilariously grim *Heresies Of The Huge God*, by Aldiss, and Harry Harrison's *The Streets of Ashkalon*. Making due allowance for the greater licence accorded to literature in recent years, it is still scarcely credible that the latter was once considered controversial. A. K. Jorgenson's *Coming-of-Age Day* speculates upon a compulsory, and very strange, sexual 'permissiveness', while Fritz Leiber tells of the fate of a sick psychoanalyst in the more than somewhat unhealthy *A Deskful Of Girls*. R. A. Lafferty writes an R. A. Lafferty story, *Polity And Custom Of The Camiroi*, and Harlan Ellison contributes the longest title.

Brunner and Ballard in good form, Anderson and del Rey and Damon Knight and David I. Masson not far behind; Blish and Kidd brilliant with *On The Wall Of The Lodge*, and C. M. Kornbluth brilliantly pessimistic in *Shark Ship*; and, for good measure, Philip K. Dick's puzzle of identity, *Impostor*. Altogether, a depressingly good read.

T. L. Sherred writes one story but writes it very well. In **Alien Island** the familiar ingredients are stirred again, but the result is less satisfying than before. The average man with one unaverage talent who figures as hero in Sherred's version of contemporary America is seen from the outside, for once, but there is the customary secret service intrigue, double-dealing, and downfall of Western civilization to round things off. Chosen as the Terran representative for the Regan Group, a powerful alien organization trading among the stars, Ken Jordan progresses from just this side of Skid Row to being a shrewd and capable businessman, at a pace which strains credulity just a little. Competently written, but leaving a feeling of pointlessness, **Alien Island** (Ballantine SF, 75 cents) can be marked E for Effort.

With the advent of the Permissive Society, it was only a matter of time before a once-popular series of science-adventure novels was expanded to include Tom Swift And His Electric Phallus. To be strictly factual, it is entitled **The Standing Joy** (Avon, 75 cents), is written by Wyman Guin, and concerns Colin Collins, a superman born in Okla-

homa in 1914, on a parallel Earth. After inventing the prolonged orgasm, Colin goes on to gather about him a group of talented friends and associates who, between them, invent just about everything else. Since these people have their 'twins' on another Earth, presumably our own, it is not easy to see why the histories of the two worlds have diverged, nor does the novel offer any explanation. A charitable view of **The Standing Joy** would be to regard it as an elaborate take-off of the Bradburyesque Mid-Western Boyhood school of science fiction, but the author, alas, appears to be in deadly earnest.

New **Writings In SF** No. 16 (Dobson SF, 21/-), contains six previously unpublished stories by British writers. There is nothing particularly outstanding, and one item by Sydney J. Bounds, appropriately titled *Throwback*, might well have been found in the very earliest issues of New Worlds. Colin Kapp's unorthodox engineers tackle the problems of the wayward world of Getawehi in *Getaway From Getawehi*, an entertaining if improbable piece of scientific deduction recalling Fredric Brown's *Placet Is A Crazy Place*. *Meatball*, by James White, is one more in the Sector General space-hospital series; Douglas R. Mason's *All Done By Mirrors* reflects upon the dangers of creating three-dimensional images; space warfare is the theme of *The Perihelion Man*, by Christopher Priest, and Michael G. Coney contributes a fairly unmemorable robot story, *R26/5/PSY And I*.

Colin Cooper's novel, **Outcrop**, is several degrees closer to uncomfortable reality. Why did the firm of Blacklady Products Ltd., makers of ornamental table lamps and other conventional products, have such an unconventionally spotless record of efficiency and good labour relations? No strikes, no absenteeism worth mentioning, regular increases in wages while maintaining keenly competitive prices, and, strangest of all, practically no sickness. It was a problem that the Habbett Organization, efficiency experts, could not bear to leave unsolved.

Habbett's first venture in industrial espionage, however, dies with a faintly sinister whimper when their agent, Byworth, merges into the Blacklady set-up only too well, to the extent of forgetting his original mission. Bill Marchmont, low in the Habbett hierarchy, but with a high Lie Ability and General Resourcefulness rating, is chosen to follow him. Marchmont's initiation into the odd, euphoric world of Blacklady Products, and his singularly rapid promotion, is told in a lightly humorous style which does not disguise the fact that there is something very nasty indeed behind the production statistics. Recommended. Published by Faber at 28/-, which seems a trifle steep.

Space allows only a mention of Philip José Farmer's version of the Tarzan story, **Lord Tyger** (Doubleday SF, five dollars and ninety-five cents). If you feel that E. R. Burroughs was reticent on certain aspects of the Jungle Lord's rise to manhood, Farmer fills in the gaps.

## BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

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

**The Reefs Of Earth** (Dobson, 21s) by R. A. Lafferty is about some alien children stranded on Earth, written in an incredibly jolly fashion: "Listen, people, creatures, devices, entities, it was the meanest world in all the universes!" His italics.

**In The Footsteps Of The Abominable Snowman** (Gollancz, 30s): a collection of science fiction stories by Czechoslovakian Josef Nesvadba, translated by Iris Urwin. Whimsical and sometimes powerful stuff, but with a very dated feel to it.

From Weidenfeld & Nicolson, at thirty-two shillings and twenty-five shillings respectively, Leonard Michaels' **Going Places**, a collection of shorts, several of which have won well-known awards, their generally mundane themes treated with metallic bitterness, very readable; and Nik Cohn's **Arfur, Teenage Pinball Queen**, which is very trendy.

Pelican Classics are aiming to publish 'some of the most influential books in philosophy, religion, science, history, politics and economics . . .' One of the first is Paine's **Rights Of Man**, edited by Henry Collins.

Hutchinson present **Ma Vie**, the autobiography of the ballet dancer Serge Lifar. At fifty shillings, it's worth reading for the accounts of his mysterious activities in occupied France. Also from Hutchinson: Kenneth Courtts-Smith's **The Dream Of Icarus** (45s), a look at the relationship between art and society.

C. S. W.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

## Captive Universe

BY HARRY HARRISON

Chimal escapes from his native valley -- an ancient Aztec civilization fraught with cruel gods and their powerful priests -- only to find that the outside world offers a nightmarish hostility of its own. 25/-

## Outcrop

BY COLIN COOPER

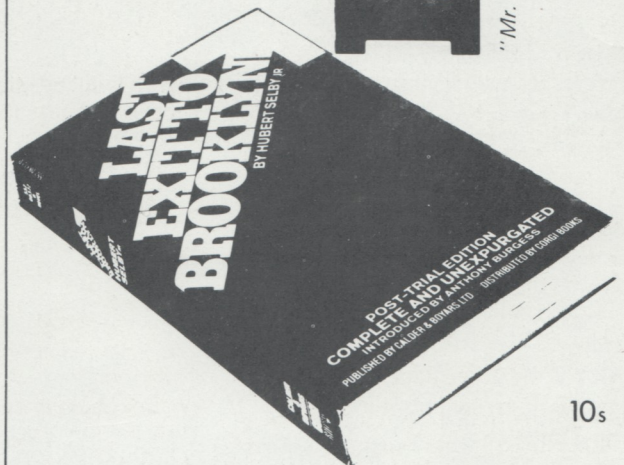
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**LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH** by John Boyd  
*'This stands on its own for wit, satire, direction and drive' -- Financial Times*  
Pub. ed. 25s; SFBC 10s

May  
**ECHO ROUND HIS BONES** by Thomas M. Disch  
*'Gorgeous phantasmagoria' -- Evening News*  
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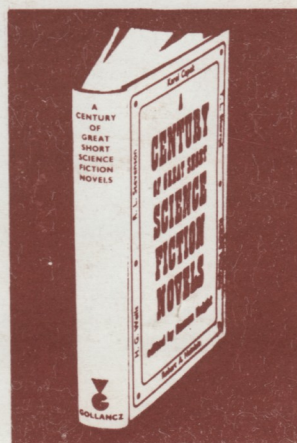
June  
**NOVA** by S.R. Delaney  
*'The author invents a whole new science. This is one that should not be missed.'*  
*Nottingham Guardian*  
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July  
**RITE OF PASSAGE** by Alexei Panshin  
*A girl fears to leave her spaceship home. 'I can recommend it unreservedly'*  
*Morning Telegraph*  
Pub. ed. 22s; SFBC 10s

August  
**TIMEPIECE** by Brian Ball  
*A journey through the universe, looking for time itself.*  
Pub. ed. 18s; SFBC 10s

September  
**BINARY Z** by John Rankine  
*An avoid is unearthed after 1000 years. 'A very British, very enjoyable story.'*  
*Sunday Times*  
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