

OMNIBUS II

Jonathan Bowden



First Edition
Published March 2010

Printed in Great Britain

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Cover design and layout by Daniel Smalley
Cover sketch ‘Medusa Now Ventrix’ by Jonathan Bowden

ISBN 978-0-9565120-0-0



The Spinning Top Club
BM Refine
London
WC1N 3XX

www.jonathanbowden.co.uk

Warrior by Elisabeth Frink (1963)

A potato head
On reflection
Contests Odin’s bout on the World Ash

But will such slab-sides
Or a Prognathous jaw
Lead us to love the warrior
As Nietzsche intended?

Dedicated to Dorothy Bowden (1931-1978)



Jonathan Bowden

A pencil sketch of the author by Michael Woodbridge

Biography

Jonathan Bowden was born in Kent in 1962. He is the author of over thirty books – such as *Our Name is Legion*, *A Bullet through Bone*, *Spiders are not Insects*, *Apocalypse TV* and *Kratos*. A painter of distinction, Jonathan Bowden has produced over 200 full-size oil paintings – many of which can be viewed in the gallery section of his web-site. An orator of great power, JB is a regular speaker at various events around the United Kingdom, and he has also enjoyed two leading roles in the art films *Grand Guignol* and *Venus Fly-trap*. Can such a card, in Alexander Pope's depiction of ombre, be cut in half? Now we shall find out...

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APOCALYPSE TV

philosophical dialogues

An introduction

This work is a contribution to meta-politics or the theoretical elaboration of political positions. It involves a Platonic dialogue between two voices – one Christian and the other Pagan – over a range of contemporary issues. Modelled on Plato’s *Republic*, it attempts to achieve a resolution or dialectical power-play between Thrasymachus and Socrates’ more effete companions. Our two collaborators or *dramatis personae* (Frederick and Thomas) are illiberal and ‘politically incorrect’ in tone. This was irrespective of whether they were debating ‘political correctness’, the madness or delusions of crowds (*a la* Gustav le Bon), the ethics of conspiracy or revisionism, or the origins of Turner prize art in Duchamp and Dadaism. Thomas, of course, happens to be a short-hand for St. Thomas Aquinas; whereas Frederick hints at an implicit rivalry with the German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche.

The title *Apocalypse TV* refers to those intellectual discussion programmes, particularly on French television, where two talking-heads debate weighty problems. It has to be the cheapest viewing on earth – often dealing with millennial angst. Yet, in this case, the presupposition remains that Western Man can only have two responses to Liberalism: either a resurgent Christianity or a Pagan ‘endless return’.

APOCALYPSE TV

Contents

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Chapter 1

SEX, DEATH, FRED AND ROSE

Location: a house in South London

Samuel:

What's this Sounes book you've been reading, then?

Jonathan:

It's this book on the West case, called *Fred and Rose West*. Why do you ask?

S:

Well, I didn't follow the case too carefully, but what I did learn I found baffling. What was it all about? How can a person - or rather two people - be led to such maniacal killing? I mean, they look so - *normal*. I think many people were shocked by that. I mean, the typical photos of Brady and Hindley make them look like the fiends they were. But Fred and Rose - even the *names* are normal. And in photos they look like just another couple you would see anywhere.

J:

One never knows. Behind the facade of many people lies hatred, bitterness, a desire to take revenge on society, to indulge in the tormenting of others. For all I know, my dear Thomas, I may be staring at a serial killer right now.

S:

I know I'm many things, my dear Frederick - but serial killer I am not. So you can drink your tea in peace.

J:

Ah, I can relax.

S:

But seriously...isn't it possible Fred just, well, *slipped* into murder to begin with, perhaps by killing someone by accident? And then he proceeded to fulfil his role as a murderer, and then pulled his wife into it?

J:

Not a very convincing scenario, I have to tell you.

S:

Something was said about his first wife having been one of his victims.

J:

It's pretty likely. He killed before he met Rose. My view is that he was a killer pure and simple. He was a sexual pervert, in a sense an exponential sexual pervert. A lot of sexual perversion is connected with impotence.

S:

Was there any evidence in the book that he had sexual perversions and all that?

J:

Oh, yes. They were both obsessed with pornography; she was obsessed with going with as many men as possible; she worked as a prostitute by choice, not because she was forced into it. He was also sexually obsessive, but probably, so evidence in the book suggests, not exactly impotent, but not exactly priapically gifted either. In other words, a lot of his violence was sexual fixation, the imprisonment of the body, his inability to get beyond the body, but also, sexually speaking, he wasn't that much of a performer anyway. There's a famous incident in the book where he has sex with Rose and another woman - they used to have kinky sex parties and so on - and the other woman said to Rose, "He's not very big, is he?" And instead of throttling her, since he'd been humiliated, he did nothing; he went away and got some tea for both of them!

S:

But isn't this a man who is supposed to have killed about sixteen people?

J:

But what they used to do, there was a sort of initiation into this type of perversity. They would begin with mild stuff, just endless carrying on between the two of them, as they were fascinated with each other when they were young. She married him when she was extremely young, she went to live with him in a caravan, against the advice of her parents, but they got beyond that,

and wanted to involve other people. She was interested in women's bodies and there's evidence she was bisexual to some extent. But she was basically polymorphous, just like Sade. Sade's sexuality begins heterosexually, then he becomes obsessed with anality, then he goes in for multi-orifice experience, then he goes in for cruelty, then sexual pantheism. It's ultimately about an unfolding of energy; it's not about sexuality at all.

S:

Maybe, but there's such a gap between all of that and killing sixteen people! Were all the murders sex murders?

J:

Basically. Rose had a 'dungeon', a secret room, where she would have sex with her clients, which contained sexual paraphernalia. But most of those victims were women, and Fred and Rose would go out on the prowl in Gloucester and beyond, looking for young, vulnerable women, strays, runaways, and so on.

S:

Did they actually go out looking for women? The impression I got - I haven't read the book, this is just from the media reports - is that they would just take in lodgers.

J:

They did that as well, but it didn't matter how they got them in; it's what they did when they got there. Often they'd just have sex with the kids, and then they left the next day. Police are still tracing several women who passed through Cromwell Street. There's little evidence they were murdered; they probably just passed through and left. However, some would stay, and get more sucked into the games Fred and Rose wanted to play, and it would begin to go beyond the bounds of kinkiness with their clients.

S:

Were most of the victims killed in the course of sexual activity, say strangulation and so on?

J:

Some were choked, throttled, beaten to death in sexual transports, but others were killed afterwards, following various sexual acts which they didn't consent to, in order to shut them up. Certain women were released after they were abused. One woman, who was crucial to the trial, came back with a can of petrol and either threw some near the door or stopped herself doing so and went away; but certainly she thought about torching the whole house.

S:

But what's the explanation of it all? I find it very hard to explain. Was Fred involved in the occult, did he have any occult interests?

J:

There's no evidence of that. He was educationally sub-normal; she was probably more intelligent than he was.

S:

Educationally sub-normal or low IQ? He must have been pretty sharp; for a start he was a good decorator, and built very solid extensions to the house.

J:

According to psychiatric examinations, he was a pretty low-level intellectual specimen: he couldn't read, he couldn't write...

S:

What about his childhood. Is there evidence he was abused as a child?

J:

Yes, there is considerable evidence in his case, and even some in Rose's case. Some would say his father was bordering on insane. I think the dynamic of these things is quite understandable, like drug addiction. Certain types of sexual perversion have an energy of their own. It's like certain people who begin with soft core pornography - most men are satisfied with Pamela

Anderson calendars, and they don't want to go beyond that. But there's a proportion of people who are fixated, semi-mystically, upon the body. Nakedness isn't enough - they want to see people doing something; then they want to see people doing something slightly more direct, slightly more invasive and intrusive. And it goes on and on, and in the examples of those very, very, few men - and it's nearly always men - who engage in this type of activity, there is a progression and an extremism in their hunt for pornography.

S:

As I understand it the Wests filmed their victims, and the police destroyed all the evidence, the video tapes and so on. There was a very early trial, years ago. One woman came forward and pressed charges against Fred and Rose for rape - she'd escaped.

J:

They were found guilty of indecency, but not imprisoned. There was nothing in Fred's background to suggest he'd been involved in outright criminality before. But the police found a lot of kinky material, which they ordered destroyed. Later, they videoed certain acts, which was used in evidence at the trial; but it was the earlier material they'd bought which was destroyed.

S:

Do you remember that London student who was acquitted of sexual harassment a while ago? I remember thinking at the time that there is this 'magic line' which society and the law sets up. Anything which is done before that line is crossed is OK - buying porn in the shop, watching porn movies, frequenting the most disgusting places, indulging in whatever practices you like - all this is very well, but when it trips over the line into something non-consensual, you're jumped on. So, basically, you can be exposed to any temptation, no matter how grave - you can be exposed to all occasion of wrongdoing, and then you're OK until you cross this boundary marked by consent.

J:

In a libertarian context the boundary has to be consent but even consent is now a movable feast. Take, for instance, the so-called Spanner Case. When we went to the Institute for Contemporary Arts the other week, they had a pamphlet advertising a debate on the Spanner Case, consisting of a lawyer, a jurist from Nottingham University, and various other people - the editor of *Fetish Times*, the editor of *Skin Two*, which is a sado-masochistic publication.

S:

Now I wonder what conclusion the ICA would have come to on the Spanner Case?

J:

Well, the ICA's view on the case is that these men - who were beating each other's genitals with various implements, including spanners, and were getting their jollies from it - should have been allowed to do it. Basically, they took the libertarian line - the acts were consenting, and so permissible. Yet at the trial they couldn't plead not guilty, because you can't consent to assault, so they were nearly all convicted. Some had no previous criminal record and were given suspended sentences; some were jailed.

S:

They intended to cause grievous bodily harm, didn't they?

J:

They wanted grievous bodily harm to be done to them, within certain parameters. It's also the case that they were all homosexual men as well. The point is that society has moved away from an absolute moral standard in relation to sexuality. Therefore, if you adopt the liberal perspective, everything is all right as long as it's consensual, and ultra-liberals are trying to force the dividing line back even further, to acts causing grievous bodily harm which are non-consensual. I attended a political meeting once of right-wing and left-wing libertarians, under the auspices of the National Association of Conservative Graduates, at which Bill Thompson from

Reading University spoke, and Peter Tatchell, and Beatrice Campbell - the whole gang of ideological sexual libertarians was there. And Tatchell's wind-up remark to the audience, as soon as he got on his feet, was as follows: 'Every man has the right to have his genitals sandpapered in the security and privacy of his own apartment.' And he got very extreme about it.

S:

This was the National Association of Conservative Graduates! What sort of reception did he get?

J:

He was widely cheered, because you have to understand these people are libertarians. The NACG is really the continuation of the 'sound faction' leadership of the Federation of Conservative Students. On a traditional definition, these people wouldn't even be described as conservatives - they're extremist liberals.

S:

This raises one of the paradoxes of liberalism. One the one hand, there is this magic line called 'consent': do what you like as long as everyone involved consents; as soon as someone doesn't consent, there is a question mark over the activity. This is not the way the law sees it, but it's the way the morality accepted by society sees things more and more. One the other hand, liberals - not the extremist libertarians, such as the ones you just mentioned, but ordinary 'mainstream' liberals - say everything is determined. They want to find an explanation for Fred and Rose West's behaviour, so they look to their childhood, to their upbringing, they look to what they were exposed to in the formative stages of their lives, and they look for the determining causes, and they say: 'The poor guy is a product of his environment'. First, they want to say that the criterion of acceptable behaviour is *choice* - the will is, in the end, completely insulated from all influences. So a person can buy pornography until they're blue in the face, watch pornographic movies, go to prostitutes, engage in pederasty, all of which is legal - and all of that is acceptable, because the person's will is supposed to be so powerful that it can instantaneously stop short of

other behaviour which society (and the law) deems unacceptable (for the moment), such as paedophilia or sado-masochism. But the idea that choice is all that matters puts pressure on the supposed unacceptability of even these activities, so that even children are regularly trumpeted in the liberal press as being capable of choosing for themselves. Still, as soon as the activity is considered unacceptable, according to the tastes of the time, liberals start scurrying, looking for the *determining causes* of such wicked behaviour - a bad childhood, deprivation, or whatever. All of a sudden choice goes out the window, because liberals refuse to believe anyone can be *evil*, or make evil choices of their own free will. Actually, it's ruled out by definition in the liberal philosophy, since choice is good *of itself* as the act of an autonomous agent - who instantly ceases to be autonomous when he does something liberals or society at large find offensive! Their attitude is thoroughly paradoxical.

J:

I must say that I find your thinking unduly moralistic, old man! It's too absolutist. It won't wash in the modern era. Your morality appears to be almost too certain, undeviating, imposed from on high, semi-totalitarian, 'divine' in inspiration. The truth, my dear Thomas, is that morality is a movable feast. It's a relative social construction. Different human beings, different cultures, different races, have completely divergent views as to what is moral and what is not. Take animal liberation, for example - a cause for which you once, I believe, had a great deal of time. In the West, animal welfare is high on the agenda. In China, however, it's considered a delicacy to scoop the brains out of a monkey and eat them while the monkeys' still alive! The fatal flaw in your thinking - as it seems to me - is that you believe in moral absolutism (basically Judaeo-Christian) as the foundation stone of human order. I do not. In my perspective, my dear chap, you cannot have civilization without barbarism. Barbarism is *necessary* for civilization. You cannot create great art without it - and art is the highest value in a society without God.

You see, old man, human beings create gods - Odin, Apollo, Christ, Osiris, Buddha, etc. - in their own image. Religious creation is an artistic act - just like all other forms of human advance. Without barbarism, my dear Thomas, there is not the necessary tension in the society to create properly or effectively. To create is to destroy; to destroy is to create. On this particular view of things, at any rate, destruction is necessary, pain is necessary - the clash of Will against Will is necessary. Rampage, ferocity, warfare, endless destruction - the vista of Kali spearing Siva, dancing in the flames - it is all glorious, it portends new human creation - a panorama of rage without limit, creative beauty without limit. It only has to be constrained when it goes too far; when it threatens the very order of civilization with its destructivity. Then it becomes a danger to the strong as well as the weak. Then the 'anatomy of human destructiveness' - to use Erich Fromm's famous phrase - begins to challenge the veracity of artistic creation itself. Then you need Law - a convention; a human convention - to punish anti-social, instinctive and barbaric urges. But without those urges, as I say, there can be no contrasting civilization - no higher culture; no tragic depths.

S:

An admirably clear statement of your position, my dear Frederick, but I must say I find it almost monstrous in its amorality. Morality without absolute, objective standards leads to sheer nihilism - anything goes, any outrage, any crime - and why should the preservation of social order be the limit? On your view, there can, by definition, be no limits - our descent into Hobbesian barbarity is the logical conclusion of everything you have said - a world in which life is 'nasty, brutish and short'.

J:

An overreaction, old man, but let us return to the subject that occupied us in the first place. The libertarian view, and indeed the view of most liberals (if you scratch the surface hard enough) , is that if you want to have your genitals sandpapered, you aren't driven, you aren't insane, you

know what you're doing - it's completely volitional. They have no conception that many of these people are driven, or in a demented state, or trapped within a particular sexual paradigm. Since it's volitional, it's just a choice - like having a cup of tea, only more pleasant. What happens when someone else is affected against their will? There was a big debate about the Spanner Case in the *Guardian*.

S:

Did anyone die in that case?

J:

No.

S:

Well, in the case of Bowie, which was an Australian High Court case, a man, in order to increase his and his girlfriend's sexual pleasure, placed pressure on the arteries of the neck of his girlfriend. This was consensual, and they'd done it before, but on this occasion she died - she suffocated. The High Court found that this was murder - reckless murder. So the fact that it was consensual had nothing to do with it. And that's basically the common law situation. The legal system at present does not recognise consent as a defence to crimes of violence.

J:

That is why libertarians of left and right are organising around the idea of consent, because they want to make it the basis of all of these forms of activity. And the doctrine of consent is obscured by the fact that in every society that has ever existed there has always been a 'red zone', a zone hived off from society where people engage in these sorts of acts. A lower level is found in prostitution, where men can indulge similar fantasies, for payment; so you have a form of consent, given that it's a business transaction, though like every transaction it's hedged about with various qualifications; a pimp, for instance, is usually lurking in the background to make

sure things don't go too far. So you can ask: why don't these men go into the red zone, which every society has as a safety valve, to indulge their fantasies?

S:

Because they can't commit murder...

J:

They can't go the whole way. Which means that the red zone is too moderate for them, too tame.

They want to go further.

S:

They want to, or they're forced?

J:

They force themselves to go.

S:

But hold on, that's the problem. Some liberals say - the libertarians say - they *want* to go, and that by definition what they want is acceptable. But other liberals say - the left liberals - that these people are products of their environment, they're victims of society.

J:

Well, to go back to the debate in the *Guardian* about the Spanner Case, it is interesting to note that it took an anti-libertarian perspective for once. The *Guardian* position on these things has a paternalist streak to it, and they said, quite interestingly given their overall perspective, that people cannot be allowed to torture themselves or others in their own homes, in a civilised society. Now this is a turn up for the books...

S:

Is the *Guardian* normally libertarian on issues of sexual privacy and so on?

J:

Most of the time. However, like most liberals, when the *Guardian* has to *face* some of the material that comes up in these debates, they move back to a more conservative position. *Guardian* liberalism is based on the idea that everyone's civilised, everyone's quite well educated, everyone lives in a nice house with a nice garden, everyone is cultured - it's a caricature, just like a don in an Iris Murdoch novel. Everyone is well balanced and wants the best for everyone else, and so everyone will come to a judicious and rational conclusion about social matters. Of course, life's not like that, and the Fred Wests of this world cut through that scenario with a knife. The *Guardian* can't handle those sorts of people, and so they retreat to conservatism. You know the old American adage, 'A conservative is a liberal who's been mugged by reality'.

S:

And yet you only need to fly south or south-east of here for a few hours, and you'll find places where these sorts of issues don't even arise. You will find places where people are executed for adultery, and where promiscuity is severely punished.

J:

That's true, but don't forget that it's the more absolutist social structures that breed hypocrisy. You can fly even further south-east, for instance, and find countries which profess to have a strict attitude to sexual morality, and yet where the sex industry is blatantly on show, and at least tolerated by the state, if not protected outright: Thailand, or the Philippines, or Morocco, where people who want to engage in such activities know where to go, as long as they ask the right people.

S:

But it's primarily a question of what the law sanctions, as a reflection at least of society's *official* attitude. The point is, we mustn't assume that the Western liberal viewpoint is as entrenched as it

is - because it's not. It's very much a position that has sprung up, in its extreme form, in the last thirty or so years. It's never been *known* before then in the history of Western culture. People - especially liberals - like to think liberalism has been around for thousands of years - and it has not. Murder has existed for thousands of years, of course. So there's a difference here: we're looking to the criteria by which the state enunciates and promulgates rules and regulations according to which people are meant to live on pain of punishment. Those criteria are what is important. To say that something, say murder, is rife in a particular society, or that children are sexually available, doesn't answer the question of what the *laws* of that society are.

J:

It is true that the West has moved from the position it used to adopt before the Enlightenment -

S:

I don't think it's an Enlightenment issue. Rather, it's a late twentieth century issue.

J:

But it's also contradicted by the popular views of society. The truth is that the majority of Labour and Conservative voters would have no time for the Spanner Case, no time for the ICA, no time for the editor of *Fetish Times*. They would proscribe that sort of activity. But the political class fears charges of illiberalism and authoritarianism, so they do nothing.

S:

True, but it is still a late twentieth century phenomenon. One the one hand you can trace the development of liberal sexual mores and the availability of that sort of temptation and occasion of wrongdoing to before the Enlightenment, back to the Reformation.

J:

Come on, you can trace it back to the beginning of mankind...

S:

No no, you don't understand. It's not a question of what is *practised*, but of what the *codes* are of a given society. Basically, I would rather live in a society which was hypocritical, in the sense that the rulers did do what the law punished while everyone else obeyed the law, than one in which everyone did what the law allowed even though what the law allowed was morally wrong.

J:

That's the socially conservative view. In ancient Greece a degree of brothel culture, slaves used for sexual purposes, and homosexuality and bisexuality existed, but they were proscribed by law or at least by prevailing social opinion, and the society was based on the family as the building block of the city state. And there was the general view that if you weren't married, especially if you were a man, you weren't really male. In such a culture, these things were zoned off from the mainstream, even though amongst the elites there was a certain tolerance of them. Which is quite different from what exists now.

S:

I mean, it's not *states* which are hypocritical, it's *individuals* who are hypocritical. If the state has the right sort of moral and legal code, then that's all right. If people disapprove of what they ought to disapprove of, and the law forbids what it ought to forbid, then if individuals, and that includes kings and princes and presidents and prime ministers, are hypocritical, then that is on their heads; and if the law doesn't punish them, that's a fault in the administration of justice, not in the law itself.

J:

They'd be living in a society whereby their own law, so to speak, would punish them if they acted in a certain way.

S:

People condemn Saudi Arabia, which is incredible. They'll hold up Saudi Arabia as an example of a country where there is supposed to be hypocrisy at the highest level - remember I showed you those photos of King Fahd and his one-step escalator and fountain in his private jet - where the kings have multiple wives, and the royal family goes to Monaco to gamble, and they visit prostitutes in London and Paris -

J:

Many of them do!

S:

And the *Guardian* readers and all of the liberal establishment are regularly up in arms about Saudi Arabia and would love the government to be brought down - and have been doing their bit, as happened with the Saudi dissident who caused the BBC Arabic service to be axed - and yet they would much rather have a society like ours in which sexual libertinism is rife, and sexual crimes like the Wests' happen so regularly now that they're barely even newsworthy, and eighty year-old women are raped - I can't remember how many such stories I've read in the last few years - they'll prefer that; but give them a society in which a man who rapes an eighty year-old woman gets his head chopped off, while the rulers themselves visit prostitutes in Paris, and they'll condemn that heartily. The liberal establishment is far more hypocritical than the Saudi royal family. Frankly, my dear Frederick, I don't think the liberal establishment can cope with a case like Fred and Rose West. Or Dunblane.

J:

Why?

S:

Because they haven't got a coherent view. On the one hand, some of them will say that someone like Thomas Hamilton was a product of his upbringing, of his environment - they can't cope

with the free choice to do evil - and on the other hand, some of them (often the same people) will say, 'We're all free to do what we like, our personal choices are by definition acceptable'; but they can't handle a person's free choice to do *evil*.

J:

But many of them have admitted that. Major said Hamilton's crime was inexplicable, it was beyond him. Blair agreed in the Commons.

S:

Precisely. They didn't say it was *evil*.

J:

But hold on, both the Scottish Secretary and his opposition spokesman visited the school after the massacre and said what Hamilton did was monstrous, but they couldn't necessarily understand it.

S:

But the fact that they say they can't understand it is an indication that they can't handle such cases, because otherwise they would have to have the sorts of laws which would make that sort of thing much harder.

J:

Yes, that's true. But they're all pressing for gun control, for a start, aren't they? And while one may dispute the details of the legislation, the general response of wanting to make access to such weapons much harder is, from the liberal point of view, quite rational. Still, it could be argued that such laws are a case of shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. The truth is that the vast bulk of the people who have guns have no desire to commit such crimes, and never would. If we had the toughest gun control laws in the world - and in some respects we do - Hamilton still would have got those weapons. So gun control is a red herring.

S:

I take the point, but I still want an answer to my question - what was Hamilton's problem?

Apparently he thought that people believed him to be a paedophile, because he liked to work with young boys.

J:

He *was* a paedophile.

S:

We don't know that.

J:

Let me give you a scenario. Major says it's inexplicable, how can someone do such things? I say rubbish, it is explicable. He's a paedophile, in all probability. He wants to commit acts with these young boys, he surrounds himself with young boys. He runs twenty youth clubs in as many years, in different locations, out of grubby cellars, the backs of vans. He gets into more and more trouble with local authorities and with parents. The rumours about him in mid-Scotland grow and grow. Every public institution - the NHS, social services, local government, and so on - they all have a file on him, his odd needs, his odd requests, his letters to them in purple ink underlined three times. They know he's a crank and an obsessive, though most people thought he was a harmless crank; after all there are many such people wandering around who commit no crime. He gets into financial difficulties. He begins to dwell on the fact that he's an outsider, that people think he's a paedophile, which he may well be. He begins to collect guns. He gets obsessed with the training of pre-pubescent youngsters, and works himself into some sort of state, whereby he thinks that by killing the children in the town that will not allow him near children, thinking he's a paedophile, he will be absolved of the pain; he can't have the children, so no one will.

S:

There were complaints that he was mistreating the boys, making them go out in cold weather and sleep on hard floors; but that's not paedophilia.

J:

No, but there are indications he was a member of certain Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) networks in Scotland, and he was known to social services departments in Scotland. True, there was not much in the way of direct evidence; but in such cases, there rarely is.

S:

OK, so suppose your scenario is right, then it's just like the Clwyd child abuse tragedy, which was for a long time covered up by the government, inasmuch as these things are allowed to go on, people with suspicious backgrounds are allowed to continue in positions of responsibility for children, so it's no wonder they end up doing something worse than simply having an unhealthy interest in children. They might be suspected, but nothing is done to remove them in the first place. Gun control is legislating after the fact, as you pointed out. What about the laws in force in the first place?

J:

Are you right about the Clwyd case? It's mainly the local government that wanted to suppress it for insurance and legal reasons, but the central government wanted to release the information.

S:

Often it is the local authority, as with Dunblane, where it was primarily the local authority which had the knowledge and responsibility over whether Hamilton got to run boys' clubs; and it took a lot to get them to take any action. Sometimes the central government covers up such cases, which are now a regular story in the media, and sometimes the local authority - it doesn't matter which tier of government does the covering up. It all comes down to the utter inability to deal

with these sorts of cases. Politicians talk about ‘inexplicable acts of monstrous evil’, but they don’t understand at all what it is that leads a person to commit evil in the first place.

J:

On your view, then, Major, Blair and others can’t cope with such cases because they don’t understand human evil.

S:

Ultimately, yes. They don’t understand, and they don’t *want* to understand that people are - they don’t understand *temptation*...they don’t understand *opportunity*. They don’t understand the idea of an ‘occasion of wrongdoing’, they don’t understand what tempts people (though they, as politicians, are regularly tempted themselves), they don’t understand what leads people in a certain direction, they don’t understand what influences people.

J:

Why don’t they understand that?

S:

Because they have this atomistic view of the individual. The individual, for them, is an isolated unit that makes a given choice at a given time. They don’t understand the *history* of an individual. The only time they bring the history of a person into it is to say, ‘This person is a product of their surroundings’ - at least left-liberal do so - and they immediately look for *causes* of their actions, e.g. abuse as a child, deprivation, or whatever. Just look at New Labour’s slogan - ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’. They want to punish the actual offence, and remove the causes, which for them are simply poverty, unemployment, and other material factors. But they leave out the *essential*, what no government is prepared to tackle - the innumerable occasions and opportunities which exist to commit evil in the modern permissive, liberal society.

J:

But is it illegitimate to look at material causes? Surely they are highly influential.

S:

They should be looked at, of course. Such things can have an influence on a person, but by the same token they are exaggerated, because for every person who is brought up in an abusive family and who goes on to commit serious crime, there are maybe a hundred who are brought up in similar families who go on to be decent, upstanding citizens, because they have learned to overcome their own handicaps and to recognise bad influences for what they are. People do have free will, they can overcome their surroundings, no matter how bad. By the same token, people are influenced by the examples they're set. Instead of looking at the availability of pornography, the low age of consent, the fact that young girls can be lured into quite legal sexual relationships with older men who can exploit them, the talking heads in our society look for *determining* and hence exculpatory causes of anti-social behaviour, rather than at the bad *influences* which act upon free will.

J:

Is the age of consent low? It's sixteen.

S:

Of course. Terribly low. Actually, let me qualify that. I don't think an age of consent such as sixteen, or even *lower*, is wrong *in itself*. It would, however, have to be based upon familial obligation.

J:

Like an arranged marriage? Is that what you have in mind?

S:

Yes, marriage. But having said that, I think the reality of a society in which there is education to a tertiary level expected -

J:

What's that got to do with the age of consent?

S:

No, it's got to do with what's expected of people, where their bread and butter is going to come from, that sort of thing.

J:

You mean that if you go up to tertiary education the age of consent should be higher? And if you don't have those opportunities it should be lower, or stay the same?

S:

No, I think this society expects people to procreate at a later age, but before that it expects women - and men, for that matter - to be educated and to experience a carefree life of liberation. It may not be what everyone experiences, but it's the paradigm held up to us in the media and by the chattering classes. If there's sex without any responsibility, without any moral and social framework to it, at an age like sixteen, it means that young women are vulnerable to exploitation by older men (as are young men!) -

J:

This is miles away from the Wests and the Hamiltons of this world. As you said, a large number of people can come from abusive backgrounds and get beyond it, overcome it - they don't do a Dunblane. Similarly, a large number of men can look at 'dirty' magazines, but will not go out and commit anti-social and criminal acts. There are many lines they will not cross, even though in relation to mainstream social standards they will have crossed a few, say if they visit prostitutes. Many mass killings do not even involve sexuality, such as the Port Arthur massacre, the Hungerford killing...these acts are quite specific and disconnected from ordinary crime, and I would say even disconnected from ordinary perversion, if there can be such a thing.

S:

Yes, and by the same logic you could say the same about possession of dangerous weapons. Many people possess dangerous weapons and never use them in a criminal way.

J:

Everybody wants to grieve over these events by engaging in the mock therapy of gun control. People want to do something, they feel helpless. But how can you track down those who are psychologically predisposed to these sorts of action? You can't.

S:

They're not getting at the root of the problem. People want to do something, so the first thing they do is try to take away the opportunity people have to defend themselves, by banning guns altogether and indiscriminately.

J:

It's a moral spasm in one sense, but not in another. If you look at the police's response, it's rather cynical and resigned. They know you could store the guns in gun clubs, you could ban all such guns (allegedly there are a million illegal guns in private hands in this society anyway). It wouldn't make any difference.

S:

Can I just say, my dear Frederick, that I wasn't for a minute suggesting that sexual perversion is at the root of all serial killing; I was talking about certain types of case, such as the Fred West case, which clearly involve a sexual motive. Now the libertarian is going to say, 'Fred West should have had access to whatever he liked: snuff movies (if it's the extreme libertarian talking, and if there are such movies), pornographic magazines...

J:

The libertarian would never allow snuff movies, since they involve non-consensual killing. But

if they're Hollywoodized and stylised, with special effects and so on, he would find them acceptable.

S:

But they would say, at least, that West should have had access to whatever he liked, as long as consent was respected. That sort of position totally ignores human nature. Temptation is one of the primary factors in the commission of evil.

J:

But don't you believe, at bottom, that people such as West and Martin Bryant are demonically possessed? Don't you believe that is the root of human evil?

S:

No, I never said that serial killers are *ipso facto* possessed.

J:

But you asked at the beginning of the discussion whether Fred West dabbled in the occult.

S:

Yes, I asked that, but not because, if there had been evidence to that effect, he would necessarily have been possessed by the Devil, and so his crimes would have been committed under the influence of demonic possession. Rather, dabbling in the occult is evidence of a person who has made a pact with evil, as it were, who has made a choice -

J:

Many occultists wouldn't go along with that; there's more than one view on the occult and, some would say, more than one type of occult. I don't agree with the possibility of demonic possession at all. However, the 'demonic' exists within man, and if people become obsessed with destructivity they become obsessed with evil and its metaphors. If they go home and drool over things, and they think, 'Wouldn't it be great to act out such-and-such', then sure, it's indicative of someone who has become wedded to a path of heedless destruction for their own pleasure.

S:

In any case, this government, and no government for decades, has got the strength, or the will, to do what's necessary. One reason is that there are enormous commercial interests involved in the whole pornography industry. And it's essential for any government nowadays, of whatever persuasion, if not to align itself with big business, then at least to do nothing seriously to interfere with its operations. For instance, can you imagine any government trying to ban advertisements which use women in an overtly sexual way? Can you imagine any government in the West trying to ban pornography, or ban films of a provocative nature?

J:

That's a quagmire they don't want to get into.

S:

It's inconceivable. It shows just how far we've moved in about thirty years. When did the Lady Chatterley trial happen?

J:

1962.

S:

Then there was the *Oz* trial, slightly later. It was a *live issue* at that time whether pornography should be allowed or not. Now, it is not merely *accepted*, or *normative*; it is *inconceivable* that a government would ban even page 3 women. That's why Clare Short was ridiculed, and part of the reason why she continues to be ridiculed, since she's seen as being on another planet as far as this is concerned.

J:

She should be ridiculed.

S:

Over page 3 women?

J:

I don't agree at all with the reasons why she wants to ban those pictures. The reasons are that it's against women, it's anti-feminist, it's politically incorrect, it causes undue, sexually extremist attitudes in men, it's embarrassing to see it over the breakfast table, and so on. The truth of the matter is that what has happened to sexually explicit material and propaganda which has, as it were, come up from underground over a century, is that once you cross the line, you can stop virtually nothing. And what's happened is that a momentum has developed, so there's a great difficulty here. When John Major got up in the Commons and said, 'I would act on pornography, but there is no national consensus, and no consensus in this House', he's quite right. Once you start with sexual imagery, you can't stop it. And you have to follow through, logically, in a way many intellectuals would feel uncomfortable with. Most intellectuals aren't concerned with 'dirty' magazines; they're concerned with the latter-day D.H. Lawrence, and with 'classic' literature like that of Lawrence himself. They're concerned with banning sections of Proust, among other things!

And purveyors of pornography use precisely this logic, they use the almost subliminal connotations of Grecian and pagan beauty, and classical art, to defend their own money-making, which does indeed involve a degree of sexual exploitativeness. But exploitativeness is a complicated thing. Many women offer themselves for work in the industry, there's a lot of money in it for them, there's also an element of the female which wants to put itself on show.

S:

But aren't you removing sexuality from the notion of the sacred? You talk about Grecian imagery and attitudes, but there's no way of understanding Grecian attitudes without understanding the religion of the Greeks. If sexual explicitness is tied up with a concept of the divine, and of creativity, then the female form is naturally associated with such ideas. And, in some ways, with the idea of destruction. When it's tied up with the sacred, it has a different

form. The page 3 girl doesn't have anything at all to do with the sacred. Indeed, what function does the page 3 girl serve in modern society? You can ask, 'What function does a statue of the half-naked Diana do in Greece?', and you can say exactly what the function is. But what is the function of the page 3 girl?

J:

To stimulate psychic and physical auto-eroticism, and to increase the circulation of tabloid newspapers.

S:

And are these functions which we ought to deem worthy?

J:

But, my dear Thomas, the one has led to the other. When the *Sun* started in the late 1950s it wasn't owned by Murdoch, it was a pro-Labour paper, with a relatively morally and socially conservative outlook. In the 1970s and 80s it became a so-called hard-right Tory and populist paper, and the sexual explicitness began in the 70s, in the wake of the lifting of what liberals would call 'repression', and the advent of 'sexual liberation'. And it's got more blatant, despite Mr Murdoch's alleged conversion to some form of Christianity!

S:

What a hypocrite. Remember the big News Corporation conference, when one of his deputies hired a stripper for a joke, to strip in front of all the conference delegates? Murdoch was so horrified, it is said, that the bloke was sacked the next day. There was a little mention, not in the Murdoch papers of course, but in the rest of the press, of the hypocrisy of not banning page 3 women - and this was supposed to be the 'family man' who sacks a bloke for hiring a stripper!

J:

Page 3 girls have, of course, led to other things. The *Sun* is tame now, compared to the *Sport*, which is openly owned by a pornographer, David Sullivan, who's worth £250 million - he left

school at 16 to become a pornographer, deliberately, so as to make an enormous amount of money, and now owns Birmingham City football club. The *Sport* is actually a pornographic magazine published as a newspaper; while the *Sun* is *just about* a newspaper, or rather newspaper/adult comic, mixed with sexually explicit elements. You see the progression? The next question is what will be beyond the *Sport*, as far as ‘newspapers’ are concerned. Even David Sullivan says: ‘I’m a decent bloke: I’m not having paedophilia, bestiality, and homosexual stuff in the *Sport*. I know when to stop.’ But what does the next Sullivan know?

S:

I think it will be paedophilia next. In fact, already there have been well-publicised accusations that fashion magazines like *Vogue* contain proto-paedophilia, because of the waif-like, anorexic young teenage models who regularly appear in such magazines. Women’s groups in particular have charged that they pander to paedophilia *per se*, as opposed to pornography in general. And then there was the furore about models being dressed in schoolchildren’s outfits...and Clinton’s recent very public attack on the fashion industry for promoting so-called ‘heroin chic’, in which the models look gaunt and their eyes glazed over, as though they have just been injecting heroin. This sort of material, by its very nature, has to get harder and harder, so as to satisfy male lusts which, almost by definition, cannot be satisfied.

J:

It’s interesting that the model-in-school-uniform appearance is essentially fetishistic, and used in an iconographic way. The point about the models is significant. If you look at many ‘supermodels’, there’s an unattractiveness to them. They’re thin, they’re anaemic, they’re wasted - there’s even a subtle homosexual element, whereby these women are often not sexually desirable, rather they’re slightly freakish. And there’s also a childlike element. So, compacted into a large-scale industry - which is what the fashion industry, particularly in Continental Europe, is -

S:

And run by homosexuals, who have, if not overtly, at least a covert desire to make women look as freakish and as unattractive as possible...

J:

Well, there's a considerable number of homosexual designers. There are all these things, which are bound up with the nature of this industry. Increasingly, this society needs to keep itself alive culturally through the use of pornography, because there is no debate about what life is about in general - which includes sexual questions, but to be discussed in a way that they are not in the media.

S:

In a way which includes the factors of nature and biology.

J:

An important question I'd ask is, what *is* pornography? Why is it attractive? The women are not real; no woman, even in a sexually provocative way between a man and a woman in private, behaves in the way that women depicted in pornography do. It's not *inhuman*, it's just *nonhuman*. Women don't look like that. You must remember that when people are filmed engaging in sexual activity (or at least simulating it), or photographed in this way, there's an *industry* around them: there's twenty men standing around, there are enormous arc lights, there are cameras everywhere - it's a totally stylised and unnatural performance. In a sense it's *asexual*, beyond the body, unnatural, a laminated, filmic gloss, that has nothing to do with real sexuality at all.

S:

That's quite right. The way sex is depicted in movies is spurious. So what is pornography?

J:

It involves the taking of the reptilian part of the brain - if one wants to use that evolutionary idea of parts of the brain - and cutting it out from everything else that's human, and reworking it by means of an enormous industry that flings it back in people's faces again and again. There's no reference to privacy, to quietness, to individuality.

S:

And above all, there's no reference to the ultimate, which is the sacred in human nature.

J:

I wouldn't use the term 'sacred', old man; 'spiritual', perhaps...beyond the body.

S:

Just to go back to the question of temptation, I've noticed that so-called 'table dancing' is coming into this country, from America, where it is a big thing. There are some porn entrepreneurs who want to bring it to London. It involves men, many - perhaps most - of whom are otherwise respectable, businessmen and so on, going to a bar, buying a drink, sitting down, and having a woman take off her clothes and dance within a foot of them, right in front of them. They can give them money, but they cannot touch them, they cannot solicit them in any way, nor can the women solicit them or go off with them. They can talk to them, but that's all; and the naked women is right 'in their face', as it were.

J:

All of that is just virtual reality sex. One thing we haven't mentioned is the proliferation of sexual phone lines, of computer-based sexuality, all of which gets further and further away from the idea of body-to-body contact. Even an image of a woman in a magazine is a human image; but with these things, you can't even see the other person, so it's become almost totally disembodied. That's not the sort of spirituality, if you want to use that word, which I had in mind

when I said sex has got to be about more than the body! *More* than the body, indeed - but not *without* the body, in a virtual reality booth!

S:

Is it not a form of institutionalised insanity?

J:

Perhaps it's an institutionalised form of mild sexual insanity.

S:

The sort of thing Freud would have had a field day with.

J:

It's polymorphously perverse sexuality. The generation of the erotic without any 'getting down to it'.

S:

These businessmen, whom you might have seen interviewed on TV about table dancing in America, can sit in front of the camera with a straight face, and say they enjoy it, that they go there maybe three times a week before they go home to see the missus, they have a quiet drink with their friends, they know some of the girls, they talk to them, they give them a bit of money, it's relaxing -

J:

It's social work.

S:

It's a form of unwinding for them. Do they get tempted to grope one of the women, to grab them, to try to rape them, to propose to them?

J:

I'm sure they don't intend to propose marriage!

S:

I mean to propose lascivious acts! No...they would have the viewer *believe* that they can sit there and not be tempted by a woman with her breasts three inches away from their face.

J:

I'd be tempted, I must say.

S:

Any man would be tempted, and you can bet they are tempted, but don't admit it.

J:

Then they're lying.

S:

Well, if they say they're tempted it loses all legitimacy as a form of public entertainment. If one of them says, 'When I see this woman with her boobs in my face I really want to grab her and throw her on the table', that would be it, it wouldn't get off the ground as a commercial enterprise. In order to bring it into this country it has to be acceptable, and for it to be acceptable you have to have men in business suits saying they're not tempted.

J:

In their own way, these men are really expounding a libertarian way of looking at things. They wouldn't put it that way, of course, they wouldn't have read a Libertarian Alliance pamphlet in their lives. But what they're implicitly saying is, 'Here I am, I haven't read a pamphlet by Brian Micklethwaite or Chris Tame or any other of the libertarian gurus, but I'm rational, I'm unaffected by this, it's just a pleasant experience which is a grade up from having a bacon sandwich, it's just sexuality which is consumed at a given moment without any impact upon me.' When the truth is that, physically and emotionally, they will be in quite a state if a woman does that in front of them. So it's a total denial of reality.

S:

Why men would want it, I confess, is beyond my comprehension.

J:

Well, there is an impersonal and objectifying aspect to it.

S:

One of them said it made sex with his wife a lot better. One said it was safe in this age of AIDS and other sexual diseases.

J:

Why do these chat lines exist?

S:

You pay 40p a minute or whatever, and you can rack up a £100 phone bill in no time talking to a woman you never met before about your fantasies; and it's not as though she's giving you any therapy as such, she's just sitting there panting at the other end. And she's probably some woman in slippers and a night-gown with her cup of cocoa in front of her and a fag hanging out of her mouth.

J:

And her false teeth in a glass on the table. But why do such things exist? Partly, no doubt, because of the immense fear of AIDS.

S:

I don't believe that, my dear Frederick. I think it's spurious, despite the fact that you hear that excuse in the media all the time. It gives legitimacy to the idea that all men would go off and have sex with women willy nilly, given half a chance.

J:

Some would, some wouldn't.

S:

I don't think the sorts of reasons I mentioned are really what's at the heart of it. I think the reason men engage in such practices is that the fantasy element, and the temptation element, are *intrinsic* to them. And there's also a sense in which it's self-perpetuating. All their mates do it, and if you're not the sort of person who goes along with it you're a bore, so it's partly about wanting to be one of the boys, a fun person.

J:

But that would only be true if it involved a bunch of men, say from the office, who all knew each other. The bulk of pornography is not like that, it's about lonely men, who are in a way themselves victims of the pornographic industry. I'm not keen on the leftist doctrine of victimology, but there's a degree to which, if you look at the sorts of men who go in for pornography - lonely, sad, tired, middle aged, running to fat, often physically quite unattractive to women - there's a degree to which this huge industry, which uses up so many women, is also exploiting so many men.

S:

Sure. The men are exploited as well.

J:

Look at phenomena in this society such as junk food and ready-made consumables. A lot in this society is standardised, mechanised, just so many units of production and consumption. The pornographic industry is a part of that cycle. It's almost the sexual equivalent of the ball bearing industry; certainly that's how the owners of the industry think of it.

S:

But you're not addressing the individual need here. What is it?

J:

Well, the average man who consumes the products of the sex industry suffers from sadness, loneliness, absence of spirituality, absence of relationships with women, a *certain* amount of peer group pressure, but that would not be a factor in the man who uses the industry alone. The fact that it's available; the fact that society does not really say it's wrong, and does not set up major obstacles or impose large costs in using it; these are also factors. It's like homosexuality, which is probably partly genetically caused: without hurdles put in front of you, as there was, say, in the 1950s, you are more likely to go with your inclinations.

S:

All of those defences have gone. All the hurdles have been swept away, and they were swept away in such a remarkably short period of history that the mind boggles.

J:

There's another point which, I think, goes deeper than all of those. And that is the great sadness which the pornographic industry feeds off, in both women and men - men and women who are trapped in the body, who can't go beyond the body, into their own minds, into culture, into language, into the use of their intellects and spiritual faculties to *create*.

S:

It caters to the basest parts of human nature.

J:

Just as certain things can *raise* a human being - light, form, shape, beauty, whether in a woman or not, the performance of a play which takes you into your life, which speaks to you - there are things which degrade rather than enoble. And though I don't *despise* the body, in some sort of neo-Platonic sense, and though I don't say that the sexual appetite is in any way disgusting, the truth is that there is the higher as well as the lower, and that here you have an industry which feeds off the lower, without any spirituality, without any grace. If you look at the literary

pornography which we saw in Charing Cross Road recently, those reprints from the 1890s and the early part of this century -

S:

Wordsworth Classics, no less!

J:

Even with them there was a degree of literary grace, a degree of abstraction and mediation, even for what it was then! Now that's all been junked. Fred West doesn't want to read long, literate sentences in order to get excited. He wants to go straight to the image, straight to the body...which shows the lessening, the coarsening and the cheapening of the thing.

S:

And that's how people destroy both themselves and others around them.

J:

Even the marquis de Sade, who was a pervert, demented, and spent his life creating vast intellectual edifices to justify his perversity - even he channelled his sexual obsessiveness into literary and artistic forms; and in a way, once he had done it, there was really no need for anyone else to.

S:

Well, perhaps, my dear Frederick, but Sade was as much a pornographer as someone less intelligent and articulate than he.

J:

But surely that is better, even in a pornographer, than *absence* of intelligence and articulacy.

S:

Well, at the very least Sade did try to connect his obsessions with philosophy...rather, he paid lip service to artistic norms; but today, not even that tiny hurdle exists, the sort of thing which

would have stopped, say, a French peasant from reading Sade. The reality of pornography is that it takes you away from human obligations: to your family, to children, to society.

J:

But, my dear Thomas, a lot of people in this society don't *have* families.

S:

They have parents who need to be looked after, for instance; there are all sorts of obligations which everyone has. Fred West had children. Though he had sex with most of them, didn't he?

J:

He had sex with some of them. And he had several adopted children as well. There is an important point in that, because, don't forget, the novels Sade wrote that are remembered are the 'dirty' ones, the blasphemous ones; but he also wrote some rather light, minor works - such as *Eugénie de Franval* and *Aline et Valcour* (even *Adélaïde de Brunswick*) - that were in a sense moralistic, and are largely forgotten today. In the same way, though at a much lower level of conceptualisation, the Wests also thought they were a family of love as well as a family of death. They had children, they loved them, some of them were in many ways quite well brought up - Sounes' book does make this point. But in the back room there would be the screaming and the bondage and the throttling and so on. So even they were split. Rose says in the book that, despite everything they may have done, they were still a loving family.

S:

Did the children believe that?

J:

The children seem to be split; some have sided with Rose, gone to visit her in Durham prison, and so on. The ones who weren't abused or destroyed were, it seems, well looked after. The ones who were in fact harmed tended to be from the first family - the one he wanted to repudiate, as opposed to the children he had by Rose.

S:

Most of the serious crimes we see today aren't sexually motivated, of course, but it's just that crimes such as those of Fred and Rose are symptomatic of the inability of society to come to terms with the lack of barriers between the individual and evil. There are hurdles that a society can erect, if it wants to - and which most have, throughout history - to make it difficult for the individual to commit evil. Still, one must not deny the individual's freedom of the will, the possibility that they may well decide to jump all the hurdles which have been put in their way. One must, though, avoid libertarianism, the idea that all there is is the individual's freedom to choose, in which society should play a minimal role. And one must also deny determinism, the idea that there really *is* no choice to be made, that the individual is simply a product of heredity and environment, and that where the circumstances can't be changed they should be used to exculpate. Society has to find the middle way, where barriers are erected between a free individual and evil. Once those barriers are removed, as they all but have been in the last thirty years - though the process can be traced back to the Enlightenment, and before that to the Reformation -

J:

Say you.

S:

I'm not denying that people committed evil before the Reformation! All I'm saying is that from the Reformation onwards the emphasis is distortedly on the individual, not just the individual's freedom to choose good or evil, but the individual's personal interpretation of what *constitutes* good or evil. This is something that comes out in the philosopher Charles Taylor's book *Sources of the Self*, and in the sociologist John Carroll's book, *Humanism: the Wreck of Western Culture*. Once society abrogates the responsibility which it has to *tell* people what is good and evil - not to make it up, but to *reason it out* and come to an effective conclusion - it is left to the individual

to interpret morality however they see fit, and to society merely to stand on the sidelines, as it were, and, like a Greek chorus, applaud the individual when he chooses good - or rather what seems to the bulk of people to be good - or condemn him when he chooses evil - or what seems to the bulk of them to be evil.

J:

To be fair, a liberal might say that they were *prepared* to intervene - assuming they had the civil authority. In Tasmania, Martin Bryant goes berserk, he shoots thirty-odd people dead, he runs from a blazing house, and is not shot by the police but taken into custody. He was tried, he was institutionalised. The liberals of this world would say that by virtue of making that judgment the society *has* erected hurdles, and so has not abrogated responsibility for the guidance of people towards creation and away from destruction.

S:

These are not hurdles, these are *punishments*. They are a post-facto matter. One of the main problems in the discussion of punishment nowadays is that there is far too much emphasis on the *deterrent* element and less on the *retributive* element. No one is saying that people should not be deterred in some way from committing evil, but all of the burden is now put on the prospect of punishment, and none of the burden is placed on social institutions, customs, habits, mores.

J:

So you're saying that all reaction nowadays is after the fact.

S:

Yes, but this also involves the attempt to make punishment do what it's not designed to do. The threat of punishment is designed partly to deter people from crime, but primarily to give the individual his just deserts. An interesting question is whether, if everyone *kept* the law, the law would have no function, given that its purpose - I'm talking here about the criminal law - is primarily to punish the guilty. But if everyone kept the law, wouldn't the law be at worst a

failure, at best redundant? The answer is that the law also has a *promulgatory* function, so that people know what the law *is*. If everyone obeyed it, then, the law would then be a success, because the system *stated* the law, and people respected it. It is implicit in that idea that the law has the function of preventing evil, or wrongdoing.

J:

Of course, the liberal position, once you get beyond the cant, is that evil doesn't really exist. After the Dunblane shooting, there was a supplement in the *Guardian*, a well-known liberal newspaper, to the effect that the Dunblane incident was a refutation of key liberal values, which, if the refutation were taken seriously, would lead to a rethink of certain jurisprudential liberal ideas. Liberals are descendants of the Pelagians, for whom man is naturally good, naturally moral, or at least capable, through his own efforts, of making himself moral. If you believe, as the right-wing philosopher T.E. Hulme said at the beginning of the century, that man is naturally evil - an extremist version of the idea of Original Sin - you must erect structures in society to repress tolerance of malevolence and decadence. But to say this is to move away from the liberal mindset, according to which such structures are never designed to *repress*, but simply as a natural expression of the innate civilization and socialization of man.

There's an important liberal novel written by C.P. Snow in the 1960s, and based upon a famous murder case which was very important for liberal ideology during the decade in which they really entered the public forum in a major way. The novel was called *The Sleep of Reason*, and was based on the Brady/Hindley murders, the so-called Moors murders of the late 1950s. Snow transmutes the case into one involving two lesbians, who torment and kill a young boy as part of their sexual fantasies. Now C.P. Snow is a new liberal who goes beyond classical liberalism, accepting the idea that everyone should be free, that traditional moral structures are false and old hat, that they deny human instinct. But at the same time the Moors murders, which he uses as the basis for his novel, confront him with the old ideas again, which he thought that he

had transcended. One of the characters in the novel tells the liberal politician in it, who in many ways represents Snow, that by removing traditional structures more social destructivity will occur, there will be more ferocious crimes. To which the liberal politician says that we just don't know, perhaps they would occur in any society no matter how repressive.

S:

That's a good example of the 'know-nothing' approach to history: 'We don't know if there were sex crimes in the Middle Ages, we don't know which societies work best', and they'll go back and cite this or that example from, say, Greece or Rome, with no interest in whether the case is typical of the time, or anomalous, or whatever.

J:

Snow is saying, in effect, that if everyone were a don, if every one were a scientist like him, if everyone had civilized and creative lives, perhaps the law would never need to coerce, and everyone would obey it instinctively. But, of course, life is not like that, and not everyone, thank goodness, is like C.P. Snow.

S:

That shows the snobbery inherent in liberalism; the refusal to accept that people are capable of freely choosing evil, that not everyone lives the kind of refined, bourgeois life of a C.P. Snow - which is not to deny for a minute that the refined bourgeoisie are capable of evil! But it's a patronisation of everyone who is outside the liberal establishment.

J:

But then look at such people, the ones who tend to affect a generalized benevolence, who love the idea of 'doing good' in the abstract. Such people, who are so often luvvies on the outside, sometimes have inner lives that resemble Fred West's! Often they try to deny the moral vapidly, the absence of rage in their own outer lives, by an inner life of hatred and bile. Indeed it is often the ones in society who affect the softest values, who also have the hardest hearts.

Chapter 2

HITLER WAS A FEDERALIST!

Location: the lobby of a comfortable hotel

Samuel:

Where are we?

Jonathan:

What do you mean, where are we?

S:

Where *are* we?

J:

You chose the location for our little ‘chat’, as you put it. And quite a pleasant hotel lobby too, as far as lobbies go. If it weren’t for the sound of a symphony orchestra playing the Beatles in the background, I could come here more often.

S:

No, no. I mean - *where are we?* It’s 1997, the millennium is almost over - and how many human beings throughout history have had the privilege of living through a change of millennium? - and I for one haven’t a clue as to where we are.

J:

I hear an existential crisis coming on.

S:

Not quite that drastic, my dear Frederick, but I am a little perplexed. I’ve been reading Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals*; do you mind if I quote you a passage that intrigued me?

J:

Go right ahead; you won’t find me refusing the chance to hear some words from the great man himself.

S:

I’m not sure I’d say ‘great’, but anyhow, let me give you his words: “What constitutes our aversion to ‘man’ today? - for we suffer from man, no doubt about that. - Not fear; rather, the fact that we have *nothing* to fear from man; that man is first and foremost a teeming mass of worms; that the tame man, who is incurably mediocre and unedifying -

J:

Sounds like most of your colleagues in Academe!

S:

Perhaps, but let me continue: “ - has already learnt to view himself as the aim and pinnacle, the meaning of history, the higher man; - yes, the fact that he has a certain right to feel like that insofar as he feels distanced from the superabundance of failed, sickly, tired and exhausted people of whom today's Europe is beginning to reek, and insofar as he is at least relatively successful, at least still capable of living, at least saying 'yes' to life...”

J:

Looking round this hotel lobby now, I can see his point.

S:

Indeed, but what is he on about, philosophically speaking?

J:

Well, Nietzsche was writing at the end of the 19th century, and looking about him at the humanity of his era, and saying that they suffer from an absence of moral fibre, that humanity has reached a certain pitch, from it would begin to decline, as he thought it already had. We're now over a hundred years on, and we can say with all honesty that what he observed then is more radically so now.

S:

I wouldn't have thought that in the 19th century a description such as that would have been particularly accurate. It seems, in fact, as though he was thinking a hundred years ahead.

J:

He always said, “People will read me many generations after my death, and then they will understand what I was saying.” The interesting thing about Nietzsche is his prescience. In his era he was an Outsider. Germany was becoming the most powerful country on the Continent, and yet he repudiated Germany. All his circle were nationalistic and anti-Semitic, and yet in his own, personal, one-man ideology he repudiated that.

S:

And didn't he repudiate Christianity at a time when it was quite strong and resilient, and the main force of social morality?

J:

Yes, but he knew it was rotten and decaying, and would eventually collapse.

S:

Which, in terms of its practice, the number of its adherents, and the fraction of those who actually *believe* what Christianity teaches, it has.

J:

He was the loneliest thinker in Europe, and demonized for his rejection of the dominant social structures of the time.

S:

Perhaps it was just such isolation which helped him see things with great prescience?

J:

Indeed.

S:

Still, I have to say that the quotation I read out reveals an extraordinary misanthropy - “man is first and foremost a teeming mass of worms”!

J:

The paradox, my dear Thomas, is that lovers of humanity must always hate humanity, because you *want them to be better*. Can we ever be satisfied with what we are?

S:

No, but “teeming mass of worms”; he sounds like a man getting over a bad love affair.

J:

As we have sat in buses, as we both have done, in the centre of this town, we’ve always had to suppress an urge to do commit a gross act of violence against the other passengers, haven’t we?

S:

Speak for yourself!

J:

I speak for everyone who has ever sat on a bus and really *looked* at what Nietzsche would call the tired, exhausted, almost robot-like figures that sit falling asleep over their newspapers and their shopping bags. There is a degree to which misanthropic hatred is just the other side of civilized affection. Don’t you want to yell out at these quasi-androids: “Wake up!!”?

S:

But what brought that out in him? In one sense he was accurate when writing about Christianity then, because, although it was thriving in general, it was on the ropes in many countries. For instance, he was writing fifteen years after Bismarck’s attack on the Catholic Church in Germany - the so-called *Kulturkampf* - which almost decimated the Church there, and led to widespread and ultimately self-destructive compromises with the then-emerging democratic parliamentary

system. Is it that Nietzsche looked around him at such phenomena, and thought, 'Something is rotten here'? What did he see?

J:

What he saw was the beginning of what has reached its culmination in this century. In the 1870s across Europe, there weren't any liberal democracies as we understand it - not all men had the vote, and women certainly didn't, since there was no doctrine of female emancipation. In this society, middle class people in rural areas didn't get the vote until the 1880s, and the full equality of women before the ballot box didn't occur till the 1940s. Nietzsche saw, in his time, that the doctrine of full equality which we take for granted was just coming up, like a weed, just beginning to make itself felt. And there was nothing to stop it in a culture which was increasingly placing value upon mediocrity, was increasingly unheroic. Nietzsche saw Christians beginning to latch onto these ideas -

S:

And believed, did he not, that such ideas would eventually destroy their religion.

J:

Precisely. And, moreover, that such ideas at least partly originated from it.

S:

I would take issue with him on that matter, but in general it seems that what he saw was the modern world.

J:

Yes.

S:

But could he have predicted what would happen to Germany?

J:

There's a danger, as we sit here in 1997, of telescoping centuries of German history into what happened between 1933 and 1945. In Nietzsche's time, alliances were shifting every few years, and nothing was truly predictable. The idea that we would enclose Germany in a ring of steel, with Russia and France, and go to war twice in a hundred years, decimating the Continent - that could not have been foreseen. Nevertheless, Nietzsche did predict a reaction against the mediocre, a time of new Caesars, new dictators, new wars.

S:

But surely, if he'd been around at the time, he wouldn't have approved of Hitler.

J:

So they say. Nietzsche has survived in university courses throughout the West because that is the official view. And it is *probably* the correct view, if you look at his commentators like Kaufmann and Hollingdale. Their point is that he was not a German nationalist - he claimed to be a Pole when he had no Polish blood, precisely because Poles are one of the nations hated by Germans. He also claimed, correctly, that many Jews supported him intellectually...

S:

And yet his thinking ultimately holds Jewish morality responsible for the sickness not just of Europe but of the world! Anyway, which Jews supported him?

J:

Lou Salomé, with whom he may or may not have had an affair; Paul Rée...And they supported him, of course, because he was anti-Christian, and German Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic, held the Jews responsible for the death of Christ.

S:

But they must have seen he was also attacking Judaism?

J:

But many of these Jews were secular-minded intellectuals, who shared more with Karl Marx - even though they would not necessarily have shared his political views - than with their religious brethren.

S:

I'm still trying to see the world as Nietzsche saw it - though I suppose that's trying to see the world through the eyes of a syphilitic maniac...

J:

Well, that may be your mistaken view...

S:

But if I had looked about me then, wouldn't I have seen a society that still paid homage to nobility, that was essentially aristocratic, structured along class lines - in short, hierarchical and inequalitarian?

J:

It was a very bourgeois society. The junkers did have a large amount of political power after unification in 1870, true...but Nietzsche is talking about an emerging ethos, the growth of large centre-right and centre-left parties, partly despised by the old aristocracy, but destined to take over.

S:

And you had the Catholic centre party, and parties supporting the military, and more extreme parties of the right and left. In that sense, I suppose, Germany at that time was a sort of pre-modern modern country.

J:

But everyone tends to underestimate the degree of modernity that existed in the late nineteenth century. Everyone views German history retrospectively, as if people then could see what would happen later. No one could possibly foresee the emergence of one of Europe's most revolutionary regimes after the total defeat and smashing of the society between 1914 and 1918.

S:

And yet now Germany goes out of its way to be the most liberal humanist country on Earth.

J:

Because of the extreme reaction to the power morality which the National Socialist regime preached and practised between 1933 and 1945.

S:

For which many respectable academics and intellectuals hold Nietzsche responsible.

J:

Perhaps, but one should also remember that academics have been saying such things for a long time. For instance, the British classicist Ernest Barker produced a pamphlet in 1914 saying, 'we are fighting against Bismarck, we are fighting against Kaiser Wilhelm II, against the Prussian Reich, against the psychology and philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.' He has been a talking point for a quite a while!

S:

Didn't he go through a vogue quite early?

J:

By the time of his death in 1900 he had already become something of a cult figure, perhaps the major non-fiction intellectual writer in Europe for a ten to twenty year period, influencing poetry, art, theatre, philosophy, before the First World War. And the vogue spread to England and even America, especially among German-American writers like H.L. Mencken.

S:

Surely, then, this had a profound effect on later German political thought.

J:

Of course, but when you ask a question like, ‘Would Nietzsche have repudiated Hitler?’, it depends what you mean. If Hitler had been gunned down in 1938, he would have gone down as one of the greatest German leaders since the Middle Ages. Nietzsche was never one to repudiate the consequences of a thought, because he saw the consequences of action as part of the thinking that precedes action. In an ordinary sense, his view of life is completely opposite to the one which Hitler cobbled together as a political philosophy - crude, racially based, Darwinian, founded on extreme anti-Semitism and pan-German nationalism. These are not Nietzsche's views. And he is not really a political philosopher anyway, his views on such matters being quite sketchy and poetical rather than logically thought out. *Ethically*, whether he would have repudiated what Hitler stood for is a different question.

S:

What we do know, however, is what he would have seen had he been around now - and it would, I presume, have made him sick. He would have seen it as the continuation, war aside, of the processes of bourgeois decline and of the growth of liberal humanist hegemony, which he saw beginning in the late nineteenth century. But one of my disagreements with him is over the date of the decline. Liberal humanism has replaced the Judeo-Christian moral code, has seen it largely collapse, but the collapse has taken place over a far longer period than Nietzsche admitted, stretching back four centuries. It is really with the so-called Reformation and Renaissance that we see traditional morality slowly replaced by a later distortion which has only reached full flower, or rather full putrefaction, in this benighted century of ours. And no doubt Nietzsche had a strong whiff of the rotting carcass in his own time.

J:

But, my dear Thomas, he holds post-Jewish morality, i.e. Christianity, as *responsible* precisely for the liberal humanism he deplores; for every ‘do good’ social theory that has arisen over the last hundred years, whether partially or wholly evacuated of religious content. ‘The last shall be first and the first shall be last’; love the poor and the meek and the humble; love those at the fringes of society; does this not all come from Christianity itself? Isn’t it true that you agree with Nietzsche over what he attacks, but disagree with him over the *reasons* for attacking it?

S:

His repudiation of the society which is not ordered in a hierarchical way, in which there is no sense of *noblesse oblige* - certainly I would agree with that. But in what way is Christianity responsible for the sort of society he rejects? Perhaps we might return to this important matter;

but before we do, allow me to raise a point which seems to contradict the Nietzschean theory of decline. I was thinking recently about the so-called ‘windfall tax’ which the Labour Party is planning to levy on the privatised utilities when it is in government. Now here is a classic example of what has gone wrong with social ethics. It seems that nowadays you have to *suck* the money out of corporations to get them to pay anything towards the good of society. The whole ethos of corporations now is to avoid tax, to avoid social duty. We are inundated with the ideology of humanism, of ‘love thy neighbour’, and yet where is it unselfishly practised by those who are the heirs of the old aristocracy? In some ways, Nietzschean morality is alive and well!

J:

And that is paradoxical, because there has been a reversal within liberalism. Between about 1910 and 1970, liberalism was indeed humanistic - the state should intervene to improve the lot of the least well-off, the poor needed to be looked after, and so on. But what has happened is that some of the forces of inequality, of life as warfare, which had gone underground, have resurfaced as a form of late or post-liberalism, as a kind of libertarianism, a morality of dog eat dog, of capitalism as red in tooth and claw, which sees the weak go to the wall. Notice that the people who advocate these things can't be too right-wing, since there is an area of right-wing thinking that has been so demonized by the Second World War that it is not safe to stray into it. What, after all, is the real difference between the philosophy of the American Jewish woman writer Ayn Rand - so-called ‘objectivism’ - and Nietzsche’s? Nietzsche extends the morality of struggle into areas of actual physical combat, whereas she restricts it to the economic.

S:

That's one difference, but another striking one is that there is no *noblesse oblige* in her philosophy, whereas there is in Nietzsche's.

J:

That's because of the extreme libertarianism of Rand's philosophy, the atomistic and classless view of society which not even Nietzsche accepts. And the weakness of such an outlook is that it does not admit that only very few people can be free in that extreme sense. Rand's extreme individualism, taken to its logical conclusion, means that you will have tyranny.

S:

Nietzsche seems to think of society in terms of *classes* of people - using, I suppose, the classical model as his ideal - where the dominant class has an inherent sense of obligation, to use a word Nietzsche would not have used.

J:

Yes he would - obligation *and savagery*. That is what he liked about the aristocracies of the ancient world. The sort of world view you are touching upon, my dear Thomas, essentially has the Middle Ages as its inspiration. His has the ancient world, a world with a tiny nobility, and a society based upon caste and upon slavery. Because the distinction between human beings was so great, you could allow the positive - the *noblesse oblige*, the solicitous element - to come out. For Nietzsche, cruelty is necessary for life, and all civilization has to be based upon a degree of cruelty, even a degree of evil, as it was in the ancient world.

S:

But is it not true that, if we look around us now, we see that the modern world has all the worst elements of his philosophy - the cruelty, the savagery - without any of the compensating order and stability which he praises?

J:

Untrue. In a way, the modern world has ended up with an odd synthesis: left-humanist views prated about in the media, available on every television screen and from every editorial mouthpiece; and at the same time a rather harsh society, judged purely on economic grounds.

S:

The grounds on which nearly everything is judged today.

J:

Indeed. Now he considers this economic materialist viewpoint to be axiomatically middle class. It's not the viewpoint of the slaves or of the elites. The aristocracy has now lost power and is a weak, desiccated, rather runtish class in contemporary society - a once triumphant class that is has now declined to the point of ridicule.

S:

Something which Nietzsche would deplore.

J:

Yes, but he would say that when a class declines it should go quickly, and not become a laughing stock.

S:

Still, people have an instinct to survive, and presumably the aristocracy has an instinct to find a place for itself.

J:

True. However, I think you exaggerate the savagery of this society. There is a savage element, and you can die in the gutter and nobody will do anything to help, but there is still an enormous social infrastructure: £90 billion a year on welfare, keeping people going -

S:

All of which is slowly being taken away -

J:

But that's due to economic competition from forces elsewhere on the planet -

S:

Perhaps, but that's not the sort of cruelty I had in mind anyway. What I had in mind was the cruelty involved in corporate immorality; not just the cruelty of individuals but of groups, the rapaciousness of certain economic groups. For instance, the decline of competition. Just going to the corner shop to buy some chocolate, I saw an advertisement for a Walls ice cream, and thought, 'Another bloody Walls ice cream' - Walls controls the entire ice cream market, at least in this part of the country. And what do they produce? Undersized, overpriced, tasteless, unappealing trash. Whatever happened to competition? Why doesn't the government bring in a law *limiting* the size of multinationals? No multinational could have, say, more than a certain capitalization, or number of employees. This should be *forced* from above, thereby encouraging smaller companies to manufacture ice creams, for instance, competing on price and quality. It's no use Walls saying, 'Well, we had that once, and we won!', because it's not a question of *winning*, and competition is not primarily an economic necessity - it's a *moral* necessity.

J:

But that's the Marxist conundrum. Marx's solution was deeply mistaken, and disproven by events, and has collapsed and gone into history. But his *critique* of capitalism and of its tendency not towards individualism but towards a kind of collectivism, towards corporate anonymity, monopoly and oligopoly, and the absence of competition - a lot of that was accurate.

S:

Presumably that's why many centre-left parties were integrated into capitalism during this century, in order to humanize aspects of Marxism and make possible the break-up of some monopolies, through anti-trust laws and the like.

J:

Getting to the heart of what you said, Nietzsche's point is that economic warfare - small firms done in by larger ones, the rigging of markets, the increasing size of corporations - is a fake and cheap form of warfare. What he would rather see is overt physical warfare, especially over ideas.

S:

Isn't that one of the reasons liberalism is antithetical to his outlook? After all, liberalism is precisely an economic view of man, wanting to get beyond war into economic struggle. We might all be in competition, in larger and larger economic and trading blocs - as Orwell foresaw - but at least it's not military, as it has been twice this century on a global scale. In which case the cruelty of economic life, for Nietzsche, would be no more than an excrescence of humanism.

J:

Cruel, but not cruel enough.

S:

In other words, sublimating man's innate physical aggression, and more importantly his innate belligerence over ideas as opposed to, say, ice creams.

J:

Remember that novel you liked, by that politically incorrect existentialist writer of the 1950s, Bill Hopkins -

S:

You mean *The Leap*?

J:

In that novel, he talks about the nascent economic union in Europe - the Iron and Steel Community, the forerunner of the EEC and then the EU. Now the main character in that book, Plowart, says that it is dishonest warfare: the warfare of small people, gathered together into big, anonymous units so that they're safe. Notice that in Ayn Rand's novels, capitalism is seen as some sort of heroic battle between individuals, which may have some relevance to the more creative side of economic life, such as inventions, perhaps even advertising. But it has little to do with business. Business is Walls ice cream, not Roark (from *The Fountainhead*) on a mountain-top, dreaming of new skyscrapers...

S:

But Hopkins, the author of *The Leap*, doesn't he nevertheless have a slinking admiration for the economic moguls, the Murdochs of this world?

J:

He does, but he still regards them as sub-standard warriors, the characters in a warfare that produces bloated, greedy titans. But they have some energy and ingenuity, and he would say that in a world of slaves, even the flabby slave masters of today have a point. Rupert Murdoch is the closest we can get to Julius Caesar, and isn't that an indictment of our civilization?

S:

Murdoch as second-rate Julius Caesar...he'd probably take that as a compliment!

J:

Instead of Caesar before a conquered enemy, deciding whether to put him to death, you have Murdoch investing in Playboy TV -

S:

Or making the great strategic decision as to whether he'll syndicate *The Simpsons* in South-East Asia...

J:

Indeed.

S:

Nevertheless, the liberal humanist is going to say, 'I accept that there is a paradox in my society. On the one hand I deplore the rapaciousness of the multinationals, with their lack of compassion for those under them and the need to extract money from them like a dentist extracts a rotten tooth. Still, this is a sublimation of mankind's aggressive tendencies, and isn't it a good thing? We have international co-operation as a way of locking nations into a system in which it is harder and harder to go to war. We have the emergence of ever larger supranational units. We have the benign dictatorship of the United States. We have the sublimation of aggressive tendencies into sporting and cultural, as well as economic, pursuits. Isn't all of this better than the sort of world Nietzsche would prefer?'

J:

The reply to that is twofold, one of which is my criticism of it, and the other is yours.

S:

Well, from my point of view there's no religion, nothing to believe in, no overarching ethic.

J:

My criticism is similar, but comes from a different direction. There's no great art, no tragedy, nothing of monumental merit being created at this time, even though there are individuals who

are doing their best, creating many interesting and provocative things. But none of it adds up to anything of what you might call ‘eternal’ significance.

S:

What our views have in common is the idea that this is a *mediocre* society, without a profound view of *itself*.

J:

Yes, in which even so-called ‘high’ art does not deal with the most profound issues of human life and destiny. Everything has been flattened out: it’s the religion of the small man, the war of the small man.

S:

I remember that film from the 1970s, *Rollerball*, in which there are pseudo-gladiatorial contests which get the masses worked up for half an hour, almost in a mood to kill and destroy; and then they go back nerd-like to their offices.

J:

Which is just a cinematic version of what you get on Sky Sports, with the background song (to the rugby league) saying, ‘there is only one religion’.

S:

This seems to me to be the ultimate indictment of society, not the triumph the liberal humanist makes it out to be.

J:

For the liberal humanist it’s a triumph, because the thing they fear more than anything is *pain*. The worst thing in life is pain. Whereas for Nietzsche, without pain there is no life.

S:

On that we agree, then, my dear Frederick, because for me suffering is an absolutely *inescapable* part of human life.

J:

Remember, at the end of Huxley’s *Brave New World*, the controller says to the Savage, ‘What do you want?’, and the Savage replies, ‘I want beauty, I want pain, I want death, I want laughter...’ And the controller looks at him in amazement, and says, ‘What you’re asking for is the right to be unhappy’, to which the Savage says ‘Of course’. Could one even imagine the existence of Shakespeare’s writings without tragedy and pain? If everything were reduced to the blandness of the Muzak we’re being forced to listen to in this hotel –

S:

And the biscuits -

J:

I quite enjoyed them, actually. In any case, we'd all be living corpses.

S:

As, arguably, many of us are already. But what I want to say to you is that religion has always recognized this: not just Christianity, but every major religion, except perhaps the ones, like Buddhism, which preach the extinction of all feeling in a state of Nirvana. Christianity has never advocated the extinction of all feeling, neither in this life *nor* in the next. True religion regards the flattening out of all sensibility as contrary to human nature.

J:

But if we had Archbishop Carey, or ex-Archbishop Runcie, with us, we wouldn't be getting that message. And their views, which predominate in modern society, are essentially a mixture of Christianity and liberal humanism. Every time I turn on the television and listen to a cleric, I'm listening to a slightly left-of-centre politician.

S:

Or a social worker with a dog collar on. Which is precisely the point. They don't believe in anything anymore, except 'being nice to people'; and clapping and hugging the person next to them.

J:

And Nietzsche's point is that the reason they are like that is because of something endemic in their faith all along.

S:

Whereas the reality is that they have moved away from what the true understanding of their faith must be.

J:

So say you, but for Nietzsche the sort of humanism he saw emerging in the late nineteenth century, and which we see all about us now, is right at the heart of Jewish morals and Christianity *per se*, in all of its phases.

S:

But one can trace the decline back to the sixteenth century - *that* is where it begins. And as for Judaism, surely he wouldn't have said that the ethical world view of the Old Testament bore any resemblance to the unctuous humanism of the present day.

J:

No - he loves the Old Testament.

S:

Well, that's Jewish morality.

J:

But he divides Jewish morality into two types: the Old Testament, which is the tribal, fierce, patriarchal morality of a people in struggle - and that he admires, since he sees it as close to the Greeks, the Persians, and the pagan world in general -

S:

Indeed - the sacrificial Judaism of David, Solomon, the temple, the Prophets...

J:

But what he dislikes is the Pharisaical Judaism of the later period, and which inverts heroic, martial and aristocratic values.

S:

Precisely the morality, my dear Frederick, criticized by Christ Himself.

J:

Maybe, but where you differ from Nietzsche is over his view that, while the Pharisees were wrong, Christ was rebelling against them but not moving towards his way of seeing things; rather, he developed the logic of late Judaism (late in the context of the ancient world) to its extreme. Whereas you see Christ as attacking late Judaism and replacing it with something different, he sees Christ as replacing it with a view that is even more Pharisaical, and offering it to non-Jews. For Nietzsche, Christianity is just Pharisaical Judaism for Gentiles.

S:

Quite a misunderstanding of Christianity, my dear Frederick: Christ was not *rebeling* against anything. Certainly He criticized the pridefulness of the Pharisees, and their valuing of law over humanity; but He did not seek to replace Judaism with something new - as He Himself said, 'I come not to abolish the Law but to fulfil it.' So Nietzsche defines his own position in terms of another which is a complete distortion of Christianity itself. Certainly, Christianity teaches that the meek shall inherit the Earth, that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and so on, but that does not deny the *sacrificial* character of Christianity. Christianity is a constant warfare, and every true Christian must be a soldier.

J:

Yes, my dear Thomas, but a warfare against human nature, which is inevitably barbaric, inevitably competitive and hierarchical. And inevitably destructive. And because it is these things, it can also be calm, solicitous and creative. This means that his morality, and the morality of the Old Testament, are closer to the pagan world than Christianity.

S:

If this is what Nietzsche thinks, then he did not go to any good lectures on theology; but let us leave such matters aside, and let me put to you this proposition: that Nietzsche's indictment of modern society is not simply that it is bland and unheroic, but that modern man is incapable of any authenticity whatsoever. Even the paganism about which he waxes so lyrical has, in its modern recrudescence, become a farcical pastiche, full of dancing around trees and folk songs around the fire; whereas in truth, paganism has an ethic which is so bloodthirsty that it would make the face of the average *Guardian*-reading 'white witch' turn a shade of grey. Not that I, for one, would wish to see its return.

J:

For Nietzsche - who understood theological disputation perfectly well - humanity is living an enormous lie, because the safest, most mediocre and most comfortable elements are on top - gingerly perhaps, since they themselves have to disacknowledge a certain amount of cruelty in order to be able to stay on top. Whenever one goes into a room, one sees people smiling inanely, saying in their minds, 'Like me, love me'. Most of your colleagues in your own establishment are like that. What they need is some chastisement, a harsh dose of reality, at least enough to get them into a state of wanting to believe something, of wanting to reject other things, of wanting to create and to soar above the mediocre. For most people, their ideology is neutrality: the safety of the bank clerk, the safety of the man in the middle. Of course, the minute people start really believing in things, and rejecting other things, you have division, factions, mutual distrust -

S:

One of the main things liberal society cannot tolerate - the absence of concord.

J:

If every academic in every university started having real opinions, the whole system would shut down...it would almost collapse. Remember how you were kicked out of Monsieur G's salon? Just for saying that you didn't care about what was happening in Bosnia?

S:

Thanks for reminding me - just what I needed.

J:

Monsieur G was apoplectic. What did he say? 'I was in the war, you know, and I killed many people; if I had a gun I'd shoot you now'.

S:

Ah, true humanism.

J:

Yes, humanism in the raw - humanist violence in the name of 'caring'. In such a small moment much was revealed. Here is a man who has a salon, a Continental thing which he has imported into London. He invites all sorts of people but there are *ground rules* - unstated, but there all the same. The main one is: do not, under any circumstances, say anything in opposition to orthodox liberal opinion. Even though, *officially*, this was a salon whose very *raison d'être* was the discussion of ideas among intellectuals. So when you said, 'I don't care about what's happening in Bosnia', meaning 'Sure it's bad, but thousands of people are dying in wars all around the world, every minute of every day, and I have no intention of spending every waking moment in a grief-stricken state of mourning over it, especially not when I'm reminded of it by rich dilettantes living in Chelsea' -

S:

Well put, my dear Frederick -

J:

When you said that, you were in effect condemning unctuous liberalism itself: the sanctimoniousness of it all; the wearing of red AIDS ribbons-

S:

It's a fad now - there's a differently coloured ribbon for every cause.

J:

- the 'We all care about everything and everybody' attitude of the chattering classes - but by saying, or rather implying, that, you were effectively jumping up and down on Monsieur G's very body. You were saying, 'Monsieur G., I will not worship at your secular shrine.'

S:

Hence my being refused re-admission at such an august event as Monsieur G's salon for the discussion of ideas and opinions. No room there for anyone who is likely to give anyone else a hard time over their views. Still, at least I'm in the company of that artist Albert Louden - wasn't he also expelled?

J:

Yes, for having ‘a thuggish face’. The implication being that he was too working class for a salon in Chelsea.

S:

Whatever his artistic talent, which is considerable. The group that he belongs to, the so-called ‘Outsider artists’, are precisely the sort of creative individuals who have been forced to the very margins of the art world, because they have a vision, or rather, visions, since they are extreme aesthetic individualists, which do not fit into the acceptable artistic categories. In many ways they are Nietzschean artists.

J:

Ploughing their lonely furrows, as it were. Mind you, Monsieur G and his family made their money by dealing in art, and so ironically, by excluding Louden, he spat on his family’s own profession and source of wealth.

S:

Or not so ironically, given his distaste for most forms of modern art, and for the secular religion which it constitutes in the eyes of the so-called ‘cultured class’. He sees it as a materialistic cult, in which art functions both as currency and as object of worship. And yet he excludes Louden for being raw, uncouth, unable to communicate other than on the canvass, a man who loathes the very materialism and commercialism which Monsieur G has gone so far as to excoriate in print!

J:

Ah yes, a situation Nietzsche would have found only too familiar.

S:

The cruelty that wears its heart on its sleeve. The chattering classes are quick to show their disdain for the creative individuals on the fringes of society because they don’t like the look of them, or because they’re beneath them, uneducated, or crude, or whatever - but let anyone criticize the handwringing, no-costs humanism of the Channel Four news, and they’re a bloody *monster*. Certainly the suppression of individuality, or of individual creativity, in modern society is something I can side with Nietzsche on. Just look at what has been called the McDonaldization of society, the grey homogeneity of it all. And have we now got an emerging ‘European culture’, something different from the individual national geniuses which made up the old European culture?

J:

Well, the beginning of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth is now the European national anthem.

S:

Yes, and I simply cannot listen to it anymore, so trivialized has it become.

J:

You know that Theodore Adorno, the left-wing writer, spoke earlier this century of Beethoven with the Cornflakes, the standardization of culture, mass-produced by a veritable culture industry.

S:

Don't many governments speak about the 'arts industry'? And most Western countries have arts ministries - need we say more? Just as we have a sex industry, a sports industry, so we have a culture industry. Don't you feel that, somehow, this is *imposed* on us? This movement towards homogeneity does not come from ordinary people, as opposed to the chattering classes and their paymasters. It's an agenda.

J:

Yes, in the sense that it's an agenda imposed on us by people who think they know best. If you listen to the official line in the media, you get the impression that the view from above is that the people are still a bit barbaric, still a bit primitive, prone to occasional bouts of political incorrectness, what they see as 'bigotry' or 'nationalist prejudice'. These people have to be reminded every so often that they must be more humane, that they must *like* people who are different from them; and, in the long run, that they should all try to be more *similar* to each other, not stand out from the crowd, or exaggerate group affiliations. A position Nietzsche abhors, since discrimination, in the sense of choosing between distinct alternatives, is just *part of life*. And now it is not just a crime, but a *thought* crime.

S:

But surely this is being done for the best of reasons, at least as they understand them. Because if we don't impose this sort of uniformity, we'll have Bosnias till the end of time. And none of us want that. So don't they have a point?

J:

But what they don't realize, my dear Thomas, is that it is *because* of this imposed uniformity, not *in spite* of it, that we will have more Bosnias. In fact Bosnia is just such a case in point: far more bloodshed in that part of the world is *because* of the artificiality of the *Pax Yugoslaviana*

than because of the existence of distinct ethnic groups living next to each other. I've even heard it said that liberals *create* Nazis.

S:

I think that is going a little over the top, my dear Frederick.

J:

Perhaps, but is there not a tiny grain of truth in the idea? Who would not lay some of the blame for the wars we have seen in the Balkans this century at the feet of the Western powers with their state-building designs, in total disregard of the deep ethnic differences of the region?

S:

At the risk of being facetious, might I say that when I hear 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' being played by a symphony orchestra, as I do now, I want to shoot the speakers out of which such drivel is emanating. If that's what it means to say that liberals create Nazis, then so be it.

J:

Totalitarian Muzak, brought to you by McDonalds...

S:

The more you tell people to be nice, the less they'll do it. And again, if I may hark back to religion as it has been practised throughout the centuries - religion does not tell people again and again to be nice. Religion brings people up in a certain way, imposes a set of values on them, a hierarchy and a structure, and lets people get on with it, within those boundaries. One has an enormous amount of freedom *within a structure*, and that is not as paradoxical as it sounds. If you come to me, having lost your way, and you ask me whether you should turn right or left, let me ask you: would you be more free if I told you you *must* go right, or if I said to you, 'It's up to you - you have to work it out yourself, and all I can tell you is that you'd better go the right way'! Now, we have no structure, simply the bland injunction, 'Be nice'.

J:

Nietzsche's whole point is that such a structure should be imposed, but it cannot be religious. There must be another way.

S:

But does Nietzsche differ all that much from the liberal humanist on that score? The liberal humanist says, 'Nietzsche was right - God is dead, religion is dead; so we have to find another structure to impose on people' - namely, a structure whose basic axiom is, 'Be nice to others, especially the less fortunate, because in some ineffable way they are better than you, and you are

guilty'. And who is less fortunate than whom, and what being nice *means* in practice, depends on our best available theories in sociology, psychology and anthropology.

J:

He would say they've got a large part of that outlook from what you would call late Christianity, and what he would call straight Christianity. But leaving that aside, he would also say that if you want the possibility of evolutionary growth - another of the tenets of both liberal humanism and élitist anti-humanism - you have to permit the harsh side, the dark and destructive side. Without destruction there can be no creation, and without struggle there can be no great victory. If, on the other hand, you want wall-to-wall Beatles Muzak such as we're listening to right now, then carry on as you have been doing for the last two centuries.

S:

I accept that there is at least a superficial coherence to the Nietzschean view in this respect, and in this it differs from the liberal outlook, which has incoherence at its very core. On the one hand we are told to value the unfortunate, the vulnerable, the dependent; and on the other our society aborts them, euthanases them, extinguishes millions of them from the face of the Earth. Why? because the liberal also values *autonomy*, the freedom to 'choose'. To choose what? To negate the better values of liberalism itself, by pretending that there is no ugliness, no handicap, that people are better off dead than dependent? Is this not the paradox at the heart of every liberal society, that it forces people to be free to destroy its very foundations?

J:

I detect a whiff of Nietzsche again - cruelty and destruction in the name of evolutionary growth!

S:

Which ends in totalitarianism. So is Nietzsche not the liberal's philosopher after all; and the totalitarian's? And are these not two sides of the same materialistic coin?

J:

If you mean, 'Can there really be good without evil, pleasure without pain?', then I reply, 'No'. The greatest works of art contain the greatest cruelty, the greatest pain, the greatest struggle. Without these, you have nothing but Muzak and video nasties. If I may hazard an unscientific guess, I am pretty sure the market for video nasties fell apart in Bosnia when the war started, and that the part of the UK where there is the smallest market for such items is Northern Ireland. When cruelty and death, that is, *life*, stares you in the face, you have no taste for the ersatz.

S:

But the liberal response is obvious - video nasties are hardly a high price to pay for relative peace and stability. If the loss of great art is what it takes to have peace, then so be it.

J:

And yet does the liberal humanist really think that life will lie down compliantly forever? You yourself pointed out the cruelty at the heart of the liberal system. Why should we believe it will not get even crueler? And that life will not reassert itself again, as in every society which lives by an artificial structure which is contrary to human nature?

S:

Can we not say, then, that the dialectic between the Nietzschean and the liberal is summed up in the question, 'Which is better - bread and circuses or meat and warfare?'

J:

Admirably summed up, my dear Thomas.

S:

And what if the bread and circuses are guaranteed to lead to an even greater form of warfare and barbarism than even Nietzsche could have imagined?

J:

Highly problematic - we might be on the cusp of the new millennium, but that doesn't mean we can see into the future, old man. And don't forget that we mustn't look at things from too enclosed a space. We do not know how the emerging power of Asia will affect the world in the future, for one thing. Far from seeing the European Union, as so many so-called sceptics do, as the triumph of German totalitarianism, we can equally plausibly see it as nothing more than a framework for managed decline. Dictators and world conquerors have tried, for several millennia, to force the European peoples and nationalities into one by the sword. And again we see an attempt to bring Europe together, only *this* time in decline, as a way of fending off competition from other regions such as Asia and the Americas.

S:

If I recall, Jacques Delors made several references to Charlemagne, didn't he?

J:

Yes, because the leaders of the new Europe like to think of European history as developing linearly to an Omega point, if I may borrow an expression from Teilhard de Chardin. Whereas previous attempts at unification failed, at least in the long term, because they were carried out by

the sword, this time we are told that it shall be achieved with the consent, nay the enthusiasm, of the masses...

S:

Let us leave aside the odd unhelpful referendum result.

J:

Indeed.

S:

And we are to have our glorious unity under the banner of Beethoven and his Ninth!

J:

So let us also leave aside the fact that Beethoven wanted to dedicate his Third Symphony to Napoleon, and then crossed that out when he crowned himself Emperor!

S:

The modern European cadres don't appeal to Napoleon, of course, though in reality Napoleon was one of the great European federalists! They like to think of themselves as Carolingians, but that's safe because it's too long ago for anyone to care about it.

J:

And in Nazi Germany, many of the ministries, up to 1938, were named after parts of the Carolingian empire. There was a great worship of the Carolingian achievement in that movement.

S:

Ignoring, of course, that what Charles the Great achieved was a unified Catholic empire under the spiritual leadership of the pope! Conveniently forgotten, of course, as with most European history!

J:

The point, my dear Thomas, was the unification, not the Catholicism. Nevertheless, as an historian once said to me, if in a hundred years we have a radically centralized European state, who knows how the rulers will deal with a man like Hitler, who wanted to federate Europe - by force, admittedly, but then so did Charles the Great, and he succeeded; moreover, Hitler wanted an ultimately peaceful German imperium. One wonders, if Hitler had not killed so many innocent people, perhaps he would end up on the cover of European Union history books, in a positive light! Here was a German who wanted to create a new order among the European peoples, through force. So did Napoleon. But the difference from the modern EU is that,

allegedly, it is all being done with consent. And the claim is that we have progressed from the barbarism of the great dictators.

S:

And haven't we? The current 'European project' is clearly more peaceful than any that have been undertaken before.

J:

Perhaps - perhaps, at least for now. Will it be peaceful in the future? And even if it is, won't the price be Beethoven with your Cornflakes?

S:

Again, a small price to pay, is it not, for concord and harmony among our great European peoples?

J:

Concord and harmony, such as there is at the moment - itself debatable - only ever exists among peoples who are declining, and who need to huddle together for mutual protection.

S:

Well, the federalists in Britain do, it is true, appeal regularly to Britain's decline, her loss of Empire, and so on, to support their project. What other place can Britain have in the world if not as part of such a powerful bloc as the EU? This is their claim, at least.

J:

I don't deny that it is possible to build powerful federations, and for there to be broad consent among the peoples who are brought together, at least after they have got used to being together. Otherwise no empire would last more than a few years. The point is that the coming together itself rarely happens successfully by consent. Even the USA required bloody wars, including of course the Civil War, for federation to succeed.

S:

Perhaps one can also regard the First and Second World Wars as European civil wars? Perhaps, in fifty years, European children will read about these wars in their history books as proto-wars of European unity?

J:

'As Europe struggled to become whole, through the slaughter it will now avoid, thanks to the Herculean efforts of such farsighted visionaries as Kohl and Mitterand...'

S:

Apparently there is already in existence a Euro-history book which says that Agincourt was not a victory for the English crown, but a loss for the French because their horses all had diarrhoea. The idea being that it is no longer politic to blame a European nation for being defeated, for getting anything wrong.

J:

So what are they going to do about Hitler? Already some critics say that the chapters on him in some history books are dangerously bland and lacking in righteous indignation.

S:

In a sense, then, are they not acclimatising the memory of Hitler, and hence of Nietzsche - at one remove - to contemporary European norms? Yes, they were 'monsters', but we can still bring them in from the cold, so it is thought. They were, on this view, an inevitable part of the evolution of the European idea.

J:

This idea of 'the end of history' - remember Fukuyama's book - seems to be casting its shadow over politics and society. Everything can be brought in, harmonised with everything else in larger and larger systems. It's almost a Hindu way of thinking! Even the demons can come in from the cold.

S:

But maybe that's the way the humanist project has to function if it is to survive. In the coming European brotherhood, everyone must be brothers; as soon as people are no longer brothers, they become outsiders -

J:

- and possible monsters -

S:

- and a possible threat. So in a sense it has to keep growing on its host, like a parasite, or else it dies.

J:

If I may put it more prosaically, if the system does not internalize the nature of its own enemies, it will eventually be overcome by them. There's almost a cancer metaphor in the offing here. As Nietzsche would say, you go against the nature of the body, you take over the body - in this case the body politic - and you keep on agglomeratizing more and more alien matter. Why is it that *On the Genealogy of Morals*, one of the major acts of intellectual terrorism in Europe in the last

two hundred years, is published by Cambridge University Press? After all, it is rank intellectual terrorism.

S:

It's a way of neutralizing it.

J:

It's almost like Holst's *Planets*, where Mars, which stands for war, is incredibly violent, the sound is demonic in a way - and yet it is all integrated into a generalized 'coming together'. It's almost as if we've reached the point where, although political incorrectness is the last secular sin, there is a dream that even it can be neutered by absorption and conversion into the material of the host.

S:

But is that only a dream, or does the European Project carry the seeds of its own destruction?

J:

It may collapse through not being able to ingest this sort of material. Maybe, in the end, there is meat that is just a bit *too* strong, too raw and bloody. They may well choke on it.

Chapter 3

ROOM 101, DOWNING STREET

Location: a park in central London

Jonathan:

So, my dear Thomas, you've started reading *1984* as a result of Tony Blair's electoral triumph?

Samuel:

I have to tell you, I felt so depressed as a result of the election, I felt so powerless, that I started reading it - it was the only act of rebellion I could think of.

J:

We're now dominated by the reign of the plastic people. But why this connection between Blair's victory and *1984*? I find it a little hard to fathom, old man.

S:

Well, it's not so much the fact that the Tories got thrashed - they deserved it - but that although everything seemed to change, and a wave of euphoria swept the country, I knew that nothing had changed, everything would remain the same. One set of middle managers replaced by another set. I thought of Orwell's book - Eastasia, Eurasia, who were Oceania at war with? It didn't matter. Who was ruling them? Identities didn't matter - just the Party. And so it seems here and now: one big party, Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrat - it's all the same. And the electorate know it, which is why they are so volatile, and ready simply to vote out of office whomsoever's in power, in the forlorn hope of change. They lurch from one side to the other, but they stay on the same ship.

J:

So you wanted the Tories to get a kicking, and they got it. So what's the problem?

S:

I wanted something different.

J:

You didn't want so many Eurosceptics to be put out, isn't that right?

S:

Perhaps, but everyone agrees they are the only politicians left with any character, with any individuality, with any real *beliefs*.

J:

You're right about the vote being essentially an anti-incumbent one. The people came out in their droves and, in the quiet of the voting booth, asked themselves: 'How do I get the Tory out?' Hence the massive tactical voting, which took even Blair and Ashdown by surprise. Blair said later he only expected a majority of about 45.

S:

Yes, they voted in the most anti-incumbent fashion possible, even to the extent of voting for the Sportsmen's Alliance Anything but Mellor Party!

J:

I think there was a special anti-incumbent sentiment in Putney, old man.

S:

So now you know why I started reading *1984*. How does power work? How is it possible to have democracy without freedom, a perpetual revolution without any change? OK, so resorting to Orwell's nightmare was perhaps a little extreme, but I must tell you how startled I was by the accuracy of the book. I'd read it before as a teenager, but understood hardly anything.

J:

It's partly based on Dante's *Inferno*. Hell is where Winston is tormented by O'Brien in the bowels of the Ministry of Love. Heaven is a strange sort of individualistic concept for Orwell, and is embodied in Winston's days in the room with Julia, looking at the paperweight and the concrete reality it represents, in contradistinction to the monstrous denial of the past carried out by the Party. The meaningless greyness of the first part of the novel is a kind of purgatory, in a

modernist Fritz Lang sense. And of course you have the inner and outer circles, represented by the Inner Party and the Outer Party.

S:

He didn't consciously model the book on Dante, did he?

J:

Oh, yes. It's in his letters and remarks of the period.

S:

But it's astonishing how accurate the book is, indeed how increasingly accurate it is becoming, if you know what I mean. It's not just the familiar things that everyone knows, such as the telescreens monitoring everyone - done today in a myriad ways, by closed circuit television, interactive multimedia and computing, plastic money, and so on - but the reality control, the doublethink, the destruction of family life, the social control, the drudgery of work...

J:

You remember the Parsons, the family that lives next door - Mr. Parsons, the boring drudge who exudes cold sweat and lives for the next Party rally, who can talk about nothing but pig iron production and the latest economic figures...

S:

The way everyone rabbits on nowadays about economic growth, whatever that is, the markets, the latest inflation figures...just the same.

J:

Although Orwell was very much having a go at his own side, the sort of boring obsession with economics he found in left-wing groups up and down the country. The book is full of 'in' jokes against left-wingers and their ideology, even though he too was on the left, in an unctuously humanist sort of way. In the book, the proles are officially worshipped as the great workers sustaining society and making military victory possible with their endless labours, while in

reality the Party despises them and regards them as so much worthless cattle, drinking, urinating in public bars, stinking...

S:

At that level, the book is clearly an anti-socialist rant. But so much of it is relevant to modern society, particularly all the ways, subtle and not so subtle, in which public opinion is manipulated, people are degraded, brainwashed into thinking there is such a thing as meaningful political change - for the better.

J:

That is where the nature of modern censorship is so important to understand. If you look at the way the Party uses censorship to control opinion in *1984*, it's ultimately based upon power, brute force. For all the nefariousness of memory holes for discarding unwanted facts, copious alteration of newspapers and books to fit in with the latest Party line, it is all based in the end on the Party's ability to inflict physical pain, not so much on the proles but upon their own errant members. That is what keeps everything together. Modern liberals would say that society needs a certain amount of standardization, it needs people to hold to roughly similar viewpoints, but it does not rely on naked physical force to get its way.

If you look at what goes on in the cellars of the Ministry of Love, people have their teeth kicked out, they're starved, beaten senseless, tortured - it's physical, and ultimately based on the primal fear that everyone has, though it differs from person to person. For Winston, of course, it's rats.

S:

We don't have that, of course, but we do have other things, for instance Waco, which is an example of reality control since it is a fact that the ATF and FBI burnt down the Waco compound using flame-throwing tanks - it is on film, thoroughly documented. And not just that, but the lies and distortions of reality that surrounded the way the Waco case was presented to the

public. Sure, David Koresh did not sound like the easiest person to get along with, and perhaps had a major personality problem. But the people who were there stayed of their own free will, it was not some den of child abuse and brainwashing; it was a sect, for sure, following a false prophet, but I wasn't aware that that was against the law in the USA.

J:

Wait a minute, old man. The FBI and ATF say the Branch Davidians set fire to their own complex, whether by design or by accident, after the bungled raid on the complex which led to the shooting of one of their own men.

S:

Shot by another one of their own men who had already entered the building, *not* by any of the Davidians, as is proven by the film, which itself has hardly been seen on mainstream television. Whether it was an accident or not is hard to say, though it's hard to imagine how it could have been an accident, given that the officer who was shot was on the roof outside the room his colleagues had already entered - the shots that came through the walls out of the room were clearly government bullets from a government automatic weapon, fired outwards, but at whom? There were no Davidians on the roof! The entire fiasco was reality-controlled in truly Orwellian fashion, from beginning to end. A careful government-initiated media campaign of vilification in order to soften up the public - just like the Two Minutes' Hate in *1984* - so that the public was convinced these were dangerous lunatic cultists, who needed to be sorted out. And they were - over eighty dead, women and children gassed by the government in their blockaded cellar, and the complex razed to the ground. The government had said they were going in to save the children from sexual abuse, an allegation proven to have been pure fiction, according to evidence from the survivors, and all other circumstantial evidence. The whole government campaign rested on false allegations by one or two renegades from the compound who had fallen out with Koresh and wanted to pay him back.

J:

So you're saying Waco was some sort of government plot? Steady on, old man.

S:

They marched in and burnt the whole thing down. Their own citizens. And also British citizens, since some had followed Koresh away from the Seventh Day Adventists, from which the Branch Davidians were a breakaway.

J:

But why would the US government have done something as monstrous, and frankly difficult to believe, as you say?

S:

To set an example, no doubt. To show that religion must not get out of control, but must remember that the highest authority is the Party, as O'Brien would have said - or rather, the state, since parties matter less and less in Western society.

J:

So you would say that under the bland censorship of Radio 4 and the luvvie brigade, there does indeed exist the possibility of physical violence if people step too far out of line?

S:

Well, yes. I mean, these acts, of which Waco is the most egregious in recent times - but there are others, such as the Randy Weaver shootout and various showdowns the government has with people who are either law abiding or else guilty of offences which are minor in comparison to the brute force used against them - these sorts of confrontation are symptomatic of the way the US government - and I take the US government to be emblematic of your average Western liberal democracy, in respect of how it would act in certain circumstances - will act to back up democracy with physical power. That's why the recent movie, *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*, has given such a disturbing portrayal of the ATF and FBI. I'm *sure* the makers of that movie had

Waco in mind, and what it shows is that this cynical picture of big government has filtered through into popular culture, to the extent that most Americans don't even trust their government any more.

J:

An interesting extension of what American blacks have considered for a long time, that both state and federal governments are institutionalised opponents of the Negro population, almost occupying powers, given the status which blacks see themselves as having, of second-class citizens who always find the law against them when it comes to a confrontation with whites. Now it's the *whites* who see government ranged against them. What rap music has waisted about for many years, Beavis and Butthead are now echoing for devotees of popular, semi-trashy white culture.

If we turn to Britain for a moment, and look at censorship of the media and other forms of communication, particularly artistic and political in the last twenty or thirty years, we can see that it has been varied. There seems almost to be a confusion among would-be censors as to what exactly they should censor! Let us not return at length to pornography, which we've already covered in another conversation, but I note that liberalism increasingly can't ban forms of pornography except for the very sadistic and perverted kind, such as necrophilia, paedophilia, acts involving farm animals, etc. But even to be associated with censorship of that sort of extreme material causes a lot of pain in the liberal mind.

S:

Well, *Crash* has just been censored by Westminster City Council.

J:

Ah yes, the movie about people getting their jollies from watching car accidents. I trust you have seen it, Thomas?

S:

It wasn't on my 'must see' list, to be frank.

J:

If you wanted to see it you wouldn't need to worry if you were in Westminster. You could walk just a few hundred yards beyond the boundaries of that council, into Camden, and see it as often as you like!

S:

I'm gratified to know that.

J:

And even Camden Council, or rather the feminist-dominated women's committee, banned $9 \frac{1}{2}$ *Weeks* in the 1980s, but you could have walked into Westminster and seen it. And that indicates the degree of confusion that exists about censorship in this society. There are certain things they want to censor, in particular forms of religious fundamentalism, particularly Islamic but also restorationist Christian, and forms of extreme political radicalism of both Right and Left, though more the right than the left since the end of the Cold War. That is a relative given in this society, for example among the Jewish lobby: extreme anti-Zionist or pro-Palestinian literature, much of which emanates from the extreme Left, especially the Trotskyists, is very hard to find in your average high street bookshop; and so it has been pushed into conceptual ghettos on the fringes of society.

Look at Jim Allen's play *Perdition*, in the 1980s. Allen was a para-Trotskyist - whether he was ever a member of the Socialist Workers' Party, for instance, is neither here nor there, as he was a cultural and intellectual fellow traveller - and he wrote this play called *Perdition*, which received a reading in the Conway Hall, in Red Lion Square in central London. This venue is a refuge for 'outlawed' opinion, and was set up by a small, Protestant 'ethical society', which stands for absolute free speech - although they tried to ban the National Front from using their

premises. In any case, the play was read there under the auspices of various left-wing and Arab groups -

S:

Was it performed in the West End?

J:

It was scheduled to be put on at the Royal Court's 'upper theatre', but was banned by Stafford Clark, who now has his own company but was artistic director of that theatre at the time. It was banned because there were many historical errors in it, as was pointed out by establishment Jewish historians such as Martin Gilbert. Allen's supporters also acknowledge this. But, after the play had been cleaned up, it was still considered too anti-Zionist to be performed in the West End or at any major theatre. The play said that the Zionists in Palestine collaborated with the Nazis to get certain rich Jews out of Nazi Germany, while allowing their poorer brethren to go to their deaths. And there are indeed documented instances of that, as shown by anti-Zionist Jewish writers such as Alfred Lilienthal and Leni Brenner. You could turn it around and say... so what? Rich people in groups who are under threat will always find friends, and will always find a way out. Put in those terms, it's less controversial than it was made to seem. However, it was controversial enough to upset a large number of people, and was regarded as a left-wing view that was not acceptable. So the play was blacklisted, as was Allen himself, who has hardly been heard of since.

S:

But it wasn't government censorship, was it?

J:

No, it was a combination of denunciation by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, by the Chief Rabbi, by key Jewish figures in the Tory party and the Labour party, by the liberal media, and the knowledge that Trotskyists did not accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Many liberal-

minded people don't like what Israel has done to the Palestinians in the last fifty years; however, it is accepted that the Jewish people have the right to a state, which Arabs, Trotskyists and others regard as occupied Palestinian territory.

S:

So was there a threatened boycott of any theatre which staged Allen's play?

J:

Stafford Clark and the people associated with him didn't want their careers ruined by this incident. There is a feeling that if you say certain things and associate yourself with certain tendencies you will find it very difficult to get work in the future. You can go back to your attic and tap away on your computer and write forty volumes, but they won't be published, or if they are they will, to use the words of David Hume, fall still-born from the press. They won't be reviewed - unless you make yourself into such a hate figure that you become a *bête noire*, the victim of the ritualised *auto da fé* of this society - someone like David Irving, for instance, who has made a career out of being as unacceptable as possible on all sorts of fronts. But I'm sure the hierarchy of the Royal Court Theatre didn't want that to happen to them. From a purely liberal point of view, they should have said: 'Here is a play which disprivileges the existence of Israel, which is pro-Palestinian - but it expresses a viewpoint on history, and this is a democracy, and as far as we're concerned it can go ahead.' It might be a cliché, but it's still true, that a democracy isn't worth its name if it can't allow the expression of dissident views, including radical Left and Right, and in our society radical libertarian views, pro-Muslim views –

S:

Muslim views, at least ones of a more orthodox nature, don't get much of an airing...

J:

No, that's one of the demonised viewpoints, and people are well aware that the Muslim ghetto and the far Right ghetto - even though in this society they're opposed to each other - do overlap, and share certain ideological and cultural views.

S:

Multiculturalism means everyone living together happily, but not everyone's voice being given a fair hearing.

J:

The multicultural society is a melting pot which allows a certain degree of fragmentation, but in the end has to censor certain viewpoints, at least relatively by not giving them access to the mainstream media.

S:

Real freedom of speech would be if the current head of the Muslim 'parliament', if there is one, being allowed to have a half-hour slot on Radio 4 prime time to denounce the excesses of Western liberalism. That would be real free speech. Censorship doesn't work by government passing an act of parliament saying 'Thou shalt not read X' -

J:

Relative censorship.

S:

It's informal but effective.

J:

It's through networks and involves a conjunction of circumstances. Go back to the Jim Allen case, because you can pinpoint the way it works. He writes a play, he's a far left-winger and so can't be accused of being a 'Nazi', or of being politically incorrect, he's not a religious fundamentalist, indeed he's a militant atheist. But he hits one button too many - it's a play too

far. What's he done? He's attacked the existence of a modern democratic state, he's attacked a minority which suffered heavily in Europe in the middle of this century, he's trodden on all sorts of liberal toes, albeit from a leftist angle - the play is too crude, he had to retract certain factual errors. It's all a bit too brutal and offensive, and if you're liberal minded you really don't want to be associated with that sort of thing. There's free speech and free speech, old boy.

S:

It's all very similar to the Helen Demidenko case in Australia, which became a few years ago the most famous literary scandal in Australian history. She wrote a novel about her experiences as a child of Ukrainian immigrants, whose family was involved in crimes against the Jews in World War II. It was presented as the search of a young, modern Australian girl for the truth about her ethnicity, her family's past, and so on - all very chic to the literary establishment. Only she clearly played down those crimes in her book, trying more to understand than to condemn the most horrendous atrocities, and even going so far as to blame the Jews for what the Ukrainians did to them!

Now, despite the fact that the tone of her book was not one that endeared it to the Jewish community, and would have been condemned as rank fascism if written as a work of history, or as a political tract, Demidenko won prize after prize, and instant fame. But, it turned out, her name was not Helen Demidenko, but Helen Darville, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Darville from Scunthorpe. She had carried out a massive literary fraud, and the controversy raged for months afterwards. Needless to say, she was condemned in vitriolic terms by Jews, non-Jews, and every columnist in the country, and she has not been heard from since.

An important point about her case is that Darville did a disservice to her work by getting quite a few of her facts wrong about what went on in the Ukraine in the 1930s, as was pointed out early on by a number of columnists, including a prominent Jewish academic. She went overboard in blaming the Jews for the entire Russian Revolution. As a result she has been

castigated for her historical inaccuracy, which has been used as an indirect means of accusing her of rank anti-Semitism.

J:

She could claim, for her part, that it's a novel, and that the Ukrainian characters, including the narrator, are telling it as they saw it. Inevitably, especially after the lapse of several decades, they are going to have subjective, biased, even prejudiced views of what they experienced.

S:

There was, of course, the complicating factor of her impersonating a descendant of Ukrainians who had been in the war -

J:

An allowable artistic device, surely.

S:

I suppose. But the point is that true multiculturalism would be allowing her to publish and say, 'Look, historical accuracy in a novel is not central. I'm not writing a history textbook, I'm telling it the way the Ukrainians see it, and there can be no doubt that many, though not all, Ukrainians, do explain their experiences under the Soviets, and in the war, in this way.'

J:

Absolutely. That's the way they see it, and they have a right to see it their way. And Black Americans have the right to say, as many do, 'Forget the Holocaust for a moment, and think about the millions of dead in the Western slave trade.' Each group sees things from its own viewpoint. There is also a methodological point which should be mentioned, that in the 1970s and 80s the most fashionable cultural philosophies were Deconstructionism and Post-structuralism, viewpoints which embodied pure relativism, saying almost that each viewpoint is as good as any other viewpoint...

S:

Rather extreme and unjustifiable, I would say.

J:

Perhaps, but these theories have been, and still are, enormously influential, and have profoundly affected the way many historians operate. Many historians would say there *is* no historical truth, at least no incontestable interpretation of contingent historical facts. The fact is that there are radical neo-liberal views that would say, to Allen and others, ‘Go ahead, publish, put on your play - it’s a viewpoint.’ Moreover, the Ukrainians were undoubtedly subject to terrible massacres in the 1920s and 30s, and have a right to have their viewpoint aired, even if it means the Establishment’s having to come to terms with the fact that there seems to have been more than one genocide in Europe this century.

S:

We don’t hear much about the Ukrainians and others, such as the Armenians.

J:

Here is a woman, Darville/Demidenko, using artistic licence and pretending to be an Australian-Ukrainian with something to say, with a viewpoint. Is that any different to Elie Wiesel? All groups are like this, Ukrainian, Irish, Armenian, Zanzibarian.

S:

Which makes me ask, my dear Frederick, what determines which views get a decent airing in this society and which don’t? I mean reality control, to use Orwell’s term, depends on the identity of the controller.

J:

I think it’s a mixture of things, and one of the reasons why we are not assailed all the time with the suffering of the Armenian people under the Turks, or of the kulaks and peasantry under the Soviets, or of a multitude of other cases of massacre and misery, is that the various groups who

have suffered greatly but are not talked about very much is that they are not well represented among Hollywood producers.

But among liberals you do find a certain relativization of suffering, and the view that what happened to the Jews this century is not unique, and that you must class the Armenians, and the Zanzibarian Arabs, and the Ibo, and the Cambodians, and the Ukrainians, and even the Irish famine victims, as being in the same boat: all human, all done down, all have a story to tell, all have rights, all must be compensated in some way, as for instance has happened to aboriginal groups in Australasia and the Americas.

S:

But what most liberals say is that there was something unique about the Holocaust, in terms of its character as the attempt to exterminate an entire people by means of the highest technology at the disposal of the state, that it was carried out scientifically and with a precision of method unequalled in human history.

J:

Well, that may or may not be true, but here we are getting into a very difficult and emotionally-charged area in which talk of censorship is highly controversial. So I think we should look at the question in a broader context, putting aside the so-called ‘revisionist’ arguments which are held by a range of obscure writers around the world, who say that either the Holocaust did not occur, or if it did the figures were grossly exaggerated - although it must be admitted that the official Auschwitz death total has been reduced from around 4 million to 1.1 million, and that Prof. Norman Stone, ex-professor of history at Oxford, has said the highest figure for the Holocaust is 4.5 million. The broader point is that there is a degree to which absolute free speech is never tolerated in a democratic society, though there is a relative ordering of what is and is not to be permitted. It is noticeable, for instance, that in this society all talk of race is highly moderated

and regulated, in terms of what can and cannot be said. Talk of differences between races has virtually been banned from mainstream academic and media discussion.

S:

Although we have had a recent resurgence of so-called ‘scientific racial theory’ in the form of the book *The Bell Curve*, co-written by a Harvard academic who was also Jewish, and which has a mainstream publisher and is available in your local Waterstones - or was, though maybe not now.

J:

A book which provoked an enormous outcry in the USA, I believe, and has led to a flurry of books attacking it as ‘racist’, provocative, and so on. Interestingly, many of the books written against *The Bell Curve*, when you boil it down, end up saying it shouldn’t have been published. And you have some other books along similar lines, like *The G Factor* by the Edinburgh academic Chris Brand, which was dropped by the publisher and still hasn’t been published, and which led to Brand’s being virtually ostracized at his own university.

S:

But he has taken his battle onto the World Wide Web, documenting the entire case. And there is a book on measuring intelligence, by an academic psychologist, published by Routledge a few years ago, which tried not to couch the findings in racial terms, but which made pretty clear implications.

J:

So you have this virtual ban on mainstream discussion of controversial issues like the Holocaust, the study of race, and various other issues. The very idea of talking about them makes the liberal establishment uneasy, because of their associations with certain ideological movements of a more or less fascistic nature, which dominate our view of twentieth century history. At the same time, however, the issues are being discussed at the fringes, not just the fringes occupied by

extremists and the so-called ‘loony right’, but by mainstream academics, in a book here and a book there, in cultural magazines, surfacing every so often in a newspaper only to disappear again.

S:

Look at the book on race by Prof. Baker of Oxford, published by Oxford University Press in the 1970s, hailed as one of the most thorough and up-to-date scientific studies of race and racial difference yet published. Now it can only be reprinted by an obscure American publishing house no one has ever heard of.

J:

What this seems to show is that much of the censorship which exists today is relativistic, depending on pressure here, pressure there, certain things are in, certain things are out. Look at the two concepts of sex and race. In the 1860s and 70s, virtually no intellectual discussion of sexuality was possible - it was not permitted. The only intellectual book on sexuality was Kraft-Ebbing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which was written in Latin! Now, the entire society is inundated with talk, from the most highbrow to the most vulgar, of sexuality -

S:

And usually, the more perverted the sexuality which is discussed, the better!

J:

Well, almost anything can be said. But as for race, virtually nothing can be said now, but in the 1870s and 80s *anything* could be said - the situations are exactly reversed. And it was no accident that the famous book by the French aristocrat Gobineau, *An Essay on the Inequality of Man*, written in the 1830s, was one of the founding works of modern anthropology. A slightly embarrassing fact for anthropologists, but a fact nonetheless.

S:

And then there's Konrad Lorenz in modern times, who founded the discipline of ethology, the study of animal behaviour. He was a racial elitist, was he not?

J:

Yes -

S:

But he was never censored, and he won the Nobel Prize, didn't he?

J:

Yes...his books cause a certain shuddering in left-liberal circles, partly because his viewpoint, although not racialist as such, is biological and based on radical Darwinism. His Nobel prize was for his work on animals and behavioural psychology. I remember a left-wing biology lecturer once saying to me, 'There's a book in our library which I try to keep hidden under the shelf.' I said, 'Oh, what's that?', and he replied, 'Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*. It's a brilliant book, but I don't like my students reading it.' I said, 'Why? You're not in favour of censorship, are you old man?' To which he responded, 'Hardly. I'd allow everything, myself, but at the same time Lorenz's theory of how territoriality and aggression are instinctive and biologically determined is not exactly a socially constructive thing for my students to read, is it?'

S:

This is it. In the modern academy, as I understand it, you cannot talk explicitly about such things. If you wanted to mention them, it would have to be obliquely, briefly, and with plenty of arguments against such views. You couldn't give a course of lectures on race, or on genetic influences on, say, intelligence - it simply couldn't be done. That's a form of censorship. No one tells you not to lecture on certain things, you just know you shouldn't, and what the consequences might be. Most censorship in our society is, in fact, *self-censorship*. No one passes

an edict, unlike Nazi Germany where there were public book burnings and everyone was invited along to watch.

J:

Or like the Soviet Union, where a certain proportion of books were taken to a secret annex of the Moscow Central Library, and stored there. You had this amazing mishmash of *Playboy* magazine next to Solzhenitsyn, highbrow banned books next to trash which ‘corrupted’ public morals.

S:

Well, they got that last bit right!

J:

And you had Robert Conquest’s books exposing the Ukrainian famine and the Great Terror of the 1930s, in both of which millions perished, next to novels by Harold Robbins. It was all lumped together, and party scribes would go over these texts, reading them, thinking about them, writing learned essays on why they were wrong, or decadent, and so on, seeing what elements of truth were in them that could be used by the system against the Western ideology from which such texts sprung.

S:

Say, doesn’t the British Library also have a room which contains material that is deemed ‘unsuitable’ for the general public?

J:

That’s true. It was revealed in the 1980s when a civil servant whistleblower who worked in the library went to the media, and later published an academic monograph on the subject! The area is called something like the Reserve Section. Eighty to ninety per cent of it is pornography - an overhang from a more prudish age, one suspects. But the system is illogical. Take Henry Miller. The editions of his pornographic novels which were published underground by Girodias in Paris

in the 1930s are in the closed section, but the ones published in the 1960s, 70s and 80s are on open access! So they're a bit confused as to whether or not to censor some of these sorts of work, or at least restrict their access...

S:

To those carrying out bona fide research.

J:

As I was when I checked the closed section in the early 90s.

S:

I'm sure your 'research' was above board, my dear Frederick.

J:

Indeed it was - wholly academic.

S:

But you must have come across some politically sensitive material in that section as well, no?

J:

There is.

S:

Isn't *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* one of those works not on open access?

J:

My experience of the British Library is that, in a sense, everything is available to those doing genuine research. There is, remember, a form of vetting, no matter how mild, for those wanting to use the library in the first place. Generally you need to say what your project is, and you get a pass for as long as you need the specific documents you want. I don't think undergraduates can get a permanent card, but academics can. You have to jump through a few hoops to get in, so I don't imagine your local paedophile would be allowed into the closed section in order to indulge himself, as it were.

S:

Sure, it's not exactly the Soviet Union - a few limitations, but not too severe, it seems.

J:

I tend to think it's almost a sort of peer group pressure...if someone sat in a nice wooden chair at the old Reading Room - now, of course, they're moving to the car park-bunker in Euston Road - and had on the table, say, Francis Parker Yockey's *Imperium*, or Gunther's *Racial Science*, or *The Protocols*, or Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, or some other extremist literature, and people were going by and looking over your shoulder, and librarians with their trolleys were glancing at what you were reading, there'd be a sort of frisson, you'd be looked at in an odd sort of way, and their eyebrows would arch slightly. I doubt anything would happen to you, it wouldn't be noted down, but there is a degree to which certain types of literature, no matter who reads them or why they're read, provoke a certain kind of reaction. And, perhaps, if you ordered such things through the inter-library loan system -

S:

It might be noted down.

J:

Yes, it just might. One type of literature we haven't mentioned is anarchist, which is not extreme left-wing, rather it's beyond the left. I am sure that a lot of anarchist literature, especially the material which extols violence and tells you how to do it, works such as *The Anarchist Cookbook* -

S:

Which I saw prominently displayed in large quantities in the local Waterstones.

J:

True, but I imagine that was something of a dare, and attempt by the owner to project an image of the shop as ‘cool’, as where you can get anything. Still, you won’t find it in the vast majority of bookshops, and anyone ordering it may well have their details marked for reference.

S:

I haven’t seen it in Waterstones since the stock went; I imagine it sold out, but I might be wrong.

J:

That particular shop is trying to say, ‘We can sell what we want’, and indeed they sold *The Bell Curve*, another hard-to-get book, though it has a mainstream publisher, as well as David Irving’s self-published biography of Goebbels. I should think this particular Waterstones is an exception.

S:

They’re not stocking Irving’s book on Nuremberg, and I haven’t seen *The Bell Curve* there in a long time. Maybe they were, er, ‘spoken to’. Irving can’t get his books published by mainstream houses anymore, and can hardly ever get his books on the shelves. Indeed shops like W.H. Smith take it straight off the shelves if they are alerted to the fact that they’re stocking Irving.

J:

Yes, that’s the way censorship works in this country now, and in the West generally.

S:

It’s informal.

J:

Whenever he publishes a book - and he’s basically engaged in high-quality vanity publishing now, with his own imprint, and his own publicity, and he drives a van stocked with his books around the country, trying to persuade shops to take them - whenever a book of his comes out, every major newspaper reviews it, he gets pages of comment; and yet no one will stock him.

S:

Well, he's too big to ignore, that's why he gets reviews.

J:

Yes, he's become a sort of iconographical hate figure, a conceptual *bête noire*, the victim of a periodic Hate Week, to go back to *1984*.

S:

Hate Week, and the regular Two Minutes' Hate for members of the Party, is one of the things in *1984* that caught my eye as being so true of modern society. A Two Minutes' Hate against Irving, a Two Minutes' Hate against Jim Allen and his play *Perdition*, a Two Minutes' hate against Chris Brand, who was not off the television for a solid fortnight while his book and his ideas were being excoriated, and who now can't get his book published; though, thanks to the Internet, which the state is trying desperately to control, he has been able to take his war to the public, and tell them what his book is about, why the criticisms are unjustified, and so on.

Not that I'm totally against all forms of censorship, I should add. I agree with the liberal view that there should be *some* censorship of material which genuinely harms the common good, which promotes violence against the social order, and the like. But books which constitute sober attempts to document the events of the past, sober attempts to interpret politics or science, those sorts of books should, on the whole, be available at least to a wide range of intellectually-minded people. And they simply are not at the moment. If it weren't for the Internet, who would know Chris Brand's side of the story? What access has he had to the media to answer his critics? He was headline news for two weeks on the BBC, and now he's gone. So who's going to be the object of the next Two Minutes' Hate?

J:

But the contrary point, my dear Thomas, is that every society senses that there are certain 'in' books and certain 'out' books, that certain texts are disprivileged and others not. The interesting

thing about this society is that it is the first modern society which has said, ‘We are against censorship’. Every society before ours - and by ours I really mean the liberal dispensation which has taken root since the 1960s, but which was growing for a long time before that - would *never* have said it was against censorship. Anything sexually explicit, including what is incredibly tame by modern standards, was banned.

S:

And in the 18th century, for instance, anything which smacked of atheism...

J:

Yes, and censorship of such works would have been considered, not as a ‘dirty job’ which had to be done with a lot of hand wringing, but as a moral duty, as the right thing to do. Ours is the first society to carry out censorship of whole categories of politically, religiously and socially radical texts, whilst proclaiming officially its moral opposition to censorship.

S:

Hence the informality and anonymity of the process, which the writers who are censored not knowing most of the time whom even they are supposed to be fighting against.

J:

Indeed - freedom of expression enshrined in the written and unwritten constitutions of the West, censorship everywhere.

S:

Doesn’t that mean modern society is suffering from a sort of moral schizophrenia? And doesn’t that engender a confusion as to just *what* is to be censored?

J:

That’s why you often get some elements of the liberal state censoring something, and other elements promoting it. Reviews of books by an author you can’t find - such as Irving - alongside denunciations of videos which are available everywhere. There is, actually, a logic to the way

censorship works in this society, but there's also a strong element of irrationality. This is seen in the fact that there is no coherent front against censorship. When, for instance, a play by a left-wing film-maker sympathetic to the IRA is made, you can wheel onto centre stage the talking heads you know will be in favour of it. But you could almost say that 90% of those talking heads would not be for it if it presented the Loyalist paramilitaries sympathetically. Or if it was film that looked at, say, *Combat 18* and said they were human beings like the rest of us - a British version of the Australian film *Romper Stomper* - you know that the establishment would be against it.

The only movement that I can think of, which would be against censorship in *all* its forms, would be the Libertarian Alliance, which is a right-wing liberal individualist grouping, in the old sense of 'liberal', and which believes in total freedom of expression -

S:

And has no political influence whatsoever.

J:

Except when it aligns itself with larger groups that are in favour of allowing some particular thing which is censored at the moment. The L.A. defends freedom of expression no matter what the subject: they defend free speech for paedophiles, and supported Tom O'Carroll when he published his book *Paedophilia: The Radical Case*. O'Carroll was not, I think, a member of the L.A. but he did belong to the debating club which revolved around the philosopher Karl Popper in the 1980s, and which defended that 'open society'.

S:

And yet the viewpoint of the Libertarian Alliance is pretty much the view of the mainstream chattering class in the USA, or at least one significant part of it, since freedom of expression is sacred there, and censorship is virtually impossible.

J:

It's true to say that most of the literature we have been discussing is freely available in the USA, but it would be wrong to think you could go down to your local high street shop and buy it. You have to write to anonymous box numbers, search the Internet (which you can do here as well, of course), know about small movements that don't get much publicity, and so on. One analogy with Britain is hard core pornography, which you can get here, but you have to do a bit of work, know whom to contact...

S:

I'm sure you're not speaking from experience.

J:

Indeed not, my dear Thomas. The material, as I understand it, is accessible, but there is a degree to which society makes one feel grubby if one goes hunting for it.

S:

But the law protects freedom of speech in America in a way it doesn't here.

J:

That's right, which is why the issue is slippery and confused here. In the USA they have erected a jurisprudential ethic, a legal and constitutional structure which, let's face it, finds it hard to condemn anything which is in print.

S:

And Congress can't even think of passing a law that would ban a certain category of literature.

J:

What tends to happen is that the state is totally secular, but because there is a residual Protestant basis to the opinions of many people in American society, they, through religious pressure groups, influence politicians to steer the society in one direction rather than another. So, in a way, they end up with the same sort of mess we have here.

S:

Yes, they have books which, while available, are not the sorts of thing you would have on your bookshelf, or show your friends, or that you'd want the local sheriff to know about. And they'd never be made into a Hollywood movie, or a TV series.

J:

An interesting case in point is the novel called *The Turner Diaries*. This book has now been brought out by a mainstream American publishing house. Originally it was published underground by a fringe, extremist political organization, and sold tens of thousands of copies, which for an underground novel is an enormous number. What this mainstream house has done is to put a swastika on the front, and to get an orthodox, liberal ideologue to write a short, politically correct essay as an introduction, saying this is the most dreadful novel published in the latter part of the twentieth century - you have to read it because it is so frightening, you need to know what we're up against. William Pierce, who wrote the novel under the pseudonym of Andrew Macdonald, has allowed this to be done so he can get the book on the shelves of every bookshop in the country. I think it's in hardback, because that means they can increase the price, and claim it as a disincentive to certain impressionable people who might otherwise buy it. I say 'impressionable', because it has been claimed that the people who blew up the Federal Building in Oklahoma City - whether it was Timothy McVeigh and others, or others without him - were heavily influenced by the book, which contains just such a scene.

S:

Perhaps, but it's pretty clear that the explosion was supposed to be revenge for the government attack at Waco. If the guilty people were also influenced by *The Turner Diaries*, so much the worse for that book; and the murder of 168 people in the Murrah Building was, in any case, a heinous crime. Nevertheless, I think that if the FBI and ATF had admitted publicly that they burned down the Waco compound, killing over 80 innocent men, women and children, and had

they made a public apology and compensated the families of the victims, the Oklahoma bomb would not have happened. And I'm sure many Americans feel the same way.

J:

I believe *The Turner Diaries* is pretty bloodthirsty, by all accounts, though I don't imagine it is any more so than your average thriller, or *Robocop*, or whatever.

S:

Sure, it's not the violence *per se* which has caused the outrage, but the political dimension. *Robocop* is probably the most violent film I've ever seen, but the context is condemnation, of sorts, of the breakdown of law and order in society, a common theme of late twentieth-century Hollywood action movies.

J:

Sure, McVeigh, or whoever blew up the building in Oklahoma City, could have based his plan on *Rambo*, or *Terminator*, or one of a dozen other movies, and there would have been very little fallout.

S:

Perhaps a few screams from critics like Michael Medved, a bit of communal soul-searching, then - pass the popcorn, please, I like to chew when I'm watching a man's head being blown off! I mean, I can't imagine Sylvester Stallone would have been banned from ever appearing in another Hollywood movie. Imagine the ramifications!

J:

Here, with Oklahoma City, you have the single worst act of domestic terrorism - and now the novel which is supposed to have inspired it is published by a mainstream publisher, after a bout of ritual vilification.

S:

There's cynicism for you. Who said American isn't ruled by the Almighty Dollar? Or maybe it's the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* syndrome: there's this frisson, people want to know - what's this book *really* like?

J:

In a way it could be said that militant political incorrectness is the last taboo. It used to be sexual perversion, sado-masochism, and the like -

S:

All that literature is freely available, not just in the USA but here, in our own local Virgin Megastore.

J:

The Marquis de Sade has been available since about the 1960s, although at first not in every shop. Now it's stocked under 'Classics of Modern Literature'. No frisson there. But political incorrectness, especially ideological incorrectness, is the ultimate taboo for liberals. You have to be careful what you print and how you market it, because you might ruin your publishing house. But the market is there. You've got Camille Paglia with her political incorrectness about sex and gender, Thomas Sowell, a black intellectual with views about race that have made him an outcast, Herrnstein and Murray on genetics and intelligence - all of these have sold very well indeed, but it's not polite to praise them. If a male academic said what Paglia has said, he'd be out of a job, or a white who said what Sowell has said, or a non-Harvard non-Jew who said what Herrnstein said.

S:

And you've got Chomsky on multinationals, American government, Zionism - he would never have a voice if he were not a respected academic in other areas, and also Jewish.

J:

He has come out with anarchist, semi-conspiratorial rants against the whole American establishment -

S:

And even wrote the foreword to Faurisson's revisionist book on the Holocaust.

J:

Which outraged public opinion, no less than his extreme anti-Zionism has alienated the Jewish community.

S:

And yet he's allowed to publish freely, to appear on the media more than any other intellectual, to speak at venues up and down the country and across the world, even though he's always complaining that he's being censored. But the Jewish community says he's an example of how they are in fact not against censorship, because if they were they would have silenced him of all people. What's the expression again - the licensed court jester?

J:

Yes, he's the licensed dissident, the apostate it's generally OK to let into your university - although many campuses will not have him. Perhaps the extremism of his views is neutralized by his immense reputation in linguistics.

S:

Well, the same can't be said for Linus Pauling and his views in cancer and vitamins, which didn't escape censorship despite his Nobel Prize; nor William Shockley and his views on race and intelligence - his Nobel Prize didn't help much. And there are others.

J:

True, it is complicated. I imagine Chomsky is helped by the fact that he is a Jewish cultural insider with all the right contacts but all the wrong opinions!

S:

He says he had his views from an early age, and was writing politically subversive stuff before he even knew about linguistics.

J:

Perhaps it's because America has a polity and a culture which is believed by many European left-wingers to be well to the right of social democratic standards in the rest of the West, that the only permitted rebellious viewpoint is a straightforward leftist 'against-the system' viewpoint. The one that is really disprivileged in the USA is an 'ultra' viewpoint, basically a revolutionary right-wing perspective. Chomsky is tolerated despite being an anarchist - though he doesn't appear to advocate violence against the state - and despite believing that literature which is revisionist about the Holocaust should be tolerated, something which has caused him no end of grief. He gives the impression of being a genuine freethinker, of not being just another intellectual clocking into a viewpoint with a swipe card.

S:

If anyone challenges the American system for suppressing free speech, liberals can point to Chomsky and say, 'Well, we haven't suppressed him' - the licensed dissident. But he's loathed, particularly by the Jewish community.

J:

And yet he talks everywhere, and I'm not aware that he's ever been physically threatened.

S:

I'm sure he's had physical threats against him.

J:

But in comparison to someone like Irving, or Faurisson -

S:

Who get threatened on a regular basis, and sometimes even beaten up.

J:

And who get the ritualistic Trotskyist mob protests on their doorsteps at 5 in the morning.

S:

Irving, of course, has been banned from Australia. And I recall Chomsky's being banned from certain campuses.

J:

I know that there has been physical confrontation of Camille Paglia by militant feminists, on American campuses. She's perceived as a threat, because she says things like, 'Date rape's a load of nonsense', and she once said, 'The prospect of a rape that mightn't happen adds sexual excitement to an encounter between a woman and a man' - or something similar. Only Paglia could say it. And she's also said that 90% of Western culture worth preserving is produced, and has always been produced, by white men - and three cheers for them! Again, only Camille could say it. Both her and Sowell, as examples of 'allowed scapegoats', are very odd people, who could be dismissed as crazed eccentrics and who are relatively obscure from a professional academic viewpoint. And they are so dismissed, regularly.

S:

Getting back to *1984* if I might, my dear Frederick, there were other elements of it which I found had echoes in the modern world.

J:

Such as?

S:

Well, the *surveillance* aspect. Big Brother and modern surveillance of the populace seem to be to be merging almost entirely. In fact, a recent book by Simon Davies is called *Big Brother*, and examines the welter of techniques now being used, developed or contemplated by governments as ways of watching their populations. Closed circuit television, ID cards which are on the way,

biometric systems, psychometric testing, satellite monitoring, everything designed to watch a person's movements, and even more ominously, to penetrate their minds, understand their character - all of this is, to me, a kind of non-literary censorship; one's movements, and maybe thoughts, are censored, as they are in Orwell's dystopian nightmare.

J:

And warfare, of course. The Chechyan leader Dudayev was killed by a Russian 'smart' missile after his car had been targeted from the heavens, and the Islamic terrorist Abu Ayash was killed by the Mossad after his mobile phone was detonated by remote control from an aeroplane.

S:

Yes, an important point, that modern surveillance is by and large an outgrowth of military technology. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying people should be allowed to do whatever they want in public -

J:

No public bonking in your ideal state then, old man?

S:

I'm afraid not, Frederick - you'll have to go elsewhere.

J:

I wouldn't dream of committing such an outrage against decency.

S:

You distract me. What I was saying, was that although there has to be regulation of public behaviour, the breakdown of moral and social codes, which has been so stark since the 1960s, all of these indirect, subtle and relatively unobtrusive ways of controlling people's behaviour, have gone into abeyance and their function has been taken over by the state. But since the state does not tend to act in a customarily sensitive fashion, but rather through law, through brute force - that's

all it knows - we are now so restricted and so inhibited that it is a form of censorship beyond what is necessary for public order and the common good.

J:

Well, the state does not have an overarching ethic in the way it used to - though contemporary liberals would vehemently deny that, saying that the role of the state is to keep society and individuals together despite the diversity and pluralism which exist, in religion, politics, race, culture, and so on - to prevent these differences from breaking out into open physical confrontation.

S:

But at what cost? A person cannot even walk down a main street anymore, without the knowledge that they are, frankly, being watched by cameras manned by anonymous officials of the state.

J:

Wait a minute, old man, from a modern liberal viewpoint one of the most serious dangers to the citizen is, quite simply, other citizens, and that all of these cameras drastically reduce the sorts of crimes of which everyone lives in such fear.

S:

Do I feel safer? Is crime deterred? It seems pretty well established that such monitoring has reduced certain sorts of *public* crime - but it also seems to be displaced from city centres to people's houses, in the form of burglaries. So, when I'm walking down the street I do feel a little bit safer; though I also know that if someone is intent upon attacking me they will do so whether I'm being watched or not. And I know there's probably a higher risk of my being burgled.

J:

There's also a paradox, in that while the citizenry is observed by the rulers, the rulers are never observed. In other words, we don't have a camera looking at the Cabinet, but they have a camera

looking at us. And we don't have a camera looking at the police, but they have one looking at us. Sure, we get to watch the politicians all the time, far more, than we ever used to, but what we're really watching is actors, role-playing. At the extreme, in wartime politicians occasionally have doubles, as happened in World War II.

S:

They're all so plastic and interchangeable nowadays that we might as well be watching doubles, or even triples! Yes, we see things now that we never would have dreamed of twenty years ago: cameras going into Cabinet at the first meeting of the Blair government, cameras in Downing Street - unthinkable until only a few years ago - we see cameras going in and out, the lobby, the scratches on the wall...we even see Cherie Blair in her night-dress at six in the morning!

J:

Set up by the *Sun*, apparently, by Murdoch - which would have pleased Tony no end, given that he went to Australia to see Rupert prior to the election to 'win his support'.

S:

He probably said, 'Rupert, don't you go filming my wife in her night-dress at six in the morning', and Murdoch probably replied, 'Up yours, you pommy baaaastard.'

J:

As long as Rupert said 'Vote Tony' on the day, I doubt that anything else would have mattered.

S:

We see things we've never seen before, and yet do we see anything?

J:

Remember the telescreens in *1984*: they're on all the time, they can't be turned off, the proles have them as background muzak to their drinking...and do we really look at all the advertisements that bombard us twenty-four hours a day, in the Tube, on buses, in the street, on TV, in newspapers? Most people don't really see them, they don't study them. There was a

collective psychic trauma in East Germany when communism collapsed. The Germans, being a serious-minded people, believed they had to *read* every single advertisement that went up, as though it was important public information. Well educated East German families would sit cretinously in front of their televisions studying each and every advertisement - they thought it was the new Marxism and they had to learn it! 'Beanz meanz Heinz. Fifty-seven varieties! Ja, so zat must mean zere are fifty-six varieties as vell as zis one ve are now looking at.'

S:

It *is* the new Marxism, in its way - more materialist propaganda, and even studied in our schools, where texts of advertisements are pored over for their deep literary and artistic qualities. The manipulators of public demand must be quietly very satisfied.

J:

And, like the telescreens, we can't turn it off. We have a proliferation of semi-pornographic media, invasive, ever present, and yet in a strange way it contains its own rebelliousness. In 19th century Britain, the sort of advertising we have today - Pamela Anderson half naked on a bearskin rug to advertise toothpaste - would have been considered virtually a 'Satanic' image. Now it's used as a staple - a rebellion against what the standards were then, and yet tamely conformist now. Conformism and rebellion in the same image, opposites together, so as to contain all true opposition.

S:

But that, my dear Frederick, is the essence of the modern liberal dispensation. In *1984*, the Party absorbs everything, including dissent. It writes its own counter-revolutionary book, it invents its own sedition - it is the author of its own manual of dissent against the Party, as Winston discovers to his horror. The Party is so strong, and understands itself so well, that it can create its own opposition, thereby neutralising all opposition, real or invented.

One might say that, despite all the parallels I see existing between *1984* and now, we haven't reached the stage, I don't think, where Western governments are producing their own dissenting material; but what we do have, on a lower level, is that just as the Party in *1984* produced pornography for the proles, so we have big business producing pornography for the masses, in effect with the connivance and consent of the government.

J:

Certainly it appears that Western liberal education is producing, shall we say, identikit morons, all brought up on the same intellectual junk food: people who can't even *understand* true left-wing ideas, or right-wing ideas, or, dare one say it, *any* ideas. And if you can't *understand* what constitutes a rebellious idea, or a conformist idea, you will never do anything.

S:

That is our modern Newspeak, the vocabulary in which certain unpalatable ideas just cannot be formulated. American educators who are worried about this call it the 'dumbing down' thesis, the idea that the population is being made dumb, deliberately, through so-called 'progressive' education, in order to reduce the individual to a stupor of passive mediocrity.

J:

You also have the phenomenon where enormous capitalist monopolies and multinationals are adopting *left-wing* views - synthetic, standardised, politically correct gestures. Take Benetton, an enormous international firm, which adopted the most unctuous form of politically correct ideology, displaying massive advertisements depicting people dying of starvation, AIDS, all sorts of miserable images, in order to promote their woollen pullovers and coloured T-shirts. Now, none of this has anything to do with Benetton's stock price; corporations are adopting synthetic liberal positions in order to neutralise all hostility: environmental destruction, much of which multinationals contribute to themselves, endangered species, pollution, racial division - all of it grist for the capitalist mill. The system contains all contradictions within itself.

S:

To save the individual the trouble of getting angry or rebelling for himself. When I see a starving person in a Benetton advertisement, I can think, ‘Oh good, someone’s getting angry about starvation. At least I don’t have to think about it, why it happens, what causes it. I’m sure people far more powerful than me are trying to sort it out right this minute.’ Benetton, bless them, are protesting on my behalf.

J:

In other words, the prospect of rebellion is contained within the structure before anyone even begins to wave their fist.

S:

Indeed.

J:

Traditionally, the old hard-left thesis was that capitalist corporations which took their raw materials and labour from the Third World at knock-down prices were responsible for the hunger depicted on such a poster. So Benetton - as a typical example, which is all they are, Body Shop being another - have obviated the critique before it’s even been registered. Maybe Body Shop don’t exploit anyone, maybe they haven’t cut down a single tree - but that’s not the point. It’s what they do *on behalf of the system*, in terms of their unctuous handwringing for the sake of us all, which is significant from a meta-political point of view.

Here is an international corporation which sells clothes - if I may keep using Benetton as our example - made from labour in India and other Third World countries, since there are no mill workers in Lancashire anymore. They’re generally paid very low wages, though not necessarily starvation wages –

S:

What about Manchester United footballs made by nine year-old kids in Bangladesh for five pence an hour?

J:

Well, something like that may or may not be true...

S:

You hasten to add.

J:

Indeed. But the point is that most people have to plough through several layers of argument before they get from colourful sweaters to capitalist oppression: international corporations, Third World, slave labour...isn't New Labour all about stopping these awful things...and they see a Benetton advert, and they have their own criticism thought out and graphically presented before them, on a huge billboard, before they've even got to stage one of the argument in their own minds. Remember that couple which took McDonald's to court - the famous McLibel trial, which they ended up losing after a year or so in court? It's as if McDonald's were to have a big poster showing an abattoir with stinking carcasses hanging up in various states of dismemberment, and at the bottom they said, 'McDonald's: Good Food For All the Family'. They would have neutralised all criticism from animal liberationists, vegetarians, environmentalists, and the like, before anyone could put pen to paper. Examples like Benetton and Body Shop show just how sophisticated big business, advertising, and the state have become.

S:

If that's right, it is arguable that we're on the way to a *1984*-type scenario, only many of the functions - perhaps most - carried out by the Party in Orwell's novel are carried out by big business, the media, and advertising, in a semi-private sort of way. It's as though state control of

the population has been privatised, without any privatisation taking place. Rather, it's just the inevitable development and evolution of the sort of society we live in. The state connives at, and consents to, this control. They don't need to manufacture their own pornography for the masses, as long as it's being done for them, for free - indeed bringing in millions in taxes - by the private sector.

J:

Taken to its extreme, it becomes almost a game. Advertisers think, 'What can the public take?', and then you see a poster for Heinz Beans, showing a bucket of vomit and the slogan, 'Get these beans down your neck'.

S:

You filthy proles.

J:

Well, I don't think *that* would be in the slogan! A little too blatant, my dear Thomas.

S:

Beyond Orwell.

J:

Remember the recent advert for the British Army: it showed no tanks, no guns, no planes, just soldiers as UN social workers around the bed of a dying child in Bosnia. The idea that they're warriors, employed by the state to kill and maim, is absent. An Orwellian inversion, if ever there was one - 'Join the army - be a good Samaritan'.

S:

The question, 'What can the public take?', really means: 'To what extent can the public be cretinised so that rebellion, of any sort, is no longer possible?'

J:

Look at recent elections in Britain, France, the USA: socialist parties come in on a platform of conservative policies; conservatives come in and implement many left-wing policies; parties junk their traditional policies, take on their opponents' in order to get into power - they end up, as it were, *becoming* their opponents.

S:

Which means there is no longer any opposition. Just one big party, really, despite the different colours and hairstyles. Time and again, people are interviewed at election time, here, in France, or wherever, and they say, 'right, left - it makes no difference'. And they stay away in droves, coming out only if there's a chance of getting rid of the incumbent, as happened in the last British election. They can only be motivated by negative reasons, in the forlorn hope that they're actually going to see some *change*, or rather, change for the better. To take a trivial example: in the last election here, as in all recent British elections, we've had Tories blue, Labour red, Liberal Democrat yellow. And what was the big story one day during the campaign? Tony Blair came out wearing a blue tie. And on another day John Major wore a red tie. The journalists wanted to know - had they betrayed their principles? What a confusion! All that careful colour coding mixed up, sending the electorate into a tizz. And that was not untypical of the level of debate. It says far more than any talking head would want to admit about the state of politics in the West.

J:

What suggests is that the public is so pre-literate, post-literate, illiterate -

S:

Unliterate, illiterate, non-literate, deliteratized - sorry, we're getting carried away.

J:

Do control yourself, my dear Thomas. What I was saying is that the ruling elite regards the public with such disdain - and not perhaps without reason, after a generation of sub-standard education, cretinisation, as you said, advertising, television, supermarket magazines, and what have you - that what really matters in campaigns is the colour of Blair's tie, Cherie's hairstyle, whether they're smiling - which they always do, simultaneously, inanely. The hard edges of politicians have to be smoothed away. Odd-looking men like Robin Cook and John Prescott - who are, in fact, realistic, not plastic or synthetic, but the sort of people you run into on street corners or in Sainsbury's - they have to be managed, dressed in inappropriately expensive suits, told to improve their diction, talk slowly and cautiously, not to say what they think all the time, and so on.

An interesting point about the USA is that the Republicans are red, and the Democrats blue, contrary to what you'd expect. The colour coding is there, but goes against the European norm of blue for conservative, red for socialist/progressive. This probably has an historical explanation in terms of the original leanings of the two parties. They also have animal mascots - a donkey for the Democrats, an elephant for the Republicans.

S:

Animal coding. Is it supposed to make the voters all warm and fuzzy inside, like when they see Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck? How much more inane can politics be? It shows, quite simply, that the people in power are now so confident of the inability of the masses to form articulate political judgments, that they adopt Pythonesque, Silly Party labels.

J:

Of course there are historical reasons for the animals, and I'm sure it all makes sense when it's explained in tedious detail. But the objective and the effect are the same - to trivialise the entire process, for a population which is increasingly capable only of thinking at the level of colours and mascots. Don't forget also that the terms 'Republican' and 'Democrat' are meaningless. In

America all republicans are democrats, and all democrats republicans, in reality. So the names themselves are trivial.

S:

American dissidents often speak of the Republicrats, to show their disdain for the system!

J:

It all connects up with Political Correctness. Remember that MP for Luton, at the last election, who gave a campaign speech, which was recorded and leaked to the media, in which he ranted and raved in the most politically incorrect terms imaginable. Did he do it on purpose, to impress the many people in Luton who hold the same views despite the tedious conformism regurgitated at them in the media? Or was it a spasm brought on by the unbearable tension of not being able to speak your own mind? Or what he just drunk? Whatever...

S:

There's a tension in the governing class as well, but that's a tension that can be managed. I mean, the MP for Luton is no more; Tony Blair is Prime Minister. It can always be managed, they can squeeze out people like that. Whereas we don't have a choice; if we want to 'rant', we have to do so in the privacy of our own homes. Very few people have access to the media, which is concentrated in so few hands that, although it's not strictly managed by the Party as in 1984, it's managed by fewer and fewer people, whose hirelings spend their lives going through a series of revolving doors from newspapers, to TV, to radio, to politics, to advertising, and back to newspapers again. Do you want to hear Edwina Currie on Radio 5? I don't, any more than I wanted to hear her on *A Week in Politics*.

J:

I think it's fair to say that the prevailing liberal ideology is based upon fear: the deep-seated, left-liberal fear that the bulk of the population needs to be educated, that they are at bottom uncivilized and illiberal -

S:

Synonymous terms in the liberal vocabulary.

J:

And that the prevailing liberal ideology is a very thin skin on an otherwise highly conservative fruit, and so the masses need to be indoctrinated, all the time, lest they slip into barbarism - tribal and anarchic chaos.

S:

But doesn't that show the contempt in which the population is held by the establishment? The population requires management.

J:

But all rulers have that view, my dear Thomas.

S:

Some rulers want to promote the good of their people, some rulers want simply to keep them under control. Yes, any good ruler will be both a positive and a negative side to the people they rule; by the same token, unless a harmonious balance is struck, we end up with social control of a kind which does very little to promote the common good, and very much to line the pockets of the establishment, who have the privilege of hearing their pontificating voices day in, day out. At the extreme, we have *1984*.

J:

An interesting point about Orwell's book is that it is very much a satire of much of the left-wing discussion he witnessed in the 1930s and 40s. He gave it quite a savaging, to the point where the left finds it uncomfortable to read even to this day. The class for whose benefit the Party is supposed to rule, namely the proles, is quite clearly the most despised, disgusting, and irredeemable part of society - in the eyes of the Party itself. Orwell places enough redemptive moments in the book to invest the proles with a human decency and warmth which he, through

Winston, believed they had. But that was not how, in his eyes, the left-wing intelligentsia with which Orwell associated saw the working classes. They were too enamoured of Stalin and the Revolution to have any time for the masses.

S:

When rulers begin to see the ruled as essentially a threat, as people who must be controlled, then the basis of society is undermined - some would say the legitimacy of the so-called 'social contract' is put in question, though I don't think it's too helpful to talk of social contracts.

J:

But doesn't all rule involve the rulers in imposing their views on society? Isn't the only thing that matters the quality of the views imposed? Liberals would say their society is no different in essence, except that, despite the imposition of certain basic values such as 'tolerance', liberal society has the greatest degree of freedom of any society there has ever been. And this is said to be for the public good. In *1984*, on the other hand, the Party has no illusions about whether it is acting for the public good. It exists solely for power - pure, naked power. And here Orwell is satirising certain power ideologies. The left, however, always denied it was obsessed with power, and projected that fear onto its right-wing opponents.

Perhaps it could be said the contemporary liberalism has, through various social mechanisms, obviated the need for that sort of power ideology in government. Certainly liberalism can be quite brutal, and is well capable of sorting out its opponents from time to time, and yet it has developed and refined a sleight of hand - it censors, and is against censorship, it stands for not persecuting its opponents, and yet makes sure they never get anywhere...

S:

It proclaims loudly that all thought is allowed, and yet, because of the destruction of the education system and the propaganda subliminally projected through the media, a whole host of thoughts can't be had.

J:

In a sense we have got *beyond* Room 101. There is even a popular TV programme called *Room 101*, in which celebrity talking heads like Germaine Greer and Clive James proclaim their most hated things, such as salami sandwiches or Jackie Collins novels, and have them ceremoniously dumped in a fake fire. And by that ritual all the viewers' pet hates are cathartically destroyed. But what is destroyed? Trivialities, meaningless nothings - this is the extreme of anger which the people seem capable of reaching -

S:

No, this is the extreme of anger which the people are *allowed* to be capable of reaching. The conceptual limits of hate have been set: you can hate Jackie Collins novels, but no more. We don't need rats in face masks to get you to conform - we don't need that sort of brutality. We can let you rebel just enough to make you feel that you have achieved something worthwhile, some real challenge to the system. Have your say - burn a Jackie Collins novel today! But don't stop buying those Jeffrey Archers.

J:

Interestingly, Room 101 in *1984* is based on a room in Senate House in the University of London - a genuine room 101.

S:

Orwell got it from there?

J:

Yes, and you know why? Because Senate House used to be the headquarters of the BBC. He worked for the BBC, and so is satirising the organization itself, which used to broadcast pro-Imperial propaganda from room 101.

S:

Force is always there, my dear Frederick. We can have all the bread and all the circuses in the world, all the cathartic TV programmes, all the Two Minutes' Hates - but force is always in the background, and as we saw in the USA with Waco, it will be wheeled out, every now and then, *pour encourager les autres*. Remember who's in charge.

J:

Maybe, but the liberal will reply that this is very different from the brutality of Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and the rest, which we have seen this century. They would say: 'You've got problems with the liberal state? OK, go and live under Pol Pot, and come back - if you can - and tell us which you would prefer. Will you dislike the liberal state so much then?' Has not the liberal state moved to a more civilized level, a level beyond the routine use of physical force to maintain order?

S:

But which is more terrifying - control of the mind or control of the body? In *1984*, the Party controls both, but Orwell makes it pretty clear, when Winston is being tortured, that in his view there is nothing worse than physical pain. I cannot agree with that.

J:

What modern liberalism offers us, in true utilitarian spirit, is a physically painless 'tyranny'.

S:

Almost, but not quite. Still, I think anyone who underestimates the insidiousness of the subtle control of opinion found in the West is making a serious mistake. I detect an irony here. The vast bulk of people fears the sort of physical tyranny depicted in *1984* more than a mental tyranny, precisely because they have been manipulated into thinking that physical pain is the worst thing in the world. This is just what the prevalent utilitarian philosophy, handed down to us from the 19th century and lovingly transmitted, in various forms, by the modern academy, tells us we

should think. Contrary to that, I would contend that there are spiritual and psychical pains far worse than the greatest bodily torture, and that our society, racked as it is by suicide, alcoholism, marriage breakdown, depression, and mental illness, is witness to that fact.

J:

Even if this were true, my dear Thomas, you will have a hard time convincing the man on the street that what he believes in, or doesn't believe in, is more important than whether he has his fingernails pulled out by the roots.

S:

Maybe, but don't you agree that there is a pain worse than physical pain?

J:

I do, but I also think only intellectuals, or people who live for the mind, can be aware of it.

S:

I doubt that, but even so, society cannot just cater for the bulk of the population. It has to have certain values which must be promoted even if they are not what most people think about from day to day. The denial of creativity, the suppression and homogenisation of culture in modern society, creates in those who care about these things a kind of spiritual pain which, although it does not leave one awake at night screaming, nevertheless reminds one that we are not in a healthy state.

J:

It should be said, though, that while liberalism is not a majority view, and is in many ways imposed, it is also a very intellectual view, formulated in the 18th and 19th centuries by a small intellectual and cultural elite in Europe. And in a way, the reason it has survived for so long while most other social systems created by intellectuals have bitten the dust, is that it goes with the laziness of the majority. It goes with the sort of mental sleep in which most people spend their lives, at least in prosperous and technologically advanced countries.

S:

More stupor than slumber, I would say...

Chapter 4

ALIEN NATION

Location: a cafe in York

Jonathan:

So you want to talk to me about urban myths - the terrorism of the modern mind?

Samuel:

No beating about the bush with you today, old man.

J:

I always get straight to the point.

S:

Well then, let me give you a quotation from G.K. Chesterton to start proceedings - one of my favourite quotations. 'When man stops believing in God, he does not believe in nothing, he believes in anything.'

J:

That presumes, old fellow, that one believes in God in the first place!

S:

As any rational mind should.

J:

So say you; I for one consider myself a perfectly rational non-believer. But let us leave that to one side, and consider the quotation in broader terms. It is true that modern man fills up his mind with an enormous amount of detritus, much of it bought from Woolworth's, Menzies and W.H. Smith.

S:

A sample of which material I just happen to have before me on the table, for your delectation.

J:

You are always well prepared, old chap. What have we here? *Fortean Times*, *The X Factor...*

S:

Actually, *The X Factor* is quite good; though I don't mean to indulge in some gratuitous advertising, not being connected in any way with the organization which produces it. The magazine does contain some useful information, though they do make rather silly mistakes. One issue referred to 'the prophets Fatima and Garabandal', who prophesied certain calamities. Needless to say, they meant to refer to the Virgin Mary, who appeared at Fatima in Portugal and is also believed by many - thought wrongly, in this case - to have appeared at Garabandal.

J:

I like the way you say 'appeared', old man - the fantastical cannot appear. Just look at some of the cover headlines on these magazines: 'UFOs - Video Evidence'; 'The Doomsday Science of the Aum Shinrikyo Sect'; 'Out of Body Experiences'; 'Alien Abductions - Fact or Fiction?'.

S:

'Bizarre!' - 'Terrifying!' - 'The Stories You Won't See Elsewhere!'

J:

I suppose, looking at these headlines, I tend to agree with Chesterton at one level, though I disagree with his basic formulation. All of the stories we see in these magazines are in the news, and the magazines are offering us reasons *behind* the headlines, the low-down *behind* the facts, or rather alleged facts.

S:

Fortean Times has become so lurid: 'I Shot Bigfoot - But He Got Away'; 'Abducted - Some Of Our Ufologists Are Missing'; 'Saucers Over Scotland'.

J:

The interesting thing, though, is that there is a range of such stories in the media, periodically. They come, they go, they fill up the media horizon for a short time and then they disappear. We can run through a few of them.

S:

Good idea - we have a list that we prepared several hours earlier, do we not?

J:

We do not - the list is in my capacious memory. Don't make the reader doubt our spontaneity, old fellow.

S:

How gauche of me.

J:

Well, we can kick off with BSE/CJD.

S:

Not quite out of the news yet - isn't the jury still out?

J:

Not as I see it. We know at least one person who predicted a major epidemic, which seems to have been disproved. He thought, and maybe still thinks, there will be people walking the streets of Old England calling, 'Bring out your dead!'. Somehow I have my doubts. Look at the famous scientists who have nailed their colours to the mast - Lacey, Dealler and others. Lacey was on the radio the other day, and was being rather clever. Verbally, he covered himself in relation to his original theorizing, saying we *could* have a few hundred dead, or anything up to half a million!

S:

We *could* have. Indeed, no scientist worth his salt would speak with certainty on a subject such as BSE/CJD. So Lacey is no different to the rest, at least superficially. But the truth is that his whole media persona, the fact that everyone wanted to know his latest thoughts, depended on the fact that he spoke *as though* he believed the deaths *would* be in the hundreds of thousands. So any backtracking by him is, in my opinion, rather disingenuous.

J:

He fed the public's hysteria, and to some degree even caused it, I would say. He became a media scientist and talking head because he was predicting apocalypse, not because he was being like the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee and speaking cautiously and in measured tones. Now that the hysteria has died down - and it seems maybe thirty, maybe even a few hundred people will die from new-form CJD, but that the leap from cow to man is too great for there to be a CJD 'holocaust' - the prophets of doom are lying much lower.

S:

But it could be argued that without vociferous dissidents and doom mongers we might not have had the vigorous measures against BSE/CJD that have been implemented.

J:

Your typical *Guardian* journalist may indeed say that whistleblowers have some such purpose. A whole whistleblower culture is emerging, especially in the U.S. You take your story of malfeasance to the media, and exaggerate it because unless you scream disaster from the rooftop no one will listen to you...

S:

Hardly something only a *Guardian* journalist would admire, my dear Frederick. Whistleblowing can serve a very good purpose, though I am wary of the idea of a culture of 'dob in thy neighbour', especially if the dobbing-in is to the State. In any case, to go back to CJD, we can't look into the minds of Dealler, Lacey et al. and say whether they intended to cause a panic, or at least to fan the flames.

J:

Knowingly or unknowingly, however, they did so. And, in my view, mistakenly, since from the beginning I have maintained that the overwhelming evidence against the 'bring out your dead'

scenario is that there have not been any mass deaths of intermediate species, such as dogs and cats, who have been fed the drossiest meat of all.

S:

I must admit that I am less sanguine than you, though more cautious than the doom mongers. I think we just do not know yet, and may not know for decades, but I agree that the evidence you just cited is significant, and counts heavily against the doom hypothesis. Still, the knowledge of the utter detritus that is labelled as pet food - an excellent article about which is in *Nexus*, a magazine I have not brought along - as well as the rubbish humans eat in burgers and other products, means that I would not be surprised if we *did* all start dropping like flies.

But the fact is that the doom mongers played a prominent part in the crisis, planting hypotheses in a soil already fertile and receptive to apocalyptic ideas. They could not have had half the prominence they had, as opposed to being dismissed outright as crackpots and relegated to the fringes of scientific lunacy, if society did not *want* to hear the worst. Which prompts me to ask: do you think that society has, as it were, a death wish?

J:

No. There is a search for what might finish us on certain fronts, and human beings are excited momentarily by the prospect of extinction; but they then move away from it. It's like the moth, which is attracted to the flame that will consume it, but usually does not get too close for too long, or else it's history. Contrast these momentary crises which society regularly experiences, with the more sober truths about what is really killing us. More people die of CJD-1 than of the new variant, which is similar to the original but significantly different (hence the initial scientific panic). Far more people are killed by hepatitis, meningitis, and a host of other diseases, than will, in my humble opinion, ever be done away with by the latest 'fad' disease. And yet who talks about them? What attention do they get in the media?

S:

It's not so much the science, the empirical question of whether or not we're all going to die from CJD-II. The question is about the psychology of it, and what's motivating people. You've got this recent 700-page Penguin book, *The Coming Plague*, telling us how we're all going to be wiped out by internationally transmitted microbes which resist all known drugs and are being spread around the world by mass migration and international travel...

J:

Yes, that ties in with World Health Organization warnings that diseases we thought had been virtually eliminated, such as typhus and tuberculosis, are making a comeback.

S:

And there's another book, called *Is the End Nigh?*, by three Australian scientists, in which each chapter is devoted to exploring a way in which the world could be consumed by an impending apocalypse: the transmission of deadly viruses by mass migration, environmental destruction, urban decay, economic ruin through 'globalisation', and so on. All backed up by empirical evidence - these are not redneck fundamentalists, but thoughtful academics. Needless to say, I've only found the book on sale at half-price in the second-hand section of Foyles. Clearly the world is none to interested in what they have to say, as it wasn't in the days of Noah.

J:

Well, I don't know about that last bit, old man. Do you mean Noah the second-hand car salesman? But it is interesting to note how scientists have become the main doomsayers in society. The pyramidologists, occultists, New Agers, *Forteant Times* sub-editors, and the like - they tend to be discounted, though they're still there, feeding off the latest scientific 'discovery' of how we are going to meet our collective Waterloo. And that's because it's the scientists we defer to in contemporary culture, the white-robed High Priests of Knowledge.

S:

Clearly there is also a market for such books; perhaps the book by the Australian scientists was remaindered because it sold new for £35! But there are plenty of scientific or pseudo-scientific mass market paperbacks that say similar things. And as for *Fortean Times* and its ilk, such magazines are now in W.H. Smith and Menzies, whereas they were only available by mail order or in obscure shops only a few years ago. The market which now exists consists of people who want to believe anything, but who also seem to have a death wish of their own, a morbid desire to see their rotting societies collapse altogether.

J:

A little overstated, I think. Look, the reason that BSE/CJD caught the public imagination is that, with the exception of a fringe of radical vegetarians and vegans, virtually everybody in this country consumed meat between 1980 and the mid-1990s. So when scientists get up and say, 'You might all die of a horrific brain disease', people take notice, because it directly affects them. Most wars since 1945 - Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf - are rather tangential, fought by professional soldiers, and having a mass impact only through the television set. There isn't really all that much which can have an impact on bourgeois societies like ours.

Most people have had sex between 1980 and the mid-1990s as well, so naturally the HIV/AIDS scare had as much of an impact as the BSE/CJD scare. Such things hit people where they live, because they relate to health, to the possibility of death from everyday activities.

S:

Yes, weren't we all supposed to be wiped out by AIDS?

J:

So they said. And there were the associated scares of AIDS from mosquitoes, from drinking out of the same glass as an infected person, and so on. Who talks about that now?

S:

Well, I note that it has now been scientifically established, apparently, that HIV is transmissible through saliva. But no one seems to be getting too worked up about it. The World Health Organization brought out studies saying that millions would be dying every year. Granted that includes sub-Saharan Africa, where tens of thousands have died, so it is said; but still, there is no mass panic, as there was, say, during the post-World War I influenza pandemic.

J:

The fact is that in the West AIDS has remained in all essentials a homosexual and drug-user disease, with little or no impact on the vast bulk of the population.

S:

Contrary to the frantic desire of the homosexual lobby for it to become a heterosexual disease. Clearly, in this particular case, the doomsayers had a political agenda.

J:

Yes, although that tends to be the exception. Look, for instance, at the scare about salmonella in eggs. There's probably low-grade salmonella in most eggs, which is why you cook them. But the Edwina Currie scare sent the nation into paroxysms for several weeks. I think the politicians are fenced in, in a way. You have a media which is increasingly shrill --

S:

How much more shrill can they get?

J:

-- you have the endless desire on the part of the population for titillation and excitement. Since the vast majority of people have no overarching system of belief anymore --

S:

You hit the nail right on the head.

J:

I thought you'd say that. People want to find fads and fancies to *energise* them, for want of a better way of putting it. They want to be threatened.

S:

I would put it by saying they want their god with a small 'g', whether it be money, sex, power, food, whatever...

J:

But they don't want too much risk. They don't want too much violence, or danger, or pain, but they are hunting for some sort of prospect of destruction, some sort of manageable risk.

S:

Naturally, when you stop believing in Hell - the real risk of endless destruction and pain - you look for a surrogate, though one you can cope with. Or maybe one you cannot cope with, if society takes its death wish to the ultimate conclusion to which it leads.

J:

Spare me the religious hyperbole, my dear Thomas - my explanation is far more 'this-worldly', and hence more reasonable.

S:

But I can't see how else to explain modern phenomena such as the ones we are talking about. I do not believe that society has always been as susceptible to such scares as it is now. In the days when the ultimate scare was supernatural - the threat of damnation - and ever present, food scares took a decided back seat. Sure, there have been scares in the past - just look at that amazing book, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. But I doubt that there has ever been the sort of lurching from one mass panic to another that we have seen in the last few decades. Sure, the very existence of the media make this possible, but it wouldn't be real without some definite psychological predisposition on the part of the public.

J:

Perhaps there is, as I would put it, an element of human attraction to the ‘dark side’. Many people get pleasure from stories, images and narratives which involve destruction, violence, horror, extreme pain and so on. If they thought they would experience such things in real life they’d be appalled, and yet they gain genuine pleasure from contemplating such things in imaginary contexts. And the correlation with media scare stories is that the media do tend to give their stories a fantastic, almost other-worldly flavour - especially at the down-market end. Facts are blown out of proportion, the mundane is de-emphasized, the reader is sufficiently distanced from the story to experience *schadenfreude* without any sense of imminent personal danger.

S:

Tell me, my dear Frederick, do these scares worry you?

J:

Well, you could mean various things by that, but I should say that, in general, I stand back and watch them with near-complete indifference. I am but a spectator at this human tragi-comedy.

S:

All rather haughty and elitist, old man, but let me ask you - are you a Fortean? Charles Fort was a relativist. His view was that everything was open to investigation; whether it was true or false didn’t matter. Or rather, whether it could even be *established* as true or false didn’t matter. All that mattered for him was the act of investigation itself, the exploring of the previously unexplored. A mystery was simply a datum in need of investigation.

J:

I would say the reverse, namely that what is true and false is vital, and that one can establish empirically, to a certain degree, what is true and false. So I look at these things from the viewpoint of a kind of ‘absolutist relativism’ - absolute in terms of scientific fact; relative in the context of cultural specification.

S:

‘Absolutist relativism’? I admire your Hegelian dialectic - you are a true disciple of the father of contradictions.

J:

But I am not a Hegelian, my dear Thomas, though it is fair to call me a dialectician.

S:

Truth matters, and yet it doesn’t?

J:

No, no...I’m not making it up as I go along. I’m trying to say that my consciousness is the sole reliable criterion of empirical fact. Structures are contingent, but my judgments about them are refreshingly absolute.

S:

Indeed. But it’s about time we had some argie bargie, eh?

J:

Don’t distract me from my ‘pregnant’ line of thought.

S:

Hush! The Great Man gives birth!

J:

As I was saying, when I look at *Fortean Times* - ‘Vampire Wizard Boy’, ‘Talking Trees’, ‘Phantom Flesh Rotter’ - I say, absolute nonsense!

S:

But you don’t *know* that!

J:

If somebody came to me with real evidence that I could take seriously, such as a video of someone’s having a conversation with a tree - which talked back - I would have a look at it. I’d

be pre-disposed to disbelieve it, though, since I've seen Hollywood movies with talking trees, and this film I'm looking at could be just a bad version of one of those.

S:

But these magazines relativize everything and make it equally banal and insignificant. 'Saucers over Scotland' and sensationalist rubbish like that, it trivializes the problem of UFOs, which is an important and far-reaching question when looked at soberly. The vast majority of films and photos of alleged alien craft are frauds, forgeries, objects of gross misinterpretation, and so on.

But there is also well known to be a hard core of photographic evidence - something which is admitted by sceptics and believers alike - which has defied all attempts at explanation based on publicly available knowledge. Of course, this doesn't mean there *is* no explanation, and that the explanation must be that there is intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. Rather, I support the view that the unexplained films are of top secret government technology, a view shared by many of the more sober-minded people who research this question. 'Saucers over Scotland' and similar headlines push rational explanations such as this well into the background. But let us move onto some other scare stories, else I shall send you to sleep with tales of classified CIA technology.

J:

A good idea, my dear Thomas, though I might not fall asleep, being as I am a creature of the night.

S:

Yes, your daily routine does put you rather 'out of synch' with the rest of us, old boy, but at least you haven't yet taken to calling me at four in the morning, otherwise I'd be, shall we say - out of sorts.

J:

But speaking of creatures of the night, what about all the Satanic child abuse scares of the 1980s and early 1990s?

S:

A subject covered heavily by the *Fortean Times* which, note well, came down off its Fortean fence and decided Satanic abuse was absolute nonsense, worthy only of ridicule. I complained to them about this uncharacteristic closing of their otherwise self-proclaimed open minds, and they replied with a certain understanding, but then went right on mocking everything to do with the subject. Not something old Charles Fort would have found to be in the spirit of his enterprise. Forteanism is not supposed to be about the *a priori* ridicule of stories which you don't believe. The true Fortean doesn't *have* an opinion, at least publicly, but tries to uncover all the evidence.

J:

Well, the truth is that Forteans are not really 'relativists', they're part of an alternative or counter-cultural circle. If you look at the sorts of advertisement you see in the back of the magazine, you find occult books, New Age products, alternative health care, and so on. Now the so-called Satanic child abuse scares of the '80s were largely channelled through the Christian right, in particular the Evangelical movement, which had been pretty successful in infiltrating the social work and other counselling professions.

But the New Age/alternative ways of thinking which Forteanism taps into are *predisposed* not to believe anything that comes from the Christian right; they're opposed to what they see as fundamentalist, anti-New Age, and so on. So their veneer of relativism and of open-mindedness begins to fall away when stories with even a tangential relation to Christianity are being investigated.

Putting aside all the 'My Wife was Raped by a Werewolf in Oregon' stuff, the *Fortean Times* does have a serious intent --

S:

They're not Fortean all the way --

J:

They can be Fortean and serious, but the point is that, like every other movement, they have limits and underlying dogmas beyond which they will not go.

S:

I find your diagnosis convincing. Anyway, it's impossible to be a relativist about the unexplained. You can't say, 'Any old mystery is as good as the next'. Mystery for mystery's sake is a sign of pathology in a person's thinking. Surely we pursue mystery because we want *solutions* - we want to know whodunnit, why, where and how.

J:

The truth is that the people who started *Fortean Times* have a particular axe to grind, and although they would recognize that at least two thirds of what they publish is actual nonsense, one of their central dogmas is belief in at least the *possibility* that some of what they say is true; even though they know as well as anyone that von Daniken forged at least part of his evidence, that most photos of UFOs are frauds or have a perfectly natural explanation, that tales of Madame Blavatsky's mystical revelations, spirits, mediums and fairies are on the whole just so much rubbish. And yet people still become Theosophists and almost worship Madame Blavatsky, people still chase UFOs, believe in fairies and try to contact their dead relatives. People will always try to find a way to disprove alleged debunkings and to justify their mad pursuits.

S:

Because people are always looking for something to believe in. They have to have mystery, but they also have to have hidden realities, something behind the phenomena. A perfectly healthy and natural impulse which religion will satisfy - if only people would take tried and tested

systems of belief more seriously than the latest crop circle or dancing goblin. Nevertheless, as far as Satanic child abuse goes, I simply cannot say that it never occurs, and have myself read pretty convincing testimony that it does, graphic stories in mainstream newspapers, and so on.

J:

Hasn't anyone told you not to believe all you read in the newspapers, old man?

S:

Yes, and I don't, but I don't think some of the stories I've read are made up.

J:

Do you know of any convictions?

S:

I don't, at least in Britain, but there may have been elsewhere. In any case, hasn't anyone ever told you not to believe everything you hear from a judge?

J:

True, but the standard of evidence in a criminal case is very high, and the fact is, every case that has come to court has not passed muster. I was once asked by the former religious affairs correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* whether I believed in Satanic child abuse, and I said, 'It doesn't happen. It's more a case of some paedophiles dressing up as Satanists than Luciferians pretending to be paedophiles.'

S:

You draw an unreal distinction, I think. If a paedophile surrounds his acts with the trappings of Satanic ritual, that makes him a Satanic child abuser in my book. Do you really want to rule out Satanic abuse? Do you say it never happens?

J:

I can't tell you it never, ever happens, but the fact is that Satanists are ideologues, in their own way. Their beliefs about destruction and chaos are manifested in certain well-defined patterns of behaviour. Most of the rituals, Black Masses and so on, have been written down.

S:

Yes, but while those rituals primarily involve adults, there are some which are known to involve children, or at least adolescents.

J:

But all that means is that there are Satanists who are perverted by their *own* standards. Satanism and paedophilia do not go together any more than Catholicism and paedophilia, and yet priests have been known to commit child abuse, as you're well aware.

S:

But Catholicism does not teach, 'Do what thou wilt - that is the whole of the Law'. Satanism does. A significant difference as far as their attitude to paedophilia is concerned, I should have thought.

J:

Look, bank managers are paedophiles, so are librarians, feminists, Catholics, and Satanists. All sorts of people get into all sorts of things!

S:

Come on, my dear Frederick. Christianity does not glorify evil. Satanism does. You can't just lump all these groups of people together. Satanists glorify sexual perversion, vice, unnatural acts of all sorts. It's their *teaching*. That's the difference.

J:

Maybe Christians are right to say that Satanists are more pre-disposed to that sort of conduct.

But the Paedophile Information Exchange, which once existed and advertised openly in gay

magazines, used to bring - and maybe still does - people of all walks of life together to indulge their common interest, shall we say.

S:

Perhaps, but surely you can see why, say, male homosexuals would be more likely to be drawn to young boys than bank managers - that's *why* the Paedophile Information Exchange advertised in gay magazines, I presume.

J:

Possibly, but the connection there is more probable than in the case of occultism.

S:

I'm not talking about any occultism, but about Satanism in its true form. Anyway, the fact is that paedophilia is a grave problem: Britain, France, Belgium, the USA, Canada; politicians, judges, police officers, civil servants, priests (though they do not deserve the name) - ad nauseam. Not every scare is false, and there have been many convictions. The trouble is that when *every* story is magnified out of all proportion, sensationalised, and perhaps distorted, no one knows what to believe any more.

J:

That's what happened with the scares in Britain in the 1980s --

S:

When perfectly law-abiding families were shattered, torn apart, and indeed some *still* have not been brought back together.

J:

As even feminists such as Beatrice Campbell pointed out at the time...

S:

Feminists in defence of the family - what a refreshing change!

J:

The level of journalism in this country has been continually degraded since the 1960s, with the result that every story with the potential to shock, every ‘urban myth’, every tale capable of gripping the imagination of an increasingly illiterate public brought up on journalistic slop, is magnified out of all proportion, fact is liberally mixed with falsehood, and the whole seething mess is spooned down our throats every morning along with the Cornflakes.

And human nature being what it is, people tend to swing around emotionally: ‘It’s all true’, ‘It’s all false’. No in between, no room for nuance, for half-truths, for complexity, something with which the modern mind is increasingly unable to cope.

S:

We’re floundering. We’re psychologically rudderless at the moment, and we’re lurching from one extreme to another. We haven’t got a clue what to believe. ‘Snuff’ movies are another scare. When were they a big deal?

J:

Around the mid-’80s, and connected with the radical feminist movement...

S:

In a ‘snuff’ movie somebody is supposed to be filmed actually dying, aren’t they?

J:

Yes.

S:

But has anyone ever seen such a movie?

J:

There are in existence films in which it *appears* that a prostitute, for instance, is beaten to death or strangled in the act of sexual intercourse. However, it seems that nearly all of these things are simulated.

S:

Nearly.

J:

I never say ‘all’ in such murky cases. Apparently the Mafia have been behind some of these films, just as they were behind many pornographic films, and probably still are.

S:

Were ‘snuff’ movies a scare in the media?

J:

Yes, in the ‘80s, and it was primarily the feminist movement behind it, though also Evangelicals.

S:

But no one talks about ‘snuff’ movies anymore; it’s gone.

J:

Yes, although there was a slight reappearance; scares are often repackaged like consumer items. Satanic abuse is arguably a recycling of the ‘snuff’ movie scare. New myths tend to envelop old ones, and some of the abuse scares in the ‘80s had a decidedly ‘snuff’ movie element, in that there were allegations of paedophile Satanists producing videos of children being killed. There’s a kind of syncretism about it.

S:

I don’t think anyone is designing these scares, no one is churning them out on a production line, but their effect is to make everybody sceptical. ‘Syncretism’ is a good way of describing it, in that every scare is as good - or bad - as another. Look at the downing of TWA flight 800. Now it’s extremely important to know who did that, and you’ve had eminent journalists investigating whether governments were involved, the intelligence brotherhood, this or that terrorist group. But in this great epistemological soup which now exists, where one scare blends into another and horror stories of all shades slop around along with distortions, misinformation and

disinformation, the really important stories get submerged, and are hardly ever tackled and resolved in a proper way. And maybe that's just the way the State likes it.

It's interesting how the more important - and hence sensitive - political stories are cropping up regularly in the alternative Fortean-type magazines. The *Fortean Times* tackles the odd one, and the *X Factor* has at least one in every issue, right next to stories about magnetic men and alien autopsies. All very admirable in its way, but I have, I confess, very little faith in the ability of human beings to separate truth from falsehood in the present day.

J:

Perhaps, but then people are driven by a desire for entertainment, diversion...

S:

Bread and circuses. Look, I don't doubt for a minute that most major scares have some kernel of truth in them. Sure, some people have died from BSE/CJD, some have been victims of Satanic abuse, some have joined cults and been brainwashed - indeed among the many scares there are some grave dangers. But the main factor in their ability to grip the public imagination in a frenzy, usually for a limited period of time, is that people want to find a solution to their problems. They want to point the finger, and many have a secret death wish for their own society.

J:

But people also want entertainment - 'I shot Bigfoot but he got away'. You have to look at it at that level as well. In the magazines which market this sort of stuff there's always an element of self-deconstruction, of undercutting irony, so that people won't think the writers are fundamentalists about the sorts of thing they actually, to some degree, believe in.

S:

They don't want to be dismissed as loonies, cranks, conspiracy theorists...

J:

Single issue ranters, that sort of thing.

S:

Well, that's the bread and circuses of the modern liberal society.

J:

But it's also a bit different from entertainment, it's in an alternative kind of area. If you look at some of the specialist bookshops, like the one I know that deals almost exclusively in comics, graphic novels, sword and sorcery books, movie and music books, and so on - it's also got a bit of Forteana, fiction-as-fact, alternative material, mythology, New Age as well. So you've got this blurring of the boundaries between what's entertainment, what's news, what's fact, what's fiction. Infotainment, as the Americans call a lot of this.

S:

Well, there are various strands here. One is the blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction - that's what contributes to the scepticism which surrounds Fortean-type publications.

J:

And with the 'liberation' of television that is accentuated all the more. You'll have scores of channels, a fuzzy mix of news, entertainment, advertising, shock-horror, the tabloidization of factual reporting. In fact, news is relatively inexpensive to produce, especially if a station merely subscribes to wire-feeds and employs few if any real reporters. It's drama and film which is expensive, and so you can cut costs by putting more drama into the news itself.

S:

Tell me, my dear Frederick, don't you think it's sad that on the one hand, people want to be entertained, diverted, made to forget - and yet at the same time they want to be told the cause - preferably the single cause - of all their problems? They don't have any system of belief any

more, they have no organized religion, and so no standard against which they can measure events and find explanations.

J:

It's also political ideology which has collapsed. During the '60s, '70s and early '80s, the radical left was quite strong. Now, with the implosion of the Soviet Bloc, the radical left is extremely weak.

S:

Yes, and there's no coherent right-wing ideology in the West any more.

J:

You have a few revivalist right-wing movements, mainly on the Continent, such as the Front National.

S:

I bet you don't find many Front National members reading *Fortean Times*.

J:

That's because most of them don't read English, old man.

S:

I meant the French version, as you well know! Not many of them would read it because they're too busy with the serious business of ideological activism to worry about whether flying saucers have been seen over the Dordogne.

J:

There's another irony here. The world which *Fortean Times*, *Nexus* and their ilk inhabit is mainly the world of pagan New Age thinking, of environmentalism, animal liberation - all strands which have a well-documented historical presence in far right ideology. And yet such magazines are always quick to dissociate themselves from any hint of far right associations. But the overlap is there, and well known.

S:

It's part of the 'return to nature, return to the soil' aspect of rightism, isn't it? Blood and soil and all that stuff. David Icke has been accused by the left of importing extreme right-wing thinking into his New Age books. *Nexus*, the Australian magazine, has also been targeted as being semi-fascistic, a charge I find it very difficult to see the grounds for. It certainly delves into conspiracy theory (albeit less frequently the more commercial it becomes), but then so do many strands of the left.

J:

The ecological movement, if it took its ideas to their logical conclusion, might well end up with something looking like a coherent ideology, but it doesn't suit them to do that. It suits them to keep their views fragmented, to concentrate on the ozone layer, rather than present a coherent outlook which might well appeal to a large number of people.

S:

But there was the success of the various Green Parties in the '80s, wasn't there? And they had a relatively comprehensive platform. The problem was, it usually involved killing off a third of the human population, so as to save endangered tree lizards.

J:

I think you exaggerate there, old man. Only a quarter. But they did at least have a relatively coherent Green ideology. David Icke is interesting. He begins as a sports commentator with a green tie on BBC, he then moves on to organic fruit juice, he then becomes one of the central people in the Green Party during their most successful period. In media terms he then goes totally off the planet, becoming a sort of shell-suited purple lunatic with multiple wives, talking about conspiracy theory and impending global catastrophe...

S:

And reprinting, almost word for word, the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

J:

Yes, using the term ‘Illuminati’ instead of ‘Jews’. A trifle clumsy, I would have thought. Then, of course, he became an unperson in media terms. They’ve decided he’s a lunatic who doesn’t matter, but for a while they took him seriously, especially when some members of the neo-Nazi group Combat 18 attended some of his meetings. He was prime-time news for a while.

S:

And now he tends watermelon on the Isle of Wight, or something.

J:

Yes, he’s been in orbit for a while now. But the interesting thing is that the media, for a short time, were faced with the unpalatable fact that there is an irreducible, right-wing element to Green ideology. Icke is an extreme example, of course, but even the Green Party with its dictatorial ideas about population and living standards, both of which they wanted to be reduced either by consent or by *force* if necessary - all that shows a strong overlap with right-wing blood-and-soil ideology. Like it or not, it’s a fact. Sure, you can have a left-wing Green viewpoint - Earth Mothering, caring and sharing and all that - but the irreducible right-wing viewpoint is there, and certain people are uncomfortable about it.

S:

You know, my dear Frederick, it’s amazing how eco-scares have taken off. Ever since Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* in the ‘60s, the environmental movement has been snowballing. Now Carson argued that pesticides like DDT were destroying the soil, our crops, our health. And there is a certain amount of truth to that: we *have* been ruining our planet, we *have* lost touch with natural methods of production. But nowadays it’s one eco-scare per week. We’ve got global warming –

J:

About which many scientists are highly sceptical, though they rarely rate a mention in the media.
And there's deforestation.

S:

Desertification.

J:

Acid rain; though hardly anyone talks about that any more.

S:

Pollution in general.

J:

Overpopulation.

S:

Alleged overpopulation. Did you know that the entire population of the world, if they stood shoulder to shoulder, could fit on the Isle of Wight?

J:

On the assumption that David Icke would let them. Anyhow, I don't think that's a viable solution to the problem. It would be rather crowded. A bit of a tight fit. And imagine the stench of all that B.O. In any event - think of having to share all that space with one's undisguised inferiors. It's a nightmare.

S:

Just an interesting thought.

J:

Pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, all sorts of cides.

S:

Species going extinct.

J:

Yes. Although there seems to be quite a bit of truth in that. We are losing much of at least the savage fauna of the planet. And the irony is that the West is preaching to the developing world and accusing them of doing exactly what the good old capitalist West has itself handed down as the Gospel of Development for generations. No wonder the so-called Third World isn't too keen on listening to the sermon! Why should Brazilian loggers listen to Jonathan Porritt?

S:

Well, because then they could buy all the nice anti-pollution gadgetry that we've made just for them. We created the problem, now we offer them the solution.

J:

Admirable dialectic, I say. We want you to develop, we don't like your poverty and muck and mire, but you mustn't destroy your lovely butterflies and monkeys, or your forests, and you mustn't get ahead of us, but you must listen to our advice.

S:

A confused message, it seems. No wonder they call it Cultural Imperialism. Look, all the eco-disasters waiting to erupt have some grain of truth to them. But as I see it, it's part of the 'apocalyptic feel' of the end of the twentieth century to magnify each one of them into a reason for thinking that The End Is Nigh. I've read two books that have recently come out, by academics, on the end of the world. One is by a respected Philosophy professor in Canada who has made virtually his entire career out of writing about this topic; and another is by a group of Australian scientists, of what seems to be a politically conservative bent. They bring out every doom scenario they can think of for saying we're finished.

J:

Really, old man, I hope you don't go in for that stuff. I believe in the future - the prospect of a future of great, creative individuals.

S:

Well, I don't go in for every scare story around, but I do think we're on the way out, as it were. One way or another.

J:

What nonsense! Nonsense that's now starting to percolate through to the public at large. We've recently seen a book called *The End of Time*, a kind of exposé by the former religious affairs correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*. He's cottoned on to all the catchphrases, the myths, the cults - all to make money.

S:

Like us, really.

J:

But not nearly as sophisticated, old man.

S:

We're getting a bit self-reflexive. Should this be in the dialogue?

J:

But I believe in self-reflexiveness in all things, including my monologues, and our dialogues.

S:

Now you're being self-reflexive about your self-reflexiveness. Should that also be in the dialogue? We're in danger of entering an endless loop.

J:

Put it all in, my dear Thomas, and allow me to continue. This author I was just speaking of combines in his book certain concepts of apocalypse, our yearnings for it, its cultural manifestations, eco-scares, and religious cults. Everything but the kitchen sink. I told him it was no more than a commercial enterprise, but that if it was all tied in to more overarching

suggestions for social change, liberal society would stand up and take it more seriously. To which he replied, 'Well, I'm a Tory, I've got no time for that.'

S:

Liberal society certainly took the *Unabomber Manifesto* more seriously.

J:

That's because he was blowing people up, old chap!

S:

Yes, I know that. What I mean is that the manifesto itself, though I haven't read it, is supposed to be erudite, well written, and profound in its analysis of society's malaise. *That* is partly why it's hard to get hold of, not just the fact that its author was a serial bomber.

J:

It's interesting that the manifesto is on sale in the granddaddy of all left-wing bookshops in London, Compendium, and also in Housman's Bookshop in King's Cross. Displayed in the window!

S:

If you tie some of the ideas of the manifesto - extreme anti-technologism and anti-industrialism -

J:

By a mathematics professor who rejected it all, or so it seems.

S:

- and if you tie that in to the various scares about the loss of social cohesion due to forces we know not what, you have a socially dangerous mixture.

J:

I regard what the Unabomber did as an interesting exercise in intellectual terrorism. Here you have a man who creates his own anti-social ideology, and sends lovingly produced wooden bombs through the post to all sorts of academic and technical institutions of a kind he himself

has qualified in and was once associated with. And yet it seems he lived alone in this shack without gas, without electricity, carving these bombs.

S:

I was just thinking of eco-scares, my dear Frederick...

J:

Clearly you were paying attention to my every word, then.

S:

Most of them. I mean, remember the scare about the melting of the polar ice caps, and how the seas would rise and we'd all drown? It still crops up on documentaries now and again. Maybe there's truth to it, maybe not. If the scientists can't even agree, how can I know what to think?

J:

Yes, you have scenarios of future ice ages, future floods, future deserts, the end of life as we know it...

S:

Again, though, there is some truth in some of these stories. As far as I can see, the climate in Britain has been warming. Maybe in 50 years' time London will have a climate similar to Paris.

J:

I'm not complaining.

S:

But there's always *something* which people are focusing on as the cause of their imminent destruction - as though they *want* to be destroyed by something.

J:

Well, Freud had a view of the 'death wish', didn't he? I don't believe it's true, but I suppose it's a metaphor for the aimlessness of life without a purpose.

S:

No, it's all sex for him, old man.

J:

Sex and death.

S:

Yes, yes, and Jung has his views, and they've all got some view or other.

J:

Don't be so dismissive. After all, they're dealing with primal archetypes, and in my view there's no creation without the prospect of destruction, no life without death, no flourishing without decay.

S:

Perhaps, but there's also what happens *after* death - to your immortal soul, my dear Frederick. Is it eternal life for you, or eternal death?

J:

A load of old nonsense! Life in this world, or death in this world - that's your choice.

S:

We *have* no choice. To that extent I agree with you. We all die. But unlike you, I don't believe in the hope of endless future creativity. We will all be destroyed, but I can't tell you when, or how.

Surely you believe that in your heart of hearts?

J:

I believe in an endless succession of Big Crunches. Disaster will happen, but we will go on.

S:

You believe the human race is immortal?

J:

No, because there is some scientific evidence that eventually our Sun will burn out, and there's an end on't.

S:

So you do believe we are going to become extinct.

J:

We will live forever. The human mind is an endless jungle. Only we are ingenious. We will eventually leave this solar system and possibly colonise other planets before the sun explodes. In any event, this will all be long after you and I, and our tape recorder, have become specks of specks of specks of cosmic dust.

S:

Well, I believe that you've substituted a spurious form of immortality for the true immortality of the human soul.

J:

You mean one spurious form of immortality for another.

S:

I despair of you, old man.

J:

Do not despair, as I thrust forward into new vistas of creative realization.

S:

C minus.

J:

Now, now.

S:

I am tough but fair.

J:

Look, in terms of you and me three hundred million years is meaningless. In *that* sense, the human race is limitless, as of now.

S:

But that fateful comet may strike tomorrow, old man; or in 2028. Then you'll see a limit all right. But I admit we've had silly panics. Remember when Shoemaker-Levy 9 slammed into Jupiter in 1994? That fly-by-night false prophet Sister Sophia took out front page newspaper advertisements warning that the collision would be so bright and so forceful that no one should travel in an aeroplane around that time, that there'd be shockwaves felt on Earth, etc. I must admit, she even had me going for a while. I certainly believe in cosmic warning signs, but one must be very careful about false prophets. Needless to say, Sister Sophia has not been heard from again.

J:

She had her fifteen minutes of fame. Remember when there was a scare about some Chinese space probe which looked like it just might come crashing down into the middle of Hull? There was even a 'Hull watch' on the local radio. People are obsessed by the prospect of disaster. They also like to watch boxing, motor racing - to see a crash, to see somebody die, even though they wouldn't admit that was their motivation.

S:

And it doesn't have an impact on them in any real sense. Like when Ayrton Senna died, and everyone experienced ten seconds of media-induced sadness. But the crash is replayed endlessly on television.

J:

Did you know that there is an Ayrton Senna Avenue in Reading? Yet people are still fascinated by destruction. And a lot of the scares and scams we've been talking about have the idea of

destruction at their core. I think that even drug-taking has at one level a kind of self-destructive urge as its motivation; and at another a desire to go beyond the self, to experience a kind of creation and transcendence.

S:

Yes, only for such people what they lack is religious belief, and they try unsuccessfully to replace it with chemically-induced pseudo-spirituality. A poor substitute, don't you think?

J:

But I do not see it in your terms, my dear Thomas. Life just *is* about creation and destruction, death and rebirth, in the physical and the mental realms. It is about the sense of conflict which underscores meaning. No need for your transcendent God, old chap; there's enough spirituality to be found in our own creative powers, if only we look hard enough.

S:

To worship human creativity - and human destructivity - as you do, Frederick, is to worship a false god. An idol if ever there was one. And, like all idols, bound to disappoint.

J:

I am never disappointed by the power of individuals to transcend the teeming masses with their works of greatness. So I don't follow your thinking.

S:

To go back to drugs for a moment, if I may, you view on the subject is rather different from most, isn't it?

J:

Yes, whereas most civilized people believe it to be in some sense 'immoral', I consider it futile and unnecessary, since chemical stimulation is not needed for a sense of well-being, for artistic illumination, imagination, a sense of forward movement in one's life. We have it within ourselves to enter the sorts of states of mind that drugs are supposed to make possible. Now I'm

not denying, of course, that some great artists have used drugs; but no one can write, or paint, or compose music, while *on* drugs or intoxicants. You have to stop in order to create; but if you can stop, you didn't need to start in the first place. On the other hand, many people can't stop, and for them creativity is impossible. So, on my view, for the truly creative person drugs are unnecessary, if not a positive hindrance, whilst for the uncreative person they are pointless, and will never supply their creative lack.

S:

So drugs have a certain kind of immorality about them on your perspective as well, don't they?

Drug-taking is at least in some cases a kind of 'sin' against creativity.

J:

Yes, in a very attenuated sense of 'sin', old man.

S:

Ernest Hemingway said that the test of a true writer is whether he can write with a hangover.

J:

That's *after* you're drunk. But when you're intoxicated you can't even focus on the keys, as Hemingway discovered. Many writers have thought they created the greatest short story that *Harpers* magazine would ever print, written while drunk, only to see in the cold light of day that they had produced absolute doggerel!

My view on this, by the way, is shared by many artists. William Burroughs said it was impossible to create while on drugs, and he had ingested every chemical stimulant known to man. His essay, 'Letter From a Master Addict to Dangerous Drugs' - in the *British Journal of Addiction* - is one of the best essays on drugs ever written.

S:

I take a broader view on drug use. I see drug use as wrong because it interferes with a person's reasoning faculty *as such*, and so prevents their pursuit of the truth, rather than just their artistic

creativity, which is not something many people pursue at all. It stops them thinking, and our job as rational creatures *is* to think and to understand the world rather than escape from it through stupefaction. We're being derelict in our very duty as human beings by using drugs.

J:

I don't entirely disagree with that, Thomas. But I do find it a little rationalistic and even mechanistic a view of human beings which you've expressed. There is also an emotional element to drug use. Even the two traditional/licit drugs in society, alcohol and tobacco - which is quite enough, in my view - are taken, by many people, for emotional, subjective, pathetic (in the strict sense of the word) reasons. That's also why a third of the adult female population takes anti-depressants.

S:

Yes, I'd say that it's primarily emotional reasons which prompt people to take drugs.

J:

In my view, drug-taking is, in a way, the anti-creativity of uncreative people, people who don't have a song or a poem in them, but who think they can share in the creative experience by artificially altering their state of mind. Only about ten per cent of people are really concerned with creativity, with moving forward, transcending supposed limitations on human achievement.

S:

But what if, as you may well believe, only ten per cent of people are genetically *capable* of high creative achievement? Then why should you castigate the rest as uncreative, and say that if they take drugs it's because drugs are a surrogate form of pseudo-creativity?

J:

Well, I'd say your statistic is overly generous, for a start, as far as the achievement of true greatness is concerned.

S:

But then how can everyone have a song or a poem in them?

J:

I'm not saying they should, only that the inferior people should listen and learn from the truly creative ones, and not seek refuge in artificial forms of entertainment.

S:

So you wouldn't have them all on Soma?

J:

No, because it wouldn't do them any good, they wouldn't be able to appreciate the higher art that was being given to them. They wouldn't be in a fit state to receive a vision of greatness from the truly magnificent.

S:

Spoken like the Nietzschean that you are, old man.

J:

Indeed.

S:

So you say people need to be in a fit state either to create or to receive from those who do create.

J:

Yes, but if someone needs a couple of joints before they can create that Hieronymus Bosch-type masterpiece, I won't stand in their way.

S:

So you wouldn't want to subject them to several viewings of *Reefer Madness*, and warn them they might turn into a werewolf?

J:

I don't think so.

S:

Yes, scare stories are dangerous when they're turned into government propaganda. But they're also dangerous when they're turned into alternative politics, which is why one of the most dangerous movements in the USA is the militia movement, which has taken various scare stories - black helicopters over America, an imminent UN takeover - and turned them into the basis of a resistance movement which has caused a bit of anxiety for the government, as well it should. And this has been mixed in with all sorts of conspiracy theories, alternative religious ideas such as neo-paganism and forms of radical Christianity, some left-wing concepts such as Situationist ideas of media manipulation and the Spectacle (as in Waco), and anti-Big Finance, and turned into the basis of a veritable alternative mini-society with its own forms of communication, advertising, support networks, and so on.

J:

I venture to suggest that if David Icke were an American he'd be a non-commissioned officer in the militia!

S:

I'm sure many of his ideas are derived by first- or second-hand contact with these movements in the US, judging by his books. And this all mixes in with *Nexus* and other magazines, as we said before, with articles on various conspiracies, how the banks control your lives, the conspiracy of established medicine to stop people learning about genuine cures for cancer and other illnesses...

J:

Yes, Teddy Goldsmith, brother of the late Sir James, and editor of the right-wing *Ecologist* magazine, has recently published an issue on the Cancer Conspiracy. Sir James was once asked, 'Are you a Jew?', because his father was Jewish and his mother wasn't, and he replied, 'No, I'm not a Jew, I'm a pagan'.

S:

I must say, I've never seen *The Ecologist* in W.H. Smith.

J:

That's because it's pretty serious stuff, arguably at a higher intellectual level than *Nexus*, and also because it is funded by the Goldsmith millions and sells about ten thousand copies through private subscription. I doubt if Teddy would even want it to be on general sale.

S:

I must say, I heard him on a recent TV documentary which, for once, set about debunking the global warming scare, and was not impressed by what he had to say. He showed almost religious fervour in his prophecy of doom, but he had no statistics, no scientific reports at his fingertips, no arguments, just blind assertion, looking almost superciliously at the interviewer as though he was *obliged* to believe him because he was Teddy Goldsmith, whose word was truth! The fact is, as the documentary amply demonstrated, there are many highly respected scientists who simply do not believe that we are experiencing global warming, or that a disaster deriving from that is just around the corner.

J:

Apparently, when Sir James was near death, he consulted an Ayurvedic spiritualist doctor, who told him, 'You must go off the drugs and painkillers', which he did, spending the last forty-eight hours of his life in utter agony.

S:

So much for alternative medicine. But let us move on to another subject - UFOs. This subject is a staple among magazines like *Nexus* and *Fortean Times*, and the way it's treated does not enhance their reputation at all. As far as I'm concerned, the kernel of truth in the UFO phenomenon is that yes, there is a hard core of, say, ten per cent of UFO sightings, documented by credible witnesses with no motive whatsoever to lie, such as policemen, air force pilots and

the like, which are unexplained, but which do not have an ultimate explanation in terms of extraterrestrial visitors. These sightings, I believe, are of things which are firmly terrestrial - so-called 'black' technology. They are sightings of black technological entities from the United States, Russia and other countries, part of their covert military and intelligence programs, which if they were ever revealed in the mainstream media for what they are, would - allegedly - damage those research programs. I have no doubt they have extraordinary flying machines, unlike anything we are familiar with, which can be manoeuvred and manipulated in all sorts of remarkable ways. That's the kernel of truth in UFOs, as I see it.

J:

Remember the famous incident of several decades back, which has been in the news a lot lately?

S:

You mean Roswell.

J:

Yes, the 'big daddy' of UFO scares. The mainstream air force view, as I understand it, is that it was alternative technology, maybe barrage balloons made of new materials being tested for later use in planes and helicopters.

S:

But the US government has now admitted that Roswell was not a balloon. They *used* to say that, but now they've withdrawn it. Whatever it was - and I agree it was alternative technology - it wasn't a balloon.

J:

That's how states get into trouble. They put out one line, then withdraw it amid embarrassment, and put out another.

S:

It's part of their standard operational disinformation campaign. I suppose the likes of you and me will never know what it was exactly, but the point is that the 'alien visitors' rubbish is partly government disinformation mixed in with the general propensity on the part of the population, especially the trainspotters, to *believe* that there are little green men.

J:

People like a story, and to a large extent people convince themselves that what they saw was beyond human understanding. It's like a court case, where each side passionately believes that its version of events is true, that it alone knows what really happened.

S:

I find it hard to understand how people who seem to be quite normal and rational can believe so passionately that they were abducted by aliens. It's possible that in some cases the alleged memories are infused into them, as so-called 'screen' memories, by government agencies to prevent their recalling having witnessed certain top secret state activity, e.g. 'black' military technology. It's reasonable to think that such 'memories' can be induced, from what I've read. And John Mack, the Harvard professor whose book gave alien abduction testimony more credibility than it deserves, is known to have had associations with state intelligence agencies like the CIA.

J:

Then again, a proportion of the population will always have weird beliefs about themselves, and not necessarily induced. I think artistic creativity, imagination, visual fantasizing have a lot to do with this. If you look at many modern novels, not to mention films and plays, you see a kind of fantasizing which, within the confines of the approved art form known as the novel, film, and so on, has a certain integrity. But when it begins to slop out, as it were, into other areas, people tend to get worried, and alarm bells start to ring. If you read the transcripts of many accounts of UFO

sightings and abductions, you find they often resemble poor novels, which a publisher, if he received two hundred pages of the stuff in a jiffy bag, would say, ‘Well, it’s all right, but I’ve read ten like it’.

S:

OK, you’ve got the people who give such testimonies for money, or for publicity - they just want to be on *Strange But True* at 10 p.m. on cable. And you’ve got the incurable fantasists. But what about people who sincerely believe that aliens have performed sexual experiments on them? Are we to believe with Freud that only women would make such claims, and that they manifest a kind of hysteria?

J:

The fact that sex comes up in so many of these stories, I mean I don’t want to get too Freudian, but don’t you think, old boy, that even if there were aliens the last thing they’d want to do is have sex with an Oregon housewife?

S:

If you look at medieval (and post-medieval) accounts of Satanic possession, you find that a lot is said about the incubus and the succubus, different kinds of demon which do indeed perform sexual acts with humans, mainly women. An important part of theology is devoted to the study of such phenomena, and they are taken very seriously indeed.

J:

My dear boy, the demonic is truly a human characteristic! But there again, maybe what we’re dealing with is an archetype, a kind of fantasy that mingles repressed sexuality, sublimation, projection, all sorts of psychological phenomena, and which takes on a paradigmatic Christian form in one period of history, and a quasi-technological form in another.

S:

So now you’re mixing some Jung with your Freud? A little ad hoc, don’t you think?

J:

But look - the fact is that it is nearly always women who come forward with these stories.

S:

As they did with their stories of infantile sexual acts with adults which Freud notoriously put down to fantasy, having dismissed the idea that there was any reality in their tales. He was comprehensively refuted later, as Jeffrey Masson's book demonstrates. Furthermore, some of the statements I've read about alien abductions read like chapters from the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and yet I doubt any Oregon housewife has read that famous medieval treatise on diabolical possession.

J:

Don't take Luciferian possession too seriously. It's a myth of the primarily destructive part of consciousness, what mystics call 'the left' --

S:

Funnily enough.

J:

-- but it is also quite possible that humanity has so deeply absorbed these narratives that they come out in different forms without anyone's consciously referring back to earlier forms.

S:

A kind of collective unconscious, you say?

J:

Well, I do not want to import all the Jungian theoretical baggage. I'm happy to leave it at the suggestion that most alleged witnesses to alien abductions are simply rehashing stories they've heard, films they've seen, science fiction they've read. They've absorbed it, fantasized about it on and off, links have been made in their unconscious, perhaps, with earlier forms of such narratives, again which they may or may not have read or heard about themselves. And from that

psychic mix, as it were, such testimonies spring up. I find that eminently reasonable as a working hypothesis.

S:

And that's pretty much the attitude of the *Fortean Times*. Although they are supposed to be open-minded about everything, in fact they have a quasi-covert methodology, which is to regard many things, such as Satanic child abuse and alien abductions, as deriving from urban myths and archetypes which have been floating around perhaps for centuries.

J:

However, I would question whether that was entirely their view of things. I think there's a 'harder' element to them, even though it's covered over by commercial dross and the magazine has declined markedly so as to be able to sell well in W.H. Smith. Putting that aside, I think they partly believe that aliens exist, or at least want to believe that it's not *all* down to urban mythology. Whereas I don't believe they exist at all.

S:

What do they believe and what don't they? You say they partly believe in aliens, but they wholly don't believe in Satanic abuse.

J:

Because they have their own 'political correctness', and such a thing does not sit well within their own worldview. So they're not really relativist.

S:

No one is.

J:

Some of us are more relativist than others - in the sense that we believe in the dialectical strength of contraries, but also in the absolute certainty of our own judgment moment by moment. Ask Heraclitus.

S:

That's a matter of opinion. In any case, it seems you were saying before that many alternative ideas are kept in ghettos, and that society regards them as harmless as long as they stay there. But when they seep out and mix with other ideas, such as radical views about economics or society or politics, then the alarm bells go off.

J:

Yes, they become threatening. I remember a senior cleric once told a friend of mine that the good thing about the establishment of the Church of England is that although it has led to a generalized blandness in mainstream religion, and is terminally boring and dull, at least it has kept a lid on some of the more 'bizarre' kinds of spirituality.

S:

It used to, but not now, since bizarre is at the heart of Church of England worship nowadays. In any case, it is so irrelevant as an institution that any lid it once provided has long since fallen off the pot, if I may pursue the metaphor. Everyone knows where to find alternative magazines, books, videos, Web sites, the lot.

J:

OK, so the next line of defence is to say, 'Keep this stuff in a few magazines and specialist bookshops, and make sure the magazines have lurid headlines like "I shot Bigfoot but he got away"'. But the more serious magazines, like *Lobster* and *The Ecologist*, are still only mail-order. And yet ideas found in the more underground press do still manage to find their way to the edges of the mainstream.

S:

Yes. We saw the *Sunday Times* run a series of articles questioning whether HIV causes AIDS, a dissident view if ever there was one. The *Sunday Telegraph* ran a feature on one of the most radical ideas around - did man really walk on the moon? UFOs, Roswell, they get into the press

with regularity, along with other Forteana; indeed the editor of *Fortean Times* now writes a regular column for one of the major papers, though I don't expect anything too close to the wind from him, and I haven't been disappointed.

More importantly, there was Ambrose Evans-Pritchard's long campaign in the *Sunday Telegraph* against Clinton, which involved a pretty sympathetic portrayal of the militia movement. He tapped into numerous alternative news sources, not least from the Internet, and gave them and their contents some currency.

J:

Yes, because of the Internet it is now virtually impossible to keep many once-forbidden ideas from mass circulation. In that sense the playing field has changed greatly.

S:

You can't have ghettos when you've got the Internet. But then with the Internet you have far more junk - 'noise', as it's called - than you have facts, so it brings with it the requirement of being able to sift signal from noise, of knowing where to look, what to look for. And now the transnationals with their oligopolies are getting in on the act, more and more of the Internet will be 'tamed' and domesticated, sanitized and filtered. And we may end up back where we were before it came on the scene.

J:

Yes, the Internet functions like a gigantic skip for all the intellectual detritus of mankind. Meanwhile, censorship of the Net is coming more to the fore, with child pornography and extreme right-wing propaganda the twin targets allowing censorship to penetrate an otherwise unregulated marketplace. Particularly with child pornography, it's a useful target since no one, except perhaps the most radical/jaundiced libertarian, would go to the wall for the right of paedophiles to put their stuff on the Net. And I suppose the extreme right is not far behind in

many liberal people's minds, so they are a convenient way in for social engineers who have a far broader agenda of censorship and control.

S:

Look, I'm happy for paedophilia to be banned from the Net, I'm content for there to be censorship; but by the same token, if it meant that alternative, unsanitized, radical viewpoints had to disappear, I would say that in the *current* state of society, that would be a bad thing, and that *perhaps* the non-censorship of paedophilia was a price that had to be paid to keep alternative politics on the Net.

J:

You use the Internet a great deal; have you seen any child pornography on it?

S:

Now what makes you think I'd look for it, my dear Frederick?

J:

I have no doubt about your probity, old man; what I mean is whether you've come across it while aimlessly surfing. No pictures of kiddies in close proximity to sheep?

S:

No, never seen naked children, boys' locker rooms...sure, I get junk e-mail advertising 'Hot Sex' and whatever, as does everyone else. But I think the problem of paedophilia on the Net, as such, is grossly exaggerated precisely so that the mums and dads get worked up enough to ring their local radio station and demand action.

J:

So there we are, it's a myth! What usually goes through my mind when I read about people who want to ban child porn from the Net is that they are also the ones who want to ban revisionist histories of the Second World War, which are also well established in cyberspace. Indeed, there's a book on Holocaust denial by Gill Seidel, a lecturer at one of the post-polytechnics -

S:

You mean new universities --

J:

Yes, new in the sense of changing their letterheads. Anyway, this book contained a foreword by a psychologist which jumped from talk about UFOs and related phenomena, which are a bit of fun in his view, to Holocaust denial, which is far more insidious. See the correlation: some people think that Forteana are the thin edge of the wedge leading to Holocaust denial, right-wing extremism, and so on.

S:

The line is drawn for us. I know the editor of *Nexus* has even been warned, by people he at least thought meant business, not to publish articles on US government involvement with drug-running, which he has done in the past. He has also become leery of publishing articles on banking, which he used to do. He has, as it were, been advised not to touch those sorts of subjects.

J:

I remember that the mainstream magazine *Business Age* published an alternative account of Robert Maxwell's death, which involved the claim that the Israeli secret service killed him for stealing from their government. We'll never know the truth, I assume.

S:

I haven't seen *Business Age* on the W.H. Smith shelves in a long time.

J:

I saw a copy in the train station recently. So with that bit of specious cause-effect reasoning, let us draw matters to a close.

Chapter 5

ART ATTACK

Location: a park near a London gallery

Samuel:

So, we have just seen a veritable feast for our eyes - the exhibition called *Sensation*, the choicest pieces from the collection of that renowned connoisseur, Charles Saatchi. I don't think I have seen an exhibition quite like it. In turns nauseating, appalling, alienating...at other times trivial and banal. Just as good art should be, wouldn't you say?

Jonathan:

Actually, I found it enjoyable. The monumental nature of some of the pieces worked, in my opinion. The painting of Myra Hindley made of children's handprints - an interesting idea.

S:

Not in the eyes of the people who vandalised it, nearly causing the show to be cancelled.

J:

Perhaps, but that was something of an over-reaction. The piece was quite effective, though the effect would have been diminished if it had been less monumental. Plus there is the fact that the picture of her from which it's taken is so well known, almost an icon of our time.

S:

And what was your general impression of the exhibition?

J:

Some of the work is quite strong, and as I say I did enjoy it, but on the whole one would have to say it is in general pretty tired, clearly a demonstration of late post-modernity. Stepping back, then, it has to be seen as essentially derivative from Modernism itself, an attempt to blend *British Pop* culture with already well-explored forms of expression from within Modernism. If you go through each exhibit, you see that virtually all of them have some precedent in twentieth-century art.

S:

Perhaps you are alluding to Damien Hirst's delightfully preserved bovine cross-sections? Did Marcel Duchamp pickle animals?

J:

No, but he pioneered the idea of anti-art, ready-made art, art that wasn't art, if you know what I mean.

S:

I'd hate to confess I did not.

J:

The cow, the shark in formaldehyde - the idea comes from technology, from taxidermy, forensic science, exhibits in natural history museums. The same goes, to a degree, for the Chapmanworld exhibit...

S:

Oh, you mean the child pornography - kiddie mannequins with genitalia coming from their faces. Is Chapmanworld one person?

J:

No, Jake and Dinos.

S:

A couple of regular guys, eh? For crypto-paedophiles.

J:

Well, it's true that they're exploiting something in the ambiguous and slightly 'terrifying' nature of dolls. There used to be, not far from where I lived, a shop called The Dolls' Hospital, where dolls were repaired. It was something of a local landmark. I used to go past it in the bus, from where I could see the panoramic corner window at the top of the shop, at which there was an array of doll parts - heads, limbs, torso, in all sorts of positions, looking quite grotesque.

S:

Do you remember when the Beatles released that compilation album called *Yesterday and Today*, around 1965? The cover showed them in blood-soaked butchers' coats, with strips of meat hanging off the furniture, and parts of dolls strewn about the place. That caused a furore and they had to junk the cover (now worth a fortune, of course).

J:

Yes, there is a gruesome and surreal element to the use of dolls. Perhaps Chapmanworld were drawing on the work of Hans Bellmer, a German artist of the 1920s and '30s.

S:

Did he make dolls with genitals coming out of their faces?

J:

Not quite, but there is a similarity of sorts. So there you have another point of repetitiveness, or derivativeness, in the *Sensation* exhibition.

S:

With the added bit of original pornography. And what about Marc Quinn's cast of his head, made out of his own frozen blood? Try as they might to stop the inevitable, the thing was slowly melting, and didn't have much face left. Not the sort of art object I'd want to have in my living room - or kitchen.

J:

Again, it's really just a reworking of the concept of the death mask, which is as old as civilization itself. If it had been made out of clay it wouldn't have caused a stir.

S:

Eventually it will turn into a great, steaming pool of stale blood. But then again maybe that's what the artist wants - 'anti-Art', a kind of subversion of art collecting, making Saatchi pay a lot of money for what will eventually be fit for nothing but flushing down the loo.

J:

If you look at, say, Viennese Actionism of the 1960s, you will see the use of excrement and other grisly and abattoir-related bits and pieces. My criticism of *Sensation*, ultimately, is that what the crowds think is a big shock - a big Wow - is not much of a thrill, and is quite derivative and unoriginal in the history of Modernism.

S:

But why are people shocked? It can't be put down totally to the fact that the media primed us for it.

J:

There's a little bit of that. In fact, there's a kind of disjunction between the way society views such art - even allegedly 'progressive' elements such as *The Independent* and *The Guardian* - and the art itself. The art itself is unoriginal, but people think that it represents some new outrage.

S:

Actually, I wonder how many people were shocked. Did you see anyone in the exhibition who looked put out? Most were suitably po-faced and nonchalant about it all.

J:

A few were grinning uneasily, but perhaps all the media comment beforehand forewarned people, and to some extent disarmed them. Some people would certainly have had a little jolt, especially by the 'paedophile' art of Chapmanworld.

S:

But no one attacked it. No one attacked the blasphemous *Last Supper*. All that was attacked was the Myra Hindley portrait.

J:

In the first weeks there were demonstrations outside against the whole show, though it's true they were focused on the Hindley picture. That picture, which hits you not long after going in, because of its size and location, was the focus for the exhibition. And the early brochures and publicity highlighted that picture, and made it the motif of the show. But of course it's not reproduced in publicity now.

S:

Tell me, old chap - would you say the show on the whole qualifies as Degenerate Art?

J:

Well, it depends on what you mean - you must define your terms. The term 'degenerate art' can be overused and easily 'demonised' because of its political associations - the Nazis had exhibitions of 'degenerate art' in the 1930s. I think, rather, that *Sensation* represents art at the end of Modernism, art as decay, decay as art - to borrow from the idea behind Stewart Home's exhibition of the early 1980s - *Culture of the Ruins; the Ruins of Culture*. That exhibition was attacked, but the rumour was that the artists did it themselves in order to attract attention. The point is that Modernism has come to an end.

S:

But what we have just seen is supposed to be *post*-Modernism!

J:

The term is not very helpful, I think. Post-Modernism is no more than Modernism itself at the very fag-end of its existence. What we've seen, even though it has a certain anti-populist and radical feel to it, is essentially old hat. The problem is that art is essentially about mediation, about an idea in the mind of the artist being conveyed to the viewer.

S:

In that sense there wasn't much mediation in what we've seen. Just unsubtle, in-your-face images.

J:

Yes. Take the hunk of meat in the glass cage with the flies hovering all over it.

S:

No thank you, I've just eaten.

J:

I mean conceptually, old boy. Now, such an exhibit is art in a way, since it's a structured space. And it's in a gallery, since the building says 'gallery' outside and people pay money to come and look at it. But real art involves sculpting - in the broad sense - a *meaning* from the material. What does that hunk of meat *mean*? What do the flies *mean*?

S:

I don't know what they meant, but I do know that they stank.

J:

Unless meaning is, to use an unfortunate expression given the topic, *carved* out of reality, or at least *projected* onto it, the hunk of meat remains just what it is. Art has to *transform* pre-existing material, and simply putting a bleeding carcass into a box and covering it with flies does not amount to a transformation.

S:

So what you're saying is that this particular exhibit - and perhaps many others like it, the Hirsts especially - are *too real* to count as art.

J:

Yes, in a way.

S:

And note how the most realistic exhibits have the most surrealistic titles. Damien Hirst's shark in formaldehyde is officially called 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living'. The very bizarreness of the title is evidence, to me, that not enough meaning has been implanted into the material itself, and the artist feels bound to compensate by adding a title which is *so* meaningful as to be grotesque.

J:

Not bad thinking, my dear Thomas. So my point is that art without metamorphosis is not art, and that without transformation the artistic heritage of the last two or three millennia is meaningless.

S:

But maybe you're being a bit too harsh? After all, take Hirst's cow: he has bisected it twenty times, producing neat, clean sections, which he has then lovingly placed in custom-made plexiglass tanks, all lined up so you can see from one end of the animal to the other. That amounts to a transformation, doesn't it?

J:

Yes, some of the strength of the work comes from that. But it's not enough. There's a lot of skill required in taxidermy, but it is rightly not treated as an art form. Damien Hirst has simply taken taxidermy to a new level. He has certainly not raised it to the level of art, however. Indeed, it is arguable that traditional taxidermy required *more* skill than Hirst has ever demonstrated. Perhaps his only real skill is in being able to persuade people to part with large sums of money to purchase his products. Look: horror, blood and guts, the visceral - this has all been part of the tradition of art. But true artists are able to transmogrify the gory elements of reality - to paint, sculpt, shape and reshape the nature of what it is to be human.

S:

So then would you call Damien Hirst a craftsman rather than an artist?

J:

Perhaps a minor craftsman, adapting prior Modernist forms and pretending they're original.

S:

What about the shark? True, it has now decayed to the point of looking more like an OAP shark on benefit - but it still has some power.

J:

Ah yes, but the power comes from the shark itself, not from anything Hirst has done with it.

S:

The blow-dried lamb looked cute and affecting.

J:

Yes, but most people would prefer it with mint jelly and mushy peas.

S:

It did look quite tasty, didn't it?

J:

I think the shark worked better than the Chapmanworld mannequins, which were in my opinion quite poor, and 'degenerate' in the sense that they represented the decay and exfoliation of late Modernist sculpture.

S:

What about Tracey Emin's tent - *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995*? Was it not arresting?

J:

Maybe she should have been 'arrested' for what the tent says she did!

S:

Poor Tracey, what a mixed-up woman.

J:

Pornographic *artistes* like Sarah Young make videos of themselves having sex with twenty men at once, so Tracey's tent is hardly a novel contribution. She just stitched up a tent to say the same thing.

S:

Ah, a tent you have to *enter into* in order to read little stories about her bed partners and her aborted unborn child. What an unsubtle concept: Tracey's patchwork womb.

J:

I'm sure Sarah could have rigged up something similar if she'd put her mind to it. She's done a sexual version of *Hamlet*, from which the Shakespeare has been completely removed. She plays Ophelia, and says in a hybrid Cockney/Essex girl accent, 'Hello, I'm Ophelia', and then drops her knickers, after which there is endless bonking.

S:

Rather Pythonesque!

J:

So Tracey the Tent is hardly moving beyond a similar 'artistic' level. That, when coupled with decaying animals, elephant dung stuck onto pseudo-African paintings - a travesty of all that is really good in tribal art - and videotape of a woman's intestines hardly make for true art. It is very late, and very, very tired.

S:

Well, I for one happened to enjoy Mona Hatoum's tour of her digestive tract. I saw the full-length feature version, in surround sound, at the *Rites of Passage* exhibition at the Tate.

J:

I suppose she needed a certain amount of courage to plunge the endoscope into her gullet.

S:

All in the name of art, old boy!

J:

You may say that. I couldn't possibly comment. I will say that *Sensation* did have some power, but mainly because of the sheer size of some of the exhibits, and the glorious neo-classical rooms of the Royal Academy. Bare white walls give everything a starkness.

S:

In-your-faceness.

J:

How lexically inventive of you - I don't think.

S:

I think Mr. Saatchi will end up disappointed, if he hasn't made his money back on entrance fees.

J:

Or sold out before the crash.

S:

As I've no doubt he will. But the fact is, in maybe thirty or forty years' time - who knows when - 99% of the exhibits we have just seen will be virtually worthless.

J:

The organic pieces will have decayed into nothingness. A few heat waves and the head made of blood will be red liquid on the floor.

S:

Blood on the carpet.

J:

Quite. But even the Hirsts, already wasting away, will be in pieces. Indeed entropy is part of the show, conceptually. There is after all an irony in the art of Hirst, Whiteread and others. They are

living in a declining civilization, and they know it - at least subconsciously. There is a self-referentiality to this art.

S:

But you hardly see Hirst running around saying, 'Oi, I did that shark 'cos I'm tryin' to symbolise that we're in a, like, decaying civilization'.

J:

No, but then most visual artists are not intellectuals. You have exceptions, of course: van Gogh's letters to his brother about the nature of painting are excellent. But most visual artists simply take certain forms and iconography from the culture around them, and replicate them in various ways. They symbolise, unconsciously, what the culture *already* means.

Art which is obsessed with dung, with putrefaction, with sex and death, chaos and entropy, is art which knows its time has come.

S:

What I'd like to know is whether dying movements are replaced by new ones relatively soon, or can they remain in their death throes for decades, maybe centuries?

J:

Well, the artistic culture of modernity been going on for nearly a century already. Pure Modernism was really over by 1930. But there's another point I'd like to make about this show. It was a display of *British* art. Now, British art has always been about great individualists swimming against the current: Blake, Turner, Gainsborough, Sickert, Bacon, L.S. Lowry, Lewis -- they are *all* individualists. Their styles don't relate much to each other or to art history. They are men with an *individual vision*. Even cutting-edge artists of today like Albert Louden are very much out of the mainstream, giving expression to their personal vision.

S:

And you think that typifies British art as such, as opposed to Continental art?

J:

Yes. And the point I wish to make is that the work in *Sensation* is *generic*. It is part of a movement, indeed a movement that really died decades ago. And it is simply an embodiment of Continental theory and Modernist practice as developed earlier this century.

S:

But are you saying that it will take an individual to create a resurgence of true art?

J:

Yes, at least in this society. Even the ‘school’ of Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud and others, which came to prominence in the 1950s and ‘60s, consisted of no more than a group of men who met in pubs in central London, drinking and enjoying each others’ company. The School of Paris painted alike; the School of London consisted of individualists who drank together.

S:

So, then, where do we go from here?

J:

The way I see it at present, perhaps the last great movement in Western art, at least for a long time, may well be so-called *Art Brut*, or Outsider Art. That will, in a way, show Modernism going full circle.

S:

Why? Because early Modernist art was itself labelled by many as degenerate, art by madmen, by the insane?

J:

Yes, that’s how it was often regarded. So it may be that as Modernism breathes its last, it will return to its original source. Remember that one of the main reasons Modernism got started was the advent of photography, which took over the ability to represent, in a fully Realist fashion, all

forms. What future did representational art have? Hence Modernist artists retreated within, and began seeing things from an internalist perspective.

S:

That may be right, but it's only part of the story, of course. Modernism was a response to technology generally, not just photography. It did not retreat from technology, it embraced it. Also, the withdrawal to the 'inner space' of the mind, begun already with Impressionism, was a response to the decline, in the surrounding culture, of objective values, common morality, mind-independent truth.

J:

True, but I am focusing on one aspect. The more technology exploded, with photography becoming cinema, then television, and now computer art, the more painters, i.e. those who still work with the traditional media of paint, brush and canvas, have retreated to increasingly non-representational forms, with the result that in the extreme case of Abstract Expressionism the paint becomes its own subject matter.

S:

By the same token, photography has itself become more and more abstract, as it has exploited new technology.

J:

It's not so much the new technology, but the increasing difficulty of finding an original image. Everything has been photographed, at least to the limit of technology. And with new techniques of micro-photography the world of the small-scale is being well covered too.

S:

So technology itself is now driving art, it seems.

J:

That is part of our late-twentieth century predicament, my dear Thomas. Where once the vision dictated the materials, now the reverse is true.

S:

Doesn't that mean we are trapped? Where can we go?

J:

One problem is that in modern society there is an endless promiscuity of the image. This is a highly visual culture.

S:

We're soaked in images, especially from television and public advertising.

J:

What it means is that society has made it that much harder for individuals to depict life in an original way.

S:

So how is the artist to transcend this limitation?

J:

Simply by painting pictures the like of which have not been seen before.

S:

But it is hard to envisage what it would be like.

J:

Well, if you look at the paintings of Frank Auerbach - an artist of Germanic ancestry who lives in Kensington - you see images that have not been seen before, layers of paint that add up to something original. He works frenetically, fourteen hours a day. He knew Freud, and Bacon, and Graham Sutherland. Freud himself is not that uninteresting, veering in a way toward photography but shunning any idealization of the human form.

S:

You mean he paints grotesque bodies in degrading poses.

J:

Steady on, old chap - not quite. It relates to *cinéma vérité*, in some ways a kind of ultra-realism that penetrates to the ugliness of the flesh.

S:

Now you steady on. The flesh is not ugly - the human body is a beautiful object. Although we are made in the image of God chiefly in respect of our souls, we are also God's physical handiwork, and have a kind of corporeal resemblance to Him. Hence the Incarnation of Christ as God and Man.

J:

Now you know I don't accept any of that, my dear Thomas. It's pure myth. Such antiquated thinking is merely Christianity's contribution to a dying and derivative culture.

S:

You may say so, but millions disagree with you. I must say, though, that the human body, especially when not looked after, can be quite ugly. That occurred to me when looking at the set of hideous family photos in *Sensation*.

J:

You mean the ones that included the photo of the cat flying across the room?

S:

Being thrown, I should think.

J:

Yes, not the sort of living room I felt a desire to spend a lot of time in. But notice how many people were recoiling from the photos, as though they'd been assaulted. People don't like to be reminded that most of them look like that, especially in their natural habitat, i.e. their living

room, in front of the telly. They're bloated, flabby, sweaty, looking like beached whales in front of a flickering light.

S:

Speak for yourself. When I watch television I assume a dignified pose, and can be described as nothing other than svelte and ready for action.

J:

You mean ready to change the channel.

S:

Possibly. But to return to the more engaging subject of the exhibition, I think the real problem is that it had no transcendence, no spirituality. The exhibits are rooted in muck and mire, the flesh, blood, death, sex. All very well, but not very satisfying.

J:

That's why it was called *Sensation*. The ambiguity of the word is no accident. The only shock people are able to feel is the enervation of their senses.

S:

Once, in a more enlightened age, people were not shocked by decapitated corpses, by disease and death, but by the thought of what awaited them beyond this life if they did not measure up.

J:

I don't know if I would call the pre-Enlightenment age you allude to as enlightened, but it is true that, at least in modern society, the only thing that can wake people up from their spiritual torpor - and I use the term 'spiritual' in my own sense - is a jolt to their nerve endings. And, as we know, the more they are jolted, the harder the shock needs to be. In some ways, a better exhibition than *Sensation* - at least a more honest one - would have consisted of electrodes attached to the walls, to which people could freely attach themselves and discover the pain of real sensation.

S:

That brings to mind the *Rites of Passage* exhibition I mentioned earlier. One of the exhibits there was a ladder whose rungs contained a noxious gas. The gas began to escape from its confines, sending a highly unpleasant odour into the room, and forcing its evacuation. I believe this was unintentional.

J:

Art attacking the viewer - *literally*!

S:

Indeed, and the thought that occurred to me was - excellent! If art can attack the viewer, then it now becomes legitimate for the viewer to attack the art, and I had visions of scores of dissatisfied art buffs who, instead of demanding their money back for all the tripe they had been exposed to, decided instead to take to the exhibits with axes and mallets. A satisfying thought, no?

J:

Your suppressed love of destruction is admirable.

S:

I try to keep it under wraps. But tell me, is there such an art form as 'comic art', where someone creates an exhibit with the *sole* purpose of making people laugh? Imagine people going into the gallery, and rolling about with laughter, howling with merriment at objects which were created expressly so as to amuse them!

J:

No, old chap - that's called music hall.

S:

I'm serious! This could be a new art form!

J:

There is an intentionally humorous aspect to some of the things we have seen. There is sometimes an intention to provoke a wry smile, which you find among post-Modernists. The bathtub made of soap, the delightful little wax cadaver --

S:

That was my favourite exhibit, in fact.

J:

These must have been created with a certain sense of irony or jest. But I doubt that any artist wants to have his viewers rolling about as though they'd been listening to Les Dawson.

S:

Ah, but that's what they *should* do, in this dry and humourless age. Why *shouldn't* the viewer hit the deck in paroxysms of amusement? Maybe this is my new vocation.

J:

Don't give up your day job, as they say. I'd do some market research if I were you.

S:

I want to see the punters losing their breakfasts.

J:

Actually, some people would find the Chapmanworld exhibits funny in a grotesque sort of way, rather than offensive.

S:

Especially if you'd had a couple of lagers. 'Oi! Get a load o' that girl with the willie coming out of her face!'

J:

Not the type one is likely to find at the Royal Academy.

S:

More's the pity. Art for the people, I say!

J:

As far as art for the people is concerned, you'd find most Marxist critics not having nice things to say about *Sensation*.

S:

How do you mean?

J:

They'd say it was anti-art, bourgeois entertainment designed at the same time to shock the masses. They'd also say it was no more than a show to enable Burlington House to pay its debts and Mr. Saatchi to enhance or at least maintain the value of what is of dubious intrinsic value itself. That's why it's been advertised so aggressively.

S:

I should think the RA would have paid off a few debts, judging by the attendance and the hefty admission fee.

J:

It was packed when we were there. Mostly with people under forty.

S:

Emaciated young women.

J:

I'm sure you were paying careful attention to them.

S:

No, only to the art, my dear Frederick. Speaking of which, another thing I noticed about the exhibits is that, although most of them were three-dimensional, none were beautiful from a *tactile* point of view. Not that you'd have been allowed to touch anything anyway, but I saw

precious little that attracted me texturally; nothing I would have liked to touch, everything all chipped and cracked and peeling. Ugly. ‘Don’t touch the exhibits’. Thanks, but I had no desire to touch them, so they needn’t have bothered with the warning signs.

J:

The work is deliberately rebarbative, so that is part of the reason. And since the work is not saying anything anyway, the textural dullness and the intellectual vapidly coincide to give a general feeling of not having seen anything worthwhile. It’s like the difference between, say, *War and Peace* and the novels of Sven Hassel. Hassel is good for a ten-minute read, but no one feels uplifted afterwards, as though any of the content has permanently entered their consciousness. Compare that with Goya, or Bosch.

S:

Well, there was a plastic reproduction of one of Goya’s war etchings: bloody heads and torsos minus genitalia.

J:

Yes, the *Disasters of War* etchings, reproduced for us courtesy of Jake and Dinos Chapman.

S:

Ah, so that’s where the missing genitals went - they stuck them to their kiddie dolls!

J:

The brochure says: ‘Three Spanish soldiers are tied to a tree, their bodies mutilated and castrated. The work is at once tragic and ironic, horrifying and sublime.’

S:

Ironic? Sublime? Forgive me, but I must have missed that.

J:

The point is, we do not have the Chapman brothers to thank for any of the aesthetic qualities the image might happen to have: it is Goya we should thank. The Chapmans have added nothing

except for some 1990s ‘video nasty’ realism. That is the sum total of their artistic contribution to that particular work. And, of course, their bright, plastic reproduction *subtracts* much of what makes Goya great - the darkness, the shadows, the mystery.

S:

Come to think of it, it would have made a good set of display mannequins for a sado-masochist clothes shop. A T-shirt on this torso here, a helmet on that head there...

J:

All right, enough, I get your drift.

S:

I suppose it could have been made by Jeff Koons in a rare suicidal moment. Pop art for depressives.

J:

That’s part of what detracts from it and from similar pieces we saw. It’s trying to turn pop art into something serious, which it essentially isn’t. Warhol intended pop art to be friendly, inviting, bright and breezy, just like the pop culture it came from. When the genre is turned in a more macabre direction, it becomes something dry, humourless, and distinctly un-post-Modern.

S:

In a word, just plain gross.

J:

You have exceeded your accustomed heights of lexical subtlety.

S:

In a way, it’s a kind of sub-standard Madame Tussaud’s, like the model of Sid Vicious which we saw, a bad resemblance, and taken directly from the famous scene in *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle*, when he sings ‘My Way’ and then pulls a pistol and starts shooting the audience.

J:

Perhaps that is what the artists in *Sensation* are trying to do, only with considerably less panache.

S:

And we should have the right to fire back at them, as I suggested earlier. Still, you and I differ considerably over what can be done to remedy what is obviously a parlous situation for modern art. For you, it's a great individual who has to come along and, as it were, re-define art, whereas for me there has to be a total cultural re-orientation.

J:

There may be both. Individuals start movements, and there may well be social and cultural forces unleashed which re-orient art, giving sustenance to the work of this or that individual, and leading to the spread of a new way of thinking. Consider the way Romanticism was unleashed in France, partly as a reaction to the French Revolution and the desire to go back to classical norms. Large scale cultural forces will inevitably be unleashed - they will shape art and be shaped by art.

S:

Well put, but the fact is there has to be a spiritual regeneration. There can't be more materialism because we've done it, it's exhausted. Photography killed off many forms of representation, and computer technology may well do away with traditional two-dimensional forms altogether.

J:

There has been a lot of representational art in the twentieth century, both within and outside Modernism. It's interesting to note that twentieth century neo-Classicism has never really gained critical acceptance because of its alleged authoritarianism and its association with undesirable political regimes. At least, I mean the more representational forms, as opposed to Bauhaus and other movements of classical inspiration but abstract design.

S:

I imagine you're thinking of the *Art and Power* exhibition we saw at the Hayward Gallery?

J:

Yes.

S:

Well, how would you contrast those two exhibitions?

J:

I found *Art and Power* more interesting conceptually than *Sensation*. *Art and Power* contained, of course, much that is inimical to Modernism, especially in its monumental, authoritarian and strictly realistic forms. On the other hand, authoritarian art overlaps with Modernism, as we saw in the Futurism which grew out of Mussolini's Italy. Lenin and the Bolsheviks encouraged Constructivism and Formalism for ten years after the revolution, though there was eventually a fierce reaction against it.

Even now, there is a suspicion of neo-Classicism among critics and historians, who think it smacks of authoritarianism. Hence artists like Arno Breker who are its major exponents this century have not really found their place in the pantheon.

S:

Does such a political association matter? Anyway, artists are always letting themselves be compromised, whether on left or right, because they have to live and they need sponsorship.

J:

These were artists who received sponsorship from a particular regime at a particular time. Artists have always needed patronage, and the artists who criticize Breker can now consider themselves lucky they were not working in Germany then. But they still get their government funding, which is often targeted at Politically Correct causes, so in essence I can't see how they are any different.

S:

I must say I found the *Art and Power* exhibition fascinating. I consulted every exhibit for several minutes, read the descriptions very carefully and made sure I did not miss anything. It must have

taken me about two hours or more. I came to *Sensation* hoping at least for a laugh, and didn't get one, and though it was of a comparable size I whipped around it in just under an hour. That says something.

J:

About you or the exhibitions?

S:

Both, perhaps. I found *Art and Power* conceptually more interesting, deeper, more pleasing to look at, more resonant with history, and even more inventive, especially the Futurist material.

J:

Even the Modernist work in *Art and Power* was of a higher order, and more in line with the thrust of Modernism, up to around 1940, by which time Modernism in the true sense was well and truly over.

S:

I think that the starkly Realist work was also better than anything in *Sensation*, because for one thing it used traditional materials, and because it required craftsmanship, and also because it *said* something, even if what it said was not always politically correct. Monumental Socialist Man with a hammer above his head - it's not exactly an image I associate with, but I recognize its depth and ideological resonance.

J:

When art refers to philosophical and ideological thought beyond itself, it necessarily takes on extra layers of meaning that whimsical, sardonic post-Modernist work simply does not have. *Sensation* is all about the body, the flesh, nerve endings. And in the end, that amounts to very little.

S:

For man is but dust, and unto dust he will return.

J:

No no, old man, I'm not with you there. Man thrusts forward, moves on to new planes of creativity. The individual dies, but his creations live on.

S:

How admirably anthropocentric of you. Instead of Socialist Man, you admire Creative Man, wielding a paintbrush above his head!

J:

I admire creative man in all his intellectual glory, but not the ants swarming around him.

S:

It's hard to see how, in our relativistic and unideological age, we can ever regain a sense of depth in our artistic creations. I suppose that's what post-Modernism is all about: a grand celebration of nothing; of ignorance. But tell me, what were the guiding principles of Modernism? Have they been lost? What does Modernism have to say to anyone now?

J:

Modernism was art for industrial, technological society. It was an attempt to get back to the inner consciousness of man and away from representation, which was becoming increasingly dominated by photography. Its aim was to translate the vigour and energy of industrial life into painting and sculpture - as well as other forms, like literature. It was not afraid of new forms, particularly non-representational ones.

Modernism has always had an elitist and politically incorrect element to it: just look at the founding fathers, such as Yeats, Pound and Eliot, not to mention Lewis, Pirandello, Marinetti, Céline, Ortega y Gasset, and many others. It has never totally associated itself with liberal humanist values or conceptual egalitarianism, which is why liberalism has never swallowed Modernism completely. Of course there was mass popular hostility to Modernism as well. But then one of Modernism's greatest exponents, Wyndham Lewis, said the vast bulk of

humanity was mentally worthless anyway, so it simply didn't matter if they did not comprehend it, as it was not for them.

S:

A bit harsh, I think, but I see what he's saying, in the sense that art does not *have* to be popular. Didn't you once tell me that Lewis was one of the few truly great British artistic individualists this century, who almost single-handedly invented an art form?

J:

Yes, Vorticism, which was wholly original. Lewis was painting abstract art almost before anyone else. An interesting thing about him is that he predicted Modernism's demise. In the early 'fifties, in his *The Demon of Progress in the Arts*, he said Modernism was coming to an end, and was increasingly repetitive. And he's been proved essentially correct.

You should also note the mismatch between liberal humanism and some of the art we saw today, which is *post*-Modernist. Liberal humanist values are sentimental, soft-edged, at their core; but the ugly, rebarbative element in *Sensation* was playing with libertarian ideas of freedom of expression which are in fact *illiberal*. By which I mean that liberalism has created a space which many artists fill almost by abusing that freedom of expression, taking it as a licence to show decapitated corpses, genitalia in various states of mutilation or distortion, blood and entrails, decaying flesh. So, in a way, many of the artists we've seen are ranting and screaming at liberalism itself.

S:

But the concepts themselves are tired, having been explored to death in the 1960s and before. When the concepts get tired, conceptual art gets boring.

J:

Yes, and if they were to tie their essentially illiberal art to more extreme political ideas, such as those from the right or from occultism, to take two examples, their state grants would dry up

overnight. *Sensation* is offensive, but only at the level of sensation itself, not the level of ideology. And that is something liberalism can tolerate.

S:

A blasphemous *Last Supper* was there, as I mentioned earlier.

J:

But most people passed it by without a blink, as it was one of the more moderate pieces.

S:

In Australia recently, Christians, as well as Muslims and Jews, managed to close down a whole exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, because the artist - Serrano - was showing a foul photograph depicting a crucifix immersed in urine. The protests took everyone by surprise: no one expected there to be such strength of feeling. A young man damaged the photo in protest, before the closure. Pity that doesn't happen here, to show that there are limits to what's acceptable. If artists can abuse the public, the public should be able to abuse them, even to the point of putting them out of business. Now that would be a form of populism I could handle. If I'd had a hammer I would have smashed the blasphemous *Last Supper*.

J:

And you would have been downed by five guards, and I would have dissociated myself from you.

S:

I knew I could count on you.

J:

Any time.

S:

Why aren't feminists getting up in arms about some of the pornography we saw at *Sensation*?

J:

Well, the direct action feminists seem to have come and gone. They really had their heyday in the '80s with the influence of Andrea Dworkin and Valerie Solanas. Solanas was the one who shot Andy Warhol. At the time she belonged to SCUM, the Society for Cutting up Men. She blamed Warhol for ruining her life and shot him, and Warhol (who was bisexual, or sexually ambiguous anyway, if not asexual), true to narcissistic form, made large silk screens of his wounded stomach. 'I've been shot, I'm a martyr for my art!' Solanas, last seen in dungarees, seems to have gone down the memory hole.

An interesting thing is the small number of people who have flirted with conceptually authoritarian art, such as Ian Hamilton Finlay who was exhibited in the ICA a while ago, and was denounced by several European politicians. Finlay is obsessed with power and the use power has always made of art. He is interested in the way, for instance, revolutions have influenced art, and his ICA show was on the French Revolution. His attitude toward authoritarianism is equivocal. I think he actually had a European grant withdrawn in the 1980s. His art takes images similar to some of those we saw in *Sensation*, and immediately invests them with an extra depth of meaning by putting them in an ideological and historical context. He also made some Runic sculptures using ancient but politically explosive symbols like the swastika. Various German politicians took great umbrage against that, for obvious reasons.

S:

What effect do you think electronic technology is going to have on art? If I recall, apart from the video of Mona Hatoum's intestines, the show we've just seen had little in the way of electronics. Certainly there was no computer art. But then are computers a good thing for the development of art?

J:

There was indeed a certain primitivism in *Sensation*. But I don't mind that so much, because the artist must always come before the instrument. Look at television, which could be an extraordinary art form - it should be total art, sound, imagery, movement - and yet look how poor most television is. I suppose that in the right hands cyber-art could also be extraordinary, but I doubt whether any minds currently at work, and which could make something aesthetic out of cybertechnology, are even interested in it.

S:

Perhaps, but I have my doubts about cybertechnology, television, even cinema to some degree. I mean, they simply lend themselves to naturalism, as media. They demand an aesthetic of movement, action, colour, excitement. Now, great art can contain all of that in abundance, but it's not of the *essence* of art. Art is primarily symbolic, I would say, so I tend to think you need more static media, such as the traditional ones.

J:

That's a little regressive, my dear Thomas. The lesson of Modernism is to grasp the new and to make something of it. All that concerns me is that the people in control of television, cinema, and the emerging cyber-art, have sub-standard intellects, are commercially minded, steeped in the vulgar, and so unable to transcend crass materiality.

S:

So where do you see art going in the future?

J:

I think it will go two ways. Post-Modernism will die a relatively quick death in the next ten or fifteen years, being as it is the fag-end of an already moribund Modernism. There may be periodic attempts to revive movements that are so old they look new. But the main currents, I think, will involve on the one hand extreme individualism -

S:

To go with an individualistic age.

J:

- and on the other hand a certain return to the academic tradition, and more representational forms. Several artists who have been ignored, or not thought highly of, or even 'demonised', may see their reputations revive in the next century.

S:

Is there anyone you have in mind?

J:

I think Dali, especially late Dali, and Arno Breker will see their fortunes rise.

S:

But Dali's never been outside the mainstream, his reputation is assured.

J:

No, but he's not seen in a correct context. Dali is both within and outside Modernism. He returns to a totally individualistic and personal kind of Catholicism late in his career, which is on the whole not liked by modern critics. But I think he may well come to be seen as a bridge between something that was before Modernism and something that will come after it. Breker may take a hundred years for his reputation to be secured, enough time for him to be dissociated from Nazism. Many critics regard him as the greatest exponent of Classicism this century, though they don't make a noise about it.

S:

I don't think we're going to last a hundred years, old chap.

J:

I'm including the fifty-odd years that have already passed. In any case I don't follow you in your apocalyptic musings. Another artist I'd like to mention is Ernst Fuchs, a disciple of Breker, though Jewish.

S:

Curious.

J:

Fuchs founded a school called Fantastic Realism after the Second World War, in Vienna. He draws on both Old Testament and Greek mythology.

S:

The former is not mythology, my dear Frederick.

J:

In your eyes, but in any case you know what I mean. Fuchs is a representational painter, who in some ways combines Dali's detail and fantasism with Breker's classical allusions and monumental scenes. Fantastic Realism is on the edges of both Modernism and Surrealism.

S:

But you regard Modernism and not Surrealism as the dominant force in twentieth-century art.

J:

Modernism is the art of the twentieth century, there can be no doubt about that. But this century is coming to an end. And so has Modernism.

S:

But Modernism does embrace a wide variety of forms, including Surrealism.

J:

Sure. Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Hyper-realism, Futurism, Vorticism, Constructivism...

S:

Enough! Too many isms! But it seems to me they are all non-realisms - oops, another ism - and each is non-representational in its own way. But tell me, who in your opinion was the great harbinger of Modernism, the person or movement who really made it all possible? I mean in art rather than literature.

J:

That's difficult, but in British art I would say Blake. But he is not really part of the great European tradition, as his art is so personal, so individualistic, based on his own occultistic, mystical vision. The thing I didn't like about *Sensation* is its *a priori* unoriginality, as it were. I mean, when Blake went to the canvas, he knew what vision he wanted to depict, but he changed it in all sorts of ways; at least that is my understanding of him. But when Damien Hirst decides to cut up a shark and stick it in formaldehyde, *that's it*. It's just a concept. There's no sense of his beginning with a creative moment and then taking it further, twisting it, heightening it - there's no real vision, no development, no moulding.

S:

Mona Hatoum has a vision.

J:

Of her gastro-intestinal tract.

S:

Yes.

J:

It's a 'concept', and it's amusing, and that's the end.

S:

What about the Continent? Who is the great precursor of Modernism?

J:

That's hard to say. There's always a national element in Modernism: Futurism is Italian, Surrealism French, Expressionism German, Vorticism British...

S:

Wouldn't you say post-Impressionism is the harbinger of Modernism?

J:

To an extent, along with the Symbolists and Fauves. In some way it might be thought that pre-Modernism is found in certain kinds of hallucinatory and revelatory art, especially of a religious kind. One thinks of Bosch, Brueghel, Huys, Gerard David, Grünewald -- a tradition of the grotesque, the bizarre, the fantastic. And of course you have such types as Munch and Beardsley, the latter being an excellent draughtsman; whereas the loss of the line, of linearity and draughtsmanship, was all too painfully apparent in *Sensation*.

S:

Perhaps that's one thing we'll see in the future, a return to draughtsmanship, as well as craftsmanship in general. Just as there's been something of a return to tonality in music and narrative in fiction.

J:

This is part of the idea of a return to 'academicism', as I mentioned earlier. But a lot of twentieth-century academic art is virtually worthless because of its lack of passion and energy. What I hope is that the new academicism will absorb some of the energy of Modernism, while building on representationality, spirituality and ideology.

S:

I think that might be the triumph of hope over reality. I would like to think you're right, but it's easy to fall into the trap of making predictions which are no more than embodiments of one's hopes.

J:

True, but then we cannot know how things will develop.

S:

But what you're saying is that we may go forward to the past.

J:

Or back to the future.

Chapter 6

SPEAK NOW OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PC

Location: a coach bound for Edinburgh

Samuel:

So, do you think we're going to get this book of ours published?

Jonathan:

Not with something as politically incorrect as this... What we need is a chapter on political correctness so the prospective publishers are left in no doubt that they shouldn't publish this book!

S:

A bit pessimistic, old chap! They need to see how fresh, vigorous and refreshingly original this book is! Look at what we've covered - sex, serial murder, art, Europe, politics,conspiracies...

J:

I see you're consulting a little notebook. We don't want to give the publishers the idea that this is all pre-scripted, you know.

S:

We haven't talked about my favourite person, President Clinton.

J:

Is that what your notebook tells you? All right, then, let's hear what you think of him, bearing in mind that this is all completely spontaneous.

S:

Now I'm tensing up. See what you've done?

J:

You're so tense, old man - you should smoke some pot. Like Bubba himself, who as we all know smoked pot but never inhaled.

S:

You know, PC is such a bizarre phenomenon. I mean, the things you can talk about and the things you can't talk about. Don't you think Big Brother makes it up as he goes along? Remember you were saying a while ago that in the nineteenth century you could talk about race -

J:

Yes, you could talk about race, eugenics/dysgenics, for instance. You could try to relate biology to human behaviour and character. Now, that massive book *Race* by Prof. John Baker, which was brought out by Oxford University Press twenty-five years ago, has to be reprinted by some publisher in the Deep South of America nobody's ever heard of.

S:

But what you *couldn't* talk about last century, at least in polite company, was sex.

J:

Yes, that's been one of the big reversals - sex and race. Now talk of race is impossible in polite discourse, whether what you say is cultured and intelligent or stupid and bigoted - it doesn't matter.

S:

But you can talk about sex until you are blue in the face.

J:

Or if you're Stephen Milligan, you can perform it until you're blue in the face.

S:

You're sailing close to the wind, old boy.

J:

Hold your PC, my dear Samuel. In modern polite society you can speculate out loud about whether a transsexual is a frustrated cross-dresser with proto-lesbian tendencies, or whether he's

actually a homosexual pathic who is so heterosexual in orientation he wants to become a woman, so he can be rogered properly.

S:

That's what I was thinking.

J:

Your sarcasm does not escape me. In 1889, to wonder about such things in mainstream discourse, subtle and nuanced as they were, would have been regarded as 'off'. Talk about normal marital sex would have been taboo as well. Now it's OK to discuss whether a man in a dress can keep his old penis with his new vagina or not. Or maybe have the penis cut off and stuck on his forehead.

S:

Can he have them both?

J:

There are, allegedly, some that do. So they can have sex with themselves.

S:

Hermaphrodites, I think you mean.

J:

Yes.

S:

Some insects are like that, I believe.

J:

Maybe there's a subconscious attempt on the part of many people, at the end of the millennium, to revert to the lowest forms of life, behaving like insects and amoebae, reproducing asexually, pleasuring themselves in their multimedia sex-cocoons, like Japanese newly-weds.

S:

I fear we're getting side-tracked, and becoming increasingly incomprehensible.

J:

Speak for yourself, my dear Samuel. My remarks are always crystalline in their clarity.

S:

The point is, I think, that it's OK to talk about sex because it's not a threat to anyone. Or at least not a threat to the existing social order.

J:

It's a threat to some people, who get very worked up over the fact that it's everywhere you look, that we're bombarded with quasi-pornographic images every minute of the day. It's noticeable that many liberal-minded people of the 1960s are more conservative about this than they once were. Why? Because they're in their middle age and they've got children.

S:

And they're worried about their being exposed to sexual imagery which is more explicit than anything that has ever been. Mind you, I don't detect all that much pulling back on the part of the flower-children-turned-television-producers. There's a mild worry, that's all. But discussion of sexuality is not seen to be a threat to the established order in the way that talk of cultural identity, racial identity, religious identity are. They are just too sensitive as issues. And yet I would say that liberals are quite wrong in the sense that explicit sexuality of the sort paraded everywhere these days *is* a threat to society, even more insidious than the other issues. It eats away at the social order, even if that order is avowedly liberal, as ours is. In the end society will be destroyed by it, since all traditional bonds, such as family, are wrecked by sexual permissiveness. Maybe liberals know it, maybe they don't, but they'll see the final result eventually, just as they should be able to see our descent into barbarism right now, with spiralling divorce, abortion, child abuse, pornography, domestic violence, and so on. *No* society can survive such a cancer.

J:

My dear boy, ‘barbarism’ as you put it - primitivism, as I prefer to call it - has its positive side - often an extreme traditionalism that is far less decadent than contemporary *mores*. But it’s the obsessiveness with which sexual issues are discussed nowadays that I find interesting. Look at the intensity with which Bill Clinton’s sexual misbehaviour is pored over, while his financial and other crimes barely get a mention, outside the fringe media.

S:

There’s Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, but then he stands out like a dog’s hind leg, since his colleagues barely touch the more important issues surrounding Billy Boy. Clinton has spent decades getting away with every felony or misdemeanour he’s ever committed, sexual or not. But his end may be near...

J:

This is the man who hates smoking, and yet when the Paula Jones harassment case collapsed he lit up a big cigar in Bongo Bongo Land, or wherever he was, and played the drums!

S:

With his secretary under the table, giving him a...

J:

Yes, I get the picture. “Hey Hillary, hey there darlin’, fetch me them budget papers while...oh, Jessie-Mae, oh, don’t stop, oh Hillary, can you check whether...oh Jessie-Mae, yeah, I like it like that, you’re fantastic, babes...*your kneepads, darlin’...OJ...balance mah budget...hell of a way to eat a tortilla...mmmmmm....*”

S:

“Hey Tipper, would ya like to see the text of mah speech on the deficit, or would you like to have a good look at *this!*”

J:

The guy's uncontrollable.

S:

Yet everyone knows the name Gennifer Flowers, but few people can name all of Billy Boy's corrupt chums in Arkansas who have gone to the wall to save his presidency.

J:

And who cares, because he's come to resemble so many of his electors in terms of sexual perversion and fiscal dishonesty that a vote against him is a vote against themselves, and nobody likes to vote against themselves!

S:

Everyone knows what he's like, and no one cares, partly because they're all so disillusioned.

J:

Bob Dole ran against Clinton with no real policies, but at least he had a tiny whiff of possible integrity about him...

S:

I would stress the 'possible'. But he fell off the platform...

J:

Yes, and he's deaf, and kept going on, "I was crippled in the war, but hell I ain't bitter. Vote for me, you bastards."

S:

You shouldn't say 'cripple'. What about disability rights?

J:

I don't give a damn about disabled rights! I don't care a bit about twisted runts and the like. You're far more pro-cripple than I am, old man. I'm totally merciless.

S:

Well, I'm interested in people's disabilities, and believe people should be helped if they need it, but I don't want other people's handicaps thrust in my face.

J:

Absolutely. Particularly if they haven't had a wash in a couple of days. The fact is, I do not go all gooey-eyed when the Elephant Man turns up on my doorstep.

S:

Does that happen often?

J:

Fortunately not! If it did, I'd say to him, "Just wear a sheet, you suppurating bastard!"

S:

Political correctness has brought us to the point where you can talk about anything trivial until the cows come home, but if it's serious, potentially divisive, ideological, then no, sweep it under the carpet.

J:

Well, we've managed to sweep a few things back from under the carpet in our conversations.

S:

Yes, we've talked about sex, mass murder...

J:

Not exactly trivial.

S:

No. And we've talked about Nietzsche --

J:

And the future of European politics.

S:

Ideas of the end of the world.

J:

Apocalypse-mongering, you mean?

S:

Not always mongering, I don't think.

J:

Urban folklore, conspiracy theories...

S:

Banned literature.

J:

The question of censorship in a liberal society.

S:

These things are just not talked about seriously in the mainstream press and other media.

Fortean Times has become a joke, as we discussed in an earlier dialogue. The mainstream media won't take any of these issues seriously. There are endless *Guardian* colour spreads on 'Is The End of the World Nigh? We Visit an Obscure Japanese Sect to Find Out' ...

J:

But what they're really interested in is Gazza and Ginger Spice!

S:

You have injected some more soon-to-be-meaningless references in what is supposed to be a timeless piece of literature by us.

J:

I think ‘literature’ is a bit strong, Sam. In our consumer-driven, throw-away McDonalds society, I feel it a bounden duty to fill our musings with the detritus of modern culture. Let our work be as ephemeral as the mental landscapes of the people who are likely to read it.

S:

Well then, if it’s ephemera you’re after, let’s throw in Clinton’s rogering...

J:

Did you know Ginger Spice was a topless Turkish dancer?

S:

I didn’t know she was Turkish. My, you seem to be obsessed with ol’ Cross Eyes.

J:

She’s not Turkish, old man! But I didn’t know she was cross-eyed.

S:

But then who cares. I mean, I did know about the topless dancing, but I learned that before I gave up watching TV.

J:

We’re calling our magnum opus *Apocalypse TV* and now you tell me you’ve stopped watching TV!?

S:

Well, it’s not all bad news: I’m still watching for the Apocalypse.

J:

I’ve never even *had* a television.

S:

So who are you to talk? The antediluvianism of both of us is beginning to show as we limp towards the end of this massive enterprise.

J:

You may limp - I *stride* with the sure-footed confidence of --

S:

Spare me.

J:

Perhaps we have to face the fact that we've been talking about things we know very little about.

S:

Just like the mainstream media!

J:

Anyway, you watched television for a good twenty years before you gave it up - allegedly.

S:

I have. And I did, so I'm well placed to comment upon matters of social import that I have garnered information about from my many wasted hours in front of what used to be called the Boob Tube.

J:

Television by its very nature reduces everything to two-dimensional flatness, both literally and figuratively. It is the ultimate egalitarian medium for our officially equal-rights society. When you look at the technical resources it has, able to combine music, word and moving image, you could almost imagine it as the total art form. But of course its very totality makes it available to everyone, with different people contributing different skills or appreciating dissimilar aspects of the medium. And since it is an expensive medium its content has to be reduced to the lowest common denominator so as to make it pay. Maybe 2% of everything that's ever been broadcast will be the sort of thing anyone would want to watch a century from now.

S:

It's the three Ss: sex, sport and shopping. That's what makes television, and the whole of modern consumer society, go round.

J:

Don't mention that play with the rude title!

S:

You mean *Shopping and F***ing*?

J:

Why could I see that coming...

S:

A fine piece of work, I am led to believe, not that I have any intention of verifying this first-hand.

J:

I detect a note of bitter irony in your voice...

S:

Well, there's the West End for you.

J:

The point about PC, Sam, if we can drag the discussion back to a more intellectually robust posture --

S:

Don't be so *a priori*.

J:

You know me, I'm just in the moment, as always. Anyway, political correctness has two sides to it. One is a serious attempt to reconstruct language and prevent discourse which is elitist in character and inegalitarian in scope, on matters primarily of race and sexuality. These are key

matters for this society. They're not the most important matters in every respect but they are central to much modern discussion. Linked to that is endless dross about obesity, and the way you treat animals, renaming gingerbread men gingerbread persons or shapes, getting rid of golliwogs on jars of marmalade, and so on.

S:

And censoring Enid Blyton because it's making fun of disabled people to have a character called Big Ears, or whatever.

J:

We had a boy with big ears at our school, and we used to drag him round the playground and beat him up.

S:

Oh well then, we must make sure our prospective editor reads about that! Childhood brutality in its raw nakedness - *Lord of the Flies* relived.

J:

I'm in good company. Jack Straw, the current Home Secretary, allegedly admitted to being a bully, holding boys down and urinating on them and kicking them in the head.

S:

If that's wrong we may have committed libel.

J:

What I meant to say is that *some have said that they believe, from something they read or heard, that perhaps Jack Straw may have been induced, in his youth, to behave in what we might now call a non-Blairite manner...*

S:

That's better.

J:

It's interesting to see what happens to bullies. Some become Home Secretary, others end up begging in the streets!

S:

At what point does political correctness cease being a joke and start being a danger?

J:

When it leads to discriminatory legislation - quotas, zones, one form of prejudice replacing another. What the partisans of such discrimination call 'justice'. In other words, when it leads to active discrimination against people who are male, white, European, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied, of normal size...in other words, Mr. Normal.

S:

And what about Mrs. Normal? A wife who stays at home looking after her children, doesn't want to go out to work, supports her husband, sees herself as having a well defined role within the home. The vast majority of women, that is, despite all the propaganda to the contrary.

J:

Indeed. So when it becomes active prejudice against such people, and contrary to such people's prejudices - because everyone is prejudiced against everyone else - we have what I would call a dangerous, anti-social situation.

S:

But after all, *is* there such a thing as normalcy? The liberal elite loves to tell us we're all abnormal in our own way, we're all freaks, there *is* no paradigmatic lifestyle.

J:

I should point out, of course, that liberalism is a very broad church and has many different forms, so when you or I talk about liberalism or 'the liberal elite' we are only talking in generalities.

S:

Of course, but that makes me wonder whether we are giving liberals a ‘fair go’, as they say.

J:

Well, the Marquis de Sade didn’t feel constrained to counterpoise his extreme views with a presentation of sexual normality.

S:

But he wasn’t published for two hundred years.

J:

Maybe that will be our fate.

S:

Aren’t we a living example of the triumph of liberalism? The fact that we are able to have discussions like the ones we’ve had, in obscure locations, talking about strange ideas in a forthright and challenging way, is a testament to the breadth of the church that is liberalism.

J:

Hold on, let’s see if we’re published first. They can tolerate Brett Easton Ellis writing about people cutting up women on their ironing boards prior to attending a *chic* Manhattan party; but whether they’ll choke on our discourse as they read the typescript over their Cornflakes, well, who knows?

S:

I think they’ll find us immensely stimulating, thought-provoking and different.

J:

We could always run a libertarian line: the most shocking thing of all is what you have not yet been shocked by. It is interesting to note that the media are flirting with the idea that politically incorrect views in the sexual area might be permitted, because they need something to shock people with. What can shock people now? Is it Satanism, hard-core pornography, paedophilia,

extreme right-wing politics, the justification of criminality? - even though there is so much hero worship of criminals in the fictional media, so it has lost its *frisson* to some degree.

S:

As far as sexuality goes, you once talked about the walrus as symbol of political incorrectness.

J:

Yes, I've always enjoyed Nature programmes because they present the earthy, biological and evolutionary side of life, especially when you have a lisping David Attenborough whispering:

'And here we see the walrus males squaring off against each other...the cows are lined up on the foreshore [UUUGH...GLUG-GLUG-GLUG...UUGGGHHHHH...WWWAAHHH-THOM, BURP, THOM-THRIBBLE-RRRRRRRR]...the bulls smash their heads into each other while the cows tremble with delight and reveal their private parts to the victor, who moves across the sand to mount the cows one by one.'

S:

Sounds like backstage after a heavy metal concert.

J:

Oh?

S:

Er, I've read about it. Anyway, the walrus certainly is politically incorrect in every way: fat, male, ugly, maintains a harem, the women are passive spectators at an orgy of male violence...but while Attenborough programmes are everywhere, could you show on BBC a film about medieval knights jousting over a fair maiden? No, that would be politically incorrect and sexist.

J:

Unless it were an ‘accepted part of the canon’, like, say, *Ivanhoe*, and could be treated as basically fictional. Did you know Tony Blair declared *Ivanhoe* to be his favourite novel of all time?

S:

Well, I’ve no doubt he is an immensely well-read man.

J:

And would enjoy reading about knights jousting over fair maidens given that he has to look at Cherie over the breakfast table every morning.

S:

My dear Jonathan, do we want to put that in?

J:

That’s *just* the sort of thing we should put in. Stop worrying about what editors will think: the only way we’ll have a chance is if we make this book the moral equivalent of heroin.

S:

Sorry?

J:

I mean dangerous and addictive. Which reminds me that another thing everyone can talk about which was once taboo is drugs. It’s an odd area, since political correctness doesn’t have a lot to say about it. Although the politically incorrect left-wing magazine *Living Marxism*, now called

LM --

S:

Because it’s too embarrassed to say what it is.

J:

Yes, that's right! But the point is that *LM* talks about a general prevailing culture of emotional correctness in relation to matters such as drug usage. By the way, did you know that the RCP, the Revolutionary Communist Party which is behind *LM*, favours horizontal recruitment?

S:

Surely not.

J:

You're thinking, 'My chance has come'.

S:

I think you've bought into an urban myth.

J:

Well, I knew a woman who was in RCP and she was a bit like that.

S:

I don't think 'a bit like that' would stand up in court.

J:

She offered me her body but I had to turn her down thinking it could be diseased. She would begin with a discussion of Engels's *Anti-Dühring* and end by getting down to it, or wanting to in my case. Engels, of course, attacked the anti-Semitic basis of Dühring's anti-socialism.

S:

Too many antis for me, old man. But anti-Semitism is a curious element within PC, or rather opposition to it. Anti-Semitism is politically incorrect but doesn't figure in discussion as much as racism in general. And yet it should be more of a subject of discussion; very little is ever said about the anti-Semitism of some of the father figures - in a very broad sense - of the modern liberal state, such as Freud and Marx.

J:

Marx's writing is littered with anti-Semitic references - even though he himself was Jewish, albeit from a Lutheran convert family - as well as anti-homosexual and racist references: he described the socialist Lassalle as a thick-lipped Negroid Jew who was probably homosexual!

S:

Poor Lassalle, he had everything wrong with him as far as Marx was concerned!

J:

Marx's anti-homosexuality was bound up with his Jewishness, in my opinion, Jews being in general anti-homosexual because of their belief in the perpetuation of their race. It's not just a crime against religion for orthodox Jews, but it's a form of race crime for all Jews.

S:

And Marx was not too partial to Slavs, was he?

J:

No, at times he comes close to adopting a pan-German nationalism. Indeed nationalism has always been a difficult issue on the left; witness the debate over 'socialism in one country' during Stalin's time. But where you have nationalism, so you have the seeds of ethnic pride and alleged racial prejudice.

S:

Well, yes, but the left is, theoretically and in practice, overwhelmingly committed to globalism and full of hatred for nationalism, despite the various debates within its camp. But getting back to PC, the way I see it is that it's absolutely impossible to take political incorrectness out of contemporary debate. At a lower level, I recently heard about a new cinematic vogue, so-called 'gross-out' movies, in which everyone is made fun of: women, gays, the disabled...

J:

Blacks? Jews?

S:

I'll tell you when I see one.

J:

Political correctness really is premised on a single objective - to restrict radical right-wing ideas.

There has also been a more extreme but less successful version of PC - Critical Race Theory. It's one step beyond PC, and aims at banning all texts containing generic references to classes of human beings, whether racial, sexual, religious, political, whatever. But 'mainstream' PC intellectuals want nothing to do with it. After all, without referring to groups of people as having common qualities, all meaningful discourse becomes impossible.

S:

You could still talk about the weather.

J:

But you couldn't say, 'The British love to moan about the weather', because that would be generic, and so banned.

S:

What about, 'All advocates of Critical Race Theory are intelligent people'?

J:

I should think they'd allow that one.

S:

But then if CRT is absurd, maybe it's a *reductio ad absurdum* of PC altogether? After all, where do you draw the line between what generic statements can and can't be made? If it's politically incorrect to say, 'Jews have a knack for business', is it OK to say, 'The English are lazy'?

J:

I hope you mean that second one as an example of a typical falsehood.

S:

Of course, though I've observed how little the chattering classes worry about trashing Englishness and everything English.

J:

The fact is that books by the most impeccably credentialed liberals are full of statements which say Russians are like this, or Americans like that, or women are like this, or 'gays' are like that. Classification cannot be done without. Some generic statements will be true, others false, but we have to make them otherwise we can't engage in a simple conversation.

S:

Note how, when it comes to something like football hooliganism, the talking heads are very happy to say, 'The English are notorious for this', or whatever. Anything working class, I've noticed, and the stereotypes come flying, even on Radio 4.

J:

Supporters of PC have no problem with talking about Dead White Males, such as Shakespeare, Milton and Dickens. But suppose someone started talking about black intellectuals as Dead Black Failures, like C.L.R. James, Booker T. Washington, Ralph Ellison, the same people would jump up and down. James is interesting because he was a Trotskyist and a racialist, one of the earliest advocates of Black Power.

S:

You know, I'm wondering just where we are with political correctness. In some respects it seems to be dying out, retreating into little pockets full of die-hards; but it doesn't take much for the PC wagon to start rolling again, say when it comes to talk about gay rights, or race, or the role of women.

J:

It is more fashionable now to lash out at some of the extremes to which PC can go. For instance, the Left likes to kick up a fuss about attempts to ban the word ‘manager’ - which, etymologically, has nothing to do with ‘man’ anyway - or gingerbread men, or trivial things like that, because they see it as diverting people’s attention from ‘the cause’, i.e. the underlying socio-economic inequality of society. They think it trivializes the whole debate, which of course it does; not that I myself believe in equality of any sort, other than the equality of True Genius...

S:

Are you in that lofty class?

J:

Naturally! But what I was saying is that the non-shallow parts of the Left are more worried about discrimination against women than about whether it’s all right to talk about gingerbread men or chairmen. As a distinguished academic of many years’ standing yourself, I assume that at some time in your long career you have had to sign a form saying, ‘I, Dr. Samuel Meyer, do solemnly swear that I will never discriminate against anyone on the grounds of sex, race, political belief, religious affiliation, intelligence, literacy, height, weight, eye colour...’

S:

But what if one has done all of the above?

J:

Then you must cast it from your mind, exercise self-censorship - after you have confessed your ‘sins’ and engaged in what Communists call ‘self-criticism’.

S:

I would have to debase myself.

J:

Yes, wallow in your own illiberal filth.

S:

It is all hypothetical, of course.

J:

Naturally.

S:

I do have a problem, though, with the idea of not discriminating against students who are, shall we say, not very smart.

J:

That might be *just about* possible, but you would be heading into dangerous waters and flirting with ideas of genetic determinism that could lead to ‘genocide’; so you would have to curb your ways. Crimestop, old man. Don’t even *think* about it.

S:

But what if an intellectually challenged student were to come knocking? One might become suddenly bored and not want to talk to them. That would be a form of discrimination.

J:

Unless they were female, bleached blonde, and scantily clad. In which case you would invite them in for a long discussion about Hegel, would you not?

S:

Absolutely not. I would banish them from my office, saying ‘Out, brazen hussy!’

J:

So you wouldn’t attach them to your desk with handcuffs.

S:

No, I leave that to presidents of the United States.

J:

What was that famous case in Australia about the master of a college?

S:

Yes, the master of a college at the University of Melbourne, who was accused by two female students of fondling them, and had to resign in disgrace even though he was not convicted. One of Australia's leading feminist authors wrote a book which was sympathetic to his plight and bemoaned the fact that feminism had 'come to this'. There was a huge outcry from her 'sisters', who accused her of betraying the cause. And recently she was viciously attacked by Radical Feminists in a poisonous collection of pseudo-academic essays. Yet she was right at the vanguard of the wimmin's movement in Australia.

J:

Actually, I have *some* sympathy for these post-feminist women who are coming to see through some of the nonsense of their movement; but not much. Really, this woman should not have put herself in her invidious position in the first place. She should have bled and bred and kept house for her man, which is what women are for. Not that I'm speaking from a sexist or 'reactionary' position, of course.

S:

I'm stunned into silence...I do fear, old man, that people reading this will indeed accuse you of sexism.

J:

I shall defend myself against all accusers.

S:

Even the term 'sexual politics' is a politically correct term. As if sex was really a matter of power rather than morality.

J:

Yes, PC is an attempt both to construct thought and to construct the parameters within which thought occurs. It's a total intellectual package. The idea that there was such a thing as 'sexual

politics' did not even exist before about 1900. The very term 'heterosexual' - which all heterosexuals now use about themselves - is a created term.

S:

Created for a political purpose, as was the term 'teenager', which was invented as a means of 'giving voice' to an allegedly ignored section of society; or rather, an ignored section of the market for sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

J:

This is a very interesting area because, prior to this century the term 'homosexual' didn't exist. There was a range of terms: Zoophyte, Urnate, Uranian, Homo-sexual (with a hyphen), Invert, the Third Sex of Edward Carpenter. On the rare occasions the subject was even talked about in public, people didn't even have the terminology to describe it as something 'normal' or accepted. When Michel Foucault - who died of AIDS from buggering Tunisian boys - wrote his famous three-volume *History of Sexuality*, he discussed the origin of such terms, and why certain terms such as 'homosexual' became accepted and others did not. The terms 'gay' and 'straight' have an interesting origin, coming from Victorian underground sexual discourse. Female prostitutes would often be described as *gay*, sometimes ironically. There's a famous cartoon from *Punch* where someone says to a prostitute, 'If you're so gay why do you look so miserable?' Everyone would have understood what that meant! And prostitutes used to describe all other women as *straight*. So the terminology has been taken over and applied to homosexuals. The gay movement has, interestingly, taken over certain vulgar and originally derisive terms and now uses them of itself, such as 'queer' and 'queen'.

S:

But that's part of the politically correct doctrine that it's all right to use degrading terminology of yourself or your 'persecuted' group, so as to disarm outsiders who can no longer use it for the purpose of abuse. Makes sense, I suppose.

J:

Note how ‘straight’ is also used by criminals of those who do not engage in criminality. Criminals are *bent*, and homosexuals used to be called bent, though not so much now. Again, this points to the deprecatory sense in which terms for homosexuals, prostitutes and other groups who have ‘come in from the cold’ were originally used.

S:

I would say the irony is lost on most of them now.

J:

Perhaps, but that link between criminality and certain forms of sexuality is rooted in the language of society, and is virtually impossible to eradicate.

S:

‘Queer’ is the word that is all the rage at the moment. To say ‘We’re queer and we’re proud’ is to glorify being abnormal, which is a fascinating phenomenon.

J:

Thirty to forty years ago the term ‘queer’ was a term of extreme abuse and you would have been regarded as grossly ‘politically incorrect’ if you said you were queer in *any* way, not just sexual. Now, although some homosexuals baulk at the use of the term, it’s pretty much accepted in that group. The black film director Spike Lee uses the term ‘niggah’ (with different spelling from the usual) in a similar way, though this has not quite caught on among American blacks outside the gangster rap ghetto.

S:

I can’t imagine Jews walking around calling each other kikes.

J:

No, not really! But I think it's a certain masochism and effeminacy that makes queers - for let us call them as they call themselves - latch onto former terms of abuse. As far as I can tell, lesbians don't engage as much in this sort of terminological self-flagellation.

S:

Maybe because there aren't as many terms of abuse for lesbians as for male homosexuals?

J:

Possibly; feminists of course would put this down to our allegedly Patriarchal Society in which men are turned on by lesbianism and off by male inversion.

S:

But it could be merely that there is far less female homosexuality than male, hence society has had less opportunity to face it and so show its disapproval by inventing disparaging terminology.

J:

A more prosaic explanation, but perhaps more likely.

S:

Part of the symbolism of political correctness, it seems to me, is the idea of universal persecution. We're all 'gay black whales', victimized and threatened with extinction.

J:

Yes, the 'victim culture' which is sometimes noted, and that has come under attack from some quarters for its nauseating tone. I remember Linda Bellos, the former Women's Officer at Hackney council. She was allegedly always going around telling people she was a black, disabled, working class, Jewish (she converted, apparently) lesbian mother. "I'm an identikit of all oppression," she declared about herself, 'I'm a patchwork quilt of all the victims on this planet.' It's a sort of secular martyrdom! Only in her case it wasn't much of a martyrdom as she

ended up a Women's Officer in Hackney on thirty thousand a year! What a great job - have Sapphic coffee mornings and do some photocopying in the afternoon.

S:

Remember that cabinet minister under Reagan? I think it was James Watt, who was energy minister or something like that. He was asked about the composition of the cabinet under Reagan and whether it was top-heavy with White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Men; to which he retorted with something like: 'Well, you know, we've got a woman, a black, two Jews and a cripple.' He lost his job. No one would even *think* of saying such a thing now, even as a joke.

J:

Some people would. I make jokes about cripples all the time!

S:

I mean among politicians.

J:

Yes, I think the ordinary man in the street finds the endless moaning about disability rights appalling, and that in reality - by which I mean society outside the BBC and the House of Commons - nothing much has changed since John Lennon used to make spastic faces into TV cameras (obviously one of the few good things about 'our John'!).

S:

I don't know. In the privacy of their own homes I suppose people make fun of everything they always made fun of - race, religion, disability - but in public it's a different story. It's probably only Northern comedians like Bernard Manning who make 1970s-style politically incorrect jokes now, and when they do they end up being excoriated in those bastions of PC, the tabloids.

J:

But you can still get Bernard Manning tapes everywhere: it's just about the only type of political incorrectness that's allowed, scurrilous, scatological, comedic, sociologically lower class. But

anything that is serious and ideological, like Chris Brand or Herrnstein and Murray on race and IQ, and you have censorship, books being withdrawn from sale, torrents of abuse from all the usual quarters, and generalized frothing at the mouth. It's harder when you have a social conservative like Thomas Sowell, who is black, and says things any white academic would be hounded out of their job for saying. He is just about tolerated, but kept on the margins. The same goes for Camille Paglia and her views on women, but her publicity seeking has given her a high profile.

S:

And she's a political lesbian, which helps. At a tenth-rate university.

J:

What's good about her is that she's so inverted - even though she likes low-cut dresses and all the rest - that she almost adopts the male position on many subjects. Sometimes she says things even the most chauvinistic man wouldn't dare say, like 'Ninety per cent of everything worthwhile in world culture has been created by white men - just accept it!' But she's freakish in modern society, even though her opinions were the norm forty or fifty years ago.

S:

The fact is that politically correct society has to have safety valves, and as long as academics like Sowell and Paglia can be labelled as freaks, or self-hating traitors to their group, or 'mavericks' (always a useful term), then they can go along doing their thing as society's licensed court jesters.

J:

It's similar, in some ways, to the Fool in English drama who is allowed to say things no one else can.

S:

So at what point does political incorrectness become no longer a laughing matter?

J:

When it is translated into political action. In fact, society seems to be inching towards the position that it is all right to have non-PC views, as long as you don't act on them. This seems to be a kind of regression to the mean, back to what liberalism classically stands for. Perhaps the sort of militant PC which has turned some ideas almost into thought crimes - you can't even *think* them - has seen its high water mark.

S:

I wouldn't be too sure. Liberalism is a velvet glove which contains an iron fist. Thought crimes are essential to liberal thinking, which like any ideology *wants* people to think a certain way, and *stigmatizes* them for not doing so.

J:

But liberals are divided over the logic of political correctness. Taken to its extreme it implies the necessity of mass censorship. If you applied it ruthlessly you would have to ban all soft pornography, all hard right-wing propaganda, a significant element of libertarian propaganda, any blatantly anti-male feminist material, much alternative comedy (such as tongue-in-cheek extreme right-wing rants which disseminate unacceptable ideas without advocating them)...where would it end? What about religious texts? What about the Talmud, which has references to Gentiles as cattle?

S:

Or the Koran, which is not exactly pro-women's lib. Or the Old Testament with its anti-homosexual strictures. Or the New Testament with its remarks on the Jews. It would be impossible! And I wonder whether this sort of censorship is what advocates of PC really want.

J:

But then what *do* they want?

S:

Control. Power.

J:

But the control has to be open-ended, existential, operating from one day to the next according to shifting principles which coincide with nothing more than instrumental self-interest.

S:

That, if true, makes PC a form of hierarchical control, a kind of ideological tyranny of the very sort liberals profess to be against!

J:

It's also a form of prejudice and bigotry, because the one thing that upsets liberals is people who are illiberal. Drop a 'homophobic' remark at a party in Islington and you'll bring forth looks of pure hate. And yet liberals say they are *against* hatred, especially of someone because of their ideas.

S:

Liberalism is supposed to be about loving everyone. Except, perhaps, those who do not love liberalism.

J:

I certainly do not love everyone. I believe in a life full of semi-cosmic hate. (Remember, I'm not a universalist!)

S:

How healthy of you, old chap! But I think you have a point when you talk about control. Liberalism is the maintenance of power by an elite who have no agenda other than their own ideological interests.

J:

That is why there are so many rifts in it, why it doesn't really hold together. For instance, it doesn't deal with the prejudices of minority groups. There was an UN survey of this country done recently which revealed that ethnic minorities, in particular Asians and blacks, had ferociously politically incorrect attitudes towards each other!

S:

That sort of thing cannot be destroyed. You simply can't wipe out the entrenched, thousand year-old views which ethnic groups have of each other. You can indoctrinate people until they're blue in the face but such prejudices won't go away and, if anything, will come back fiercer than ever after decades of repression, as we saw in the former Yugoslavia. If that pseudo-country had not been invented, as it was by the Western allies, there still would have been tension as the different groups squabbled over territory, but you would not have seen a full-scale war caused by reaction against what was in reality no more than Serbian imperialism.

That is why we need to allow the ventilation of controversial opinions, we need more discussion of so-called 'banned ideas', because if we don't there will eventually be a reaction against the liberal establishment the like of which they will never have expected.

J:

And which they won't want to publish!

LILITH BEFORE EVE

a quartet of plays

An introduction

This book contains four plays for either the theatre, radio, television or film adaptation. These plays are a direct rejoinder to Brechtian or marxist playwrights like Jim Allen, Howard Brenton, Edward Bond, David Edgar, Trevor Griffiths and Arnold Wesker. The first drama, *Lilith Before Eve*, examines Punch & Judy in a new way or in accordance with a violent dynamic. It proves capable of an Evolian explication, but actually ends up with a chthonian or matriarchal bent (*a la* Charles Maurras) in his defence of *Antigone*. Our second work, *Glock's Abattoir*, shows the necessity for courage and puts a limit on 'crying wolf' too often. It also explores folk art – after the fashion of *Grand Guignol*, marionettes, freak shows, strong men ripping apart directories, figurines, wax works, boxers, wrestling, vaudeville, glove puppets, mannequins and ventriloquism.

Likewise, the third piece under these foot-lights, *We Are Wrath's Children!*, supports the family within a revenger's codex that's worthy of John Webster – never mind Peter Brook's direction of Olivier in *Titus Andronicus*. Our final thespian offering, *Evolution X*, is a dystopian effort which is anti-totalitarian or metaphysically conservative. Re-examining L.P. Hartley's *Facial Justice* or even Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Jonathan Bowden attacks state socialism or dirigisme. In particular, his analysis bears down upon *a man alone*.

LILITH BEFORE EVE

A play

“For before Eve was Lilith” --- an old tale or its proverb, quoted by Rudyard Kipling

Dramatis Personae: These include Trog, a sadeian puppet of dubious origin; Punch, a ventriloquist (male); and Judy, his would-be lover. An unnamed female dancer performs throughout... she is stark naked.

Directions: All of this takes place in one cage or a sensory deprivation chamber. No props really figure during the piece. The action remains or has to be considered to be the words. Each of the three characters sits around an oval table with a green baize cloth on it. Trog – the ventriloquist’s puppet – wears a cover-all tribal mask around ‘its’ head, albeit with two faces at either end. This figurine comes across as de-humanised, gloved, set-aside and alone.

PART ONE

Trog: “Had she first surmised him on that bill-board or poster, and otherwise rearing up before those who have penetrated the mists? Its colours – intermingling with the texture of this livery – were either ochre and scarlet... or possibly red and yellow, depending. Do you hear? Must we interpret this zeroing in on the facts in such a way, and may Kipling be wrong when he spoke of the ‘oldest story’, namely love? Smitten she most certainly was – at least in terms of flesh’s shorn entity; as if it ricocheted like an amputation at the heart of identity. But what do I know of affirmative action – of introspection, adoration and desire? Am I just a doll (?), or, most evidently, a Canadian infraction against the circumstances of disease.”

Punch: “Describe yourself (!), O purposeless affidavit of manufactured wood.”

Trog: “You do it (instead) – when you’re the remit of my master within this Stygian bowl.”

Punch: “No you; I asked yonder form to release me from such an imponderable fate.”

Trog: “Cannot your mind detect the pointed ears behind our porcine mask? I will never be free for divers reasons, since I am inanimate: and I have come to resemble a ‘thing’ and not a person, thereby. Truly, I entertain the masque of a snake which knows nothing of its prey, and my eyes betray about their orbs the cruelty of these serpent folk.”

Punch: “You might fashion about your operation the necessity of the birch – lest I thrash you with a branch taken from the Tree of Life!”

Trog: “You mean Yggdrasill?”

Punch: “That’s right...”

Trog: “Why don’t you delineate the severity of my indifference (?), if only to fill up the cup of cruelty with lust. Do you ever doubt your right to exist?”

Punch: “Not I: and this is because personhood only delineates itself as an appetite to slaughter. Does the meanest spirit ever break out from the marrow of these bones?”

Trog: “My countenance afflicts conscience through the warrant of its disease, however.”

Punch: “Assuredly, I’m wasting my words with the onset of such pity. But – in your case – I shall adopt a charcoal sketch of the monstrous. For you happen to be a ventriloquist’s dummy which is awash with a texture of grey skin. Can your hands be

altogether furry and padded like those of a beast? Yet again, when I have occasion to think on't, are they sleek and unburdened *avec* felt padding? Both of them happen to be small and miniaturised in character – and each one exhibits what Emily Dickinson called 'a zero at the bone'. *Avaunt thee!* Your limbs or outer arms were conjoined with pins at the elbows; especially given such a wooden frame. Were you basically what Jakov Lind once described as *a man of wood*? Since your corse remains crippled, grotesque, three feet in size, cataleptic and angular in the distress of its distaff eddy. You must be aware of the fact that mind and body are connected at every level – pursuant to degeneration theory from the nineteenth century? Never mind the spirit (withal)... *quod* a physical distress betrays one's moral notion of decay – when licit to the companionship of its nethermost orb. Beauty is the ethical purpose of love's unction (in other words); while ugliness has to be a catalepsy in the spirit which portends defeat. The para-olympics then keeps its shape as a discharge for mountebanks. You alone, sirrah, can be the manufacturer of my negative side; a factor that thence betrays a silhouette which is cast out from its Victorian frame. But still, you continue to belabour or trump Quasimodo in a cracked mirror."

Trog: "Move over, footling one... you have yet to describe the force of my awakening; if only to come up successfully from underground. Do these lips o' bracken evince the distress of their leprosy?"

Punch: "Surely you're referring to what's called white leprosy? A phenomenon or discharge otherwise noted in Conan Doyle's nomenclature via *The Blanched Soldier...*"

Trog: "Thou hast said it, my masterful dot! Particularly if we are to reckon in the facticity of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ...* Let's continue to delineate my pasture forevermore; at once choosing a beheading over its entrapment in the oak. Might

the fastness of its age be indicated by the number of rings around the trunk?"

Punch: "Quite so, my devil doll: in that the sap in your veins illuminates the blood of victims as yet unborn. Yet why don't I furnish your alphabetical soup with more letters?"

PART TWO

Punch continues...: "I'm afraid that your visage incarnates a stick-insect most rare; if only to prop up the idea of a delinquent puppeteering. You have to be aware that Thunderbirds are not necessarily FAB! Similarly, your eyes swivel and radiate in their sockets – thereby connecting them to a sluice device which runs parallel to the eye. Does it eventually bore its way back into the recesses of a *papier-mâché* skull? But, in such circumstances, where is the room for any accommodated brain? Truly, you were small, midget-like, occasionally folded up on your master's lap, double or triple-jointed, as well as wearing a purple dress-suit, brown shoes, an orange dress-shirt and bow-tie. Wasn't it the exemplification of a forgotten distaste? Also, your flesh tint illustrates the grey of its rubbery modelling – i.e., one that's been held up in the doll's hospice or comes replete with its tension/sheen. Can you recall the Doll's Hospital in Reading, west Berkshire? Wherein a hundred corpses or so – all of them children's handy-meats – lay in the upstairs window of a forgotten lair... despite being higgledy-piggledy. --- What with their arms, limbs and faces coming to be intertwined in the grip of death... rather like so many diverse bodies in a charnel pit! May we ever forget your pointed ears and bright red, voluminous lips or nails (?) when painted after a clown's fashion. After all, isn't the world of carnival, circus, street theatre, improvisation, action art, vaudeville, magic, music hall, wrestling, the side-show barker's cry and a display of freaks... not sinister? Doesn't it partake of the malevolent; if only residually or in a matter of fact way? Could it relate to a mediaeval feast of fools or even the dithyramb of one's anatomy lesson? Do the worlds of Galen,

Vesalius and Professor Gunter von Hagens collide herein (?); particularly over an exhibition of flayed corpses. --- At least if we concern ourselves with a cybernaut's plastinates, by dint or virtue of original types of entertainment. Might this intone a new or amoral Kolyma (a soviet concentration camp); and what is the point of being alive if a puppet cannot enjoy Pasolini's *Salò*, in black-and-white, with the images reversed out?"

PART THREE

Judy: "I first spied him in a tabernacle of miracles – when next to the board which advertised his ventriloquist's show. Was it outside the Bellairs Playhouse in Guildford, Surrey? Anyway, I felt compulsively drawn to his example – rather like the moth that is animated by the flame within which it will be consumed. Did I circle for awhile – somewhat circumspectly – around the doors and payment booths of this theatre? Had I yet to recognise the steam turbine of my love?"

Punch: "You were in love... or swooning in ecstasy like a deluded swan!"

Judy: "Yes, yes, my ready darling... with you."

Trog (the puppet, who was sitting nearby throughout this ordeal, or on his master's lap): "Indeed, she knew the reality of adoration – a percentage which just flexes its muscles at the touch of Aphrodite's gossamer lips. All appears to be a rogue integer of meat; at once replete with a butterfly or *Papillon* that attaches itself to the calf-side of one of Francis Bacon's triptychs. Are we altogether in an abattoir of the senses; especially given those erotic and morbid tensions in Flemish art concerning the waxing or waning of the Middle ages?"

Punch: "Or we might mention the Renaissance's onset... whereby the calm onset of the classic world comes back to de-Christianise the West."

Trog: "Quite so. All truth begins and ends with the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus. Do you detect a debt of relinquishment over and above a rampart of the psyche... one that will be paid later on by Villon, Donne, Rimbaud and Verlaine? Moreover – even Lord Alfred Douglas' translation of Wilde's *Salome* from the French pertains to this. May it deal with beheading, dance, a Bacchanalian extravaganza and fantasies of fellatio *a la* Richard Strauss' opera...? In any event, you definitely love each other without kindred resource. Does one detect an evanescent sprout, thereby?"

Judy: "Might it be true, Punch, do you love your Judy... yet?"

Punch: "But where is the Policeman?"

Trog: "Or those multiple beatings – when handed out by clubs and sticks on every side – and much beloved of children down the ages. Also, whenever will we be able to find those red-and-yellow awnings down on Brighton's sands – themselves replete to a puppeteering of violence? And this was never mind the gibbet upon which Punch is to be hanged later on; the latter needs to be manufactured from good, clean wood."

Judy: "Oh, my darling pet, you will never be executed. I won't permit it!"

Trog: "Not allow, the lady says... perhaps we shall axe you instead, dearie; and what about Toby the dog?"

PART FOUR

Judy: "Have I seen him before within the semblance of such a blue light; a scenario that's merely held fast at the centre of the stage and imprisoned by a yellow beam? Nothing seems to constrain the two of them – whether parent or off-spring – as they sit at the heart of an expectant pit or inside a folly of moon-beams."

Trog: "Your love proves to be immediately livid, chaste, expectant and unpanelled in its purple. Did you think it could remain hidden when you commandeered my master's dressing-room?"

Judy: "I essentially entertained it on the off-chance – albeit with a shyness which came bred in the bone or proved to be uncertain of its witness."

Trog: "Surely you remain undecided over its role in backgammon?"

Judy: "No, assuredly; yet the escape into this star's boudoir lay before me... What with its mirror – when sequined to a rendezvous or its fluster – and it comes surrounded by those yellow lights that habituate one to grease-paint... even in a vaudeville act such as this. A few postcards transfix the glass above our gaze, and they are cast off to the side but always seem to be parented in their derangement. Do you comprehend it now?"

Trog: "Love is a two-way acrobatics within infinity; nor can we square off our relief before the semblance of any available wood. It reinterprets a trampoline upon which one twists and turns – so as to somersault beyond the witness of torture. Are you aware that love is a disease, or a hatred of surcease which runs on its voltaic energy? Like any other malady, it strikes down those who are fit to build a temple to themselves in their garden."

Punch: "You mean a folly...?"

Trog: "Possibly – for the shores of Eve's off-spring, when heaving on the beach, were replete with sharks! They basked in the sunlight."

PART FIVE

Judy: "But let's speak more about the representation of my love! Since I am afraid to see a skeleton towering over a throne of ebon marble and rising under arc-lamps in a hidden tomb. Was it really clothed in the absence of flesh; together with its unforgiven brown-bones before the velvet of its corse? By any similar interlude, did the joints crack or splay (?); that is, does one move o'er and against another in terms of an armature's rest? Even though its great, gaping, skeletal mouth seems to open and close upon a tribute of affection..."

Punch: "You've been reading those novellas from Mills & Boon again!"

Trog: "Granted: it has to be a peculiar adventure into the mastery of Love... once more and unto this breech. Yet isn't romantic literature just a species of emotional pornography for women? By any other consideration, this pin-hole camera – when replete with imagery upon a plate – has found its compartments ruptured from without. The girl loves you, confess it, Punch! Are you (in contravention) going to brandish your baton and beat her? I think not! Why don't you wise up to such a fracture o' arrested fortune? Mayhap, you think her illustration is too unsettled – particularly if drawn from a literature of the distaff side? Why then, don't you sign off against the circumstances of a scarlet coverlet?"

Punch: "Wasn't a blood red colour thrown up in so many spots against an abandoned screen? Shouldn't it encode an abstract expressionist painting by Jackson Pollack?"

Trog: "Abundantly so: this comes into being without the recesses of so much mutilation or talent. Anyway, I prefer to think of it as a rhinoceros creature *a la* Ionescu's example; and it's tied to a post of unbridled onyx. Has this indent of universal agency been tortured; or otherwise ripped to shreds before the acreage of

time? Do you hear my clarion call to its witness, thereafter? Since 'it' bears upon its rubbery hide --- or juniper skin --- the mark of the rack, stone or branding-iron. All of these sightings are buffeted forth abreast of a bedizened jewel... May this be a great constellation of fire (?); the former merely flaring away in its tournament of Greek Flame and only stopping short of declaring itself to be a fabled comet. Did the latter fail to plunge down to the sodden earth; thereby causing a maximum impact upon the loam? Hear me! Because the ground steams and bubbles with the miasma of its course; or after the evidentialism of Professor Challenger in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*."

Punch: "Yet let us look for indications of meaning or affliction, my dear boy/puppet. Is this former head – when screwed on with a bolt – little more than Grey like a turkey-cock and indicative of a double-joint at the chin, thereby? Might it rescue a manikin of our affinity... particularly when it's been severed at the neck? Subscribe a purpose to us at last – lest you should surrender to approximation or misstatement. Don't attempt to rewrite Derrida's *Prisms* within a theatre of the macabre, I beg you..."

Trog: "You have forgotten to insult my bravery before the truth! Thus, I refuse to lay siege to linguistic development; I just indicate the celerity of blood (instead) whilst brandishing a celery stalk as I do so! Can it also be the wand or batten – then being commandeered by a master of ceremonies – that enables us to go on towards Celine's 'End of the Night'? Am I my own ring-master... no matter how resultantly?"

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"Anyway, the rhinoceros creature was soon freed from bondage; if only to sprout wings and plunge deep into the heart of a flaming jewel."

Judy: "Could he have been pursuing the magician who had been tormenting him?"

Punch: "Necessarily so: in that he swoops, riffs, ramps and runs overhead – albeit now circling down on a bearded figure who wears a dark cap and cape."

Trog: "Does he flee – this candidate for Xanadu – rather like Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu and with an oriental beard twisted to the fate of its cruelty? All of it necessarily takes place within a *manga* of one's identity..."

Judy: "Yet our love shines out beyond all other such tendencies. Have you really had a chance to spy on Ligeti's *Dance of Death*? May we even be adult enough to face the expectancy of our defeat? For remember... let us never fail to enjoy a *Brief Encounter* moment with Trevor Howard through a failure to breathe or grieve – nary mind breed."

Punch: "Didn't Friedrich Nietzsche insist on the importance of genetics in his notebooks – *The Will to Power*?"

Judy: "Assuredly, dearest sprite, but I must clasp you in my open arms... devoted one. Forget your tabernacle of wood or emptiness --- you speak the truth through Trog! Let us elope from your act before the reality of this truth drug wears off. Nor need we essay anything other than the management of dwarves."

Trog: "I am a dwarf!"

Punch: "Please prevent us from becoming bogged down with 'political correctness' on behalf of the little people (herein)!"

Judy: "But they'll never put us on at the Institute for Contemporary Arts now."

Punch: "Who cares? Yet – wait a moment – won't we be able to enter those portals which once shared a space with the Chapmans' dolls?"

Judy: "You mean those mock-paedophile exhibits --- at once fist-to-fist --- or close by north west?"

Punch: "That's right! It happens to be a million miles away from Anthony Gormley's the Angel of the North."

Trog: "You mean the one that has its arms open as a gesture of protection or an absence of pride? Do you recognise such a witness statement as this if it shares only the necessity of a cracked mirror?"

Punch: "Are there divers examples of green-glass frames behind us (?); at least in terms of our costume or vestibule. See here – delinquent one – what of your human rights?"

Trog: "You utter a blasphemy, master. I refuse mortal status – since I am inhuman. Consider me to be part of an invisible group which is called *the inhumanists*. Whilst necessarily, I reject the religion of tolerance or inclusion. Can I demand that dwarf throwing be regarded as an inalienable part of a midget's freedoms? Stand up for the small or the reduced in stature, thereby. Runts of the world unite... you have nothing to lose but your hands and feet! For us, over four feet and two inches has to be considered as an exercise in body fascism! Do you recognise the inner logic of Leni Riefenstahl's or Tamara de Lempicka's aesthetics? I retain a pride in my defaced puppetry --- the uglier still; the more fascinating the outcome. Do you agree? Our creed has to be nought but the Procrustean bed... Long live a decrepit Pinocchio! Long subsist this pregnant swarm! It's a question of Quasimodo not Esmeralda! Let's champion dwarfdom! Hail death! Hail..."

PART SIX

Judy: "But don't you love me, Punch, my sweet?"

Trog: "Go on... kiss her, you fool!"

Punch: "I can't understand the conduct of any such beginnings. Might it relate to the prospects for an opera which Sir Harrison Birtwhistle undertook and that was called *Punch & Judy*? An uncertain prologue swirled around this work; it contained Punch, Judy and the baby..."

Trog: "Where is this toddler or babbler of innocence?"

Punch: "I know not. Yet any intrigue of mine has to fall before these fates; especially when it relates to the target of its suspicion. I refuse to exhibit such a nullity – even within ventriloquism – and in terms of a deluded stick-man, albeit one that's tightened at the waist. Does this embody one of those figurines in an artist's studio – whether single, double or triple-jointed at its vertices? For a sculpture like this was a macquette of no significance... at once now trembling or intruding in the dust (*a la* William Faulkner), irrespective of being neuter or strangely androgynous. Are we also under the parabola of Angela Carter here? But likewise, do those incredible desire machines of Doctor Hoffmann ripen or find a way to leap between dimensions? Is this essentially after the fashion of H.P. Lovecraft's familiar, Brown Jenkin? After all, at the centre of a statue's efficacy lies a misstatement. It has nothing more than a soul of clay – merely look at the meat attendant upon the witness of Frink, Paolozzi or Dobson, for instance! Nonetheless, do you recall that scene of transformation which was otherwise mired in the mud of Rosamund Lehmann's novel, *The Ballad and the Source* (withal)? Wherein a mad woman – a Mrs. Rochester *manqué* – felt these stones to be enclosing real bodies. They were replete with a sense of plaster. Does her aorta beat to this entreaty of magnificence; or be it congealed within a *second skin* (sic)?"

Judy: "I beg you to differ from this punishment... since hasn't the skeleton stood up within such subdued light; the former being shot through over an electric blue's intention. Again, a mysterious semblance to actuality comes upon us; wherein wolves howl their deliverance outside this latitude of stones. Do you realise that our chieftain rises above us – even when naked and shorn over the remit of so much bone? But still, a dead-man like this moves in an ungainly fashion towards its nemesis... broad-sword in hand. Is this past Odin oblivious to the fact that various boxes of jewels counteract a sombre splendour... irrespective of any sepulchral architecture? May our procession indicate, in turn, the grandiloquent sets of so many silent films... such as those of Cecil B. DeMille?"

Trog: "I grant you the locution of an amputation – no matter how apposite its loss. Nevertheless, I prefer my stock of imagery to that which you might choose to locate in the minds of men. Do you remember the radio slogan from one of Orson Welles' tourneys (?); at least as regards the serial vested in Kenneth Robeson's *Shadow*. He happened to be a vigilante – replete with gun-fire – from out of a signature tune in the nineteen thirties. Its motto was: *who knows what evil lurks in the minds of men?*"

Punch: "I recall it well – when pursuant to a lost metaphor of causation."

Trog: "Good!"

Punch: "But may it spoil our purpose yet (?) – because we are really a post-modern version of Punch and Judy. This proves to be after the example of a Gothic misadventure... as comes to be contained in the circumstances of M.R. James' ghost stories – no matter how hieratic in form! Wherupon the violence of the sea-side (or the rough-and-tumble of *Grand Guignol*) fillets itself before a curtain's closure. A blind or gingham screen (this) which cascades to the floor in order to obviate meaning..."

Trog: "No sir, Mr. Punch!"

Punch: "Take that – you wooden coin-sharp!"

Trog: "No, caitiff!"

Punch: "Oaf!"

Trog: "Poltroon!"

Punch: "Aaaah! Ooooh!"

Trog: "Delinquent tyke!"

Punch: "You have it!"

Trog: "Oh-ah!"

Punch: "Yabooo!"

Trog: "Mix it up, smelly!"

Punch: "In the immortal words of Edmund, God stand up for bastards!"

Trog: "Death is the portion of madmen..."

Punch: "Tickey boo! Boohoo!"

Trog: "Can it: Willie the weeper!"

Punch: "Fish-eater."

Trog: "Rag, tag and bob-tail too."

Punch: "Culpable spastic!"

Trog: “BBC newsreader.”

Punch: “Liberal.”

Trog: “Hog-bound furrier.”

Punch: “Dish-washer.”

Trog: “Get a dose of this... drob-head.”

Punch: “Eat claw, smiley.”

Trog: “Thwack... whack... take that!”

Punch: “What about this?”

(Note: They continue to exchange blows with their hands and sticks – rather like traditional vaudeville turns or ‘funny men’. Nor is this to mention the example of Punch & Judy knocking hell’s bells out of each other down on Blackpool’s sea-front... necessarily.)

PART SEVEN

Judy: “But what of the severance of our untold Love?”

Trog: “By whichever means do you seek to ensnare me between Scylla and Charybdis... ol’ duck?”

Punch: “Pardon? My prep school didn’t actually run to ancient greek.”

Judy: “Do not despair, sweetheart. Nothing can be lost in translation; at least in terms of one affordable ‘park & ride’ rather than the next. For – to use your imagery – the cannibalism of desire has to be faced up to before a plate-load of meat. Do you wish to digress from the essential problem that lies before us? Since the skeleton had risen from its dais or it basically came to

be ripped over its portion of a cleft palette, and ‘it’ stared down into a tunnel of darkness. May the wolf-pack howl away outside; and do tapers of fire then flicker upon these subdued stones? Are they not firmly hidden in niches; therein to reveal the diameter of their attested light?”

Punch: “But what of the rhinoceros creature – especially when it’s cast out by virtue of a multiplicity of bone?!”

Judy: “That’s right, beloved! Surely we are both adult enough to bear witness to the nature of our passion? Yet this magical dragon – within the oft semblance of a dream – soared away or far ahead, and into those ranges of purple. Did he intend to bring down his former tormentor (?); now reduced to microscopic size within the flames of a many-sided jewel. I swear to you that everything of which I speak is fact.”

Trog: “None of it bears false witness in the land of Nod?”

Judy: “Most assuredly... embrace me now, enraptured one. It is time to go beyond emotional foreplay and find solace in a touch most sure.” (She reaches out her hand).

Punch: “Don’t plague the resources of sideways-on meat! Cast me adrift, cut me off... forthwith. But, by anything the art of the mannequin holds sacred, let me go! Forget to touch me – release the balustrades! Please, I beseech you, forgo coming near.”

Trog (with a strange air about the puppet): “Ventriloquism begins in the stomach or innermost organs. It originates from Germany, you know? Yet the sound of words – when issuing from these silent lips – ultimately comes from the belly. It basically refers, in Teutonic diction, to throwing the voice from one’s innards.”

PART EIGHT

Judy (when utilised, somewhat delicately, as a voice-over): “There now began one of the most peculiar romances that the world has ever spied. For I followed the two of them (Punch and Trog) around the cosmos – i.e., from country to country and state to state. Does one hear the patter of tiny feet made of wood? Hark! Sometimes I sat out in front; at once salient to a blue tick-off; and at other moments I existed over in the wings – scared to red. While, on different occasions, I took up a distant vantage-point... as was seen or observed from the colour yellow. Maybe it incarnated some deep-seated sandstone? Here are a few pointers to their stage act or performance, by way of illustration...”

Punch: “Do tread lightly...”

Trog: “Because you step on my corns?”

Punch: “No, jokes ---.”

Trog: “But didn’t Aristophanes achieve everything in this line?”

Punch: “Not quite.”

Trog: “He can’t succeed in hanging the audience.”

Punch: “Will you do that?”

Trog: “I’ve brought the rope from Jewsons.”

Punch: “It’s tough, multiple-coiled and blue.”

Trog: “Are you being anti-semitic?”

Punch: “Let it be Travis Perkins then --- the colour remains unaltered.”

Trog: "Yet how can you string them up?"

Punch: "Won't they go home and do it for us?"

Trog: "Why, having seen me first, don't they want to?"

Punch: "It's a good job we've gone over to natural gas these days."

Trog: "Everything in this show becomes nitrous oxide!"

Punch: "Were we doing a Royal Variety performance?"

Trog: "All that we lack is royalty and a sense of variety."

Punch: "Do you remember any good mother-in-law jokes?"

Trog: "No."

Punch: "Well... that's killed this part of the Mansion House speech."

Trog: "I don't write the material."

Punch: "Would anyone else?"

Trog: "Pah!"

Punch: "I always told Doctor Barnardo's that I wanted to be a comedian."

Trog: "I know, and they're not laughing now... et cetera."

PART NINE

(*Directorial interlude...* this part was possibly narrated by Judy). A beautiful and naked blonde stands in some transfixed blue light. She happens to be an exotic dancer or *artiste* of repute. Her presence here signals a metaphor for the previous action – given that the other three characters find themselves caught around a table. Can it be otherwise spare? Yet, on a secondary calculus, she may not be entirely nude – if the girl wears gauntlets and high-heeled boots. These have tasselled extremities or limits of probity around them. There also subsisted the whirl of metal or studded belts... all of which exist betwixt her midriff and catch. Her breasts and buttocks were exposed, but she carries in either gloved hand a long lasso. It betokens azure in both tint and finality. Whereas her big hair is peroxidized down to a pitch of blondeness; the former extending halfway down her back. Suddenly, she commences to dance and throws up her gauntleted arms – plus the hemp... thereby revealing her bosoms. Momentarily, the dancer's hands are splayed and behind her shoulders; or was there a glaucous tattoo marked LOVE on one of her flanks? Possibly it may have been the right one – while seen under those arc-lamps of an apprised marine. Now then, is she actually dancing up and down in her cowboy boots replete with spurs; when taken together *avec* those tassels aslant each leg and mushrooming out, or striking a collective impermanence (thereby)? Up and down she bounces on the lit boards – what with the neck of a cable circling beneath her: in relation to which a violet silhouette turns on the floor. Might it re-do or interpret an expressionist wood-cut? On and on she bounds – whilst just see-sawing like an Olympic trampoline: with her leg muscles pulsating and the minx's massive hair streaming in front of her... None of this (though) conceals the fact that her bubs are out and resplendent.

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For Rider Haggard's *SHE!* has had occasion to cavort to Ligeti's *Danse Macabre*; an atonal threnody if ever there was one!

PART TEN

The three characters in our drama – Punch, Trog and Judy – find themselves sat around a table with a sherry glass on it. Only one exercise in Irish crystal exists between them.

Judy: “Can’t we ever go anywhere without Trog?”

Trog: “Oh, dear me now, Punch never goes out without *moi*, do you?”

Punch: “Nevermore and a day (my familiar) or a bunch of Sundays. We are inseparable!”

Judy: “Listen to the impressions of a dream I’ve just had! I came across you, Punch – albeit with a delirious clown-face against a background of white. Your nose had to be made up using a brilliant red disc, or was it actually an extended conic section and ballast... after the fashion of Pinocchio? Do you revisit this semblance or its actuality? Again, Trog exists before you and out of all favours of moon-time; it comes to be independent of your grip – no longer being a ventriloquist’s dummy, you see. It stands abreast of your mournful aspect and gesticulates (now) in the manner of a silent film... somewhat like *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*. In any event, this masked denizen finally unfixes yonder nose; thereby taking off the red-nosed reindeer’s deceit. Only to offer --- what? Why, Trog just turns away from our spot-light, rather nonchalantly, or in relation to some pattern of disgust. But what I can’t forget has to be the expression of depletion, exhaustion, false contempt or suicidal aloneness which flits across yon features. Your eye also appears to be distended – at once glassy, fearful, spectral, undefeated and yet alone. Might we otherwise tell it to an invisible *Jackanory*? Moreover, you remain slumped down in an ergonomic chair – replete with a salient metal-rim – as I approach from the stage’s back. A distant fog seems to clog up the landscape. Whatever may it really amount to? Anyway, let us call it the distillate of some dry-ice

particles... themselves moving across one's range of vision, if only to cede once or twice towards a purpose or its entreaty. This configuration (likewise) blurs a remit within one's identity. I continue to be dressed in black – although by making use of tight-fitting garments of yore. Do I delineate a 'nineties girl about town with a closely-woven skirt above the knee – and some calf-high boots? Shall this be an exercise in a moral boulevard? I light a cigarette with a lighter manoeuvred out of my bag expressly for this... intentionally so. Yet still Trog leers abundantly over my love – with this puppet's jaws (underneath the mask) drawn up next to your neck; and almost vampiric in its pose or response. You look deflated – yet continue to hold your ground steadfastly, irrespective of the clown make-up smeared all over your face. Can this embody a beacon in order to delineate the Russian state circus (?); a culture where such a popular tournament is regarded as a genuine art-form. Or, percussively and as an alternative, mighten the latter be received as a tributary of blood rushing to its source... or milking the whole like so much lip-stick smeared around a trap. But – all of a piece – Trog's mouth-organ backs off when occasioning a rasp, or the signification of a banshee calling for her prey. Won't this imbroglio be grasped as a confirmation of the Scots-Irish mist?"

Trog: "Do you have a proposal to pop (?); maybe even before the aisle of our entombment."

Judy: "You surmise correctly, my *papier-mâché* head. Are we to wait until Cerberus' jaws close upon us? Let us refuse to slaver at the bit with our genitalia out, but mutually agree to come to a decision aslant these fates."

Punch: "A factor which is... irrespective of any damage occasioned by these Norns?"

Judy: "I shall instruct you. Our respective duties must lie in the direction of a matrimonial union or its cross."

Trog: "Cannot you tell that he is tremulous ahead of such a grid-iron?"

Judy: "Silence remains golden for those who fail to communicate properly, you know. But let me give you some alms towards the plenitude of a fist. For we love each other. The only options which now confront us are matrimony or a mutual suicide pact. Do you want it to be said that nought but a ventriloquist's dummy survives us? Surely, my sweet, we must resist the allure of a wiccan doll?"

Trog: "Refrain from insulting me, wench! The spent nature of your intrigue is merely the vivisection of a great ape laid out in front of us. Are you aware whether famous biologists, like Professor Richard Dawkins, wish to extend the notion of human rights to the higher primates? No (?); why then lean upon the integer of a falling star... since the virulence of *Titus Andronicus* will only be enacted by mannequins who are accustomed to their task. As the party tormentor O'Brien tells Winston Smith in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, do you die when you cut your finger-nails?"

Punch: "*Touche*, little one... Truly, you happen to be a homunculus of the forgotten orb. Especially when such a characteristic sphere can only be Odin's eye-ball – the latter jettisoned forwards while he was crucified on the Tree of Life!"

Trog: "Never mind all that... For I represent his two ravens when combined on your left-side; with either of them hanging from a cliff – plus one of your arms halfway up my back: only to work it up and down like a lottery scratch-card."

Judy (with some exasperation): "I have had enough of this game of charades. Let us cut to the chase – my dearest friends of absence. Because my head lies to one side of yon, albeit with my eyes fixed on a dream that exists far and wide. Is it just given

over to the gossamer twang of a hairy spider, who moves convulsively along the side of its web in order to devour his prey? Can 'love' be seen as the scavenging of abundant succour? Does the mate of the black widow – after impregnating her – try to get away by scurrying along the branch to safety? Do you recall him from those nature programmes on public service broadcasting? He must be the little brown one. May he reach the paradise of absolution --- no way?! She – over a hundred times his size – reaches out languorously in order to draw him up to her thorax with an arachnid's ligature... Crunch! After the fashion of one of J.G. Ballard's automobile crashes, he is consumed. A blank bill of fayre --- of nothingness --- then fills this screen!"

Trog: "Thou speakest the truth, sister; or should that be spent carrión of our hate? Doest one reminisce about those paintings which mimic the existentialism of the nineteen fifties (?), and they were executed with the graphic talent of Buffet. Wherein an unholy *angst* penetrates the surface of your visage, only then to retreat into the three-dimensionality of a nightmare."

Judy: "I know what you mean for the following reason – modernist painting is not my poison."

Trog: "Yet I insist on declaiming, fair one, that all female vampires are the descendants of Lilith!"

PART ELEVEN

Punch: "You speak of the existence of a dream... most untidily."

Judy: "Assuredly – yet when confronted with the facts I forget their import."

Punch: "Allow me to vouchsafe it for you! Let me look across into the justifications of your mind... Can it be considered to be a confrontation with *Brute Force* (?); an expressionist film of great power – shot in black-and-white – and dating from the nineteen

forties. For, in your fancy, have I hidden under a table in a dark and secluded room? A gloom which cannot completely hide a nimbus of terror then inundates me... as the playing cards are seen to fall from my hand. What were their numbers; or the secret codicils that lie within the tracery of this abandonment? Is it a Gothic architecture under Ruskin (?); or the merest variation of such a contingency? Anyway, those numbers which revive their fortunes are the three of diamonds, (delicately placed), or the six of spades; the King of spades, the Ace of diamonds and the Ace of clubs! *Excelsior!* Do you notice a numerological configuration between them – at least in terms of those splinter-backs? Are they numbered before the range of such a contempt? See here... I can add them up for you, a six and the guidance of a three. Does this tot up to or complete the sum of nine? Nine... numerologically speaking, surely this countenances a high state of consciousness, mysticism, awareness, nobility, metaphysics and mathematical lore? May an advent like this apply to the text as a whole – rather than our unequal selves?"

Trog: "I need to go to the bathroom."

Punch: "Puppets never require the lather of a latrine..."

Judy: "I am sick of this particular tourney! It revisits a mediaeval joust without the spears... Perhaps if I were to reach out for you now – while looming across this dispensation of briars and thorns?"

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(This occurs in the form of a voice over...) Well! My hands moved to embrace him, or otherwise tug at the vestments of his deluded cloth. Were my red 'raptors – or nails of varnish – about to caress his bow-tie? When suddenly he reared up from the table and leapt with a jerk... the sadic doll, Trog, also went with him; connected to his arm. On and on they rushed out of the restaurant, and both of them succeeded in drawing down the jaundiced eyes of spectators. A solitary wine-glass remained

upon the coverlet afterwards... Did he carry his incubus or succubus (whichever) after the fashion of the female satan in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*? Was 'she' a bald, Italianate, leggy supermodel – of an androgynous aspect – or wearing a cowl? Anyway, all I remember were the distinct voices of these two merging into one another ---. 'No, no, never, never, keep your distance from me. It's all been a mistake; we cannot wed...' 'Take her, you dotard! You shouldn't be an imbecile forever! Return to her now – fight for your chance. Don't renege on your love... each one adores t'other. How can you let her slip through your fingers?'''

Directorial remarks: Silence reigns for a brief moment – in a manner which finds itself sustained by a blinked gap. Its colour intrudes upon grey-to-black.

PART TWELVE

The blonde beauty has reappeared once again. She begins to flash-dance anew and within the purview of a barely concealed striptease. Her musical accompaniment (this time around) is *Checkmate* by Sir Arthur Bliss, the British composer. Has she somersaulted abreast of her back – after the fashion of an amber tambourine as it loosens up before the fates? Over the young woman goes – with a lasso in one glove and trailing after her, plus a violently yellow coif cutting up amidships! With both breasts protuberantly out – she becomes almost suspended in mid-air for a moment. (As the strumpet's spurred boots take one up and over a hinterland of Self!) Are the painted nipples erect when she lands on her knees, thence splashing wetness all over her body? At a time when her gauntleted hands grasp the rope above her face, and the upper part of her form becomes obscured by the luxurious extent of her foaming hair... A compaction that was large enough (in its wig-like deportment) to fill up three-to-four heads other than her own! Still she struts forwards, with an imaginary audience in the palm of her hand, as the main-line remains held across her legs... gauntlet-wise. One eye came to be

undisclosed by hair, both grape-fruit were ‘out’ or covered with streaming water, but the lower part of her anatomy is altered by the cowboy’s fastness. Can those tassels be fluttering in an imagined fan... that is: an instrument which causes her to steam off-stage? A stroboscopic light gleams on in the distance...

PART THIRTEEN

Judy: “Now I must react with the vigour of a wounded tiger-shark. So I went up to Punch’s room... the one containing an amphitheatre of mirrors – not to mention some other thespian extras as well. These were the appurtenances of an *artiste*, such as framed photographs from earlier shows... as well as one ornate dressing-table. A mirror with bulbs around it served as a central reference-point. Behind all of this, a bright scarlet interlude supervenes as a plenitude of blood. Does this haemoglobin-screen shade off into lined purple at the edges of its run? Above all, the time for confrontation was nigh... I took my destiny in both hands and began to speak. Trog – as always – nestled up against Punch’s shoulder throughout this. Did the puppet look more expectant than usual? Might ‘it’ be more avid, self-congratulatory, dulcet, de-registered, demented and purse-lipped... in comparison to what I am used to? Indeed, how much of all this could be put down to my imagination?

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My darling, the asperity of non-relief must find its outlet... if our future together is to have any meaning. Don’t you believe in the prospect of a resolution? Haven’t you heard of the marriage counselling service called *relate*? Can we invigorate the purposive gesture of our being? This ready farce has gone on for long enough. We both share our love... in light of its flame around the brain-pan, why won’t you marry me?”

Punch: “My lips are sealed from fulfilling your utterance or desire. Like in a children’s book of those available dots... we have to fill them in across some invisible spaces. Are we the Cheshire cat – that is: a creature who’s destined to die with a

smile on its lips? Forsake me, Judy --- register the Devil's hindmost, for we can only speak of disfigurement lying behind this mask. Have you heard of the Titans and their destination down in Tartarus... amid defeat?"

Judy (edging closer and closer, and with a longing in her eyes): "Perhaps a kiss will make you change your mind?"

Punch: "NNNOOOOOOO! Get away, Judy, before you discover the truth! None but me has a right to fall aslant the impact of puppetry. For example, have you yet to assess Archaos, The Circus of Horrors, Doc Madness, 'performance art' after the example of Wyndham Lewis' *Mrs. Dukes' Millions*, Jim Dine's *The Car Crash*, and La Fura Dels Baus or 'vermin from the sewers' in Catalan? No? Then keep away, I beg you! Nor need we utter the profanations of escapology; and don't belittle me into revealing my secret horde... if only to go down into death when trapped inside an iron maiden."

Judy: "Too late, beloved! Too late... AAAAIIEEEEEE!, (she screams). What is this?"

PART FOURTEEN

A directorial insistence: Our blonde bomb-shell comes back into the reckoning... She continues to circle the stage amid the medley of a dance. Yet all her attempts to escape are foredoomed – since she will always be dragged back into the centre of a whirlpool. Is a harpooning attendant on her bronzed flesh? For now, her breasts are out ahead of their step's sprightliness – what with rivulets of water gleaming off or in front. Does the amount of h2o on this arched surface surprise you?

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Again, the heat on this perspiring skin rose up or onwards, and this was heavy with the colliding dew of the air. Whereas – under the mop of her cascading yellow-hair – she wiggled one melon provocatively... first one nipple and then the other one. Both of

them were dyed with a lambent gesture of pumice. But what can those tints be now (?); at least masquerading to orange, green, gold, silver resin and turquoise. Did the latter illustrate the eye-sequins of a peacock – at once screeching at the moon? This water then sprayed off her tension – thereby providing an envelope or sheen around her form... together with gauntleted hands around her back. Both of these had to be dark blue in colour, and they successfully held onto a lassoed switch. Was it coiled behind her in aught of a bundle? Suddenly she turns around in a blizzard of motion; and this action is just to show off her delicately proportioned bare-back and buttocks... *avec* a pair of cowboy boots coming up to or under her rear. (They are both thigh-high in manner). Furthermore, her peroxided mass whips around her upper-chambers like a lash... whereupon she gathers up the hefty binding above her in a clout. It rears over her blonddeness at present; albeit with either of her teats devastatingly displayed... and her legs were wrapped one around t'other (teasingly). Then she cracks the rope beneath her stilettos – primarily by leaping up and into its noose, as she caroms and cavorts to completeness. This way and back she ducks about... plus a mist which rises around her in a way that's fit to vapour-lock. Her silhouette dances a jig upon the floor or under the withering lights, and it involves this skein being held fast across our girl's torso. (It's grasped by both fists). Finally, she is seen to run around and around, and such a twine swishes around her like a flail. All of this occurs before the *demi-monde* comes to a stand-still... in a flash-dance where her mammary is pumped forward, her body becomes beaded with sweat, and her sulphurous mop looks aflame. But what eventuates now? For – in an instant of tranquillity – a two of hearts has been projected onto her bust or naked midriff. It denotes the number 2; the secret algebra of the eternally feminine!

PART FIFTEEN

Judy: "As I flung my arms around him in abandonment – and against a background of the deepest red – there took place a

fierce CRACK! Oh, what might this mean? Answer me... beloved! O beguiling one, answer me! Yet he was in no position to respond... since the figurine of Punch had fallen to the ground like a wooden doll: in a situation where 'its' arms and legs were disjointed... and they lay on the orange floor, higgledy-piggledy. Didn't he resemble an artist's broken mannequin (then); especially when its limbs are at variance or right-angles to one another? Suddenly, it dawned upon me with a terrible shriek! Because a reversal of roles has taken place – abundantly so. Let me put it as plainly as I can... for Trog effectively stood before me in triumph. Was it just my fancy (?); or had the creature looked on expectantly at the moment of my embrace? Did I detect that Trog's thick-lips were open, and this imp of the reverse's eyes are seen to be glowing with a beady intensity? Could one feel the pressure behind its skull?"

Trog: "Yes, Judy, you are correct. Punch is dead and gone... but, all along, an observer must recollect that he was just the dummy, while I have remained the ventriloquist throughout this ordeal. Yet one detail has to illuminate such a *denouement* – even like a lightning flash trailing after a thunder-clap. Do you wait to see it?" (With this soliloquy, the caryatid known as Trog lifted up its gloved hands or gauntlets, and it is in order to detach the nature of a puppet-master's face. A mask which then peels off like one of Vincent Price's; if only to reveal a hideous visage underneath... in a scene that's reminiscent of *The Abominable Doctor Phibes*! What head does this new Trog evince? Why, it happens to embody a woman's features – after the circumference of Circe. Her eyes are necessarily detached from their retinas, but they can also be described as angular, wolfish, aslant, vulpine and full of destructive fire. Do mysterious faery lights float up to their surface? Whereas her mouth looks ravenous, lustful, green, longitudinal and crammed with very sharp teeth!)

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"Welcome, my aberrant sister! For Trog has disappeared into the mystery of its puppeteering. May it be the fate of all

mountebanks – or contortionists of variance – to go down beneath the knife of one's semblance? Since – under the masquerade of *Commedia dell'arte* or an English sea-side amusement – mightn't a more serious drama come to our attention? Do you ask for Punch's real name? Why, it could only be that of my first husband, Adam. Were all of the previous sins of his inheritance found coruscated in his form... especially when revealed later on as the antics of a wooden man? Does he depict a rickety or balsa sculpture by Reg Butler, thereby (?); that is, a stick which is ultimately broken on life's wheel. All of it subsists in a process where it will be repeated endlessly or without undue fatalism, and minus an end. Can it be an example of the infinite return? You ask me for your troubled name, woman. Whysoever else... it would only be Eve. Doest thou remember her? She proved to be the one who tempted him – at the insistence of one of my sons – to eat from the Tree of Life which contained on its branches the fruit of good and evil. Me? What am I called? You ask for my codex or sigil? *I am Lilith!* You were Adam's second wife, but long before and during his one hundred and thirty years... I was the first to wed him. Truly, I happened to be the prior spouse (withal). Up from the filth of mud, lice and bracken – these were those noxious substances from which I came. In this case, Grendel had no need of a mother or an old hag – when my spawn are literally numbered in thousands! My children come down to us as the semiotic of demons... most effectively. Forget Peter Blatty; girl, my brood-time offerants remain Belial, Choronzon, Baal, Lucifer, Astaroth, Dagon, Rimmon, Thamuz and Beelzebub. All of the spirits of the night – all zombies, werewolves and vampires – are the progeny of Lilith. Do you hear? Because without me there can be no shade, shadow or darkness --- and hence no dialectic or the prospect of light. Above everything else, we have to incarnate a sense of timelessness! You continue to demand of me our future astrology. Your own? It shall be to repeat what exists everywhere else --- forever and ever. For whenever young children foregather

to watch Punch and Judy – no matter how innocently on the abridged sands – WE ARE THERE.”

Judy runs away screaming (merely).

By way of a visual answer or its *coda*, an imaginary camera comes to alight on two cards... i.e., a three of diamonds and a six of spades. They total nine or philosophy’s accountancy.

THE END

GLOCK'S ABATTOIR

A puppet theatre

CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA: These are Glock, an ossuary attendant or the troupe's amateur clown; and Death's-head, an agent of nemesis or its narration. Two policemen – Constable Smithers and Sergeant O'Rourke – also figure throughout this masque. Whereas various ghouls, boogies, weremen, undead, Siamese twins, zombies (et cetera...) continuously strive to make an appearance.

Act One; Scene One:

Glock is speaking on an old-fashioned telephone: "All Tartarus has broken loose tonight; especially given one's adventure into a garage of fortune. Will you detect such an abundant misery as this? For one's night-time or its wraith lies thick upon the ground roundabouts; a process which was itself sovran within the rights of day-time. Concerning these factors – undue particulars of my damnation aren't really necessary. Certainly, I had leapt out into the hospital's advent or its furthermost development... primarily in terms of its tinkling glass. What did I find there? Why, it recalled one of Boccioni's sculptures – albeit of a futurist indent – and a macquette that captures an object moving in space."

Death's-head mouths in terms of a skull's patent... He definitely speaks as a voice-over: "Does this matter drift away from you, Glock? Is it out of all proportion to your forgotten years? Doesn't yonder character wish to seize a moment like this? Let me whisper across your momentum now... For you ran towards an aperture that betokened a twilight of all gloom. Down these corridors you mustered such strength as you possessed; together with a red box around your armoured frame. These lights filtered upon a trespass... and weren't you limned within its turquoise glare? Suffice it to say, a garland of bay-leaves lay around your tonsured head. (Even though you hardly re-assembled a Caesar, like Nero, in Seneca's or Zeno's wrath!) No. Your version of

George Chapman's *Odyssey* became transfixed with an axe; an implement which rose and fell having been taken from several more. All of them glinted – plus many scarlet flecks – amid chiaroscuro's dwindling tints."

Glock: "None of this takes cognisance of my position – effectively trapped here alone as I am. Above all, the moon shone on in a distracted way; at once being pale in its ovoid disc and seeming to be held in by a latticed structure. It affected a blue dye (somewhat resultantly) and was just circumscribed by a Tudor trellis. In one part of this sky stood Joey the Clown – he embodied Glock's simulacrum thereby... despite sloping off to one side of such a momentum. His face came to be withered in something of a blanched moment; together with orange hair and a Chipperfield's leer or pout. Might it be 'Ricardo's' family circus (?); when considered to be a cheaper version of the same development. Regardless of this, the peon's or pueblo monger's mouth stood chaste or otherwise leaning-to, and it looks void of a winter's sensibility. Weren't these eyes also staring – themselves startled in their grease-paint – and yet often glaring out beyond this neck's ruff?"

Death's-head: "But no starched quality can hide the Beadle or the bloody black-beetle, as Punch calls him. Isn't there a quaint English saying that splutters (?):

*Step on a beetle, it will soon rain...
Bury it underground, the sun comes out again.*

He wears a *noir* mask or eye-piece – even a coif of linen – over his concealed features. While his face interprets Calcutta's hole or possibly nullity's pit (thereafter); and this is despite a compulsive hand-twitch. Can you watch this mimetic drama all the time – like on a toy-theatre minus its ancillary globe? Wasn't, in this regard, the historian of Montague Summers' restoration

and Punch and Judy the same? His name was fondly remembered as George Speaight.”

Sergeant O’Rourke (when receiving a telephone’s blip): “Listen to me, citizen, or wearer of a crown of thorns! Do you reminisce about some silhouetted hands – all of them held up in a gauntleted or armoured fashion? Each one of these metallic gloves then smashes at tubes, wires and pipes held above its remit. In terms of a pictorial vision (to speak of) it displays Cruikshank’s ‘Punch & Judy’ in a way that’s crossed with Balthus. Still, Glock races on and his form discretely invades purple – what with a pink effulgence beetling around his brows. But Punch continues to lash out blindly with a halberd; *avec* its steel becoming bent, roseate and tapering away from any blue... plus varied trailing ligatures. Isn’t his humped-back form bent over or keenly doubled up (?); and thus withering away to scorn. Cannot the earth really explode under his blows – thence splintering towards this frame with multiple shards collapsing in? Such an awning as this (remember) resiles away from without... it nearly always happens to be a red and yellow tripod found situated on the beach. Are your children ready to run down and inspect it?”

Glock: “I’m trapped up here at St. John’s cemetery – alongside various ghouls who numb the air without. They gather in a conclave outside the window, looking in, and have yellow faces which are presumably spiked or possibly angry. A red shutter closes around their relief! While inside my caretaker’s cabin were gravestones, tombs, obelisks and marbles... all of them taken together with putative mausoleums. A great Edwardian desk festoons the rest; itself replete with cards or systems of observance. These happen to be those messages – ‘dearly beloved’, et cetera... – that Cyril H. Lovegrove sells to its throng.”

Death's-head: "Yet Punch hurls this weapon at Joey's feet, essentially in order to cascade it towards the ground. He examines its blade cautiously... underneath tapering and ready nails made from pumice. Wasn't such a mystery obvious? Since Punch has now to be confronted with an ink-dot test... the latter held up by Joey's mitten. It happened to revisit one of Freudianism's last templates – at least before H.J. Eysenck destroyed it. Do you wish to reprise his *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (?); when fitfully published by Scott-Townsend... a eugenicist press from Washington, District of Columbia. What did he see amid those splotches of paint; each one of them intoning a child's efforts in water colour or even poster-paint? It betokened an example from Dubuffet's *Art Brut*: when this was basically a simplistic rejoinder to the surrealist movement. Whereas Mister Punch – for his part – observes naught other than what is presented to him. Even though once the card was discarded, Jack Ketch lingers upon its projection from behind. There are two of 'him' – every one of which is contained in egg-cups... what with a metallic tracing connecting his two heads! Might they embody a speeded up version of Cruikshank's engraving, as catalogued by J.P. Collier in 1828? Possibly... yet here the executioner wore a head-dress, together with a cape."

Act One; Scene Two:

Sergeant O'Rourke: <<His colleague, Constable Smithers, listens on primly. He has a tabloid or a supermarket newspaper in his hands. It probably undoes *Fortean Times* in its irrelevancy.>> "You say that you're haunted by bogeys, man? Can you substantiate their existence? May they rekindle the following integers? Since one of Judy's tasks is to release us from this imponderable, primarily by means of pulling up a chair. Will Joey be forced to pluck a card from her exposed fan, in terms of a game of whist's ready witness? Could it possibly be the photograph which adorns Anthony Burgess' *Clockwork Orange* – when cobbled together by Lionel F. Williams? It became known as 'Eye' or 'cogs'. Nonetheless, this smear of paint

interprets a hint of treacle... for it betokened some pain, but not too much. Because Punch continuously leered on at his counterparts – plus a pane of latticed glass falls sheer behind them. Regardless of all this: the Beadle – or a magistrate's assistant – cracked a sick-joke before him. 'Where's the Baby?'; 'Don't know, I've eaten it' ... *et cetera*. The moon continues to glint onwards – basically by suffusing the stain of an attendant window. In furtherance of which... a padre, who wears a dunce's hat, turns to make a remark. He reeked of false piety; together with both eyes being exalted in heaven's direction. Indeed, his ebon orbs were almost popping out of their skull! Wasn't he called the Methodist on occasion (?); and isn't this the merest dig at Wesleyian pretensions? 'What do you accomplish by dint of mayhem?', he asks the Devil who's stood alongside him. Satan just seems to stare dreamily into the middle-distance. (Don't forget, my friends, that all of these characters present themselves as glove-puppets). 'Why, I'd choose to molest her transparent beauty', he declared in a hollow voice or timbre... while assessing the night-sky. Meanwhile, all of these personifications can be viewed – whether presumably naked or end-over fist – by a suit of playing cards. They are laid out in a manner which reveals their sequined backs to us, primarily in the form of a wooden-castle that's constructed from sand. Didn't Franz Kafka write a novel by betraying one of those titles? Anyway, a blind beggar confusingly makes such points to himself or inside his own world. He jabbers and signs repeatedly; all of it reminiscent of a mummers' play ahead of these silhouettes and other numb-skulls."

Act One; Scene Three:

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Describe where you are now..."

Glock: "Well! It surfaces as a shack some way off from the good or available earth. Does it sprout with the munificence of Milton's poesy (thereafter)? The structure's outlines were surely irregular (?); when taken together with haphazard oblongs

shifting out of such a tracery. Behind this cubicle the sky waxed purple; at once overcome by a pregnant silence. A yellowing light – when either grilled or prolonged – then segmented its aggrieved square... Were such moths attracted to its lustre or polarity; thereupon to beat their wings? While – out in front – lay a graveyard of the palest blue. This ossuary square consisted of menhirs, pediments, obelisks, kneeling centaurs or Gothic incunabula. Yes, even the odd Cleopatra's needle continues to break this sky – merely by fixing its ascent perpendicularly to those surrounding graves. Did it fail to illustrate a volume like Rupert Gunnis' *British Sculptural Dictionary, 1660-1851* – that is: from the Stuart restoration to a Victorian great exhibition? Whereupon we move away from lodging a complaint against Richard Westmacott the Elder, for instance... particularly as regards his statue to James Dutton, hailing from Sherborne, Gloucestershire, in 1791. Wasn't an angel depicted there – when fully robed, female, and trampling upon death? It took a skeleton's form at this juncture.”

Constable Smithers speaks for the first time across his colleague: “What do you require of us?”

Glock: “Help me, I’m being besieged by the underworld!”

These two policemen then reply in unison: “WE’LL BE RIGHT OVER, SIR!”

Act One; Scene Four:

Death’s-head: “Their police sirens continued to level any clarion due to them – basically by cutting through the dawn (just so). Each yellow or ochre sliver sliced its own atmosphere into neat halves – almost all of it on the run and as a consequence of a blaring tannoy’s accompaniment. Might it be a horn of abandonment (?); rather like a Butlin’s amusement... albeit in reverse. It made the following sound or white noise, a cacophony that’s almost donkey-like in its braying.

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AAAAAAAAAAIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEE, it ran. Many people found it to be highly irritating... but soon the vehicle screeched up at this tabernacle or grave-yard. A plenitude of waves (these were) which captured or flowed over crooked trees; themselves transfixied by shadows and yet broken before the wind. They are blackened in a frenzy or twisted, twig-like and offered up to Belial! Now then: these graves or cornices leered up around this particular caprice... for these policemen have reached St. John's, you see. But they weren't completely aware of Weston's fate which awaited them – primarily since his reliefs prefigured those by William Blake. They seemed to be funereal, (abundantly so): and yet they also spat in temperance's face! Let's look at part of his monument to Jonathan and Elisabeth Ivie in St. Petrock's church, Exeter, in 1717... for example. It spoke of blood in the bone or siphons of relief, and it heralded even Donatello's priority or over-view. Most especially – in my case – it delineated a foretaste of twin skull-heads; one on either side of two leaves that were smoothed down in stone."

Act One; Scene Five:

Constable Smithers: "It appears to be quiet or almost abandoned in terms of its practical effects. Yet who can really spot what integers lurk within this vista? Doesn't a bat scream in darkness in order to see? Nonetheless, all of Glock's cigarettes have been stubbed out in an ash-tray or its heavy glass. No-one is prepared to discern what goes on here (you notice); at least when positioned next to a window of serrated panes which are held in blue. The Devil stares on and on throughout, and this is reminiscent of Fred Tickner's puppets when manufactured in their wooden usage. Yet didn't he wish to avoid hanging them due to the latent humanoid within? Certainly, Satan looked out at a glorious moon or such a terraqueous orb. Again, we must notice whether its pitted surface reflected white amid grey, or otherwise remained charged and unruffled. Whereas the sky above his horns swirled with an azure wash; at once embodying

one of Turner's sea-scapes... no matter how distantly. Meanwhile, Clown Joey continued to rub his hands – helter-skelter like – up and down the side of an Egyptian sarcophagus. It proved to be shiny or pellucid; after a reflection of *lapis lazuli* or lost alabaster. 'Evil has to be the result of a profound boredom', he mused. Whilst an enormous silver clock – with two giant hands – lay behind his example. What time did it indicate, then (?); it was merely five to midnight; if not the eleventh hour of John Tyndall's vintage. Related to all of this – the anti-hero of our particular mystery play says to Joey, 'we're bored'. --- A statement about which the clown responded uncertainly. His brow beetled further or then became furrowed. But subsequently, he shrilled inanely or with his lips pursed into a compressed grin. 'I know', he retorted. 'Let's pull a joke from this Christmas cracker; it's made in Hong Kong like all the others.'

Act One; Scene Six:

Sergeant O'Rourke: "All waxes still in this place – even down to the insects. Nor does any noise whatsoever originate from our caretaker's hut. Didn't Pinter, Beckett's amanuensis or mock-secretary, write a play of the same name? Anyway, the clock-face has changed its aspect at this juncture – possibly when pursuant to a new or nethermost dial. Might it show off a sundial this time around? Could it really be contained by the Hesperides – i.e., what Voltaire called the gardens of the West? Furthermore, a time-piece like this waxes unique in its antiquity; what with a collection of Roman numerals over its surface. For the village of Bix in south Oxfordshire was once a military camp, you know? It's a case of B...9; a true travesty or reversal of Howard Brenton's decadent play *The Romans in Britain*."

Constable Smithers: "Punch approaches us hereafter... He's merely jiggling himself along like a marionette, but actually he proves to be more of a glove puppet. He addresses the Policeman during a quiet moment. All of them swirl in a haze (thereafter); or is it, quite properly, something of a dry-ice mist? It seeps up

from behind our set or music-hall stage. This wooden-top (for his part) indicates a Victorian propriety: what with a conical helmet, a blue-dyed conch, a truncheon and a Dixon of Dock Green sense of *gravitas*. Perhaps it illustrates a model that had been carved, painted, varnished, re-touched and dressed by Wal Kent, the Punchman? Remember now: no Jew can ever become a professor – the performer or individual who exhibits mister Punch. It remains a totally Anglo-Saxon form or pursuit.”

Sergeant O'Rourke: “Punch continues to talk to the copper... while Joey the Clown, with streaming orange hair, occasionally glides around in the background. A darkness enshrouds both of them; making them oblivious to all the other time-pieces roundabout. Yet the bite of Joey’s grin could do for either of these dolls; especially when he seems to bend down or belch... and this is almost to chew a garment’s corner. During this act his brow remains coruscated, unwholesome, livid or tremulous with drops of blood. These are continuously being renewed in order to cover over its source. Might he disinterr an *alter ego* of Glock’s – that is to say, one which was gone but not forgotten? Altogether, my friends and public, it speaks of a shell lunacy or an approximation to Strindberg’s *Occult Diary*. Still, such an etheric disposition rests apace... while Punch speaks in his swazzle (whether squeaky or alliterative) to the Policeman. He can only be properly dressed if in a sapphire’s quartz. ‘The quietness outside Glock’s keep has to be responded to. It sinks down its own plug-hole; at once lonely or equivalent to those circling irons.’ ‘I don’t obey your diction, Clown’, menaced the Law. Really? For Punch – with his blue eyes staring – had already begun to trill. Moreover, his costume proves to be scarlet plus brilliant yellow-buttons or tufts, together with a dramatic frieze. Whilst the ‘nose’ proceeded to curse ever more liberally and protuberantly. Its wall-to-wall or glove-puppet smile, however, creases on from ear to ear. Can you observe it? Mayhap these figurines were drawn from Michael Byrom’s collection of Punchmen? Anyway, he chooses to be a hollow-man who leers

away without mirth; after the fashion of Waddington's playing cards. A connexion with tarot cards' digits also draws out your number."

Act One; Scene Seven:

Death's-head enunciates by way of narration: "The two policemen have shown aught of their contemptuous vigil – firstly as witnesses of the above. Secondly, they approach this hermit's hut – or his allotment's bastion – with drawn revolvers. Neither man-jack of them, though, has yet arrested a ghost during their special constabulary. Let's eavesdrop upon their converse... albeit with the tombs limned in blue against chiselled magenta all around."

Constable Smithers: "The warrant for his arrest has been issued by providence, but only as a relief from some direct action. Punch toyed with a gun as well as a maniacal grin – when abreast of all these statements. Momentarily, such an act or tragi-comedy stalled – if it can be described like the shutter-movement on an old camera. May it encompass atonality (?); or a moving away from the diatonic range in Sir Harrison Birtwhistle's opera *Punch and Judy*? It was the first effort to make the grade – without hinting at any reverse or involving Russell Hoban. Necessarily so: since no *deus ex machina* becomes available for these harlequins or dithyrambic spectators... after Wyndham Lewis' fashion in the *Wild Body*. Couldn't Bestre be seen as Picasso's vision when crossed with that of a manikin, and looked at in a Vorticist's eye? Yes?"

Sergeant O' Rourke: "True enough! Yet Punchinello wafted a gun around his head while grinning inanely; and the muscles in his imaginary neck corded behind-hand. Meanwhile, a gas swirled in its pageantry or swoon; thus illuminating divers shapes. The outlines or penumbras of a Peeler and Clown Joey became discernible, thereby. What could one do? It also waxed rather lyrical, *ceteris paribus*, because the law officer had a

vermillion balloon tied to his head by dint of a piece of flex. In one fell swoop of aggression, then, Punch placed his blunderbuss next to some wood and fired. This was followed by a fierce crack, a smidgeon of red paint and a slumped puppet athwart the stage. He partly brought down the backing-curtain behind him – although this is primarily due to a mistake. ‘Huzza, Huzza’, lauded Punch, ‘the Devil looks dead or otherwise molten!’ (Editorial note: There’s some mistake here, surely? For has the eternal harlequin chosen to mix up temporal with spiritual authority? Like those Gnostics of yesteryear, does he infer that this world comes to be lorded over by flies?) Anyway, he might as well put the weapon to Judy’s skull next – particularly if the Baby doesn’t cease its ballyhoo. ‘Children, children, play and reel’, lampoons our Punch, ‘especially when hop-scotch offers its toes!’ Because when one thinks about it anew – can dualism be ended so easily?”

Act One; Scene Eight:

Death’s-head: “The Sergeant and his Constable continue to interrogate one another hereafter. Basically, it may only amount to a hammer without its tongs.”

Constable Smithers: “Our witnessing of such a delusion distresses me.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Why so (?); your pistol is drawn.”

Constable Smithers: “Any handy revolver indicates the murder of a million Sabine women! In such circumstances as these, a parallel can be drawn with the House of Atreus.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “In terms of Caryl Churchill’s demotic translation from Seneca’s latin, you mean?”

Constable Smithers: “Thou hast said it! Your impermanence or remembrance – when noted before this locution – must fit the blue uniform about our sleeves.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Yet again, my man, you will have to trust to your intestinal fortitude! Do you take my drift?”

Constable Smithers: “My brother in arms, our correct witness has to be an eagle devouring its witness in the stump of a tree.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “You’re saying that Herbert Spencer’s natural fallacy isn’t one?”

Constable Smithers: “To be sure of it... For those eyes which stare out yonder are the false exhibits of a Turner Prize.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “But haven’t I an exhibit of my own blood that’s frozen at its heap (?), primarily in order to test against these misstatements.”

Constable Smithers: “With your talent for linear anecdote, comrade, isn’t it obvious whether you should have been an epigraph writer?”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Won’t I become one – in relation to those epitaphs on the graves all around us? Hasn’t Harold Pinter’s death been announced on a recent radio broadcast (withal)?”

Act One; Scene Nine:

Death’s-head: “Two sets of eyes narrow their witness ahead of us, even aslant of any effective victory or its surmounting. Further, those slits which stare out at you vary from green to red; basically via its semblance to purple and orange. It was in this hazy twilight or *Tropicana* that the creature is first seen. Did it choose to bear in mind the Crocodile from a traditional Punch and Judy? When we have to remember – in Piccini’s or Porsini’s

day – that we were really talking about dragons like in *Beowulf*. A curvature in space was limned as a consequence; the former enfolding in an open silence. Yet still it came on and on... its maturity of consciousness giving rise to a brazen fact, even as it stalked its prey. Could it be an observation of the mid-wife toad (?) in Arthur Koestler's diction; when crossed, as it might be, with a tremulous reptilian stem or stain at the base of the brain? Some chose to interpret it as evil's root... do you? For this mastodon has a scaled hide – or possibly a red eye – which opened within such a disc's diameter! A cornea that waxes somewhat split, necessarily, in terms of an eye's wonderment or cloth. Moreover, a pale extremity looked out over its May day; and it took on the scene's residue with a smudge of sun. Didn't it break up before any other optical illusion? Anyway, Punch's pot-bellied form – when adorned with its cap and bells – reared up from behind a stanchion which is suffused by a napthol mugg. Can it be heat induced?"

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Really? Since you know that Punch cascades onto the reptile from above or aslant, and amid a dark shower of molten glass. Will this saurian turn over slightly – when spread-eagled to such a feast with a grappling Punchinello? Does he hold onto his head, thereby? It's then that mister Punch penetrates him using destiny's spear – whether or not one chooses to hold aloft James Herbert's locution. Wasn't it Longinius' shaft which splintered Christ's side at Golgotha? Yes. One good turn deserves another; especially in relation to staunching thirst with vinegar-water."

Constable Smithers speaks to us in an observant vein: "Truly, we are entranced before a Stygian keepsake! A scenario where one motivation astride the dawn leads to an enclosure... Didn't this T-Rex come at him with arms flailing (?); themselves just signalling a wide in cricket, or occurring against a criss-crossed blue background. Certainly, our spear has pushed through the reptilian hide; thence emerging at the other end... or with a

casket of rheum around it by way of red. Surely, we recognise whether Trevor Ravenscroft wrote *The Spear of Destiny* (?) – an occult primer from which Herbert’s effort is a mere redaction. Nonetheless, this titan – while pinned to the spot of its own tree – resembles Michelangelo’s musculature on many a sculpture. (One can only canvas his monumental Abraham with hunger, for example!) Similarly, may a pinion’s break be hidden by this joust; albeit by dint of Punch’s arm? It broke off, rather creatively, when snapping in two or inside our ‘raptor: i.e., a saurian who raises some toothy laments against sun-fire! Isn’t it so, sarge?’

O’Rourke replies in a pensive mien: “A fine mess, dear boy... Because one branch has broken into two limbs of Heaven... whenever Punch’s teeth were clenched together in a manic grin, as unfolded by Geoffrey Howick’s linocut. Wherein our desperado rides into the future with a stick in his hand, or atop a hobby-horse which nods towards the fray. But what of the Great Beast, as tabulated in Revelations by having the number 666 upon its brow? Might it find itself let go or cruciform (?); and manipulated or possibly let down, thereby? Could this incarnate or congeal Man’s son upon the cross, once made of cedar, or all-father Odin on the world-tree that had been foregrounded in ash? All of this doesn’t even mention Attis, the *castrati*, who went down ‘neath a poniard as a pine rises majestically above. No Ganymede for Agdistis’ syrinx may be found, lest Midas chooses a wife to exacerbate fate!”

Act One; Scene Ten:

Death’s-head: “Smithers and O’Rourke creep closer to the caretaker’s domicile. Furthermore, a network of eyes seems to cover or follow their every move. For these peep o’ day boys gesture from behind some lintel; thence glistening betwixt opaque squares of glass.

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Also, a different mind-set exists within such blue-boys now... It is a sort of *Johnny Got his Gun* by Dalton Trumbo – albeit without an abattoir's salient detour. Speaking of which, a squeak was heard in the distance or amidships... as a wheel-chair moves itself into the light. It glides forwards with a commingled grace – at once lost in time-travel. Yet could it be the register of a fallow despair... betimes? It happened to be the Doctor who's approaching you. CLACK, CLACK, CLACK ran his chair's runners. On he came – always being unpardonable as a witness to certainty – and with a gloomy penumbra streaking away aft. Cripples always depress us --- to be sure. But here, various pipes lead away after one another, trellis-like, and above his frame... no matter what physic had been induced upon. Again, the marvel of strangers seems to be upon us; the latter merely listing to a kept plenty or abundance... namely, one that has iron grills on the walls. This apothecary soon reaches a corner; if only to turn around it and trundle out into a renewed vista. Might it be called a *studio vista*? Still, the oblong of a door lay beyond his meandering chair – plus the reality of two female mannequins-in-store before an end to this chance. They wore a dioxazine purple which shaded into a brilliant blue, and this is often minus a feminine affidavit that pouted meaningfully. He doubtless wore the handle-bar moustache, stiff collar and bald pate of yore. (For aren't we referring to the 'doctor' in *Punch and Judy*?) Yet this time our quack appears to be subdued. 'Where are you, mister Punch?', he intoned in a plush voice. A pall of silence then intruded... 'Well now, go to Hell and back!', he stormed. 'Who says I need you to get through this "Clockwork Orange"?' Likewise, he bent down to his quarry or ventricle... thus speeding the chair forwards. It spurted along a grey estuary or its pasture, with the concrete reverberating away in its chiaroscuro... Could it intone one of le Corbusier's formulas? May it have been an attempt to take the brute out of 'Brutalism'? No matter: since a sudden kick cannons into the chair from behind; thereby causing it to carom like a billiard ball. Moreover, the foot that engineers such an absence happens to be Punch's...

It comes across as tasselled, without bunions, low-down and drawn together on a red slipper: as well as tied aslant with the afterthought of a yellow ribbon. Didn't the director John Ford make such a film with John Wayne – one which pertains to this sash? Lilting to one's tune, therefore, the Doctor's wheels revolve around and around in a tail-spin prior to their collapse. When suddenly – he pitches forwards with a cry and plummets down some empty stairs... in a situation where the device moves in silhouette, occasionally by reverberating its overall tension. For himself, the quack was pitched up at the steps' bottom in a square of lighter grey or pumice. Do two parts of a trellis in candle-light laterally transpose themselves across his puppet? Can they be a cross – or one particular purview in Giotto's terms – that indicates a grave? Consequently, from this prone hand two spirits emanate upwards: one must be a stylised or etheric version of the Devil; the other a pompous medical practitioner in blue livery. By Gad!"

Act One; Scene Eleven:

O'Rourke and Smithers howl in unison by way of a chorus... or shan't it really be a threnody(?): "Look how we approach those sets of eyes which stare out at the moon... because each one comes surrounded by varied diameters in focus. Yet – when combined together – we whirl around some statues of our fondest desire. They collide with Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*; especially when roaring along towards oblivion or another such gateway. Furthermore, variously contingent sculptures block the way forward. They happen to be Brancusi's *Torso of a Young man* and the same carver's *The Cock* – but not Will Self's Cock 'n' Bull! No. Anyway, this premier variant revisits a Greek hoplite – one who has been helpfully crossed with Robocop by way of a Tardis. Whereas this Romanian's crystals indicate two legs beneath a trunk; a macquette that's been severed at the lips or haunches, and it calls out to Professor Gunter von Hagens' corpse art. Might it regain the status of an instrument's yearning? For Constatin Brancusi's other work dons

the mantle of a fool's cap – itself wrought by lightning or vigour, and *in lieu* of a cock's crow. Dare we suggest a relationship with these lines by W.H. Auden? They are taken from the poem *For the Time Being*:

*Alone, alone about a dreadful wood
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind...
Dreading to find its Father.*

Death's-Head: “Gingerly, the two policemen edge closer to a desolate shack. Both of their batons have been drawn from each other's sabretache... at once heralding the day. Because these men approach such a rope's tension without pity, or in a way which proves otherwise envious of the morning. What colours enclose their entry into a star-gate like this? Why, every pigment dances before us many times and is illustrative of nought save a Black Sun. These tones habituate themselves to a majestic dye - -- whether rufous brown, ochre, a grey leaven, pumice or a trail towards a dullish green. Suddenly, a yellow square opens amid this darkness – and Glock stood at its epicentre or wake. Was he dappled in orange tints around the midriff (?); primarily so as to cry out like Munch's howler on the bridge... Do you remember the bourgeois couple with a parasol or an umbrella; and who limber up out back? Given Israeli devastation of the Gaza strip, don't neo-Trotskyists in the West superimpose a swastika on the Star of David?”

Glock: “HA! HA! HA! HA! HE! HE! HE! HE! HO! HO! HO! HO!”

Sergeant O'Rourke: “How comes this unseemly mirth, dog? State your business presently; if any pertains to you.”

Act Two; Scene One:

Death's-head: “Glock leant against the door's partition or boundary-marker. Its frame looks somewhat spotted in the

direction of a blue-light – particularly when cast in svelte skin or serge, and its unaccompanied by any distinct witnesses. Moreover, the caretaker was beside himself with hilarity – and he just held his stomach in tightly or abruptly, while massaging it with a free hand. Could he possibly be interpreting Jim Crow's filibuster – as drawn from Punch and Judy's fayre or carnival? All of a sudden, one has an intimation of Hogarth's engraving which dealt with *The Humours and Diversions of Southwark Fair* (circa. 1733). Wherein a black booth, a pin-hole camera and a sensory deprivation chamber have risen up... even possibly to dance or twist. Now Jim's puppet dribbled along in this twilight – one that originally cleaved to 'political incorrectness' or its lustre: but it also remained watchful over what might turn up. Do you get me, o liberal chaff? Since his big or blubbery lips were looming up, and they appeared to be justifiably red in terms of their tincture... Yet Punch repeatedly hits him with a stave – itself 'worrying' for a *Guardian* correspondent to witness. Soon the glove-puppet who is known as the booth's N----- slid down towards the floor, and such violence seems appropriate or apportioned to its game. Indeed, this diaspora African didn't even have time for his song... that is to say: the Jim Crow slave chant (so mentioned).

Wheel about, turn around, like so, Jim Crow;--- caracole, give it a roll, fire me clean, Billy-o, Jim Crow... I'm hangin(') and burnin(') from a tree! Ain't this some jazz?

Constable Smithers: "What business do you have with any guffaw o' witness?"

"I'll tell ye, officers and men", roared Punch... I mean Glock: "I reached out after you on false pretences, see? Because you thundered on with sirens atonal or droning, and it was merely to shake a dwarf's hand. I laugh and caper herein... HO! HO! HO! HO! Look at you – this is the greatest amount of fun a denim-wearer can have short of playing with oneself. Yes sir! Since

you've proven by your actions that you really believe in ghouls! Wasn't it you who came running towards me; albeit through a haze of Prussian blue which melds into pewter? Again, such rivalry as this ricocheted across the heavens. Whilst, in the middle of our whirligig, a torso rose up in order to fill the dimensions of a mental screen. It rendered itself either Riefenstahlian or Thorakian by turn. It also possessed some pitted muscles – when built up by steroids – and rising tier upon tier in a manner that's pectoral yet unabridged. Did they illustrate those Charles Atlas advertisements of yesteryear? These were the ones which are redolent of a Californian beach or carney scene – i.e., one of those tourneys that Arnold Schwarznegger originated from? Do you register the fact of his election to be the Golden state's governorship, now? Anyway, these teen messages embodied the following output: 'a weedy, pimply adolescent who's running to fat? Don't let them kick sand in your face, squirt! For a mere two dollars and ninety-five cents you can enjoy a brand new body. Look like a classical sculpture in your own laundromat... et cetera.' Yet has such a figure – in many ways reminiscent of the Strongman in Crowley's tarot – actually severed a bloodied head? He came to dispense with its robotic cranium (thereby). Likewise, it fell away with this chain-saw's beheading or pulp, and plus a delinquent pap or severance weeping from its reversed blades. It simultaneously looked like an illustration from Flemish art that had been crossed with an MTV jump-cut. Never mind... because a left-over of the Capeks' drama has fallen to the ground. It (in turn) strove to renew its nature through some fractured and broken metal... all of this delineating some pink rust or its shadow via a semblance of payne's grey. Unfortunately, no silver coffin-handles seek to further its cause..."

Both of the policemen, whether the constable or his sergeant, then speak together: "So there were no bogies, bogles, vampires, banshees, wraiths, zombies, will-o-the-wisps, human fish, wrecking crew... etc. For – whether scripted by the music of

Henry Lawes or not – Milton’s comus rout hesitates to make its entry.”

Glock: “Verily – it must be a pointed or transparent case!”

The fuzz then respond in a corporate fashion: “You have contrived to bring us out here on a false alarm... at least bereft of all dungeons and dragons?”

Glock: “It may prove to be extant in terms of some penetrative facts.”

One’s boys-in-blue are keening over a new crusade now: “Do you have any reason for such an unsolicited absence? You know that it happens to be an offence to waste police time?”

Glock: “Spare me the officious trivia, officers. For don’t you understand how boring it can be to one like me... namely, to wilt here or within death’s pall? So – in circumstances such as these – one’s given to manufacture what fun one wishes. A big joke contrives to fry the little ones to dust, radioactively speaking. I’ve discovered in my researches (you see) that loneliness may often be slaked by a police siren’s burst or commodious whistle. Wherein those flashing lights instil some abundant comedy – whether close at hand or out there under a red-and-yellow awning. Doesn’t it occur astride the narrows of a confining beach – whence Punch’s tragi-comedy is performed?”

Death’s-head: “In this instant or shard, the police don’t recognise their playwright or scribbling colt. For, by virtue of the fact that he sucked pomegranates from a lotus, he or ‘it’ lay necessarily up to speed. Since Glock chose to swoon nakedly before a cable’s electrical discharge – instead of which the voltaic current lifted him off to oblivion. His face seemed to be stricken or otherwise ashen; and this was before its clear implementation into ultramarine... or its registering of every condenser’s bleep. What

colours were these kaleidoscopic tints (?); as they came to be symbolised by a skull's absence or a jutting towards the bone --- never mind the mighty ohm! Every semblance or play-time then lifted its wire; the former itself crackling with intent... indeed, this atmosphere kindles or proves to be alive *avec* motes. Each electron cuts into this ether and defines its overall sapphire rhapsody (thereby). Looking up – and with his cranium masked by an infantile projection – our caretaker cascades within such living lightning. (Even though all such distended spectrums have been assembled hitherto). Might it illustrate an exercise in what musicians call 'the Blues'? Certainly, whether we're speaking of prussian, ultramarine, phthalo, cobalt, cerulean, brilliant, phthalo turquoise, pearlescent... et cetera: all are there. Yet neither of these policemen notices this phenomenon, and they basically pass on from an electric chair that's mantled in a haze. Didn't Andy Warhol do a silk-screen print of a scene like it --- i.e., essentially an exercise in *ecce homo* which found itself covered by an identical pigment? Glock, still waxing *compos mentis* anew, wants to quibble about one particular word. It chooses to be pig and meant – get it? HA! HA! HA! HA!"

Nonetheless, our two guardians are busy encompassing Charon's way: "Cease your scratchings at such unbidden wounds, fool! Also, never dare to call us out again on an uncouth legend. For you'll be arrested and sent to the magistrate's court else. You've had your fun (my poltroon); learn to quit while you're ahead of the blade – why don't you?"

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Their Parthian shot crashes out as follows: "You must watch your step, my blithering caretaker! Don't ever presume to contact us again unless you're really in trouble, if you know what's good for you. Furthermore, you shall have occasion to sign off now or contract your living will..."

Act Two; Scene Two:

Death's-head: "It must be twenty-four hours on from our tragedy at the grave-yard's or caretaker's hut. Indeed, Glock signals his present isolation or its loneliness, and this was primarily by sitting to one side in the stands. He whistles a Londonderry air within the sky-light of a subdued glow. To one side of his present impasse, however, a candle burns fitfully and with an intermittent or golden flicker. It happens to be stuck in an urn or a green-bottle; and this eldritch fugg merely flexes 'its' muscles using some wax. Might such a container be an amphora – or a vessel of an ancient turn – under our radiance's slough? (Isn't the definitive edition of H.P. Lovecraft's poetry called *The Ancient Track*?) Moreover, the entire scene-scape had to be filled over by a ready translucence; thence marking up the void, its molecular space or recalling a Cathar gleam. Wasn't this the light within which so charged le Corbusier's vision? Wherein one special heresy can lead – through an Albigensian's pout – towards a nimbus of eternity. Now then, the colours involved in this were an orange that'd been manufactured out of lead --- primarily by way of happenstance's heat or Zeus' bolts. Yet, in all conscience, everything has been suffused by a cadmium yellow. Truly, Glock is profoundly bored and hungers for the police van, if not this chase's excitement. Couldn't it possibly be a time to subdue the Devil's witness?"

Glock: "Would their forms approach me or residually slake my thirst – at once pretending to be porcine in the darkness? To be sure: a sky that waxed both ebon and claret intruded. It led away from where we were gathered – and merely seemed to pursue a lifting up – at least by dint of a Ganymede's tracery. Will you detect a foul hominid who lurks within such boughs? It stirs something of a customary essence or its blight, you see. (Even though this slope above to the griffin lay replete, plus the motivation for its angel's nomenclature. Similarly, some intentional lichen lay all about us – and this was despite our penchant for letting off guns. Did these wraiths smart at our

pain? May the lips of a curlicue or a blunderbuss like this seek shelter under a roof's covering... and by hurling one-to-one inside a claw (thereby)? Might a sexual dimension obtrude?"

Death's-head: "A three-spronged trident hits against some gravel; therein to loosen an atonal sound or its semblance! Someone has struck pay-dirt down in the deep (*a la* Peter Benchley) or adjacent to a sepulchral vault. It came to be hemmed in on three sides, my masters, and was understandably cubical in its modernist infractions. At the centre of it lay our Glock; a character who is just farming the floor with a moment's indifference. Can he be Neptune – especially when given a post-modern focus, or otherwise seeking the truth in graffiti art and such illuminations? Mark you: when he chose to examine himself in the compass of a hand, he knew that he was born a woeful witness. In another intervention, a bearded Glock went round and round and around within a tetragrammaton o' the spirit. Glock had become old now – or found himself encircled by mist as well as brackish over a lost innocence. Each and every hair may have splintered to a greyish-white whilst one looks on. Whereas Glock was observed tracing patterns in the dirt – no matter how waylaid or after one such closure's abundance. What may he be articulating here? Surely, it has nothing to do with those traditions and customs which were contained in Alexander Howard's *Cavalcade*? But – more realistically than ever – it doubtless relates to all of those Punchmen who haven't been born. These are individuals like Wal Kent, Geoff Felix, Waldo Lanchester, Michael Byrom, Fred Tickner, Glyn Edwards, John Stafford, Tom Kemp, Sidney de Hempsey, Jesson, Professor Smith, Percy Press Junior and Senior, Martin Bridle, John Styles, Smokey the Clown, Bryan Clark, John Alexander, Pete Maggs, Rod Burnett, Barry Smith, Professor Panic, Caz and Sergei Obraztsov... *et al.* What did the experimental novelist, B.S. Johnson, say about a salvation through lists?

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At a last parade Glock finds himself strapped, intermittently, to an electric-chair. He is stark naked. Will it backfire upon his ready physical needs? Who can tell the truth about this? Because the road for any diplomacy announces no end in sight... Yet, all of a sudden, a streaking guff of air was melted into some pitch alongside it. You see: Glock had begun to burn, sizzle and fry – whilst his face resiled to an oval like in a Bacon triptych. A smidgen of ozone then fills the ether; thereby linked to a flame or cut off by its transparent breeding. The caretaker disappears now... and his features look to be illumined, charcoaled, barbecued – even odalisque. Each new immodesty strives to curdle the mouth ‘white’ amid some brown. For what remains after a fire other than its embers?”

Glock: “Again, I stared above me only to disinterr a longitude’s snout or shadow. It pointed directly towards the south by way of a clustered embrace. These found themselves to be joined together or interlinked, membrane by membrane...

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Glock (half an hour later on): “I know another wheeze – at once by turning a hoop or twisting a jester’s clout! I’ll ring the police once more so as to indicate my addiction to *fun*. One call always brings the house down... somewhat imperturbably.”

BRING; BRING...

XX

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Hello?”

{Death’s-head: By way of a spectral implementation or its stage-set; i.e., an amphitheatre that’s pursuant to a dream’s estrangement... Wherein Glock reappears – at least momentarily – in the guise of Mister Punch. ‘Hello, children’, he says. To which O’Rourke replies in consternation: ‘pardon?’ Punch, for his part, comes dressed in a traditional attire or its vaudeville;

together with a red cap of braid, felt lower-lips and grasping wooden-hands. He glides onto the stage *avec* his mitts up in mock-abandonment... a glove-puppet like no other! Do you detect such a deliberation or purport? For – up above this clockwork regulation or silence – one was free or able to see the interface of a miniature stage roundabouts. Come on now: since its appurtenances commandeer the gilding of so much gold that's been taken off the premises. Whereupon a half-moon or crescent is seen partly over to the left; plus a circular measuring device (when Imperial in its ditty) returns the weight of its misjudgement. Are you clear about it, *mon ami*? Has the worm fully turned from its abundant folly? Let those crystal shards fall limply to the floor amid autumnal leaves... Again, and over the permanence of this measuring jug, one can spy a thespian mask which had been made of bronze. It contrived to be heavy, cast in gold, foursquare and reminiscent of the theatrical intentions of ancient Greece. Its eye sockets happen to be fluted and evil; while the mouth remains cavernous or wide-open. Up above this hood or face-covering – and pursuant to a space atop its head – one can discern some orchids. These flowers are brilliantly white or festooned towards a nimbus of death; thereby indicating the musk of the grey lotus... A poison (this) which blossoms in a location far to the east.

Punch appears before us once again. He glides forwards in an arc and finds himself contained by an original socket. His eyes bulge from their retinas – particularly when abreast of such wood as this with his cap and ball. A blanched ruff surrounds his neck at this point; especially given those red and yellow stripes which taper down such an awning. The Beadle or policeman is also seen to be hanging around there. This law officer evinces something of a starched wig, a cravat, a monocle and a turned up moustache. Does his demeanour indicate a ponderous Victorian nomenclature (perchance)? Can you recall those lines from Shakespeare's *King Lear*?

*Hold thy hand bloody Beadle
Why dost thou whip that whore?
Thou lusteth to use her in that kind
For which thou whipst her.*

A noose seems to be hanging between the two of them; but, in a blur of motion or a trick of the light, these puppets appear to exchange places. All of a piece then – the Beadle finds himself hung from the wooden stage. His feet are both off the ground and the clean rope's been fixed around his neck. To which Punch cries aloud: ‘that’s the way to do it!’}

Act Two; Scene Three:

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Hello... once again.”

Glock: “The Devil and all his legions of crocodiles (or dragons from Hell) are after me. They happened to be busily coming up from under the ground. Can’t you recognise my marshalling of the truth? For their agency or its retrieval is blood red in a ghoulish way; while it lists on towards a silhouette of darkened sludge... Was it really brownish to the tinge; and have you ever read a novel by Graham Masterton? Because here a naked woman’s form floats in the ether or out of all compass, and it’s withdrawn over the expectancy of her recumbent thighs. Yet all around her – or in terms of a necessary ligature – these experimental lays of the ‘brown’ coagulate and gather into a form. Nonetheless, each mouth champed off at a necessary bit or bite (sic), and each one came to be neglected in its fluidity (quite possibly). Did these heavy skulls become translucent; or otherwise mixed and melted together in their uncertainty? Moreover, one eye could mushroom in a distended manner amid a river o’ teeth; or will it just dissemble o’er a vampiric longing? Meanwhile, my veriest image hit pay-dirt; at least when hidden at the heart of a jig-saw piece dedicated to light-heartedness. Might it turn out to be the ripe temperature of a dissonance which saw its hope lessening... or always glowing in bright pink? Yet

still, I have to return to those basalt corridors that exist underneath the earth... Wherein various wild boar search for truffles in my hair and scalp, or seemingly adjacent to its individual strands. Would you be able to detect a rendezvous here? Since such discharges or flames hint at a new leprosy... or they found themselves giving into a fluidity in the skin."

Constable Smithers: "What nonsense you utter! You alone are responsible for your desires... good Glock. Give up such mendacity concerning the oneiric, I beg you. Instead, just consider this charnel house to be the onset of a new daybreak. But we shall not be deceived again... for – in no way will we be provoked forth – sirens blaring."

Glock (when further acting out the commensurate status of a dream...): "Have I come abreast of these beggar-monsters or suchlike cripples? Because the manufacture of Punch's desperation lay aslant me – when way down or betwixt the height of these curtains – and lying askew on Brighton's sands. Do you remember it at all? For this temple always has about it the look of a pavilion – albeit where a stream-lining due to gold gives way to some vermillion. Needless to say, its banks were steeped with an awning which occasionally pitched up by way of yellow-to-red... and it was fluted at the top or surmounted *avec* a flag. Won't it be a Union jack? It swayed in the wind or rain, but otherwise remained static. Suddenly, and within this amphitheatre of misspent dreams, Punch bobs up once more... yet isn't he essentially looming up against a northern industrial landscape? Could it be pitched up in terms of its alliance with scrub-land and bush – particularly when drawn in photographic grey or sepia? Surely now, a misplaced eyelet or orb (one which was oval as regards its suggestion o' whiteness) reared out of a black face-mask? Mightn't we reminisce about a *noir* publication in the United States during the 'thirties called *Black Mask*? Again, it careered afore its face or lisp – and it just cut to the

trace by way of so much affordable wire. For can the clockwork transparency of one 'eye' hide from the mechanism within?"

Death's-head: "Punch has made good throughout this ordeal. He stands on the stage under some gloved awe – what with tassels and bells attached to a pulley. His dress sense, though, remains the same: i.e., with a pair of goggling eyes, a pointy nose, a white ruff and some orange/green jester's stripes. Are the latter attached to so many nine tailors --- or a campanologist's delight? Enlivened now, by various candles (tall and red) which may or may not illuminate the scene... he finds himself arrayed with the Devil! They are fighting with one another – whilst Punch's stick or wooden baton goes up and down on Mephistopheles' head. Whereas the latter glove-puppet fixates on a scarlet arrangement... one that's taken together with a fluted conch and a spear over its entrance. After all, he waxes a deep crimson or finds himself given over to an amplitude of taste. May he embolden a creature from the black lagoon – primarily by wearing a gas-mask or being vaguely reminiscent of Blaise Cendrar's text, *Lice*? Do you resuscitate its library card? It proved to be a memorable account of the Great War or the first european civil war... even though it comes across as very different to Celine's or Barbusse's record. Still, they fight in a blur of motion or an unparalleled flight; and it occurs within a slip-stream of identity which transfers onto video. Furthermore, we notice that the following tints: turquoise, earth brown, the colour of violent emerald and blood red --- all of these find themselves carried over. Forsooth – only then do we see Punch clatter Lord Nick to the floor of the booth! He resultantly shrieks, gibbers and croaks in triumph: 'that's the way to do it!'

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Within this simulacrum of crimson or its flame, therefore, William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' lies prone and defeated. Can it amount to the reversal of a mediaeval mystery play or its trajectory? Oh yes... For the Devil has been thrown down to the boards. He happens to be deceased – even kaput – cackles our

Punch. A Gnostic touch is added here too; especially when the latter declares: ‘Behold (!), now everyone’s free to do what they want...’”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Really? I don’t reckon to that sound or its circumference myself...”

Glock (in the character of Punch – or by way of a broken witness): “Ha! Ha! Ha! He! He! He! My hands are untied forevermore; and they exist in celebration of Satan’s defeat. Or, quite possibly, it’s imbibed in another way... Yes?”

Constable Smithers: “But we still won’t come out to rescue you, Glock. We think that you’re lying – do you see?” (He speaks in a way which is transverse directed, albeit when aslant his larger colleague. Both of them are dressed in a bold blue or serge. O’Rourke remains seated throughout, however, and he seems to be smoking a fine cigar. It hails from the Dominican republic).

Act Two; Scene Four:

Death’s-head: <> ‘He’ speaks with a narrative thrust into his hand – one that’s rather like a spear! <>: “Yet again, your face becomes flabby or dissembles to a haloed red (withal). Can’t we intimate some sweat there; or are you all aglow with rivulets of pumice? Further, your quivering nostrils betray the fact that you may be genuinely afraid... primarily because Punch has reappeared within the topsy-turvy world of a withering asp. Is this performance tent or its livery o’ mayhem turned over, or does it sway in the breeze and ricochet to the side (even)? In its silent cinema, *mon ami*, we can see the huge doll’s head of Mister Punch listing to the west – at least within an aggressive or sepia-tinted moment. On he moves while swarming towards us; together with his arms held out before him or aslant, and his fists curled into tight balls. It’s as if he’s become a Neapolitan version of Odin, the all-father, who’s come out to play on the undulating grass... but then again, where is Fenris or the great wolf who will

devour him at the end of days? Still, the morbid impermanence of his eye leaps out at us... at once looking frigid in its diameter of nothingness. Most especially, when a spartan landscape may be detected behind this scarecrow... one which merely freezes our gaze away from those translucent fields. Had such an ebon mask been observed – reverse-ways – or with a white wire holding up the other side of its futile skin? For it occurred out here on May eve or the summer's solstice, and usually behind the curtain at a village fete... together with such a blackened image staring out at you afore the clock. A few tokens of ivy float next to its case... do its big and little arms indicate a quarter to three?

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Immediately, Mister Punch pops up before us or thereafter. A purple cloth which was made from a comparable velvet swept to his rear; basically by covering up the inner recesses of a theatrical booth. Does he lisp over a closure or its issue – particularly with his arms held across or *in lieu* of wooden staves --- never mind thespian extras!? His ruff seems to be grey in its chinese whiteness or any other gesture; plus *avec* more than a hint of green-and-gold wire in order to go with those goggling eyes. Remember now: he has just committed more murders than even his Professor can recall.” (Note: a *prof* is the boffin whose hand controls Mr. Punch. But then, may anyone ever really master this errant Everyman?)

Glock (in terms of a soliloquy or its voice-over): “Come quickly! You must save the soul of one who cares nothing for this life... even if it just happens to be a gateway across the temperature of death. Because various bodies went to pieces out there in the night-sky; even though such rubiate star clusters twinkled like graves. All of these were limned in moonlight – or they moved out beyond the shuttered boards of my chalet-cum-shack. Are not booming or imponderable sounds to be heard reverberating near to my nakedness – at least in this phantasm or lustre? Also, those ‘beasts’ have slobbered all over us like spent carrion on ready rooftops... all the while superintending us with Comus’ rout. Or

might it be the victimhood of a new intensity? Most abundantly, when my axe or halberd had splintered the skull of one of these ghouls! Over and beyond ‘it’ went... at once circling the circumference of a magic circle out in the desert, a place where Choronzon found itself worsted. This must be irrespective of Aleister Crowley’s or Victor Neuberg’s presence there... Yet the young woman’s form reared on a proximate tomb – a Circe to my sleep. Is she blonde, nude and svelte, or in possession of a towering immensity of hair? None of which can be concealed by the green winding-sheet that this *femme fatale* displays about her. Was Cleland’s Fanny Hill encumbered by such a glossary? It can’t really be Judy, but maybe it’s Pretty Polly?”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Hey, Glock! You do actually sound in trouble for once. We’ll be right over... never fear.” (Not long afterwards we find those police sirens starting up again).

Act Two; Scene Five:

Death’s-head (alternately now): “The police – after they have arrived in a manner that’s one plus another – kick in the shed’s door. Their legs are longitudinal to the shaping of these planes; each one basically adjoining its distaff side/eddy. Nonetheless, and to the advent of any such witness, Glock is left laughing in the entrance. His bald head carouses its own mayhem... and it’s merely japing to the spit. Each of the officers then stands in a light-blue doorway or its sound... but what of Punch? Does he leer on from the apex of a piece of clockwork machinery? A semblance or cornucopia of disorder (this is) which rescues some junk from tumble-down rooms. On top here – and by dint of any witness – we find a taxidermist’s bottles or phials, and the in-trays of so many specimens. May it all relate – no matter how subtly – to Damien Hirst’s artwork? Again, the locution of a thousand bottles needs splicing with whatever abruptness comes to hand (possibly). Likewise, do you detect the inner workings of Swiss watches here; wherein every one piles on the offering of its barometric pressure? Higgledy-piggledy these be; or they

prove to be unconstrained in their witness statements. While each one festoons a gigantic or Goliath spider looking on aft; or maybe it's just pursuant to junk's gerrymandering!

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Yet Joey the Clown has reappeared on stage at this time, and he's occasionally aggressive towards so many Victorian playthings. He seems to be dappled with a test-card of estranged colours; the latter swimming before us like a medley or a liquorice assortment. Some sausages have been left out on the balsa wood, and this nearly always occurs ahead of those screaming children of our imagination. They exist aslant of a purple curtain which wrestles venom (or even relief) from a distant sky. Must you declare a commitment to this act of trespass? 'I've got a packet of pork scratchings', opines Mister Punch. Suddenly, we notice that the crocodile is looming up from the back of our stage. It was possibly a dragon from long ago – i.e., way back in Porsini's time or the dawn days, and it existed amid a land of giants in olden mists. Couldn't a Nemedian chronicle be devoted to it? Now the monster – who's really a glove-puppet – glides forwards in a way that's beholden to the hand which controls its sliding indent. Might it perceive the scarlet impediment of its 'Eye'; or those sharp sabre-teeth which can wrestle it to the deck? Do they grab hold of such flesh as this (resultantly so)? Each green-jaw then closes around a cylindrical funnel; together with the bacon that's already crackling in an imaginary pan. Whereas Punch and the Crocodile are competing for the attention of this pork – and they essentially vie over it to the left and right. Were they oblivious to the gaggle or crowd of children – at once hidden in the stalls – and who squeal with laughter at this onslaught? "Give me those porkers or gifts of an aberrant swine!", squalls our Punch. For its part, the Crocodile remains speechless throughout. It waxes too busy in consuming its porcine bilge; having risen up, and contained by an explaining arm, in order to embrace the recumbent lustre of so much green. 'Release the bounty of such a sty! Didn't the pigs rule an imaginary soviet in *Animal Farm*? I demand my sausages... naughty, naughty... NAUGHTY!',

screeches Punch. In summation, a puppet or an imaginary wolverine finds itself caught out and abruptly lying on its side. What does he look like? Why, his nose seems to be pronounced, his orbs appear rather protuberant, and his lips were open in order to reveal some wooden teeth. Doesn't his bell-tipped cap hang down with a concentration of effort? 'AAAAAAHHHHH!', cry all the children sentimentally."

Sergeant O'Rourke: "So you have tricked us again?"

Glock: "That's right, my lads! But weren't you already alienated from the familiarity of your misstatement? *Yessum...* for the nakedness of this skull often rears up ahead of one's dawn. You see, a cobweb may have joined one's enclosure despite your perspective... given the fact over whether the cold radiated out beyond my body. It testifies to nought save a stone compact (adjacently speaking). Were we really in a situation where the shack has exploded – thus sending its grief's roundabout? Or might this be an uproar which had occurred from the ground's lineaments or upwards? For, like a ruined piece of articulate sculpture, my neo-classic rest lies above the earth's surface. Could it resemble the withering destiny of Arno Breker's shapes – particularly when these have been smashed to shards by egalitarian troopers? Surely also, the cold sets in abreast of this weeping ether; the former reaching up to the Heavens as some fulsome steam..."

Constable Smithers: "Your fun is over, Glock. You will never manoeuvre our intentions towards such daemonic ludo again. We shall not come to a villain's aid --- no matter how convincing you sound in terms of terror or derangement."

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Are you so resolved?"

Glock: "--- Only to die..."

Constable Smithers: "--- Irrespective of any justice..."

Glock: "No, morality... at least in aid of a ripe snake. I gainsay the poison of its fangs. Doesn't a worm ouroborous exist at the bottom of a bottle of Scotch whiskey?"

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Reject this kindred of our days, my friend, since yonder life enjoins the modesty of cribbage... at least when it's canvassing the perspective of lost fingers. True enough or *nix*... no caretaker can muster the strength to stand alone before a night-sheet's impasse!"

Death's-head: "He is at once solitary or lost, and he remains within the fastness of this adoration. Does he (Glock) sit there steeped in cold; and just wrapped around with the morality of a blanket? Still, a fire continues to burn before his knelt form; thereby giving out a semblance of heat – or is it the after-echo of a subdued witness (forevermore)? Snow and ice then banks up on either side of him; and this occurs primarily within the tundra of a misstated Blue... itself next to one burnt-out shack. All of which casts a shadow on nought but freezing air..."

Glock (as an aside): "Both of the patrolmen's faces look rather hard now; and they edge towards the angular or the green in one's declining light. May it interpret the spent abstraction of a candle which gutters on its table? Again, there comes into my mind the delirious tragi-comedy of Punch and Judy... In a drama where Mister Punch stands up (or out of a black-and-white silhouette) with the masked Hangman afore him. Will his body really be gibbeted after death – one wonders? 'Rest easy, Punchy me boy', says old blood 'n' bones, 'you'll have to be hanged from the neck three times until you're properly dead! That's deceased, cadaverous, *rigor mortis*, cut up *a la* William S. Burroughs, et cetera... do you hear? You must perish once for love and twice over for filthy lucre, as well as finally in accord with that ol' hurdy-gurdy music.'"

Act Three; Scene One:

Glock is talking on his old 'phone: “You have to high-tail it over here, officer, for I am in danger from a thousand staves... The creatures are all around me now – and they seem to be licensed by their necessary bites; together with a howling amid the snow that drifts down from neighbouring peaks. Weren’t these lights out or covered o’er by candle snuffers? Most especially – given the illuminations which surround us; at least in terms of those icy rivulets or these icicles of wrath that festoon my beard. Might it rekindle an imaginary George V’s effort? Further, my long-standing mastodons approach me through the snow; and they’re merely abreast of one reflex as against another. Moreover – when one considers it – they span the horizon from left-to-right or under a grey temperature. Let us look at this: since their gibbering forms were seen reflected in such flames, or they find themselves released via a fiery kindred. May it be the estimation of some flattened Greek fire? Still though, I am gathered in my scotch tartan or wrap, as the mob festoons or commences its targeted magnetism. Can this resemble the inner landscapes of Elias Canetti’s text *Crowds and Power*? For these hominids gain a tundra of forgotten days out of all witness – and they are spotted howling by an emerald vestibule. Each tusk is then raised in ululation before an expectant mote; and yet for a brief second the climate grows warmer. It was almost as if the earth shifted ahead of an expectant sun! Mightn’t it embolden a sea-green spheroid *avaunt* the tallest of these braves? Possibly so... because each man-thing stood agape aslant the towering majesty of a new eclipse. Certainly, I came here asking for an escape within the mysterious affidavit of these forgotten towers. When just for a moment – to be sure – my mind goes blank and it becomes filled with images drawn from J.R.R. Tolkein’s *The Lord of the Rings* (a trilogy). Aren’t we prone to the onslaught of this new indifference? Against this, and around the circumference of our sky’s angles, russet or verdant cumulus continues to gather. It fills one’s conspectus with an exploding minstrel; primarily by way of looking up into the adventures of

so many lit-up gyroscopes. Suddenly, it blossoms into the manufacture of nothing but light... and isn't even nanotechnology restricted by light's wavelength? Can it be an expectation of death? Please forgive me – officers – you must come to my aid!"

Sergeant O'Rourke (who answers the 'phone on his own and without Constable Smithers): "Not on your nelly! We've had enough of your antics, boyo. Because your lies have called us forth on one too many occasions – and always without undue visitation by these spirits. You see, Seneca's children haven't been lost or otherwise abandoned in such a house of nothingness. It's a manse o' hell or nullity *a la* Richard Matheson – do you comprehend?"

Death's-head: "But truly, Glock was beyond all help from mortal hand now. Yes and no? For didn't we leave Punch – his aberrant *alter ego* – wrestling with the crocodile on a puppet-theatre's stage? 'Give up those sausages, you swine!', yelled our anti-hero.

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Punch still possesses a baton and he proceeds to batter the unholy croc with it. His paste-board offering or its brief thwacks the beast again and again... while such pork string-beans hang from its expectant lips. Could you detect those present fingers which lie slightly behind one's gloves? Most abundantly – when they are wielded by the expert hand of a master puppeteer. Granted: Punch falls unexpectedly anew or abreast, and 'he' finds himself caught between the sabre-teethed jaws of the Croc. Is he dead (perchance); or just sleeping within the boards of this driven snow?

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The doctor pops up behind him at this time; if only to enquire whether such a cavalcade is dead or not. 'Are you deceased, Mister Punch?', asks the quack in an officious tone. 'Yes', comes back a tiny sepulchral voice from beyond a thousand graves. 'Whether that be true or no', chortles the medical man, 'I have

here the necessary remedy – namely, a bottle of physic.’ Could it be laudanum or opium drenched in alcohol, in order to adduce so many deluded dreams? While this particular M.D. – for his part – happens to be a genuine snake-oil salesman. Most especially, when he finds himself characterised by a bald pate, a handle-bar moustache (white), and a crisp or black dress-suit. He also possesses a criss-crossed balustrade – albeit in the form of a white tie, but not necessarily any tails. Punch remains expectantly attired in cap, bells, pointy shoes and striped jimmies. He still lies prone on the stage.”

Glock (on a telephone for the final time): “You must help me out of this folly or its spendthrift agony!”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “By no means, your falsehoods go before you like so many fireflies which flit over a swamp’s surface.”

Glock: “But I’m not lying this time.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Ah! So you admit your prior mendacity, do you? Begone Glock... *Go Down Moses*, in the words of a Nobel laureate like William Faulkner. Let us spy upon your retrieval in the dust! Why don’t you fall forwards into the earth and take the Devil with you!? Moreover, won’t the skeleton come up behind Mister Punch as a ghost or spectre, and in order to haunt him? There are some who say, after all, that it’s Judy’s spirit – i.e., his one residue of conscience which follows him to the end. May it represent the journey of his own ghost train through its tunnel? Anyway, you’ve had your last laugh Glock --- you who have cried wolf, ghoul, monster and boggle once too often!”

Glock: “Who’s CRYING?”

Death’s-head: “After which the old-fashioned telephone line goes dead... whereupon Glock, the graveyard’s caretaker, is abducted out of his shack by the side-door. (Wasn’t this the one through

which the two officers, O'Rourke and Smithers, had once entered?) He finds himself suitably escorted by the denizens of the cemetery. These are hob-goblins, dryads, ossuary mongers, ‘things that go bump in the night’, anti-gods, bad faeries, delinquent elves, negative pixies, zombies, mongrels, picnic cannibals and much else. Could they be revisiting Hecate or her minions? Or were they (in turn) illustrative of a monster mash; possibly even an assembly of vampires? Didn’t the Vikings choose to call their parliament *a thing*? To be quick about it: they crucified Glock’s body next to some wood --- at once head-down or in a bloodied wash --- and under a full moon. The corpse was covered in liquid or a rheum’s film; even over its well-creased hide and torment. Certainly, the warder’s throat is out and it pitched down the neck’s side like a warbling giblet! Might it summon up one of those performance art pieces involving mutilation – and exhibited by Schwarzkogler in the ‘seventies? But such marginalia can be discounted now – since Glock remains stubbornly dead. Chief amongst his persecutors came Death’s-head. He continued to wear the outside of a fossil’s skull (plus antlers) over a lipless tare. Wasn’t ‘he’ the robber-leader of such a gang even in soliloquy, then?”

Glock’s corse finally sports a death’s-head: “My lips are numb and blue. I am without residual life or animation. Yet beneath me lies Punch. He or ‘it’ comes to be slumped on the ground with goggling eyes... and our puppet’s dressed in a reddish/yellow cuppa-soup! His small wooden hands were doubtless cast askew. Likewise, a deep purple curtain grounds the stage of this glove’s performance behind him. His body also seems to be surrounded by marbles which were grey-to-green-to-blue (sic). How do you do? Suddenly, and like news from nowhere, a familiar voice returns: ‘that’s the way to do it!’ *HA! HA! HA! HA!*”

THE END

WE ARE WRATH'S CHILDREN!

An opera without soap

CHARACTERS: These happen to be Ancient Cramp (an aged millionaire), Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, his daughter, and their three step-sons or step-brothers. All of the latter are both middle-aged and require money desperately. Their names encompass the following demons: Arbuthnot Robinson, Crinkley Rage Ransom and Tiberius Hague-Ovant. A lawyer who has been retained by the family also makes an occasional appearance. His name can't help but be Montague Raitt. Likewise, a beautiful white cat known as Scrimp or Kaiser 'enjoys' a walk-on/walk-off part. Wasn't everything legitimate and above board now, yes?

ONE

Ancient Cramp: "Looking down from within the semblance of a dream – or possibly some form of crestfallen imagination – I am perceived to stand still. Could I be withered in my years (?) or otherwise bent over a yew-stick, when perspiring, and wearing a dark-blue suit. May this orgone tincture wilt as an agency's resource or renewal...? Anyway, the disembodied semblance of such a face floats near to me. It must only enflame electrons or similar discharges from the dark-side. Does it really gyrate within a spectrum of deluded atoms? Also, will I ever be in a position to move my Bishop across the checker-board in order to annul it? Most certainly, it's just those adventures into game theory that Willie Ryan outlined in *Scientific Draughts*.

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Now then, the visage I've sketched causes itself to become subdued within some falling particles... each one of which belabours the prospect of a true 'form'. Whereupon our atomic mask bears its teeth below the eye-sockets of some dead eye (coloured red); not to mention the crackling of sulphur. Further, this head can revolve silently or in its own ether; thence to reveal a kaleidoscope and any mutability out of hours. Or is it a belly-aching mixture of *Kaos*? A scene wherein some strange beasts –

whether multi-eyed behemoths or jagged-eyed Assyrians – besport themselves. Some of these creatures are legless or wish they were so; while others signal the pineal eye on their forehead and it exists at the heart of a pressing insight. Might it be new – or no? Again, the odd hippocriff or example of Moreau's carrión (within this particular wrecking crew) paddles along on the ground like a porpoise... or alternately, some sort of deranged *Hamlet*. Doubtlessly, this assemblage was a manifestation of all my night fears – all of whom (to personify them) radiated out from a central block. During the course of which, a great electronic medley surrounds my skull and it inundates the brain within. Every mouth then represents a cluster of molecules, fire, teeth, vacant orbs and misspent energies flashing roundabout. How shall it indicate anything other than a nightmare's withering insistence?

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Nevertheless – at the heart of this conundrum – variously familiar shapes become discernible to me. (No matter how far they may appear to be from our fire-storm!) I manifest myself at the stage's centre, to be sure. Am I not dressed in a dark-blue suit – of a well-known cut – as formerly indicated? Yes... but surrounding me on every side are my children. Who else could they be in such a glass of hours? Well! First up to the mark comes my eldest step-son and his hair is red; it flames with the discharge of so many doubts... themselves unresolved. Whilst his features were coruscated or careworn – and this was usually over the ventilation of so much woe. Most of it, habitually, revolves around the concept of anger! (Whether it sneaks up on you as rather unbidden, surreptitious, defensive, round the houses, oblique or a performance in rodomontade). Most persuasively though, his livery is caricatured by that of a vulture. For all of my children (with the sole exception of one of them) find the lower extremity of their bodies to be covered in feathers – even some attendant wings. My good sir, are you free to engage in the furtherance of my dreams... whether or not they prove to be accompanied by their winglets? Moreover, each one

of my sprats (whether a direct or indirect off-spring) stands on a cylindrical pile of gold coins, Salvador Dali-like, that extends many times over their body height. Can we believe them to be birds of prey who're liable to wing it away on my booty? Or is this my accomplished progeny --- irrespective of any Willed status?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "You betcha, daddy-o! But any status of ours as vultures won't superintend these facts (no sir). Needless to say, we sit here perched on some endless columns of old, crinkly pound notes, silver dollars, sterling enquiries and divers gold bullion. Won't you be able to hear it rustling in the long grass? Inevitably, we are yearning for the circumference of your death and wish to hasten the day on which it occurs. Die; die, die, die... you old rascal! Why don't you perish and leave us all of your money? For don't we recall the adroitness of Punch & Judy within this cavalcade of skin (?) – it capers out there on an iron stage."

Arbuthnot Robinson (taking up his brother's phantom argument with gusto): "A vaudeville wherein those glove-puppets glide into some sort of silhouette; at least in relation to each other's fugue. Does one remember the racial delirium – now coming true – of Christopher Priest's science fiction novel, *Fugue for a Darkening Island*? Truly, the romanticism of its imperial measure never needs to doubt itself in such a torture chamber. Again, Punch has mushroomed before the laurel wreath of his own plumage – and with the canopy of its red awning way out in front. Yellow and scarlet it was: plus we need to take note of a tambourine's sound (somewhere) or in a distant splice. Do you count yourself ready over our foray? Since Mister Punch remains goggle-eyed, replete, under-utilised and 'inhuman' in a slightly mechanised way. Might he make a gesture roundabout the knees (?), primarily in terms of a dark-purple curtain that's satin or folded. Was it touched (also) by a tincture of darksome blue-dye around the retina's extremities? Surely now, Punch takes care of

a Baby handed to him by Judy – albeit maximising its screaming mouth or fulsome expenditure. *Quod* or because such an orifice remains well-rounded, bleating, on its knees before fate and reminiscent of Eisenstein at its best. Do you re-engage with that example of the cat-calling nurse, *a la* Bacon, in *Battleship Potemkin*? An illustration of Poussin's *Slaughter of the Innocents* comes to mind...”

Ancient Cramp: “But what of my prior articulation – when dressed, as I am, in blue? Can’t you detect a wearisome quality about all of this? For I continuously hold a stick underneath my moustache – do I not? May your company discern those groats aplenty – when set against the livery of so many piles of gold, themselves adjacently surrendered? They really summon up our one remaining skin or its pericarp. It happens to be a light green in its flavouring... while it seeks a pink shade to set fire to flies inside.”

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “Death is the insistence of our entreaties, Daddy-o. For – if we’re to be participants in your bleeding – I will lay many a bet over a game of solo whist. Most of these armatures can find themselves cut off at the wrist! Let’s also remember what the Duke of Cornwall, that reluctant troubadour, shouted in *King Lear*: ‘Out vile jelly, where is thy lustre now?’ (He happened to be blinding Gloucester at the time). Of course, we’re referring to Shakespeare’s *Lear* by the way – not Edward Bond’s.”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “All of which I was ventilating about Punch and Judy previously. Or, in the words of a professor, it concerns the tragi-comedy of Mister Punch... a performance inside which all other dramas have their place (if imprisoned by time). Will the celebration of Joseph Grimaldi – Britain’s foremost clown – not take place on the first Sunday after January the 8th? It shall be superintended by the clowns’ chaplain...”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Quite so! For Punch leers on with an expression of exhilaration... while his eyes almost seem to pop out of his wooden head. They look yonder or appear to be rather beady in their expectation of unhallowed fruit. Were they painted with some dithyrambs of intrigue; or did they bear upon their spots the basilisk stare of a lizard... but not an insect? Forget everything else now... especially by dint of the fact that the baby screams in close proximity to our anti-hero. It’s in a situation where the planes of its face tilt upwards, and each *Rendezvous with Rama* makes up the plenitude of a new search for justice. Nor can this be quickly forgotten! Since Grimaldi’s legacy proves to be the cavalcade of an embittered future; especially given a child’s high-pitched and continuing whine. A playlet wherein its grooves became distended, sheer, possibly misinterpreted, and reminiscent of Balthus’ *mores* in reverse. Can you see it before you? Oh yes! ‘Be silent’, screeches Mister Punch in terms of a sibilant answer. ‘WWWWAAAAHHHH!’, continues the babe in an unabated fashion. Suddenly, Punch throws the child off the stage or its rampart, and it goes up and over the front of the portcullis... only then to rest on a semblance of these steps. Consider it again, my reconciling driftwood... for the infant is gone – if not discarded or dead – but not necessarily unburied. Still it lies at the front of the sea-side booth; albeit having fallen within a haze of darkling light. It helps to surround the mushroom of such a growth – primarily by merely suppressing its bawl, when flung aside or towards a bloodied gift of impermanence. You see, Judy’s baby – unlike the other characters in this drama – happens to be a stick-puppet. That is, it’s not one which’s going to be held by hand...”

TWO

“Death makes ready our nuptial bed!” – Cassandra in Hector Berlioz’s opera, *The Trojans*

Ancient Cramp: “So then – all of them are vultures who hunger for some abstract prey. This certainly accounts for three of my

step-sons: namely, Arbuthnot Robinson, Crinkley Rage Ransom and Tiberius Hague-Ovant. They all stand away from me severally and in a group – albeit busily watching or spying at the far end of the drawing-room... rather like escape *artistes* in relation to a gladiator's life-line. Perhaps one image amongst many others comes into my mind here – and this has to do with an armoured officer who faces off against a retinue of slaves. They were low-life or rabble, and maybe they could be described as the *residuum* in terms of a civilisation's tasking. Almost suddenly – they are fired upon with a burst of flame-throwing energy, and it ceases to exist within a molten wall of fire. Does it reassemble – when side-by-side with such an entreaty – graphic novels like *Battle*, *War* and *Commando*... themselves the progeny of IPC Thompson in Scotland? Anyway, one figure alone stands out amid this maelstrom or 'holocaust', and this involves some carnage occasioned by burning. Yes indeed... my reedy voice was heard to answer for the remainder. 'Come into yonder cauldron, step-son', it enjoins or bemoans. 'Why don't you step inside this threshold; if only to study yon dexterous preaching in such an oven? Surrender, my boy, and move forward...' To which his opponent's response remains eminently predictable. 'Eat pay-dirt, Daddy-o', snarls Arbuthnot Robinson – while firing on this flaming torch with a pneumatic ray. (Even though the discharge proved to be too great – and it filibustered up into a blaze of spume, if already amongst atoms of some radioactive partiality). But the blast's energy recoiled violently – thereby rebounding from such a force-field and hitting him full in-front. 'Damn it', hisses one of my more distant relatives, 'this whiplash strikes back in the form of a ricochet – it severs its own fortune, accordingly.'"

THREE

"I have no fear." – Theseus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: "Here's your sherry, my loving father. May it be an illustration of Thomas Bright's festival out Suffolk

way (?) and known as Cakes ‘n’ Ale. It is a beneficence that dates from February 1865 or more, and it has to amount to one of England’s oldest forms of charity. Nonetheless, the surrounding tables and books come to be dappled by a light green, or they’re occasioned by the purity of their surroundings in terms of décor.”

Ancient Cramp: “Mask-like (and somewhat life-like or otherwise decamped) my three step-sons stand to one side. Abreast of the foaming carpet (they are); whilst waiting or plotting for my inevitable demise with the severance of vultures. Let’s hear them chunter amongst themselves, or are they speculating upon destruction’s prospect? For each one of them bears about his visage the loathsomeness of a new asp; at once coiled around the perfection of its Grecian head. Have you failed to observe that double sculpture – presumably by way of an introduction which looks to Harmodius and Aristogiton; or was originally by Critias and Nesiotes? Yessum...”

Crinkley Rage Ransom (off to one side and with a critical lisp): “Look at her, will you? By Loki’s spirit, the woman knows no bounds of either shamelessness or indecency.”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “You speak of our step-sister, brother, who is not related to us by any ligatures of blood or spray?”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Yes, yes; of course I do, wolfling. Let us proceed to capture the generation of our spite like Sigyn, Loki’s second wife, who stood above her husband in the bowels of the earth by making sure that the serpent’s over-flowing poison scalded him not. I can’t recall whether she used a silver or a pewter bowl for the delights of this relief. Mayhap you’ll be able to detect some symmetry herein?”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “By involving our step-sister in the assault, you mean?”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Indisputably so... brethren. For, instead of allowing him to tire, she dotes on him and prolongs the worthless ingratititude of his life (thereby). Because the longer one’s step-daddy lives – opportunity cost wise – the shorter will be our usage of his rightful gain. Certainly, one remembers a vision from long ago that’s buried deep within the recesses of my mind. A mystery play wherein an undisciplined slave – or a member of the district proletariat – is brought before a regional governor. Was he bound up and trussed before the observance of his fate? In any event, the swine comes in... almost by creeping along the ground in a lowly manner: albeit with a recessed booth lying somewhere behind him. Doesn’t it contain two pistols (or Lugers) which are taped back-to-back? But before he can either move or begin, a throwing-stick is launched at his skull with a sickening THWACK! Moreover, this champion – or veritable hurling angel – then stands behind a teak desk that’s impregnated with steel, mahogany and *lapis*. A myrmidon checks the miscreant in order to examine his pulse-rate at this time. ‘Isn’t our baseling kaput?’, I ask in expectation. Yet what half-mask did his features really betray? Might it have been mine or my step-father’s, or some other entity as yet unknown to me? Perhaps we’ve both had the temerity to share fifty per cent of a visage each? (Even though at the back of my armoured form lay a shield – it nestled up against a rear wall). It refused the capture of any recess by an offerant other than me; and instead of this it stood out against a mural of some brilliant white. What did such a parable basically depict? Why, just try to think of an inversion of Labisse’s *Medusa* – particularly when seen in a lithograph’s guise. Or could it be the grimacing gesture of a frost or a hoar giant called Ymir... especially if held in place by a metal plate?”

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “Our worthy sister doesn’t fool me for a moment, my brothers! After all, she only skivvies for him in the hope that he’ll leave her more money in his Will. In such circumstances, charity just remains an expectation over future greed; as contained within a gesture of concupiscence. Do you

notice how she fashions his pipe, slippers, P.G. Wodehouse book and ‘Bristol Cream’? Yes? Bah! It bears about its remit the rodent manufacture of so much deceit. Indeed, I would willingly skin her alive over a maintenance of bees! Don’t necessarily hurry forwards towards any forgiveness or upkeep (no matter how unaccustomed)! Yet what of the reading material on his lap? Could it essentially be a short tale by William Morris or Algernon Blackwood instead of a ‘twenties humorist... perhaps it’s a gothic tale by Ambrose Bierce? O troubled one, let me familiarise you with such asperity! For instance, our conqueror stands before a vestibule of burnished teak; if only to receive a computerised Rubik cube from an extended hand. Do you notice any difference here, Arbuthnot? Because our fingers always grasp the hazard of so much estrangement, in that the cuboid may well be a collective memory... or, quite possibly, its distant shrug. Maybe it really indicates the sovereignty of death! For behind him – and clamped to a revolving ring – are the bodies of six sprats... all of whom were wearing masks. Perhaps they happen to be younger versions – or semblant chameleons – of our step-father, Young Man Cramp? They circle (somewhat simultaneously) on this magnetised dish... and each one of them proves to be indicative of a forgotten God. Can it – most persuasively – be the multiple agency of Balder, Od, Wieland, Bran, the Green Man and Mimi? Every one of whom refuses to be dressed in mediaeval chain-mail, like a crusader, but is much rather linked to some modern technology.”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “My brothers... the real point has to be to make him die! Certainly, he’s old, timid, vanquished and lacking in imaginary resource. Isn’t he just a ninety-three year old skeleton? Moreover, he stands between us and a billionaire’s ransom. For each moment longer that he lives denies us the plenitude of our inheritance. Might we call him – in all transparency – a thief? Since this King Lear (or Canute) has placed his satin chair at the water’s edge... primarily so as to order the waves not to inundate it. What folly, I ask you!

Remember now: each half hour which he survives cheats us out of a Willed compact or bargain, at least in terms of the funds that we are set to enjoy. Let's halt the clock, brethren, if it's pursuant to a time line's kill!"

FOUR

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "But we must never forget the fact that we've tried to kill him on divers occasions. You do recall those instances of steel (?); albeit with every item whimpering away to a forgotten dust. I merely recognise whether your dials are occasioned by one's grief, my siblings... even as you stand there, Arbuthnot, with your mouth open or withered to the chase."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Assuredly, do we choose to remember a miasma or its plague of bats? A mystery play wherein a seething mob (or such a Comus rout) gathers around their step-father in gauntlets or mittens. All of them charge forwards in this mediaeval tourney; together with an assembly of cowls drawn up over their deluded faces. Do they come to register – when toothless over their gums – the brigandage which subsists in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*? They brandish sticks as they go – as well as holding fast to the press or bait, and they also howl at Young Man Cramp's features when held in their misshapen grip. Has he stayed behind in order to mask this raging fury; the kindred of which washes around Crinkley Ransom, his step-son, and revives a tidal wave? These malcontents – who are dressed in rags and holding staves – march Young Man over a fjord or its bridge. It has to conceal the ascent of its distemper with some purple; while drawing the garland of its hidden machinery below. Is it not affixed, cabin-wise, within various rectangles of reinforced granite? Slowly now, the grunting and caterwauling of this mass recedes... because they have seized their prize; at once sovran of all pride and existing before a recognised star-gate. Yet our sibling, Rage Ransom, was left alone when adjacent to the clarion of such a voice... it calls out to him in the stillness, rather operatically. Does one register the conspectus of an abundant

fear? ‘Who are you?’, he hisses. ‘What do you require from the extremity of my lust?’ To which an answer is given by Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, his step-sister, with half of her face blanked out by a perspective in blue. A painted white line runs down fifty per cent of her visage (withal); plus her hair surges to a brilliant red – particularly when it’s compared to a green tunic beneath. Did it actually betray a masculine cut, decidedly so? Moreover, can she be described as the Indo-Aryan or Hindu goddess, Sarasvati, who proves to be Brahma’s consort with white skin? A woman (this might be) who possesses a crescent moon on her forehead or brow, and she embodies the feminine side to all art, science, poetry and learning. ‘Why do you persecute your step-father?’, she asks in a high-pitched voice like a Khitian or monastic bell, itself reminiscent of falling pink lotus. ‘Hasn’t he showered you with every kindness of the golden cup?’, she mused aloud. ‘Assuredly’, replied the kneeling votary – whose scalp seems to be somewhat obscured by a serf’s cap; the latter being manufactured or woven from grey fleece. ‘But we stick to our reasons which exist beyond the reality of bone...’ ‘Avaunt thee!’, she cries in exasperation, ‘give to me their circular wit or its spontaneity’. ‘Well! He is alien to our blood and kind, in terms of a family resemblance. Were he to blind us all with science and industry, or even nobility’s knowledge... to us, he would amount to no more than a chamber-pot’s draw’. ‘I see. In such circumstances, then, your pelt rightly resists being tarred-and-feathered by this brush’. Whereas – when crawling away – Crinkley Rage Ransom besorts a mediaeval compress; i.e., this happens to be an ambit of servitude, expectancy, malicious cunning and root biology. After all, aren’t most mortals the product of their genetics? Irrespective of all this, though, the slave of one elder-one spends a penny of its insouciance; as is evidenced by the high gods, or those ancient and shining ones.”

FIVE

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “Yet tell us of those times in which you have failed to kill the oldie...”

Arbuthnot Robinson and Crinkley Rage Ransom speak together now, or in unison: “Indescribably so, my man, for the old goat has mitigated against our sense of pleasure. On one occasion, to be sure, we waited at a corner of the mansion’s convexity; and this was irrespective of its frieze or ornamental pageantry. Why did we stand fast (?) in a situation where the bypass of memory has filtered it to a light blue... together with a border of shimmering black. Well! It was in order to crash down a loose cornice onto his head, at a time when the old fellow had the temerity to pass underneath us... while shambling along by way of his walking stick. Could it be made from a clean bit of yew? Anyway, a few moments ahead of the impact he seemed to stumble... thus sending our missile shrieking a few feet away from its pay-dirt. Had the old codger been forewarned, then? Can it have been a mere slip of a snake’s tongue (or his ankle) in the long grass? Would it be at all licit to attribute a sinister motive to it? Who knows? Besides this, our small white ball has missed its cavity in a life-game devoted to roulette...”

(Ancient Cramp is wearing a mask over his aged features. Does it recall a pterodactyl’s front-end? Or alternatively, could it be a miniature Henry Moore sculpture – one in which a white quartz comes connected to the oldster’s nose): “*Nota bene*, my step-children have attempted to murder me on several occasions – each one of them guided by youth’s impetuous nature. Yet every one eventuated in failure or in terms of absence’s loss. Have I been strapped to this agency’s fire-pits (?); or even other deep silos of grief – if only to end up smelling like the evaporated essence of the grey lotus. Do you refuse to see it all? For these power units indicate the fuel-cells of our future; and they were linked to liquid hydrogen or about to burst beyond Dunganess’ fiery pits. Gratuitously though, was I actually strapped to six cylindrical sticks of dynamite? Moreover, each one of them is linked to the others via a special ligature... a device that spirals about my body like an octopus. No matter how cloying this may seem to be... See now (!), how my children chunter amongst

themselves in relation to patricide. Are they not blinded by its conceit? 'Your demise has to be assured, Methuselah', declaims one with pride. While another exhorts the following: 'Death's lock demolishes the bones of ages! For haven't we been too squeamish to fully enjoy Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*?' Nevertheless, my future execution can be viewed from a thousand angles – or it cascades out of a tunnel that's been dug deep into the loam, when pursuant to many a depth-charge. 'Let's drink to the old boy's fragments', chortles Arbuthnot, 'and our destined cash. You see, fortune smiles less on the brave than the most cunning'. Still, I refuse to give up the ghost and drop short, however. All of which tempts my 'off-spring' to a new dosage of chagrin – just look at them now! Because resultantly, when a hooded official inspects my coffer with a robot in attendance, he enquires: 'is the old'un dead?' To this the answer has to be a resounding: NNNNNNNNOOOOOOOO! But wait a moment, wasn't my body sent plummeting to the atmosphere's surface by some gliding wraiths? All of whom hope that it will explode or otherwise shrivel up; particularly when it comes into contact with the other's envelope. Surely there can be no release as yet? Yes indeed; since I have escaped without prior blemish or blame, and am unloaded as regards an omelette's eggs. What did George Bernard Shaw say about those two evident commodities?

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Again, my corse has to be held aloft by twin staves – one of them able to support this ragamuffin with the other. Below all of them a crowd – or an aggressive jamboree – has chosen to gather. Are they the carnival retinue who might mushroom at the gibbet, or in relation to one's Circus Flavius? Nonetheless, one peon amongst many stands thoughtfully capped – he's sucking on a straw in his mouth at the time. 'May the old one happen to be a master of escapology – like Houdini?', he muttered under his breath. 'Yet again', his neighbour averred in kind, 'I have heard it said many multiples of his co-exist, each of 'em identical to t'other down to their nethermost atoms'. Had Parminedes thought of this intervention in ancient Greece? 'I don't doubt it',

I replied; at least when standing next to my bear-skinned ally in disguise. Who can actually determine the dimensions of a new mediaeval jerkin these days?

SIX

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Didn’t I also try to get rid of the old caterpillar with some poison? You know, it involved that purple bottle with a sulphureous compound inside; i.e., the one with a skull-and-cross-bones on an outside label. Anyway, I laid it down for my master’s provender and by way of his evening tipple – but that very night he fed it to the cat. Do you remember the handsome brave or feline called Kaiser? His was a masterful presence (indeed) with a sleek white coat and a magenta collar around its neck. Yet now, he lay dead on the carpet *avec* his finely chiselled head tilted slightly to the left. Did it embody the effigy of an Egyptian deity, thereby? Still – and amid an azure effulgence – Arbuthnot looked on through a crack in the dining-room door. Yes indeed, the old felon (more an example of Grendel’s father than his mother) mumbled to himself; and he happened to be stooped as well as pyjama-clad. He uttered the remaining ditty: ‘Scrimp, old fellow, are you well? What ails thee, boy? Is the ‘Bristol Cream’ not to your grape-guzzling tilt? Calamity Jane! Old Kaiser – when descended from some Prussian blue – happens to be stone cold sober. He’s dead, deceased, kaput... and without any beautiful plumage whatsoever’.”

Ancient Cramp: “Yes, alrighty! Each of my three step-sons – when flushed with impatience and goaded by bullion – has attempted to kill me. For am I going to meet my daughter, Teresa, on some accentuated and rectilinear ground (?); the latter rather adrift from a dream’s circumference. Hail, daughter... after the fashion of those Praetorians in ancient Rome who greet one another in this fashion. Are you a mistress of such retrieved elements (?); particularly when you’re found to be a witness to the truth’s sensuality.”

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: “Let our hands grasp each other, my beloved father, in a compact of steel. Is our gesture to be one of renewal – whether in the manner of four musketeers – or under the temperature of a new dawn? Can my three step-brothers really wish to start a war by your assassination... even if this suggestion only exists within the reptilian stems of their brains? I must atone for my abandonment of this desolate place; especially when it comes to be curdled in its barrenness. Were we right to call it Golgotha yesterday (?); namely, the mount which was named after the cavities of a skull. But, if adjacent to the surging capacities of an electric storm, I shall leave you now. Allow me to vacate this volcanic islet in a magic chair that carries me aloft of any wondrous import. Fare you well, father!”

Ancient Cramp replies: “Fare you well, daughter!”

SEVEN

Ancient Cramp happens to be smarting under a new locution or its identity. “What are yonder vultures chuntering on about now? May you be planning various ways through which I could be despatched? Like the last time, any impediment to your Colossus of Rhodes’ expectation will have to fail. It is altogether overheated. Moreover, I have more than espied this avalanche of a great stone; and the former has no option but to cascade out of ‘our’ sky. Might it reminisce about a flaming meteor, thereafter?”

These malefic step-sons then speak in unison: “Oh no sir, by no means... since we are unable to spy the portent of your dagger. Why, we were just commenting --- amongst ourselves --- about how well you looked today. Can you then prove to be apparelled in these delicate tones of age? It’s hardly an exercise in what Thomas Carlyle would have called the *jeunesse doree*, but still...”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “Do you see or credit it? It remains as I have always indicated; especially when it’s succulent over a new

abattoir's sluice or relief. Anyway, the placement of such a grave would often rely on a 'raptor's caution.'

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Yes. Charles Manson's toe-nails have got lost in this particular biscuit splicer... I agree. The old termagant has eyes and ears that miss very little or nothing at all, contrary to one's wilfulness or fate."

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "My brothers, can't you see a dais which contrives to surround us all on this plateau? Again, a remit that's given over to scarlet reverberates aslant our senses. Look you! The gates on this circle of brick have been opened up, even though mass-gravity atoms crush everything to the level of one's floor. Now: let a personification of us all – when dressed in a green leotard – move onwards and outwards. He is surrounded by the debris of some outraged rock on every side. Suddenly, a version of Teresa Mayhew-Phillips appears next to him; and she's ten-foot tall & clothed in blue lycra. Farther on, we find our step-father – when disabled by age and in an advanced bath-chair – hovering above the horizon. Between them a tube which enables one to skip between dimensions (sic) comes to operate in a territory between father and daughter. 'Let's seek to escape', trills Teresa, 'through the actions of an articulate renegade! Do you augment such a fury with the crackling of some lightning? Since a new figure emerges in this particular hellstorm – or is it really a maze of threshed beginnings? Such a deity has to be at least twelve feet tall; as well as being armoured, booted, congealed or with a portcullis for a skull. May 'he' actually incarnate a male version of Freya; the lover of cats? All of which causes him to wear a mask after the fashion of either Skrimp or Kaiser. Can we detect in him the personhood of these three (?); or an otherwise delinquent band of brothers. Wherein their negative side was brought out and liberated with Loki's spirit – if not fastened onto Mesmer's magnetism. Listen to this spiel, my brother-in-arms! Does one not characterise him – amid such hippocraphs as these – as the prince of lies?'"

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Tiberius (continued...): “Behold, O ye ill-omened ones, the mastery of your murderous fortune! Slay the old wretch without a second’s thought! Kill your step-father, Ancient Cramp! Come into the ripeness of its aftertaste (perchance) or its putrid reckoning! Stay behind only to destroy yourselves in a Chaldean crucible – prior to the reconstitution of diverse forms! Think solely of abundant gain, my brave champions! Is human or mortal sacrifice – within certain prescribed boundaries – just a transmutation or a disabusing of energy? Peel back these dark ones – or various hybrids of a gibbon and Hanuman – in order to prolong a final gasp’s trajectory!”

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips (if speaking out of her own symbolism): “Hasten, may he attempt to rise in accordance with varied types of lucid dreaming? Was his prologue merely found to be rooted on death’s other side? Surely, warriors such as ourselves can only speak of an exo-skeleton... that is, a structure which alone rises out of kilter with a necessary deed? For might individuality be a curse as regards *homo sapiens*’ future? Truly, no-one really knows – but perhaps we may take up an illustration from Count Maurice de Maeterlinck’s *The Life of Bees*? A minor scene whereby the function of the whole is reduced to the one, and this was irrespective of my inclinations in the matter. Since – in an amphitheatre so composed – the bees lie in rows, aslant one another, or in myriad and tiered layers. Oh yes. All of them are lacquered in a vestment of purple; if pursuant to the succour of their Queen’s milk. ‘Let me be at liberty to unfold my destiny’, cries my step-fellow’s essence. After which – he hurls himself down a dimensional tube that exists between planes or seems to be redundant over its resource. Finally, he disappears into the ether or towards some wisps of faint blue-tubing; and even the other figurines, such as Teresa and her father, follow suit. Were they all to be the ready chroniclers of a new Ymir? ‘Soon you will control our minds – along with all the rest of the citizenry’, each character embroiders in turn. But this brothers’ collective

karma just stands there; albeit with ‘its’ arms crossed on a metal breast-plate. ‘It’s so true, my relatives of distance, since I intend to shut this globe off to all life save my veriest Will’.

EIGHT

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips has been brought down to earth by these developments: “I had originally sat reading to my father against a purview of yellow; together with a grand piano which proves to be set up in the background. A roll of sheet music or a piano-roll lay atop it. What may it have been? It could possibly amount to Bartok or Kodaly; but it was more than likely to relate to the British school of Walton, Smythe, Ireland, Bax, Vaughan-Williams, Britten, Mathias, Birtwhistle and Maxwell-Davies... These were the names in this particular frame. My three vulture step-brothers stood off at a distance (withal). Each one of them had their hands in their pockets; and they also chose to wear suits of sandy brown, emerald and other earth-tones. Whilst their entire demeanour – when set off against a magenta backdrop – proved to be sullen, in-drawn, envious, plotting and resentful.”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “The time for procrastination now falls fallow from my hand, brothers. Heed the umbrage of some forsaken skin – why don’t you? Does one recall having read in one’s youth the Edgar Allan Poe story *Some Words with a Mummy*? Well(!), murder merely retracts itself from the stick-fingers on this special mitten. For each and every digit, then, militates against some customised frenzy... but it also occasions stealth. Oh yes, my brethren, do you choose to weigh my character’s necessary drift? For tonight our Grand Old Man or fake Gladstone bag must die. I am truly desperate for money. He will have to perish as a consequence. Remember this: no other substitute comes to life in this sulphuric acid’s potency. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor!*”

(We now enjoy the detour of a brief director’s cut... Furthermore, all of the above words were delivered sotto voce

and off to one side. They cannot be overheard; leastwise not by the intended target of their venom. Throughout the delivery of all of this spleen, however, an enormous and armoured effigy stands alone. It illustrates an Assyrian sculpture or compress; at once massive, lock-jawed, lugubrious and solitary in its cask. May it constellate our step-brethren – when smelted down or askew – and shifted aft in a negative direction?)

NINE

Ancient Cramp now exists from a position somewhere above his pillow: “Crinkley Rage Ransom, my eldest step-son, tip-toes into my lofty bedroom at just after three in the morning. Has an ormolu clock struck three bells someplace else, and maybe in an adjacent hallway or its niche? No matter... because a pale tincture of moonlight – itself of an exquisitely fine blue – fills up the lower features of this floor. It also seeks to delineate an untroubled edifice or its silence; whereas a delicate green-tint washes these abundant walls and their ceiling. All of which discloses those books and pictures contained within – a Stubbs here or a Thackeray there (perchance). My step-son (who I inherited from my second marriage) introduced himself slowly, and he sidled up to a wall when in possession of a black spider’s sword or fang. Might it be a poniard for killing in milady’s chamber (?); albeit one that’s been cast in wrought gilt. Anyway, he intends to commit a murder this night – so much has become blatantly obvious. Is he at all circumscribed by the fury of Macha; the crone or dryad of death in Celtic mythology? Most particularly, when we summon up her status as the queen of annihilation – almost after the prow head of the White Lady as it cuts through our silvery waters. May this incarnate the principle of Morgan la Fey; a supreme war goddess and pale Kali who goes abroad fully armed with two spear-points? Still, in an early representation she has been cast on a bullet-stone, with the head of an owl mulcted over its crest (as a diction) and oblivious to all harm. Does she also carry about her oval the armoury of two breasts (?); at least when rested in terms of an armature or its

crescent... or otherwise keening towards a wheedling pumice. Effectively now, can one spy on it further – in relation to what the author John Cowper Powys called *Aboriginal Cymric*?

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Again, his face loomed or leered over my sleeping pallor. How might we effectively characterise it? Well!, it appears to be twisted, bent, furtive and all-aglow. Whereupon the light coming from a bed-side table seems to illuminate it from below – especially given some sort of pale fashion or response. For hasn't a combination of fear, odium and avarice transformed it into a disfiguring mask? Maybe my glassy eyes can still apprehend it on their toasted retinas, as they look upwards with a laugh? Moreover, was Colin Wilson really correct – in his *Encyclopaedia of Murder* – when he spoke about the murderer's imprint being left on the victim's eye-ball? (No matter how residually this might prove to be...) Anyway, Crinkley's visage must ransom its fate before some heathen gods... especially when we consider his flared nostrils, beetling brows, bulging eyes, mud-guard ears, flaming red-hair and grinding teeth. Truly, in the words of the *Authorised Version* of 1611, there will be a wailing and a gnashing of molars for those who inhabit this outer darkness? Do they actually characterise *A Mask of Amontillado*(*)? (*Note: the latter is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe). Behind him curled up the ready filigree of so much green; the former becoming occasioned by either dollops or spirals. Yet behold now... the death-dealing plunge of his tulwar knows pause for a few flashier seconds. Why? What is it? By Hades' daemons, why does the cypress of this impediment fall through the floor of its catacombs? Does one detect a detergent – or even a bleach – before one's veriest heart? Indeed, the peradventure of Fuseli comes most readily to mind... Most especially, when an etheric Macbeth emerges from Duncan's bed-chamber, daggers in hand, only to be met by the brochure of a Medusean wife. Remember Felix Labisse; or might he be a Nemedian free companion *a la* Robert E. Howard?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Great Scott... the old scythe’s already past his or its ‘sale by’ date. He’s died this very night (you see) and there’s no necessity to stab him now with my knife. Nor do I need to scare him into having a coronary – my residual plan of campaign. For, under the tableau of a finishing blue square, old grandfather time lies dead in his pyjamas – or on what is presumed to be an occasional dais... All of it takes place afore the rampart of one’s kitchen skewer; if serenaded to one’s necessary end: and casting a penumbra on these special sheets. Hooray, hooray... ‘ageism’ trumps every card (thereby) and the weak go down beneath one’s whetted blade. What a splendid day – all praise to the celebration of Mammon! Mithras rules over this plenitude or hour! Do we need to sing a reverse stave, in mediaeval Latin, to Ahriman? Behold our *black sun*...

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But what of Punch and Judy, I hear you ask? I beseech you, since Mister Punch has entered this puppet theatre from its stage-right. Further, the purple folds of some curtains exist behind his goggle-eyed immensity – with the only other character on stage happening to be Judy. She comes across to him, wearing a bonnet, and plus the child in her arms. *AAAHH(!)*, is that right? Punch spies the babe under his jester’s cap; *avec* the hooked nose, the manic grin and those revolving orbs. For might ‘he’ be a variant on the theme of a man who smiles without mirth? Surely the Baby – the only stick-puppet in the show – cries out in a wheedling, high-pitched manner? May it be redolent of Alan Ginsberg’s decadent poem, *Howl*? Nonetheless, and with amazing finality, Punch brutally chucks the infant out of the window... in fact, it’s hurled off the front of the stage. Yes! The fledgling falls – open-mouthed – and with a whirring whine rather like an autogyro’s rotor-blades. It seems to descend – or otherwise descant – in darkness; if only to spiral with bloodied lips upon those hard stones that’re occasioned by shadow. Could it reassemble an O without a figure (?); at least as regards the diction of Lear’s itinerant Fool. Or maybe it will incarnate one of Bacon’s mouths (?) – itself out of kilter with the puppet’s orbit;

or otherwise redolent of Eisenstein's nurse when screaming on those Odessa steps of yesteryear. In any event, this stick figurine lies prone, exhausted, lifeless and trapped. It subsists out there on one of J.G. Ballard's *terminal beaches*, constructed with pebbles, and refusing to furnish an echo to its cry. Is it so?"

TEN

Ancient Cramp: "Behold, I am dead – yet life's gift of language echoes on in my available corse. I also have the ability to look down on my children's antics, as my step-sons' ransack the bedroom looking for the Will... Such impatience, to be sure... Yet my perspective on everything seems vastly distinct up here on the astral plane... What peace, now that all turbulence has ended! Quiet, let us await developments. Can you hear that they are talking --- dead men upright --- one to another? Listen..."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Where did he put the blamed thing?"

Tiberius Hague Ovant: "Search me."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "It has to be here, I tell you. She always told me he kept it hidden in this very bureau... or down on the left. Aha, I have it!"

Ancient Cramp<<vaguely, in a sort of dream-like transport after death>>: "Yes, the three of them procure (after a somewhat egregious default) my Last Will & Testament. Yet what shall it profit them? Whomsoever gaineth untold riches but loses contact with reality may find everything dissolving around them. Who could have uttered that phrase long ago? I forget. Anyway, look at their characters now – aren't they convulsed with greed?"

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For do we spy a procession coming closer here? Wherein a horde of bestial guards who are armed with staves await their progeny. All of them were arrayed with sticks – some of which have fluorescent skulls at their end. They glow in the half darkness

roundabout... whilst over the entire proceedings an enormous sculpture stands guard. It looms over a turquoise discharge of smoke or brackish incense; and the wisps of Hephaestus' forge inundate this valley with a new glow! Assuredly, does it revalue the Colossus of Rhodes? No-one really knows – since these wonders of the ancient world have not survived, if only to reconnoitre a modern template. *Touché!* Now these young orphans (or my heedless step-children) are bodied forth... and they essentially emerge from the underside of a dirigible or a zeppelin. They fall over one another, scrap, flap and were all a'feared --- as they're 'run' to the barracks without a shred of mercy or pity. Hello, what is this? A woman is observed to be coming across the tundra... May it actually turn into Teresa Mayhew-Phillips (?), who's busily sporting a cloak around her lycra vestments. Could this shroud come to represent a toga, instead? In any event, she has two great mastiffs alongside her; and each one of them enables us to reminisce about a Conan Doyle story (thereby). Moreover, her appearance has subtly changed in a way that's difficult to register. For she looks older, sterner and less running to any sort of resource than hitherto. No... in answer to an unbidden question, her skin was neither looser or tighter than heretofore... in that it remained unflayed. While the visage kept up an air which seems altogether unflappable, taut, wire-like or given over to a necessary stricture. Her hair – too – signals a distinct difference in ways and means. It's no longer bottle blonde or peroxided (you see); and it has become shiny, blanched, white at base, rinsed out, empurpled – but ultimately *blue*. Does anyone care to notice it, my pets? Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! How definitely these worms have turned roundabout... She turns to address a nearby harasser, a personage who looks suspiciously like myself. Can you detect any similarity to my unvisored past – when free of a fifteenth century helmet? 'See to their persecution, paterfamilias', she muses to herself. 'You spare the rod of discipline only to endanger the child. Verily, all punishment and pain is a portent of learning. For your information, the conjugation of Latin verbs will

basically occur with one's thumb-screws on... Yessum. (Leastwise, if we were to utilise this little exercise as a metaphor for life). Boot the little tyke on his way, hoon! Doesn't he bear a striking resemblance – albeit with half a face-mask missing – to a young Arbuthnot, sire?"'

ELEVEN

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Take a gander at this, I tell you! Why don't you just retina regard it (?); it says a Last Will & Testament, I ask you. Here, examine this particular codicil or act of spite. He's left no money to us at all, my brethren. Every last bit of it has been bequeathed to CHARITY(!)... that's right. For the old fossil's umbrage knew no bounds whatsoever at the thought of our loss."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "It's frightful... irrefragable, without conscience and lacking in family dignity... do you hear?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Old grandfather time – or our nethermost Methuselah – must have been soft in the head when he drew up the Will. We'll be duty bound to test it through the courts – regardless of any expense involved. First off, let's contact the family's lawyer or shyster known as Montague Raitt."

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Also, doesn't it embody or counter-act one of those circumstances in Punch & Judy? Whereupon – and after the Baby has been thrown off the stage – Judy returns on the right side of our booth's amplitude. 'What hast thou done with our babe?', she whines on. Her reedy voice comes over tremulously or quaveringly; while the female's little wooden hands shake. Meanwhile, Punch prefers to bob up and down between-times – whilst contriving to hold out some digits made from balsa. He almost teases those children gathered before him on the sea-front – by virtue of his presence. They sit roundabout or in a hemicycle, and they nervously finger their ice-creams, when they

find themselves abreast of a gaudy red-and-yellow awning. Does it continue to flap in the wind, aplenty? For, like a character in some spasmodic Dada by Duchamp, Punch's orbs seem to revolve in their sockets. Might our author prove to be an unfunny vulgarian like Will Self? Anyway, he gave his young audience a toothy grin. 'You see, my young sirs and madams, one's water-baby happens to be asleep... isn't it so?', he coos. His arms are then held our reverse-ways; or possibly in terms of some supplication or other. Suddenly, Judy screams out loud and by way of an arrested response. 'You've murdered him... you nasty, beastly old man. For whatever fashion brooks our reverse imp. He's gone, been scragged and *is* kaput – you do detect this truth, don't you... boys and girls, mums and dads? Why don't you rekindle your moral seismograph... here and now, my worthy commons? Didn't he strive to commit infanticide; a felony which is far worse than self-harm or *felo da se*... in and of itself? 'Yes, oui, si, ja, da...', out-sources or pours our combined youngsters. But Mister Punch (for his part) remains unfazed by such a maudlin commotion or its blast. 'You wicked, deviant tellers of tales', he lambasts his immature audience of 'famous fives', and he continuously points at them during this ordeal. Because for him now, the indeterminate semiotic of Paul de Mann's *Blindness and Insight* holds sway in this maelstrom. Nonetheless, Judy responds by letting out the following remarks – especially when she's right next door to a purple curtain. 'You're naughty... Mister Punch; you've been very, very bad... and I'm never going to kiss you again'. (Could this possibly be a synonym for sex, perchance?) Punch then begins to beat her with a very large stick which he'd brought on stage for this. WHACK! Do they begin to wrestle with one another, albeit within a whirligig of force? And so, like Dickie Davis' 'World of Sport' on Saturday afternoon's ITV during the 'seventies, this wrestling bout continues. Blow is presumably traded for blow amid various tram-lines of energy; and each one radiates out from the other's colours or spectrum. Look at it, my masters! Resultantly so, a flashdance of speed, lotion or motion (and whatever else) thence

contrives to inundate our Whole. A thwack and thwain – or its threnody of available motion – then superintends. Finally, and like the nanny called Sandra Rivett who was beaten to death in the basement by Lord Lucan... Judy flops over onto our minuscule stage. Flip... she's a goner; rather like a character in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. In relation to which – Punch first responds by placing his wooden hand over the underside of his face. Therein, he starts to ruthlessly upbraid the audience – primarily by joining in the fun and laughing uproariously. HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! He's not alone in his inhuman jape either... *hee; hee*. May he really have occasion to bob, bib and tuck across from such a crowd? Percussively, a cry can now be heard; it ventilates itself from amidst his swatchel's mechanical gyp. 'That's the way to it!', he enjoins in way which is possibly pronounced all as one word. 'That's-the-way-to-do-it!"'

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Our sister, Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, has momentarily turned up."

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Like a bad penny, you mean?" (Note: this latter remark was delivered in a hoarse whisper or off to one side...)

TWELVE

Ancient Cramp<<He's cast up from beyond the grave (no matter how residually) and by way of a yellowish glow. Mightn't it actually be an example of some bleached titanium?>>: "My three vulture step-sons then proceed to inform my daughter about the Will's verities. They do so in a curt, waspish and unapologetic manner. Isn't it altogether typical of their boorish *mien*? No matter what else may be fashionable... *ergo*, an image of some despondency filters into one's mind or phrenology, and this is despite the inevitable translucence given to my demise. For up here – in one's astral body – everything appears to be so much more distant, ethereal and abstracted. But the revelation that I see

above me is more than real enough... since here, the gloved hand of one possibly aged individual or dot, obtrudes from a neighbouring wall. It steams slightly with the relic of so much folly or latent fog. Can these outstretched, muscular digits come to exemplify anyone's meat? Or is the young individual who stands ahead of me – when armoured and shaven-headed – just looking askance at aught for no good reason whatsoever? Does it hark back to the early designs of Francis Bacon; or even those of his help-meet Roi de Maistre? Yet let us forsake our former identity from behind a multiplicity of masks. Has one ever read Wyndham Lewis' manual known as *The Code of a Herdsman*? Arbuthnot Robinson then intrudes into this heady admixture; he's much younger now, as well as possessing an anti-gravity device hidden under a fluorescent helmet. Moreover, this head-piece has a skull-and-cross-bones attached to it... and it's limited to some rather crude paint. Whereas our former skin-head (by way of a necessary accompaniment) bears a striking resemblance to Crinkley Rage Ransom... even if 'it' just betokens adolescent goose-flesh. Tiberius Hague-Ovant, though, incarnates a chalk-mark of progress; at least as it exists under a serf's bonnet or catch. Certainly, he fiddles with a mystic rubik cube only a millimetre high; while contriving to snarl all the while. 'Why doesn't it work, Cramp, answer me that? Aren't you supposed to be the mage of all possible Mages? Isn't that how you've made your necessary or abundant bullion... the latter fit for us to inherit?' 'It doesn't begin to supply the answers because you won't do so, step-son. What is there about yon that can't compute, eh?' 'Forbear from handing me riddles on a silver platter, Daddy-o. For yonder rats seem only fit to suck up detritus from each proboscis'. 'One question', asks a teenage Crinkley rather arrogantly, 'explain this girl's value, can you? She merely stares into a cuboid or G3 mobile, and mimes some dancing games. Can't she be aware of the eroticism of such a feat – as her aura manifests those recumbent visions or anxieties? Do you choose to resuscitate the phrase *Rex Vivant* – i.e., lord and master of the dance; thereby making it feminine in its travail? Answer

me...!' 'Your step-sister's thoughts coach or tease out some pure beauty... imagine that. Surely she may be defined as a Cordelia to Edmund's bastardy? Poor, brave Teresa – since she's trying to survive with her inner fortitude of love on an otherwise devastated planet'. I then reach forward in order to stroke my daughter's hair. It proved to be darker or almost brunette in her youth, although it later turned a fine tint of amber or blonde. 'Dance Teresa – rather like Claudia-Minne Boyle of Ballet Rambert – and cast off all inhibition in consequence, just turn & twist about. No-one shall punish you this time – for we'd enjoy spying or watching your tarantella. With you crossing the boards, my dear, no voluntary cascade of von Laban's happens to be dead. No dodos can be imagined to subsist here'. She rises to one side of us – at once crisply over the moon's spring *in lieu* of Hecate – but in a way that's surplus to her dogs' requirements. Look... her arms are raised above her shoulders; and they wax un-dormant, poised or sweeping. 'Truly', I announce with fervour, 'her limbs have become the branches of Life's tree!'

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Do you remember a story by Algernon Blackwood entitled *The Man who Loved Trees*? A narrative within which it became immoral to lop off or curtail an oak... Listen now: *quod* she approaches my dead ear on the left, if only to whisper..."

Teresa-Mayhew-Phillips pipes up: "About leaving the entire bequest to charity; you know that I approve. I'm proud of you, Dad, I'm all made up." (As she speaks these mumbled words in a low tone, some tears of salt-water trickle down her face).

THIRTEEN

Ancient Cramp gazes down from on high: "My funeral takes place within a week of these events. After all, I had died of old age and no autopsy was required. Each and every one of my clan and kin (sic) then gathered around my bier; it all came to be clothed in some lightish rain or with a pale blue pigment infusing the scene. Are you aware of its casual witness statement, O

viewer? For such an evident ooze dashed aught before it; whilst a slightly dull Anglican cleric puttered on. Moreover, it became apparent whether gusts of air or water were sweeping around one; yet none of my step-children looks to be present. Behind some black or calf gloves, even amid many a muted whispering at the service, their absence is discussed. (Even though my beloved daughter, Teresa, from my first marriage... oh yes, she has put in an appearance. I would have expected nought else from her. Does she catch a striking glance or eye – together with her delicate fur hat and matching wrap? Most definitely, Teresa Mayhew-Phillips cries throughout the entire proceedings or their dirge, and she dabs her face with a dainty tissue... What a trooper, eh? My sweetheart's still faithful – or accordingly loyal – right up to the end. I must bless her heart, indisputably so. But my three vulture step-sons remain amiss... They have flown the coop, or are feeding on other carrion and prey in a blasted tree's stump.”

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An illustration from Punch and Judy then materialises so as to entrance my inner mind! Wasn't my eldest step-son, Crinkley Rage Ransom, keen on such allusions as these? Well! Let us examine the evidence which fate has lain before us... For a Ghost has mushroomed or come up behind Mister Punch on an illuminated stage. It slid up *avaunt* him or abreast of no purport whatsoever. In reckoning thus, however, this particular glove-puppet took on the formula of a skeleton. Might it intone one of those that exists in a tank (?); as is contained in those sundry exhibition cases in the Royal College of Surgeon's museum. I think it happens to be situated in south Kensington, central London. Anyway, it bobbed or weaved around this stage in a jig; thereby seeking to reconnoitre our mountebank's ready eye. In appearance – though – it embodied a medical specimen lying on a saw-bone's bench... albeit after the fashion of one of Holbein's renaissance pictures. Suddenly, Punch spied 'its' frame or focus behind him – and he came over all frit. He proceeded to address the audience: 'Boys and girls, mums and dads, my brethren and

their sisters', he gargled, 'if you make out that noxious ghost again or find him loitering in these pavilions... you will tell me, won't you?' All of which has to be directed at a diverse audience *out there*. May it similarly relate to the Clink Museum in Soho, central London, set up by the former Bishop of Winchester in order to illustrate instruments of torture? Furthermore, this ghost or spectre continues to haunt Mister Punch in a way that echoes Caesar's or Banquo's manifestations. Never mind now... since Punch's all-over leer – when combined with his goggling eyes – suffuses our blue-light without any shame. On occasion – and when privy to a scream's vehicle – the skeleton's head can become detached from its puppet body. It then pursues, in a rather elongated fashion, the nemesis of Punch's extract or falsehood --- if only to fire a beam, thereby. On and on came this disembodied skull, before Punch succeeded in batting it away with his joy-stick. WAP! It resultantly disappeared in double-quick time... and Punch cried out after it: 'That's the way to do it!' No-one can recollect at this late date why such a wraith haunts Mister Punch. Some observers declare it has to be his bad conscience – especially after having murdered Judy without any remorse. Other pundits, pollsters and soapbox orators pooh-pooh the entire notion. Could it possibly be Judy's spirit hovering around him... who knows? To be blatant with you, my young scamp, I don't recollect whichever sprite or bogle latches onto Mister Punch... thence eating into his spirit or coming to deny him meritorious work. Do you have any idea about this whatsoever? Any road up, a knock on the head soon sees to that swivel-test, *me ducks*.

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Regardless of this jack-in-the-box's rantings, however, cannot I see my erstwhile attorney, Montague Raitt, standing next to my daughter's right collar-bone? Look upon it this way, he's fulfilling an official function by attending my burial mount at Sutton Hoo... or is it a last resting place? The Episcopalian pastor then intones the ultimate post before this throng: *ashes to*

ashes; dust to dust. It gives me a queer feeling (I have to say), when looking down on these proceedings from above.”

FOURTEEN

“Every civilisation rests on force or *ukase*, and it comes into its own when each scream’s part of the design.” Jonathan Bowden, quoted from an early text, on the blog known as *hoover hog*.

Ancient Cramp <<a man or will-o’-the-wisp who’s finally come to enjoy his out-of-the-body experience. What does the mystic or seer Alphonse Constant have to say about an astral body that’s topped by an enlarged, purple head?>> “Nonetheless, several more days have passed down below on middle earth, and then the solicitor Raitt rings my children to inform them about the Will. Yes indeedy! Let’s listen in, my fellow travellers, at least by way of an interlocution or its dialectic.”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “I knew we’d eventually have to catch up with you, shyster. For our step-father’s keepsake (i.e., his Last Will & Testament) resembles a moral kidnapping or some sort of gaol break. Don’t think that his step-sons are fooled by anything... since his adventures ahead of the tomb-stone involved the disinterment of a skeleton, without any reference to the passage of Punch and Judy’s skit across the stage. Any key can turn in a lock after it’s been oiled; the former prior to an explanation due to Freudian *coitus*. Have you ever skimmed H.J. Eysenck (?); he declares it to be a matter of bunkum. Remember, my errant member of the Law Society, no entreaty may ever assail death without vampirism’s wit.

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Anyway, a distant dawn (or its land of visitation) comes up in order to complete our retina’s capture. Now then, what really characterises it? Well! A battering mob has come to the door of this deluded shack, if only to see Young Man’s Cramp cast his arm or its amplitude across the entrance. RAT-A-TAT-TAT... the crowd beats upon the door so as to gain egress (thereby).

Even as, at this juncture, a pipe, mace, halberd and various grappling-irons are seen to pop up from behind a wooden frame. The flimsy aspen structure then begins to heave, warp, buckle and give way – at least before it comes to sag irretrievably on a post. Yet a shaven-headed Crinkley steps towards his step-father, so as to proffer a used two pennyworth. A gesture which seems to be protective, but that also looks sullen in its indistinctness. ‘Let me deal with this example of a gladiator’s *canaille*, all-father, since your post must be to resuscitate the necessary absence of one’s chicks’. ‘No way’, replies he, ‘I forbid the observance of so unseasoned a Sunday service. Instead – my progeny of the hive – you should thin out your atomic structure by using the circuitry encased around your loins’. ‘Fading out’, declares one of them – if only to be followed by the shading eddy of another. ‘Observe this rhapsody in red’, quoth he... at a moment where Ovid’s wraiths merge into the ether; while reckoning on naught save a silent deliquescence. Soon they are all gone; whether we were referring to Ransom’s tonsured hooliganism or Tiberius’ rags-and-serfs’ hoody. Each one eclipses the other towards a sense of grey... and this was irrespective of whether any of them have heard of Britain’s equivalent to New Slovenian Art, the Grey Movement. Yet instantaneously, the behemoth which is Hobbes’ version of the crowd surges into the room; and they are all found to be yelping, hollering, belching, gaping and hawking. All of them besport towels or rags (of one sort or another) across their bald pates. Moreover, most of their number carry weapons and their eyes seem distended or in turmoil, and the occasional tooth protrudes from their languid gums. Have you ever noticed that ugliness and inferiority often prove to be synonymous? Must it essentially amount to an illustration of Gustav le Bon’s thesis – as outlined in his *Psychology of Crowds*?

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Nonetheless, our mass or throng surges now towards its temporary goal. Do you choose to comprehend it? Since one of his preliminary clucks or squibs, Tiberius Ovant, remains subject

to man-handling by this seething *residuum*. They have captured him and he is open to their licentiousness... especially at even-tide. Their hands definitely claw at his exposed throat; and are their nails really long or scraggy? ‘Kill the beast, burn his toast, cut out his eyes and play marbles with them’, they chant repeatedly. ‘Cramp, old fellow, the Great Beast of the multitude has me in its clutches or talons. I couldn’t phase out properly as a consequence’. ‘I recognise your dilemma, my sprat. It’s why I have stayed behind in order to assist you’, answered his co-sponsor.”

FIFTEEN

Montague Raitt: “Let me interrupt you, Crinkley, in case your diatribe disabuses you to the point of madness. Yes! You may mutter the following imprecations... ‘The Will has been perused by all three of us adjacently. Also, we removed it from the undertow of his bedside – while his corpse was warming-to or in our keeping. But like liquid toadstools, we intend to fight it out in the courts. Our collective motto then remains or has to be *peace through victory*. May he (Ancient Cramp) have been in his cups whilst making it out, or otherwise subject to wine’s deleterious influence? Let us move to shatter a bottle of perry over a lukewarm grave! We’ll prove in court his gerrymandering, lies, senility and incapacity to render such a codex. There’s no doubting it whatsoever... and his Last Will & Testament proves to be a latterday Dead Sea scroll, even a blatant implausibility. Mightn’t it – somewhat resultantly – be an exercise in Dubuffet’s *Art Brut*? We’ll gather in order to show the world that this nonagenarian was crazy! (et cetera...’ YET WAIT A MOMENT... what you haven’t registered is the following: he actually left a later and more valid Testament. It’s a new Will which supersedes the old one, do you see? It serves as a postscript to Ancient Cramp’s bedding and its read articles. Do all three of you wish to let rip a wolfish cry of exultation? For it has to recognise a legal deposit office without compare, and it forms a basis over your recovered qualms.”

Ancient Cramp: “In relation to which – my vulture step-children are struck dumb with the ecstasy of such a misplacement. Are they really the feral children of a wanton’s desire? It seems so... due to the fact that they exist independently of the city-scape which lies between a Cerberus, possessing three heads, and an attorney in tweeds. Maybe they will feel free and easy enough to hand round the Baddeley cake? A thespian act of generosity (this) in Robert Baddeley’s Will of 1744, as is espied over the enactment of *Twelfth Night* at Drury Lane.”

SIXTEEN

Ancient Cramp<<who’s now looking through a lens of darkly misted time>>: “What can it be about music coming to soothe the savage breast, according to the poet? For hope springs eternal in my three step-sons... and on the morning of the second Will’s declamation, they stop off to place flowers on my grave.”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “You must be absolutely insane, old boy! On a morn like this, to lope off and strew reeds of lustre (or false judgement) on a termagant’s reeking corpse, I ask you.... Doesn’t it exemplify a particular scene from a Gnostic Punch and Judy? A moment wherein a lurid glow examines this defensive or forlorn ideal. Immediately thereafter, I looked up at the Punch and Judy theatre on the sands. It had become brightly lit up or otherwise bobbed in the light – thereby dodging this way and t’other, if only to illumine these pitches of the dead. Listen, my brothers, a mysterious whirring has turned up – even as our toy theatre swayed in the moonlight... and the booth’s red-and-yellow colouring glinted dully. On this stage’s aperture were Punch and the Doctor – both of whom seemed to be hesitant over each other’s glare – even though they’re ‘operating’ on Pretty Polly (otherwise). Do you choose to remember her? Ancestrally speaking, she was Punch’s girlfriend – rather like Lois Lane in *Superman* – and this girl came over as unknown to the show’s childhood participants in contemporary time. A rubiate glow (according to an active spirituality) imbues this proscenium’s

scene, and it even extends to the scalpel in our medical-man's hand... Could this pompous MD be a Victorian gentleman, or quite possibly a shaman of different states? Who knows – my league of deviants? But before master Keats or the slitter's entry – an amazing visitation occurs... A codicil or Robert Service proem whereby a snake emerges from Polly's mouth, coils around her scalp and bites her surgeon's hand. Was it an example of the worm ouroborous (?); i.e., the scaliest one who goes about devouring its own tail. Or alternatively, might it illustrate Giotto's sigil – the latter pertaining to envy – and soon to be discovered anew in Italy's Scrovegni palace."

SEVENTEEN

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "I'm not mad, old man, merely delivered of a new livery or its caprice... since these flowers are just the manifestation of a new Cyclops, especially if its one eye comes draped with such corn dollies as these. May it take your fancy to own a wickerman, even if your scanty intent is to set it afire? Anyway, why don't the two of you lighten up? For the racing of my pulse has led to a new acclimatisation... because the rabble must have already taken hold of Young Cramp, primarily by leading him out from a marble colonnade to an execution pillar! They march onwards – albeit heaving and snarling – if only to lead our lord & master off to a steam turbine room. Behind them, various flames leap up *avaunt* some disjointed sculpture... and this is during a period where Paolozzi-like machines, doused in ash, limit the pedigree of a newly Modern flourish. Could it be a Futurist frenzy, or more precisely, the *right stuff* of either Tom Wolfe's or Ernst Junger's diction? Still, I have escaped from the hydra's clutches by clambering over various interconnections of pipe. It had proved to be a finite resolve – or possibly a delimiting of Bic's blade."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "You must be over-joyed to spill out from beyond their coils?"

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “Yes, frankly... because now we are free to collect our winnings from Life’s court. Like the brown cadaver grasping a plump maiden in mediaeval pageantry, we can join battle with Norman O. Brown’s *Life against Death*. By any deliberation though, we owe the old boy a bouquet of rough diamonds which has been spread with petals’ frost... but not a ‘bouquet of barbed wire’ *a la* Andrea Newman. Remember, fellow dreadnoughts: we are making up for the one we didn’t drop at the funeral!”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “You’ve convinced me of its efficacy – no matter how reluctantly. Yet now that we’ve performed our duty with a perforated trumpet, let’s go and suck up those truffles left by the Will. For didn’t every Punch and Judy man (or so-called Professor) have about his person a young assistant known as the Bottler? An impresario, this, who looked strangely simian under a green sky... especially when the red-and-yellow awning of the Punch and Judy theatre is seen to billow under a scant wind. A Bottler? Yes, he was the one who master-minded the antics of such a breach; he also got the audience going; as well as stirring up trouble ‘twixt parent and child... or instigating back-chat and heckling. Likewise – and with the clarion ‘come along, boys & girls’ – he pied piper’d the multitude towards this tragi-comedy. Do you realise that Terence or Plautus had naught comparable? His most demanding task, however, remains to go round with a tin for the showman at this land’s end. A *denouement* wherein Gawain meets his very own Green Knight...”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Enough of yonder example, man! The show can only be over; why don’t you vault this barrier in order to fight with Grendel and then a crocodile? Moreover, this figurine was a Dragon once upon a time or under Porsini’s tutelage in those wintry depths --- could it not be a harbinger of dawn? Let’s depart in order to hear Montague Raitt, our family’s lawyer, recovering this Will alive/alive-o and by the skill of its reading. Do we succeed in leaving Mister Punch, then, to wave

his stick at our carnival's end... particularly when his eyes are all a'goggle? 'Good-bye, boys and girls', he squeals through a swazzle; 'bye-bye', the dispersing throng calls back to him. They all have their right arms in the air or hold them aloft – like one of Caesar's satraps saluting. 'Good-bye, Mr. Punch', they salaam, 'good-bye'."

EIGHTEEN

Ancient Cramp <<who now possesses a voice, no matter how sepulchrally, which spills a lullaby from its ready coffer>>: "The Will is presently being read in Montague Raitt's office. 'Please be seated for my bureaucratic spiel', he chooses to anoint those present with. To look at it from above – my step-children seem to be mightily pleased with themselves. But by contrast, my beloved daughter or little sparrow (Teresa) justifies some tears before a wolverine's appetite! Yessum... Again, my reader, Montague Raitt's officious tone scans each period like a metronome or a 'speak your weight' machine. Yet my three vultures are speaking about me in unison: 'What a kindred spirit of Beowulf our step-father resembled – to be sure. Do you recall John Gardner's addendum or mythus, by way of the monster's vintage? Never mind: for all three of us wish he'd reached a century or more in such an imaginary game of cricket...' et cetera. What hypocrites these scions are, and so unusual to have praise of me from their iron lips! To begin with, their earnest vainglory is cocksure or Jerzy Kosinski-like; but over many moments in time a hesitancy creeps into their expressive masks. Whereas, *au contraire*, a secret smile of satisfaction starts to break out on Teresa's face... and it resembles a gloved hand, courtesy of Tiffany's, that bursts through a manikin's bust. An illustration of puppetry's art (it proves to be) which wears a sliver of gold leaf over its tender areas. Likewise, why are there so many deaths in a performance of Punch and Judy? It presumably has to do with the puppet-master's desire to uncork his left-hand... for does all of this not relate to a prior intrigue?

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Within the purview of which two figurines – one of them possessing a black block over its face – approach the military governor of an unknown province. His visage looks to be impervious to pain, even imperious or lugubrious in its lustre: but in no way worn out. He also wears some chain-mail links in the form of a coif or its talisman, irrespective of a tonsured head-gown....: ‘We’ve found a waif and stray in our researches, wolflings. May she have been dancing like an erotic ballerina, contrary to all discipline and deportment? Look at this – why don’t you?’ (He then slides back an inner compartment or drawer-space). ‘We’d heard that she’d been feeding at the brain of one trickster, Cramp. So why not allow her to test out some electric-shock boots --- toe-to-toe --- in order to assess her cavorting ability? A fine job of training her you two marshalled, since this mincing Teresa didn’t have the nerve to quench a residual voltage. Now, if you’ve got aught to declare to me – just take care to unburden your moral conscience. Otherwise, make sure you clear off down a pathway towards oblivion... because I’ll be too busy devouring a repast’. With this, two slightly familiar hands deliver a steaming hot-plate – one that’s replete by having a Fortnum & Mason’s lid on top. ‘You butcher... we’ll seek vengeance against you by dint of a semblance or surfeit of meat! Where are our cleavers?’, declare both warriors at once. Yet suddenly, they turn abruptly on their respective heels and march out with a quick step. They easily traverse the deep-piled carpet within minutes....all of which means they’re outside in an eye’s blink. ‘Ha!’, snarled the Myrmidon they’d left behind, ‘they’ve each resiled from their vigilantism, or otherwise become quivering jelly when confronted with its consequences. Truly, we are the mould within which such gelatine is shaped! Against it, they’ll have no alternative but to quit their posts; yet I stand here awaiting Cramp. For once his carrier pigeon doesn’t return, he’ll wander the world rather like Odin without his staff’. Gingerly – given the heat – he proceeded to lift one domed lid off a dinner service. Surely it’s made of solid silver (?); but all that’s contained underneath it were several gelignite sticks, wired, and

with a timing-device merrily repeating the following: TICK-TOCK; TICK-TOCK it clipped out. He won't even have time to scream before the explosion rips him apart (you see).

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'Why do they detest you so?', the younger charge of the two asks of a mid-life Cramp... a figure who's somewhat disguised himself. 'It's because I'm a dreamer, a visionary or a Jainist of the distaff side. I float between dimensions or Steve Ditko-like borders, and they exist across from Pixie-ish delusions of selfhood. Can you comprehend those boundless walls of verdant green which lie on either side of these hands? (He holds them up – and as he does so – we see that a younger version of Cramp's face is illumined in its entirety... it even looks transfigured). I wish to engage in cosmic play or gambols; while they want to own everything – particularly in terms of its monetary worth'.

Did the former militia commander's bearing have about it – in any composite fashion – the stamp of my three step-sons? They formed an unholy triad, after all..."

NINETEEN

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: "I can't quite believe in a providence such as this one."

Ancient Cramp's ghost: "About what can she be remarking one wonders? Why, let's just regard the unaccustomed masks of my three step-triplets... can't we superintend their aggressive canines, bullet-like orbs and caustic gait? Are they not a visitation of disappointment – most palpably? Look at them: it's almost funny to observe the cauterised hope which has been etched on every feature. If I weren't already dead, my daughter, I'd have a good belly laugh about it... an exercise in *Schadenfreude* or what? Mayhap it comes to intone the following phantasy... A scenario in which a skeletal or blanched man – who's heavily masked – strides across a paper-thin bridge. Surely now, it exemplifies that magisterial spasm of light which is cast across water – itself almost after the fashion of the living

lightning? Wasn't Zeus the master here, and doesn't this last structure speak of or muster up the curving millennium bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne? Any road: 'I am led by my nose over a cascade of lava – albeit with strange cries of either ecstasy or despair coming up from the reek. Suddenly my form is grabbed by a seething claw; and it originates from below when garbed in some gaseous fibre, and these fingers stretch out so as to gain a hold of their prey. As if by some injunction – one of the bridge's guards then prods at it with a whistling pole. Does it bend and stretch like an oarsman's barge or stick; i.e., a device which is best seen on one of those punts plying the Isis? Nonetheless, his action saves me from a man-handling by one of these *savants*... a creature whose misshapen paw releases my sleeve thereby. These gases continue to swirl or fade towards green simultaneously, and I look down into their midst. All I can see are some distended and deranged faces which gaze up at one from such diseased vapours. One tournament head seems to grit its teeth; while another two ventriloquist dummies have open or lolling mouths. Where do they come from (in particular)? How can they continue to live down there in an eldritch pit? For what ultimate purpose is their existence poured forth around us? 'Down freaks!', the gaolers condescend to scream over them... but I am no longer listening. Because all of my hearing has to be concentrated on an inner voice – yet surely my understanding of them faces metamorphosis by gas? But might it be something aught or other than this? Could I really be party to an outer perimeter of Hell (?); one that proves to be far worse than John Martin's postulate. (Even Dante's *divine comedy* doesn't really come into our picture; it's too poetic...)

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Then I remember – with a loud thunderclap – where I've seen such masks before... were they not grotesque imps who had been perverted by silence? For all of them bore an uncanny resemblance to my three vulture step-sons... even though my legitimate daughter, Teresa, can hardly hide her broad smile throughout. Yes... it was in a storehouse of Punch and Judy

figurines where my recollection clusters. Moreover, each and every one of these macabre dolls has been delineated in a higgledy-piggledy manner – after a certain species of envy or malice aforethought. Their overall *troupe* bore Roselia's name or vintage, and they were late Victorian puppets taken from Richard Gill's collection. (Note: all of them stare out from a grainy photogravure, by Waldo Lanchester, in Michael Byrom's book about *Punch*). Some of these hideous gloves wore a chattering class o' distemper (like the Skeleton); whereas others bewailed a bear's habitation (in a carnival reminiscent of Judy, the Padre, various Boxers, the Law's long-arm *a la* the Policeman, Egypt's King S***o, and a trite puritan akin to the Beadle). All of this wrecking crew included the Crocodile as well as other painted dolls, and 'he' existed adjacent to a long-box or gibbet. It flashed an unbearable length of gnashers-cum-teeth – themselves alienated to a fault or all at once. Might each one have been continuously using 'Rembrandt' – the American non-fluoride toothpaste that's blue in colour? Who can otherwise remember it clearly?

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Meanwhile, my non-biologic children seem to look remarkably similar to me. *Their eyes revolved in round sockets --- each one's fists became clenched; perspiration broke out in unlikely places or ducts, and the gang's teeth gritted the asphalt of an unknown beginning.* All three of them have become a picture of bewilderment, fury, enmity, disillusionment and unresolved asperity. 'The sick scarecrow', lashed out Crinkley Rage Ransom, 'let's dig him up, eviscerate the corpse and boil it in acid'. 'No, that's too lenient', stormed Arbuthnot Robinson, 'we must scrape out his eye-balls with our bare hands – and play marbles with them afterwards'. 'Do you know what?', enthused Tiberius Hague-Ovant in a dark humour, 'we ought to rip off his pizzle and feed it to some pigs in a sty'.

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The reason for such 'anti-humanist' outbursts as these? Why, let's just listen to the solicitor, Montague Raitt, who has finished

reading my Will. Its last line declares: 'All my estate shall be divided equally between those children of mine who attend their father's funeral'.

Ancient Cramp

THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT!"

EVOLUTION X

A dystopian fable

Dramatis Personae: These include a hermit, a sage or an unaccustomed philosopher whose name is Heraclitus Bean, a physiocrat. Whereas two sadic psychiatrists also strut through these pages. They go under the names or keepsakes of Whopper and Topper. Four soldiers likewise find themselves configured in a version of Greek tragedy by Richmond Lattimore. Their names are as follows: Colonel Ax, Major Tree-bend, Captain Tomb Gooseflesh and Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray... otherwise known as 'Rock'. (Collectively they are called 'the Swine'). Superintending all of this though, one has to consider a female angel of death... is she an indo-european djinn or something of a Kali *europea*? Her title remains a steel-trap before dying and the words used were Sabrina-Tara Tomkins. Might she be a reverse *anima* or extension of Heraclitus Bean?

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On the cusp of minor characters, two soldiers of fortune or other operatives – Warp and Weft – make an occasional appearance. While a cretin --- Mister Nobody --- drifts in and out of this sequence.

FIRST SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Fenris will devour Odin eventually... but not quite yet. For the exemplification of this vision shows off the following tableau – namely, a blue curtain or its bamboo frame of wall existing beyond a pyramid of doubt. To one side of such a field of vision – and alien to its right – can be seen a fire-grate which consists of sequestered bricks. A brief interlude of flame rears up to one side of it; at once solemn in its own infraction or delusion. By way of a delimited rose, however, a woven carpet hangs from the far wall via a pin. It berates the following witness in an alien tongue – *sympathy is weakness* (it reads): in a manner which passeth all understanding. To the other extent of our envisaged spot, various homily accoutrements peep out from

their shelves. These include a coffee-pot and sauce-pan, together with the odd wine-bottle or accustomed plate. On a lower table some simple fare seems to be laid out; possibly to the accompaniment of indications like cheese, bread and brandy-snap. BUT OUR ATTENTION BECOMES ARRESTED BY THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN ALL OF THIS... and he remains a man of approximately middle-size. He is lashed to a chair and appears to be bidden – in his absence – to the sovereignty of bondage. About his neck he looks to have some pilot's goggles; while his uniform sports epaulettes amid a tab of green. Moreover, this character's mouth lies open --- as if to scream! Yet what concentrates our insight has to be his golden skin; the secular trunk of which resembles ambrosia or the food of the Gods! Could it revisit – albeit in reverse order – the futurist sculpture by Boccioni known as *Unique forms of Continuity in Space* (1913)? A set-up wherein the muscularity of Thorak comes unstuck; if only in a whirligig of ormolu or under the apportioned trajectory of a black lotus (merely). May we spy it amidst a vortex of speed – rather unhesitatingly? Anyway, such a figure's skin-cloth evinces a tapestry of runes: and it is rather like the cold, inhuman, Apollonian grandeur of an ancient mask. Does Apollo really blast those around him with the asperity of his languor? Behind which lurks an ever-present semblance of the reptilian...

What might our crucified victim be crying out at? Why, can it have aught to do with a large scimitar which was multi-dimensional in its use and hungered for his throat? Its handle seems to be appended to some scarlet, but the hand which wields it is Midas' or otherwise comes spray-painted over tungsten's absence.

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Superintending all of the above, though, an old woman plays with the nature of an animate computer... it fizzles and pops under the trill of her delicate hands. Her name was Sabrina-Tara Tomkins and the Burroughs machine which she skilfully

administers has a mock-human visage. Indeed, its eyes remain silent within an orb-time's salience... since the death-grimace of its mask portends many of Paolozzi's machines or fake sculptures of a reverse temperature. Do you recall the one – modelled on Blake's temperance o' Newton – that adorns the British Library on Euston's Road? Nonetheless, this robotic imprecation resuscitates Isaac Asimov's *I Robot*, but without the humanism which disfigures the latter. Even though its head succeeds in having about it a carapace of steel – the former cleaved in half – or contrapuntal over a skull's deliverance. It looks like an egghead when it's been raised on goat's cheese; yet without the inescapability of a brain outside its palimpsest. May one detect the limbering up of such an attitude? For no other spartan architecture ricochets into sight – despite the fact that Spengler's *Man and Technics* might be involved... Because this living or main-frame computer resuscitates an Aztec god, Xolotl, at once deluded of all pain and reckoning on one's sacrificial innocence. Mightn't it reimburse either D.H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* or Dennis Wheatley's *Dangerous Inheritance*? No matter... *quod* we shall meet it again. Its name is Kill-Martin.

SECOND SURAH>>>

In theatrical terms, our play begins here...

Colonel Ax: "Observe the trajectory of my finger, comrade. It points in a line towards the forgiveness of our goal... Can you detect its limitations on this ordnance survey map, perchance? Yes sir, since we are only momentarily free from the cruelty which binds us to our shadow-worlds. For all love contains within it the parsimony of fear. Now then, our job is to place an agent at the heart of this town or Gotham, and it exists right at the cross-roads of enemy activity. He will play a decisive role in our future strategy; primarily by out-manoeuvring the dullards (thereby) and shifting them onto destruction's path. This hamlet's name – when situated on a blue silt road – folds into the word Nonesuch. Yet it shall be from this humble clay that we'll create our Golem... do you follow? It even reminds me, *en*

passant, of the character with an unfolding or extending neck known as Scaramouch. Doesn't he figure in a mountebank's carnival – never mind a populous circus – under the title of Mister Nobody? Given Cruikshank's talent for enlivening him, we are free to observe such tightly woven steel-engravings of yesteryear (especially...)"

Major Tree-bend: "Was he accompanied in Collier's edition by twin tumblers – on either side of him – and balancing their art accordingly?"

Colonel Ax: "Quite so. For Piccini's tragi-comedy exists in the mass mind and it trumps those distant Attic comedies from whence it came. Yessum... Punch & Judy may not be the elixir, but it certainly cries out to us in the desert for some water. Let us mix this holy water with the haemoglobin of so much communal forgetting! Is it only my mind's-eye – or may I see its proscenium arch rising before me (?); at once merely graven to the day it was born and flapping its red/yellow awning. Eric von Daniken's sun has come out or the beach seems misty with its haze, and one's sea laps up over some frontier pebbles. Aren't they frightfully exposed? Let us look at the play's cast list – at least in terms of its innermost population. (In his imagination, therefore, Colonel Ax draws down each puppet from its hook... and every glove-indicator has a space for itself at our theatre's back.)

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Look here, my desperadoes in mayhem... the first stick-figure we happen to draw from this habit is the Skeleton. (He holds it in his imagination or on an outstretched palm.) It gibbers on my hand in an enclosed manner of bone; and it just doubles up aplenty or is otherwise ready for a saturnine nocturne. Yet who knows why it haunts Mister Punch – when placed next to this salutary curtain? Can its gesture prove to be anything other than macabre – particularly after the aphrodisiac of 'Death's dance'? A scorpionic interlude (this is) which was scripted throughout time

by none other than Felicien Rops, Odilon Redon, Durer, Breughel, Ligeti and many a mediaeval illuminator who worked on drear manuscripts. Could it fasten on Punch's conscience by betraying his instincts; and thus represent the shroud of a departed Judy?"

Major Tree-bend: "It bespeaks of Judy's ghost who wails to the gallery after some failed kindred or other..."

Colonel Ax: "Ah, verily, we are resolved to murder one another like Cain who slew his brother, Abel. For the finest sundering of a life was to free up its manumission (you see). There can be little glory in war save death, yet the cloaking of unBeing proves to be our conflict's elixir! Do you remember the *anomie* of Ajax (?) when seen here in this Romanesque triumph... but not really betokening an illusion. What did the ancient sage Heraclitus have to utter about it, at least when transposed to Karl Edward Wagner's diction? I must declare that he pronounced the following: *war is father of all things; king of all things; it makes some men Gods, of some free men, and of others slaves*. Pursuant to this rectification, however, don't you see that we require a spy here? (He pointed down at the map as he said this, and continued to eye its topography after a vulture's piece). Kubla-rebok (or Nonesuch) happens to be a town that's surrounded by some basalt cliffs, each one of which finds itself riven asunder by variously grassy steppes. We require an agent to be right at its epicentre or frigid in its posting in terms o' graft, and such a talent's liable to oversee everything as its Apostle. Can you really catalogue a posting for this harpy or wolverine? Since this cartography courses away under my finger or within a bluish haze... Was it (no matter how adjacently) the square of a deluded reading – or some other calculus betimes?"

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins <<when viewing him sideways-on, or from another dimension>>: "How may Colonel Ax be properly characterised? For surely, he illustrates a matador at the point of

our bull's rupture (?) – much like one of Francis Bacon's paintings. Because his skull is balding under an upturned orange-crate; what with two epaulettes appearing next to a tunic of winsome green. Moreover, he continues to wear a metal visor over his head (briefly); if only to exaggerate the sententious mutterings of a mouth beneath this. *Ecce homo* --- behold the man! But it's not necessarily an example of *salvator mundi*, after the Renaissance painter Antonello, but still... can't we discern a telecommunication's wrist-band that's subsumed in a gauntlet? Over all though, the effect remains of H.P. McNeill's Bulldog Drummond without the mouth-wash..."

THIRD SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: "We have now discovered an opportune way to penetrate to its 'heart'; at least by way of an available aorta. Listen to me: in the inner vortex of Kubla-rebok there lies an idiot who's oblivious to all honours or medals, and he truly represents a man alone. His name happens to be Mister Nobody. Now – what terms of reference attach themselves to his Quicksilver retinue? Why, they would merely be bullets of indifference such as hippy, yippie, recluse, hermit, Breed, refusenik (sic), drop out, long shaggy dog, et cetera... these were the mileage of so many slugs! Was he not a delinquent object in our planned socialist state, rather like in Ayn Rand's *Anthem*... albeit in reverse? For such bourgeois individualism has no regard to Moreau's new men or our bay-of-plenty. *Touché!*"

Major Tree-bend: "Yet how can our ears be bent towards this absence of social responsibility?"

Colonel Ax: "My master of the sub-human reach, I will instruct you... due to the fact that our blood-axes must drip with a carrion of undeclared intrigue. Oh my, yes... this imbecile called Nobody mummifies our car delivery lounge – and must you detect a dent in its bonnet? Because he remains a perfect target throughout. He also goes nowhere, resiles frustratingly abed,

talks to no soul and sits chomping his carrots on a garden of improvidence. To reel this cold-bloodied pike in (then): he would make an ideal operative or secret agent, *n'est ce pas?*”

Major Tree-bend: “Your linear logic catches my frenzied brain like pitch tar, comrade. How may I – when blushing and with both eyes shut – teach granny to suck eggs? Yet perchance, this ditty must be retrieved from a Pinteresque silence. Can such a sack-cloth-and-ashes be spider-launched; or is it just sitting on some caskets of rare onyx? Further, what about the tarantula – or a hairy arachnid – who guards these opals’ passage with its yellowing fangs?”

Colonel Ax: “Their mouths were not formally agape?”

Major Tree-bend: “Try them and see, my friend... but I still return to the evidence of a Lollard who blows his horn repeatedly. Moreover, doesn’t Sarban’s bookish phantasy hint at some misgivings here? For Ripon’s horn-blowing – in deepest Yorkshire – sounds out every evening from a four-cornered obelisk. It refers to setting one’s watch at nine p.m., and it dates from the year 886 during the reign of Alfred the Great. In short order, my fellow conspirators, how do you cut off Scaramouch’s fake neck so as to void our Mister Nobody? Can you effectively detect the appeal of our wisdom? Would it be altogether credible to train up an idiot as a secret weapon?”

Colonel Ax: “Of course not, comrade – what you do is kill the imp and replace him with a double.”

Major Tree-bend: “It’s a case of Mister Somebody for Mister Nobody, you mean?”

Colonel Ax: “Most assuredly, a game of six aces has striven to draw its own blood...”

FOURTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "I look on, multi-dimensionally speaking, in order to assess the plenitude of one's wrath. It beguiles my ever-present witness (you see), since do I render concrete each waspish desire? Never mind, my lovelies... because Colonel Ax has resumed his role as an unannounced Professor, in this 'Punch and Judy' performance of the mind's-eye. It may never match the exaltation of Sophocles; yet it shall often alter one's inner cascade in terms of the wisest, oldest, greatest play ever told. Colonel Ax holds up the Baby now; at least when it proves to be naked over a noon-day's thumb. Similarly, one can gaze into its visage independently of all else; if only to cancel out the impediment of a necessary scream. Can the babe stand revealed as a blighter whose mouth's been hollowed out in plastic; and yet the latter seems to be short of an ovular perspective? Don't forget, boys and girls, that this particular figurine mimes to a stick... whereas all the other *papier mache* macabres (to give vent to every 57th variety) are glove-puppets withal.

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Next up in this catalogue of spirits comes Judy and her face seems to be refracted in sun-light, thus existing off to one side of the palaver. Needless to say, this was by wit of one present-absence --- since a halo of reverse glory appears to masquerade as her mask, albeit pinching it in order to achieve its resolve. More so, my ducks: the tragic or grotesque elements of our revels (or Piccini's) comes to be grafted onto a guaranteed Masque. But it's not necessarily one underscored by Henry Lawes... why so? Why, *quod* here pops up Joey the Clown; a figurine who's crisply attended to in his own booth. He – a direct descendant from the Harlequin's jeremiad – plays tricks on Mister Punch and mimics him in accordance with this farce's tradition. Moreover, his face comes to be painted with brilliant white or grease-paint; together *avec* great black-lips, red spots on the cheeks and gravy tears over one's brow. Also, he bespots a ruff around his own collar – next to a silken jerkin of some red-like apparel. Likewise, the Circus' awning shows up horizontally behind him.

Are his capricious frolics using caps, bells, frying-pans, sausages, hide-and-seek, *ad infinitum*, as the elixir of a theatre's sword-play?"

*Avaunt thee – an argument commences out of Time;
Look at how they wield each baton,
Plus malefic Punch clubs Judy dead,
O, Pulcinella! What hectoring sprites...*

FIFTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Yet let us continue to over-watch Sabrina-Tara Tomkins, and this is regardless of how she deals with a recumbent Fate. Will she choose to monitor her machine, Kill-Martin, over the effect of its misadventures? Possibly yes; at variance no... since Sabrina-Tara immediately seeks to divest herself of a shift or cloth that surrounds her. Could it be made of some white muslin, or even a similarly diaphanous material? Anyway, no sooner has she divested herself of this accoutrement – than this matriarch belabours about her with a stick! Might it recall a liquorice baton, or one of those joy-sticks associated with Punch & Judy? Since around her person – or stood in circuitous relief – there happens to be row-upon-row of toy soldiers. A large number of them consist of Guards *per se*, or members of the Queen's own household regiments... together with busbies, ornate bayonets at the ready, and red tunics. Some of them seemed to be approximately life-size or William Roberts-like, and all were characterised by those light-green bases... the latter studded in metal. Surely one remembers those military figures of old; especially when cast by manufacturers like Britons and Sons, limited? During the course of such *Grand Guignol*, though, Sabrina-Tara becomes convulsed with rage... and she behaves like a ravening fury (sic) without the Euminedes' intervention. Her grey hair streaks behind her flailing arms – all of which are now fixated upon their object, or rinsed with an unsavoury projectile throughout. Whereas one eye glares in a larger way than the other – albeit with a rapt attention to iciness that hints at

the reptilian beneath. Furthermore, Sabrina's lips sprout or 'pyramid' out towards turquoise, and her orbs beetle in an ironic pitch... while her face became creased with livid indents. May such tractor-tracks o' the soul actually hint at a metaphor, or do they personify the Swine foregathered below?

SIXTH SURAH>>>

A porcine medley is accustomed to carouse or spin – by way of a Master's dance...

Colonel Ax: "We certainly have a perfect replacement for our very own Scaramouch. Do you detect this transportation into such plastic tongues? Our state must kill a clown – replace him with a living Plastinate or identikit picture – and then exhibit this folly as a Turner prize entrant. It can either be a mosaic or a stained-glass window; at least in terms of our indifference to pain..."

Major Tree-bend: "You already have the correct scarecrow mapped out?"

Colonel Ax: "Most assuredly – my man; for collectivisation of individual co-ordinates is our endeavour. On this levy, then, L.P. Hartley's *Facial Justice* rises to our attention... but we reject its accelerating cascade of reaction. Does one recollect the woman who travelled from England's south coast in order to damage some stained-glass windows in the 'fifties? She was hysterically middle-brow (you see). When such images as these had been spliced into Coventry cathedral thanks to Graham Sutherland, so as to reconsecrate the place after war-time bombing. Truly, our definition of mortal liberty has to be a boot stamping on a face forever. Are we all true socialists here (?); that is, robots who prove to be golden-skinned and capable of ought..."

Major Tree-bend: “How do we witness this *aureole* of our birth? For let’s damn the consequences and name our minister of unreliance...”

Colonel Ax: “You may have your wish, my comrade-in-arms, particularly when it’s patterned on a bullet in the kidneys. His calling-card has to go by the name of Heraclitus Bean – that is to say, a hermit who lives alone in those abandoned hills. Were they blue-tinged; or otherwise coupled with a lozenge of distracted light? Whereupon, and like the modernist composer Messiaen, he seems to prefer the company of birds --- unlike those characters in Daphne du Maurier’s short story. Yet the armature of his very silence or pendulum, which suits him at this moment of rest, will serve him well over forgotten commando skills... the former nagging at his sleeves.”

Whopper: “Are we not lucky in finding a recluse who’s already attuned to these Mysteries? For isolation always opens the mind to an absence of pity. Further to this, the work of Jean-Paul Sartre remains incorrect in so many things – do you see? Especially when we recognise that hell approximates less to other people than an absence of their presence. Surely each is a snail, with or without a shell, who leaves a silvery trail upon open ground? Ooze betrays its necessary filter; and yet Hades remains an osmotic barrier through which *les autres* can’t travel.”

Colonel Ax: “They shall not pass!”

Whopper: “Quite.”

SEVENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Whopper and Topper are two dissident psychiatrists; and each of them is found to be redolent of those dislocations in Zamyatin’s *We*. The former connects to a bean-pole who’s many hands high in its horse-flesh; while the latter

betrays R.D. Laing without an itch... Similarly, these leftwing authoritarians seek to refute *Anti-Oedipus*, a thesis put forward by Deleuze and Guattari. For them, the mad and the sane have not changed places; they merely must do so... Can I welcome them back to my particular hive? Since one's bodice harbours the attention of its armour or cover-all – not to mention a cloak behind my back and the flowing ricochet of a skirt. Welcome friends, to a nemesis of nothing but death... Look: I remain able, in our little psycho-drama, to pull another glove-puppet over one of these gauntlets. Certainly, the Doctor appears now – at once moustached – and available for any action by way of a drop of physic. PHYSIC... PHYSIC: let's understand whether a tell-tale heart clutches at its own bypass. Here he comes (however) and he looms up behind Punch who lies prone on the stage. 'Are you well, Mister Punch?', 'No, I'm dead!', 'Really? How long have you enjoyed corpse-like status?', 'A thousand years', 'As long as that – eh? I don't believe you're kaput at all, Mr. Punch', 'Let me rest on these peaceful boards... AAHHH!', 'Wait an instant, I declare, what you need is some physic. I'll be right back with a bottle... soon as I've boiled down the baby for its marrow', 'Your very own snake-oil, I'll be bound.'"

EIGHTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: On top of a lonely hill – or by virtue of burrowing into its insignificance – a hermit was seen to live out his secluded life. Whereas any photographic exposure seems to enhance a scintilla of blue; or otherwise finds itself given over to a space's absence. Meanwhile, we notice that two secret policemen and their attendant medicos are approaching a hut. While two figurines – with fixed bayonets apiece – stand guard on either side of this aperture. On closer inspection, though, weren't they those toy soldiers we mentioned before?

Colonel Ax: "Congratulations, comrade, you have been picked out for a special mission or task, and are thereby ennobled by this

preferment. The serving of one's country is a special commission in peace – never mind in times of war or conflict.”

Scene-setting: (Yet, *sub species aeternatis*, one also happens to be walking across his grave's top – albeit in steel-shod boots. Could it be Sabrina-Tara Tomkins who adorns our mind; other than in a situation where she's worshipped anew? Her medusean form stands erect on a minimal dais, and it's rather reminiscent of that actress who played Tamora, Queen of the Goths... Do you remember? For she came forward in a livid and intense manner; as well as being basilisk-eyed, heavily mascara'd, and redolent of Beresford Egan's images when these were pursuant to Audrey Beardsley out of Baudelaire. All of which proceeds from the director Peter Brook's violent use of Shakespeare's dramaturgy in *Titus Andronicus*).

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Colonel Ax: “You are dead, comrade citizen – yet we will force you to live again, irrespective of all other mission statements. You must serve the state as either an integer or a cellular construction of the impossible. Can you really be aware of the honour we bestow upon you? For – like O'Brien's diatribe in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – do you die when your finger-nails are trimmed? And, more than ever so, didn't Anthony Burgess not gloss this particular caper in *1985* – the latter replete with proletarian *argot*? ”

Scene-setting: (But still and all, a batch of toy-soldiers was seen to be marching around Sabrina's plinth. Round and around they circle – without any culpable object whatsoever. Do they have an end in view; and what's it to be if discovered? Above all else, a saturnine catchment area then breeds forth from the Gods – albeit with a prism-violet streak to its available ether. Some great hulking machinery – all the while – also lifts off so as to surround this placement with diverse circuitry. Whilst superintending all of the above... a massive granite statue looks down betimes. It portends a doctrine of ceaseless struggle plus

some negative statement or other. May it betoken an Assyrian deliverance; or likewise measure up to the doctrine of *believe-obey-fight* in Mussolini's discourse? Truly, strength comes through an unfolding plenitude of such joy!)

Heraclitus Bean: "I don't wish to be any part of your proposed imbroglio. My stillness recoils from a past of either attested want or a hive of bees... whether translated by Arthur Sutro or not. Might I apportion blame's transparency; at least in terms of an unabated Punch and Judy? Look here... how many times can Pulcinella let go of the cry: '*Huzza, huzza: the Devil is dead!*' Because he always has occasion to defeat him in the booth, as Doctor Johnson once bluntly inferred. Do I hold him out here on my exposed hand's entreaty?"

Topper: "This citizen chunters on like a pocket-sized Mephisto."

Heraclitus Bean: "Most certainly, I have succeeded in fording the aftercare of my own tiny wants – no matter how manifestly... Still and all, our version of Old Nick rears up through an accustomed flood-gate. See here: must we love or swoon before the flaming red-linen of his magisterial garb? Too true, my friends, in that we are trapped in the mechanistic fortitude of everyday patterns. Wherein an old sour puss lies in an expended glove-puppetry on one's left-side. Most profitably, his infernal watch-tower looms up forevermore; and it merely seems to be blood-red in its expectancy or force. With a stop-gap to the mouth like a melisma – or fluted concerning a horn and pushed out by way of an ear-tube – are we right to sense the *kaos* of Anton LaVey's format? Presumably though, these forgotten hemi-cycles of grime --- resembling the circular arcs left by dirty glasses --- constitute the rippling effects of a mouth. Since a modernist constellation of this near-grief comes close to Paul Klee's picture of a *Possessed Girl*. Yet behold, Mister Punch and the Devil are fighting once again – with one on top of the other or another... Is it a blur of arrested motion; basically by attesting

to a Greco-Roman wrestle plus some necessary sticks? Busy, busy were these paranoids (you see); and each one of them belabours his fellow with a massive hit. Whack! Ah! Stop... my grief. Suddenly our Pluto falls to the boards all but dead, and a balsa or wooden trajectory seems to have stopped his heart. 'Hooray! Hooray!', rants Punch in a transgressive vein. 'Now everyone is liberated from the taint of original sin – and we're free to fashion the future as our hearts dictate.'

Colonel Ax: "Save in your particular case, my weather-vane... because you have been appointed by our regime in order to clear an encumbrance. Must you see or recognise the flighty potential of this blind-man's shaft? For I will have you know that a short-sighted rascal exists way back in Piccini's Punch and Judy. He probably embodies an elixir of ignorance and folly, when coming straight from mediaeval mime and by way of a Mummers' anthem. 'Can't you detect the light...? Watch out how you swing that billy-club, you blind old blackguard!' (The colonel, in his bright green jerkin, then strikes a ferocious blow on the hermit's exposed neck. He does so with a baton made of yew – rather like a cricket bat. Poor Heraclitus can only stagger slightly under its impact.) Observe, dissentient one, how we punish any exemptions from what Khrushchev called socialist legality! Now then, your face and its body have occasion to recall an idiot in a waylaid village. It exists well behind enemy lines. We shall kill him, replace the didicoi with you, ensconce yon in espionage and make use of ye as a spy. The hamlet in which this spastic resides is central to our adversary's communications... do you follow our drift, perchance?"

Heraclitus Bean: "But I want naught of conflict or its disadvantageous bounty. I only wish to live for a kernel of the mind and its spirit... Don't you choose to register here, amid these pet animals and birds, the provision of philosophical manuscripts aplenty? They have to adopt the example of

Aquinas, Hegel, Veblen, Searle – plus Joad – on a library shelf of our imagination. You see, I reject the principle of fury.”

(Major Tree-bend then hits him savagely over either side of the neck with a Punch stick).

Major Tree-bend: “Listen to me, comrade: no-one may dismiss our state’s rectification without a bullet in the skull. We’ll resultantly pickle your brain and place it in formaldehyde like Damien Hirst, or use it in medical experiments. Each individual happens to be just an ant in possession of its millenary. None may effectively flee from the utilitarianism of Reason’s cult *a la* Robespierre. For one’s anti-life equation directs all such temperatures as these. Bah! Do you dare to besmirch the *cri de coeur* of communist living (?); and can our specimen even recollect Howard Brenton’s *The Romans in Britain* at the National Theatre?”

Heraclitus Bean: “You make my impossibility of perfection all too clear.”

Scene-setting: All of these collected swine – like in *Animal Farm* – then severally retort: “Come with us presently, pawn.”

NINTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Under the watchful boots of our new Colossus, an assembled throng of brigands have gathered together. They line up under a zeppelin’s reverse hanger or expanse; together with their billy-clubs at the ready, and they are waiting to fall on its expectant cargo. These were a collection of youngsters or adolescents (aged between nine and fifteen) who are made to run a gauntlet across this expansive field. *Whack... whack... whack...* this Ollendorffian beggarhood then found themselves manhandled by such clubs; much after the imprecision of a Punch & Judy show. Is it occurring down on the sands in Paignton, Devon? Anyway, and pitched into the middle of such a

throng comes Sabrina-Tara Tomkins, complete with two great mastiffs. They ramp or rave, and collectively each dog growls or snaps at the bit. Do they likewise wear massive collars (of studded copper) around their necks?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Comrades and subalterns, what do we take to be the meaning of *Evolution X*? I will instruct you now... For each and every settled dilution in Astaroth’s stomach casts forward a new enzyme – the production of which was by no means consonant with renewed bile, or a quivering jelly-fish. You see, such fructifications hint at a sympathetic homunculus – at once held in blue dye – and turning upside down in a chemist’s retort. *Avaunt thee!* Are its features not creased in agony or shame; at least during a period where a mage seeks out its mediumship? Since evolution occurs due to harshness, negative massage and the duties of a providential discipline, et cetera... Can it interpret the subsistence of reborn skin; when the latter’s woven over a recently calloused wound? Yet fortitude shall be galvanised from a sense of weakness – as long as we spend our lives avoiding those delicious plums of pity.”

TENTH SURAH>>>

Heraclitus Bean now finds himself exposed to Whopper’s and Topper’s lair – there to undergo conditioning into Mister Nobody, the dotard. Could one hesitate to give out such an advanced message? For W&T (.) were psychiatrists who sought to mould Man like plasticene in concord with statal purposes.

Whopper: “Your complacency before the facts is truly alarming, boy. Do you notice the mistakes you have failed to ascertain – primarily in terms of this test paper? I assure you that no good may come from so clever-clever an attitude. Begin again, prey, for if dissatisfied... we shall have no recourse but to flay you alive! Is it really the case that we roll out the unforgettable drama, as occasioned by Punch and Judy, under the imagined ostracism of their biographer, George Speaight? In any event,

here comes the Beadle – i.e., the present articulator of so much officious patter! In most cases – whether designed by Fred Tickner or not – he intones a help-meet of bureaucracy, or an exemplifier of the iron cage. (As proves to be contained in the ideology and morals of Max Weber, a German sociologist from the early twentieth century). Must I reach into the back of this cabinet or awning – so as to bring him forth? Here he comes... one Beadle --- or Black-beetle, as Mister Punch calls him --- at once starchy, bewigged, eighteenth century-like, stuffy, with his arms unfolded – plus a handle-bar moustache. Beadle: ‘Where’s your authority, then?’ Punch: ‘Here it is’. (Knocks him down). ‘I arrest you in the name of the Law’. ‘I have no paws’. ‘You’ll be very sore’. ‘I can’t help being poor’. ‘Do you need anymore?’ ‘Like Oliver Twist, you’re a frightful bore’. ‘Take that or this, me boy – what about t’other?’ ‘Thwack... Whack... Thwang! Root-toot-toot!’

Topper: “We slacken at the pace of your absent change, earthling. Surely you will detect any effrontery thereafter? Let’s begin again... don’t you realise that this entire 11-plus has failed the servant’s chute? How can you expect to convince anyone if you can’t master this yokel’s dialect? See here! Your assessment or examination is altogether too correct. For incorrect usage of proletarian *argot* helps to betray a bourgeois presumption. Whereas correct grammar – to patent remarks from Baroness Cox’s *Black Papers* – always pays a Reactionary lip-service. Must you be labelled an enemy of the people by one of our tribunals, lay assemblies or functioning communes? Basically comrade, doesn’t Lissagary’s diction convince you of a solecism’s necessity...? (Note: Lissagary wrote a demi-trotskyite history of the Paris commune in 1870). Isn’t inarticulacy the help-meet of the ‘oppressed’ --- by virtue of being head-to-head -- or even signing off as a redundant dunder-head? It also speaks volumes about English John’s cap and bell?”

Heraclitus Bean: “I will do better to avoid a bullet in the skull by dint of some envious tropes. Likewise, I foresee that you wish me to fall through various hoops or gestures; thereby jumping and skipping aft so as to readjust the bait.”

Whopper: “Take care of the license harboured by an insolent tongue, my slave! Here are some pebbles... put these bellicose gestures of stone (some of which are shaped like diamonds) in your mouth so as to slaver at the bit. For Humpty-Dumpty on the wall – when talking to Alice – has yet to make his way back to its yoke after the shattering of Man. Can you take care of it?”

Heraclitus Bean: “I won’t be able to master the imponderables of such a misery (gasping).”

Topper: “You must: on pain of being put to the water torture; or at least in terms of an impediment’s bile. Any idiot who’s worth his salt has to master the lingo of a vagrant’s deceit. Because no Poor Tom can be allowed to burst upon the world mouthing the philosophy of a bush professor. Not half...”

ELEVENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins views all of this multi-dimensionally or through a misalliance of hatred.

Sabrina...: “Don’t wait for the foretaste of a new cranium thereafter. No way – since two capable victims of mine, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, have been delivered to the bounty of my ken... nor are they accustomed to a grief of ages in a salutary park. Does one even care? For an autogyro drops onto a deposit of lawn nearby, with one of my beloved soldier-boys kneeling on its back projection. ‘Hail, Sabrina-Tara!’, he utters, ‘we bring you the tidings of a new dwarfdom. Ye-e-e-s-s-s...’ By virtue of the fact that I may stride out in full armour, albeit pursuant to a renewed destiny, and bursting with an unfettered eagerness for prey. Various myrmidons, with their weapons armoured to the tilt, stand by or muster up towards silence... As

I, rather leisurely, take my time to descend various classical stairways – what with heavy, Grecian urns at every turn. Good-bye cruel world; don't we choose to celebrate its riches? Only those who have suited themselves to Heraclitus Bean's capture, *ceteris paribus*, may actually be there at a tournament of death. Wherein the lodgement of Spartacus, *in rictus*, can find itself broken within the shafts of such a chariot. Especially one which is speeding to its doom over the other side of some nethermost cliffs. 'May we watch you crucify Bean, together with his attendant gnat?', leered one of my servitors. No: the honour of sacrifice goes to those who can put celerity before passion... but even then, a Venus in Furs must pronounce upon her carcass aslant a capering moon. Similarly, 'I have to deny your offerant's dish – somewhat unfortunately – and no matter how pedigree its chum. Agreed? Because only those who're cram full of capture may partake of administering pain, in relation to those who mete out various punishments... given that those stocks happen to be full presently. Truly, even broken biscuits like these betray an offering at the bottom of their crate. Yet, my fellow warriors, don't let me afflict you with uncertainty. There shall be other victories; other jubilees!'''

Scene-setting: For months and weeks now – or by dint of visiting the unachieved – a peaceful hermit known as Heraclitus Bean was transformed into a fool.... (That is: he becomes a veritable Mister Bean, if you take my meaning). Basically now, all Elisabethan and pre-Restoration comedy – in an English vein – partook of either Jack Smart or a Jolly Jape! Can we assess this, most effectively, in an example like F. Kirkman's *The Wits* (circa. 1673) which speaks of England's clowns? Surely no-one may chase such cruelty to an indistinct bay? (Even though the character known as Scaramouch might serve as a neck-brace, particularly when abreast of a Ghost who earns the title of Nobody. Since his neck is capable of unscrewing to a great height, if surrounded by fops, and only in order to reveal the circumstances of Mister Nobody. Was he just an entertainer amidst rounds of

screed, as witnessed by George Cruikshank's engravings from *Punch and Judy*?

Whopper: "Stand still before your adjunct to nakedness! Rest again, Bean, for one's trajectory has to limit the possibility of failure – even over mumming to a sadic mime like this. You've got to stagger more... you must adopt the crepitating hour-glass of a cripple! Remember comrade, each freak has to find its way through a cordon of identity. You shall walk aslant of all o'Reason's capacity, at least before adopting the white line of a blind mole... Or, almost simultaneously, are you ready to capture the achievement of one sieved opera – or a chamber piece – in terms of its atonal sound? Do you otherwise reminisce about *The Second Mrs. Kong* by Sir Harrison Birtwhistle?"

Topper: "Likewise, you shall have to adopt the gait of crippledom ahead of Newgate's calendar – availably so. Always and a day, you will need to place yourself in a retard's state of mind. Moreover... let us utilise Theodore Adorno's notion of negative dialectics: in that no-one must pounce upon Nobody, while extemporising, so as to resemble a blank delusion afore a mirror. Is this a mask of One; or just a white hood over the head with two eye-holes?"

Whopper: "Let *Punch and Judy* be our illustrations or guides herein... For the Hangman has appeared from behind his mercurial settee. Needless to say, he bestrode the world less like a colossus (or a wooden figurine carved by Fred Tickner) and more after the fashion of a grave-digger with a gift for the gab! Truly, his pate was bald, his eyes sapphire, his dress-coat, surplice and shoes black; and his demeanour rather *sinister*... or slightly reminiscent of the spiritual left. Does one heed the darkness of an aforementioned witness (thereby)? Since Tickner's glove-puppet moves towards us continuously, albeit by one variant or its sleight of hand... and each tickle remains the mainstay of a new regime.

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The Hangman, with penetrating blue eyes, speaks thus: ‘Come now, Mister Punch, you will ‘ave to be hung by the neck until you are dead’, ‘Well fed’, ‘No, dead’, ‘But I’m not well read’, ‘Dead... kaput... deceased, down the plug ‘ole... kicking the bucket!’, ‘Big zero to your bucket, but I’ve got a frying pan’, ‘What for?’, ‘Sausages’...”

TWELFTH SURAH>>>

Topper: “Drool... why don’t you, my puppet? For we wish to purchase the expectancy of more spittle than cattle. Furthermore, even if you consume a sandwich in our personal calling, you must cull rheum’s plenitude so as to get through many a sleepless night. What can the wit of ages really be, if it suffers not to hang a mountebank upside down for our pains? Mayhap, it betokens prime minister Putin’s desire to hoist his Georgian rival by his testicles? Don’t they refer to such a one as a *zanni* in Italy’s *Commedia delle ‘arte’*? Never mind: the real point was to skewer comic timing on our spear-tip, basically in order to outmanoeuvre a masque with a buffoon’s wit. But surely, you ask, the basic test of such tom-foolery has to be to open one’s zipper! Because undue attention to bodily functions is a comedic elixir. No sir, not necessarily: for we redeem our absence of a collar less directly, even if it happens to be a slave-collar. You see, we declare – as the keepers of your inevitable charge – that the castration of a louche comic reveals Aristophanes’ intentions. Root-toot-toot! Let him swazzle his way out of that with a high-pitched voice...”

Meanwhile, Sabrina-Tara Tomkins looks on from afar and yet with the vagary of aeons: “Splendid... haven’t my boys done marvellously to facilitate these renewed caperings? Hail heroes, your success has to be the plenitude of a new crucifixion... I shall certainly put Bean and his fool, Nobody, to the water-torture or the ‘Great Question’ as the French once referred to it. One must adore and serve only Ares. Observe his effigy – when

tucked away in this booth – or doubtless contained in some recollected granite. Yet don't just worship after the nature of Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the *Koran*, rather, seek to emulate his compaction with the Caesars in order to reward death. For only those warriors who have captured the stripling, plus his midget, may earn the right to join our caravan. Hail! The feeding frenzy of our blood does well to neuter its dispersal or after-effects. Do we observe them now – albeit frozen to one's floor – or all fixed in aspic and hungering for nought save sacrifice? Both of them must share the same fate; even if it consigns them to my fiery pits. Because like Sammael – in Wyndham Lewis' tripos *Malign Fiesta* – I will be the juggler and saboteur who challenges flame, if only to confront it with the breath of an ice-giant's daughter."

THIRTEENTH SURAH>>>

Whopper (without further ado): "Adopt an idiotic grin which is minus a semblance of one's forethought! Do you dare to smile on amidst such available mirth? I say again... you don't look insane enough! Run those fingers – at once fashioned by malfeasance – across the rubbery tripod of these lips! If this was not to be the case, perchance, then those digits might be guilty of self-abuse... to use a term drawn from an Oxford English Dictionary in the 'thirties."

Colonel Ax: "May one speak of Eric Partridge's thesaurus devoted to slang?"

Topper: "Certainly not – for any spent conifers o' wonderment have been burnt out. Regardless of which, any glazed mask must give a nod towards Paul Klee's painting *The Possessed Girl*. Might you reminisce about its eldritch turbulence? Anyway, Heraclitus' skull may bend on its stalk like a dandelion; or it could revolve in accordance with Peter Blatty's diction. Yet no exorcism is in a position to catch this quicksilver's fleet-o'-foot. For do we still want to blur Richard Wagner's notes by stretching

a wet sponge across them – after Schoenberg's affectation? At least this was how an early critic reacted to his Romantic swoon..."

Colonel Ax: "But Big Head's duty – when descending from an early Mummers' quarrel – is to boost the idiotic towards a point of complacency."

Whopper: "Quite so... because our laser beams, in an exemplary fashion, have to shoot the lips off Joey the Clown's fixative – primarily in order to reveal a dirty old master beneath the grease paint."

FOURTEENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "Let us examine the spawn which you will leaven to my abundant gaze! Behold thee... we should survey these unfortunate whelps with the expectancy of one's patience. May I tilt back the head with some variously indifferent claws? But what do I really dwell upon behind these eye-slits? Still and all, a dry amplitude is driven up to my retina – in that his orbs are dead, frigid, caged or lacking in dexterity. Surely, they come across as marbles in the face – or alternatively, each fish-eye looks like a Damien Hirst sculpture when tastefully hidden behind its glass? Curse you, poltroons, can I never receive the service which I require without necessarily crucifying my help head-down? <<In a temperature of exasperation or rage, therefore, Sabrina hurls the manikin or dummy from her... if only to discover that Bean passes through her minions, thereby knocking them to left and right. Don't they embody so many skittles in a Somerset bar; especially when they're thrown into a whirligig by the ball cannoning down its row? Heraclitus – in this dream's portion – also wears aerial discs upon either foot.>>

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"So you did return from a Valley of the Lions (?); or were otherwise keen to impregnate such metallic furniture', splutters my only Sybil. "Be attendant or watchful of my brief awhile", he

answers, “ and essentially it has all come about in order to transport a friend. I can hardly ask you to remember that the Spastics Society had been reformulated as *Scope*.”

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins addresses Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody thus...: ‘Unutterable little fools! You may have come for a mild interlude, but an infinity shall be your staying gesture’. After whichever instant, a clawed talon reaches up in order to activate a machine. Its name is Kill-Martin and it resembles an Aztec God; a formulation which was at once frozen into a mask or some other congealing power. The look on Sabrina-Tara’s forecourt, however, exudes a triumphant posture in a trice; and her visage becomes avid, zealous, harpy-like, exultant or teeth-grinding. Don’t her lips cavil in a rectangle of lip-stick; if only when suited to a breaking of the Gods’ compact?”

FIFTEENTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Observe the majesty of one salient embrace, my fellows! In any event, you must impress upon us the visualisation of a scream! For an idiot or his savant has to reckon on a belly-aching’s due, after all. Since Dostoyevsky’s vision of one touched by lights (or *The Idiot*) forbears us to pay any National Insurance contributions whatsoever. Can it compute with one’s witness, necessarily so? SCREAM, I tell you --- for the mask of a misfit customarily wakes up in a dotard’s arms! Didn’t even Quasimodo have his bells at the top of Notre Dame? Truly, campanology comes to be a drop-out’s last refuge! *Quod*, if you are to play this part like John Hirt, you’ll inevitably have to learn how to cry out in torment. Victor Hugo’s short story, *The Man who Laughed*, says something similar – no doubt about it.”

Whopper: “Ye-e-e-s-s-s... doesn’t the present participle of our Punch and Judy show allude to these mistakes? Now then: let us watch on from the rear of this booth – with its red and yellow awnings – and consider some more of those damnable wraiths. For instance, here gambols one crocodile in particular...”

Topper: “Is he disenchanted with being a dragon?”

Whopper: “No, it’s a crocodile, I say. Listen to me, wretches of Albion, and learn wisdom thereby... because a prolonged croc(.) opens his mouth so as to extend a ‘fetish’ or its circus-tent. Similarly, its mouth remains open or otherwise severed as to a trick, and it’s able to prick itself over a bloody source. Do you notice its *inflagrante delicto* caprice? Certainly, the play on one circus medley has cause to pronounce on its development... since the world’s oldest farce or Mummers’ sprite has never been only a puppet’s demeanour, do you know? For before Piccini there lay various marionettes, the Mummers’ plays, Mediaeval mystery cycles and transplanted off-shoots of the *Commedia dell’arte* – each one listing to every other wind. Human beings mouthed parts aplenty then; at least afore summoning up one’s recognition in order to fight a dragon outside a tent. Perhaps it would be best to bring in Tintoretto here; in a scenario wherein St. George battles the Dragon against a lowering sky?”

(Both of these engineers of the lower mind address Heraclitus Bean directly, but this time he’s wearing the mask of Mister Nobody – the idiot).

Whopper and Topper find themselves speaking together, or rather crowned by a customary ignorance. (Why must we shorten this distance or its tele-photo lens?): “Mightn’t you wish to try this glove-puppet on for size? Remember – only the left-hand masquerades anything in terms of the cloven hoof or its indifference. Let it ride for a moment: since one pregnant *aporia* within such an awning creates monsters – and these are not really the ‘sleep of reason’ out of Goya! No. Punch always dominates the stage over to the left, as you look at it from the outside-in. But this was (also) by virtue of the fact that the Professor customarily wears him on the right-hand. Once the puppet has been drawn on – at least in terms of a gauntlet – Mister Punch may never be cast off until the show draws to its climax or end

(leastwise). Do you register a market for his available distaste (?); after the admonishment of Hermes – the Greek god of wisdom and magic. To be sure: Professor Cornford once averred over whether Punch and Judy went back to Attic comedy – by dint of nothing less clumsy than a straight line.”

Mister Nobody now chooses to act the part of Bean or a divine child: “May I?”

Whopper plus Topper speak together now: “Be our ready guest, my spas(.) of ages, particularly if you’re pursuant to the violence of an arrested motion. Again, will your eye occasionally denote a marble that’s dead to its locution – or possibly void? Consider this argument: once the glove-puppet closes over his fingers it takes on a whole new territory of life. Does it embarrass us within the semblance of a renewed ‘penetration’ into death? See here, comrades of the revolution, the glazed look which we must discern in yonder eyes cannot be replicated by this reptile.”

Heraclitus Bean/Mister Nobody: “I am faithful to the loss of my personhood or its spirited essence. For – when I encounter this crocodile upon the sleeve – it bursts forth in order to challenge my unsteady bit. Its bark has to be worse than its bite, depending, and as soon as it’s levered upon one’s arm it leaps out across a plenitude of space. Do we forsake the portmanteau advice of such an utterance? Since when attached to its necessary digits, (my watchers), it disembarks – if only to triple jump or soar. Are you aware that this glove took up the Devil’s roadshow on a particular stage? Mightn’t one have been the replacement of the other – albeit at a later date? Because once it’s on one’s raw fingers, you never wanted it to leave off. No... Certainly when it can pounce like an apple in sun-rise; at once bursting towards the shore or otherwise dappled with yellow: plus a mouth that teems *avec* dinosaur’s teeth. May we even speak of a diaphragm?

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All of it's due to the fact that my head bore about it a sound trajectory – adjacent to some red – and previously illumined by shimmering gold. Agreed, once this biting green-noddle – when held up by a stick – had struck loose you never wanted it to end its quarter's rest. Despite the evidence over whether Punch's baton – or multiple rounds of sausages – became lodged between these shanks."

Whopper: "Truly, once an emerald sheath is fastened one rarely seeks out rest. Will it ever really swallow Punch's stick after a terrible bit of business?"

Topper: "He's an *enfant terrible* – as witnessed by Jean Cocteau – you mean?"

Whopper: "No, we've had to manufacture a child out of an idiot – at least before he became one. This is why – when adjacent to a spinning top – he won't leave off his toy."

Topper: "He'll learn a due sense of progeny; if only Punch and Judy purists can claim that our crocodile represents Lucifer on the prowl. Quietly goes it, monkey..."

SIXTEENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara surveys her purgatory from a celestial seat:
"Behold, my winged charioteers have fallen down a man-hole!
Shall I relieve him of his undoubted burden or its pain?
Unjustifiably so, his make-shift jump had cascaded into a crater
in my consciousness. Still, no aero-discs can help his ascent now
– at least not when atoms crackle at the redoubt of his resource.
Are they swarming termagants from the unforgiving air? Let us
see... since a fit or heroic Heraclitus Bean, together with his
familiar Nobody, have slid downstairs into a very deep pit. Is one
aware of that scene in William Hogarth's *Southwark Fair* (?);
where Punch trundles his wife, Judy, towards Hades' flames... A
sure echo (this) of those mediaeval mystery plays of contrary

years and pieces! Never mind: the real point remains those tourneys of suffocation under which they labour. Harken! Does some fiendish machinery – or its diverse circuitry and channels – choose to trap them in their downwards course? For are they heading down through multi-dimensional zones – or an *Interzone* – towards the labyrinth of a plexiglass cage? Look you! These doors open and shut within such crystalline slides; or alternately they're various rumours to a scant intrigue – the like of which comes minus those aero-discs that are no longer engaged.”

Heraclitus Bean: “Quick, Nobody... I have to recall everything ever known about Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (formerly). Why did she build these cybernetic pits – if not to force the pace of evolutionary change? May it almost be given the currency of Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*... a treatise or doctoral thesis on vitalist bias? Anyway, doesn't she believe in dysgenic swiftness in order to achieve a goal? A situation wherein Evolution X furnishes a point of departure... primarily so as to achieve maximum impact under its torment circuits! What say you, little one? Can the insights of Gaius Cibber's *Bedlam* – when cast in stone – not really mature in order to render apoplexy moot? Do you detect a metronome's beat here (?); the latter swivelling around an eye or distended over its norms. This is let alone any rootedness in one's cornea – if we but face it.”

Nobody (for his part): “Fee...fie, fo...fum: Poor Tom's a'cold; and will her brow's delicate chiselling fall into the flame? Or can each issue wrap itself in rags; if only to cement a coinage and smash through one's undergrowth? Does anyone recognise my crown of thorns? I'm the King of Sweden. Welcome to my mathematical theorem... (says he; while dribbling continuously from his mouth).

SEVENTEENTH SURAH>>>

Whopper: “Any training pursuant to a discourse of discomfort is over now. Do you recognise its vapours or mephitic gases? For

every sneeze, scream, howl, egestion, bout of imbecilic drooling, glazed eye and foolish grin merely keeps apart the lips of Glastonbury's unRomance... no matter how fecklessly! In any event – or to furnish a shifting tide – Heraclitus Bean comes to be ready for your inspection, Colonel. We have worked on his delinquency for months; thereby enabling him to become unreconciled to his past. Might he be the leprous mendicant within the gate; and definitely so? Look here... he staggers with a shambolic willingness – at once broken to his mast – or basically hurling an unnamed bottle into the sea, (most capably). May there be a message engulfed within its compass, or held in a green-glass? Namelessly so... Moreover, the breaking down of our specimen – in accordance with behavioural remedies – proves to be socialism's ready elixir. Can our *dirigisme* denote a story-book romance, like Doctor Seuss in reverse, which is based on the smashing of a thousand skulls? Do you remember the title of Jack London's 'third positionist' novel, *The Iron Heel*?"

Colonel Ax: "Granted: the former's memorial could have been a statement over a tertiary posture. But, to my mind, it improves with every perusal – save when I compare it to the amputations of *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo. Dare one rekindle an Ouija board and its losses, or a template which tends to endorse the diktat of Senator Joe McCarthy's committee?"

Topper: "An assembly that hunted subversion and Anti-Americanism, you mean?"

Colonel Ax: "Quite so: we loathe the United States and all its works. But COME FORWARDS, state your business, comrades... and let us stare into the 'wet look' of a renewed cadaver. Necessarily so, since the unripeness of this crab apple shall poison the lot! Again, an effigy we create must endorse the Elephant Man more than any wicker-man going."

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“HRRMPPH! (Colonel Ax inspects Heraclitus Bean in Nobody’s guise.) Bring him closer to my face – I will have to stare into a visage whose proximity to *Homo Erectus* makes life easier to bear. Couldn’t he charm the socks off a slogan which says, in a junkie’s diction, that life is a fix? Most agreeably, he incarnates a feeling for Fred Tickner’s puppet known as the Blackman or Jim Crow. Wasn’t he a bandy-legged Negroid? For in Punch and Judy no ‘political correctness’ can stain an atmosphere which is made out of wood and methane. Have you ever consulted the Nobel laureate Professor Eugene Shockley, the transistor’s aide-de-camp, on *Eugenics and Race*? Inevitably though, you can hold this puppet before your eyes, and it betokens a black-and-white minstrel show or its form seems beholden to such a sport of kings. Perhaps we have a token of Eckermann’s *Voodooism and the Negroid Religions*, but without any ‘sinister’ undertones whatsoever in Conan Doyle’s diction? Herein, only a tar baby’s humour reigns throughout. Aren’t you aware that the notion of Jim Crow originates from a music hall turn – way back in 1836 – by the Scottish *artiste* Tom Rice? Because these gloved fingers prove to be bug-spectral, infantile, crest-fallen, thick-lipped and sooty after Robinson’s Marmalade. Surely they exist as a refutation of James Baldwin’s thesis – namely, that there will be no fire next time? For, and tilting with entropy’s grain, it relates much more to *The Bell Curve* than C.L.R. James’ *Minty Alley* in Barbados. Do you recollect the Jim Crow song?”

“He sings: ‘*Revolve, why don’t ya, turn on your heel,
Be slow to go, be sure to throw... Jim Crow*’.

“What now, then? Doesn’t Mister Punch – when heralding his red cap and bell – rear up from behind the stage? He recounts the following alibi: ‘Ho-hum, take a bit of this, Jim!’ Blackman: ‘Shallaballa’. Punch, laughing and roaring, proceeds to knock him down. Obviously, there’s no time for a ditty in this particular set or routine. ‘Root-toot-toot... that’s the way to do it!’ Perhaps, on a far bush or by a swaying aspen, a *waa*-Golly is seen to twist

amid some golden light. It betokens a Klavern's effulgence that hangs in deep shadow around its spray... May this twitching silhouette actually be on fire? Mightn't it also illustrate a rendezvous with D.W. Griffith's account of a nation's birth (?) ... most definitely so. Or could it be an albino example of the Spirit's side-kick, Ebony, when taken care of by Will Eisner? Here we have a scenario where Lothrop Stoddard's thesis has been blanked out from the 'twenties onwards. Although, alternatively speaking, a blanched resolution should have occurred already, a scenario in which Tom Wolfe's *Last Man* was definitely a lighter shade of pale."

EIGHTEENTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Heraclitus Bean and his companion, Nobody, are yet to fathom the recesses of their box... at least under the supervision of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins. May it have occasion to recall *The Room*'s dimensions – a decadent cuboid by Hubert Selby Junior? Can its plasticity be rendered neutral, thereafter? Or do they possibly share the centrality of Damien Hirst's shark, 'The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living', (1991)? Yet aren't they basically within a plexi-glass shield, the unnumbered doors of which close upon them without a click?

Heraclitus Bean: "Poor Tom – or Mister Nobody in another guise – be silent now, I beg your witness o' yore. For everything I know about Sabrina-Tara Tomkins has to be raised to the forefront of my mind. Might we locate in particular the insecurities of an aged brain... basically one that's lost to serenity's absence or gloats over presents and gifts? Perhaps we perceive them to be the sweet-meats of a lost carcass... rather like the Greek Cypriot version of *delight*? Surely they come in the form of jelly – or tungsten rare – with an outside sprinkled by icing sugar? No matter how it's been otherwise divorced..."

Mister Nobody: “Sprinkle the down of corpsedom over my compendium – dear heart! Reach out, my lovelies, to a rival reek, hey bonny ho, Poor Tom’s a hot; especially given my relocation to a steamy bedroom in the company of a winsome whore. What a format! Root-toot-toot! While the surprising element about wearing body-armour is that one’s chastity remains unaffected. Be it ever so mad or nay; the question twinkles on unlimbered...”

Heraclitus Bean: “Assuredly, let’s grant you the acclimatisation of your own folly – particularly when its grown lethargic over the Gods’ disinterest. On this premiss, then, and with a chocolate bounty (hitherto) we shall stake our lives.”

<<Plus – and with no affectation whatsoever – Bean reaches out to a torment circuit consisting of nothing but studs. They are connected to a minuscule steel plate in one wall. Is it my imagination... or does a U.S. warplane of yesteryear, a P-47M Thunderbolt, fly by within one’s inner mind?>>

NINETEENTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Most remarkably, comrades... when one surveys Heraclitus Bean we notice that a face dots the permutations of another’s eyes. Mightn’t it duplicate a visigoth by Balthus? Wherein pubescent teenage girls flaunt themselves in rooms (nakedly); whilst dwarves lurk under-cover with a delicate hand to probe unseen. Won’t it have trouble in returning to a jury’s-out plot by Jerzy Kosinski? And this is no matter the puzzlement of that Moloch – the Holocaust industry – as belittled by Finkelstein without any seriousness whatsoever.”

Whopper: “My excellency, here are two photogravures for you to look at; both of them appear to be delicate over their off-tone or its transparency. Yes... for we remain owl-like in our taloned affront to such knowledge. Why don’t you compare these two pictures – Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody – after our

torturing of the one into the other... Could even the late Albert Camus demarcate a plague like this in Oran? (Whether or not we were to consult Michael Ayrton's representational foray afterwards...)

Colonel Ax: "No way, comrade medico... I cannot tell them apart – not now or in an available month of Sundays. For the first page of this vellum comes to us in a distinct manner; when written, as it will be, on the percussive instrument of this hermit's skin. Indeed – friends – your transformation waxes perverse in its way. Didn't Kafka succeed in converting an insurance clerk into a beetle? Most clearly... yet, in this case, any monument to Man's limitations must leave a trail of spore behind it."

Topper (gabbling rather fast): "Further out-breaks in this drama muster themselves aplenty. First, we shall parachute him into enemy territory. Second, one mock-idiot will replace the reality of another's kindred. Third, the real Mister Nobody may find his course abjectly terminated by us. Fourth, our war department slays him outright. Fifth, one's secret agent, Heraclitus Bean, then begins reporting back to us on enemy formations from behind their lines. His role happens to be crucial in all this – because Heraclitus' reclusive trunk, mind and body are already formed (if not linked to us by auto-suggestion). Sixth, the town called Kubla-rebok or Nonesuch lies at the heart of our future imperialism. Fundamentally, we can dominate it through his Ouija board manipulations, don't you understand?"

Colonel Ax: "Very good... our party leaves tonight. Victory hail!"

<<Yet neither Ax or the two parsimonious psychiatrists, Whopper and Topper, bother to look at Heraclitus Bean. They fail to comprehend that he's broken/subject to the warping-and-wefting of personality, or been turned into a shambling man-

thing! Have these secret policemen, morally speaking, succumbed to the colourlessness of pure research *a la* Moreau? Do they detect the inner code of zionism's holocaust in Gaza?>>

TWENTIETH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: In a rival dimension or its twilight's duty, Sabrina Tara-Tomkins rocks back and forwards on an available chair. Could it be a child's rocking-chair which has been adapted to an adult purport or use? Regardless of which, she sways in an undulating motion with a goblet of fine viands occasionally rising to her lips. On appeal though, one can say that she was witnessing the notice of an oublie too far. Is it a recognised statement, thus? Against this nostrum – a guard stoops before her reach *avec* a glistening box on a conch-like tray. It glimmers astir an abundance of light motets; having been placed on a side-table or its pouffe. Might it besport five limbs – or staves – of a necessary teak: plus one of this handful off to a captain's side?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Look at the commanding miracle of this indulgence... and just see how those capering oafs, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, must be suffering now! It's such a pity that they couldn't see things Macha's way, or in accord with a relevant incline/plane. For all pelts must be alleviated through an oblivion of rain – oh my yes! In concert with such a sense of pity, the concertina of the beast has to assert itself like a bishop in chess... particularly when it's moving diagonally across the board. Mightn't it involve the hospitality of an aforementioned crone? For, in my negative aspect, I have come to incarnate the impact of Kali or Chamunda (possibly). Here – in my solitary abundance – I can dance or swoon upon an ambit of skulls... albeit with only a cowering mortal truckling in my wake. Let's behold my skeletal mien – *avec* the sword raised over a sandstone's head – and my jewellery composed of bone-plus-snakes (withal). Does my image become sanctified; or otherwise relevant to its ninth century origins in Orissa?”

To whichever or like diatribe – her accompanying acolyte can only nod in asseveration.

TWENTY-FIRST SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: A plane passes across the heavens and it's speeding to its destination. It has to be painted a light blue (essentially) and the sky around it swirls with a kaleidoscope of purple. While a perfectly formed or oval-like moon transfixes every backdrop with a white disc. Suddenly two men who're prone to a harness become discernible in their parachutes --- they are adrift of much cumulus. Their names were Colonel Ax and Major Tree-bend; and each of them is dressed in combat fatigues that're green in colour.

Major Tree-bend <<who's shouting over the engine's noise>>: "Don't ever fear the fatiguing utterance of misstatement, my Colonel. For Heraclitus Bean – our secret agent – totally affects the role he's adopted. Nor could anyone really describe it as method acting – not entirely. No. But he does remain in one theoretical vogue... without either a shock or some tittle-tattle of Stanislavski. Since our accustomed madman – or Poor Tom a' bedlam amid Lear's heath – perfectly commandeers his part."

Colonel Ax: "You believe that it shall be a triumphant spear for our espionage agency or its circuit?"

Major Tree-bend: "Most assuredly, he bears upon his body the smack of our primary adulteration. Yes sir, like an old-fashioned radio (or even a handsome Leyden jar) a homing-pigeon will re-route his information back to our hungry mouths."

Colonel Ax: "Do tell: for the scamp of our witness wants to save any available cadres. Whereas this spy may never challenge the currency of our investment – whilst sending back gold-dust prior to its minting (necessarily). Furthermore – are you sure that he preponderates in his steps (?); at once waxing lyrical over a tarantella or one of Bejart's penumbras. May he doubtless feel

afflicted – or rather graven over time – and thus liable to tread on von Laban’s toes? Could it come to reconnoitre a vehicle of light deceit, thereafter?”

Major Tree-bend: “Comrade, you speak the truth about a wonderful cobra which rests on its Indian scales; and finds itself worshipped in concord with a dictation of five heads. Yet rest assured, this mole can be our version of Graham Greene’s ‘unquiet American’ who savours nought of the grave. And – despite one special tincture – he shall send few notes of the compass with him except the nonchalance of Braille. Yet these effectively register what we might wish to witness.”

Colonel Ax: “Come again? My fellow socialist or revolutionary, it was all seen before in B. Traven’s fable *Treasure of the Sierre Madre*; at least in terms of a peon’s just servitude... the latter being sent by Morse code or even a ‘special delivery’! Still, let him accede to a psychiatrist’s advice... for behind Punch’s mask of Attic comedy all we require are notes of binary information, military secrets and enemy troop movements. Hasn’t he already been parachuted behind the Whiteguards’ lines?”

Major Tree-bend: “Aye... Moreover, any of our pilots who have been shot down must be sent back in double quick time. An occurrence which lacks any infamy whatsoever – especially in terms of its *double entendres*...”

TWENTY-SECOND SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Queen Sabrina continues to sway back-and-forth on her golden apron, the former proving to be a ricocheting pediment that rests beneath her feet. A curtain (of fine cloth or muslin) is possibly folded against itself in the near distance. Can one suspect any defiance of this interviewer?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “The suffering of the innocent necessarily depends on a prior fortitude or its disrepair. Do not

forget it... since any evolutionary prospect has to afflict the entire species as a form of forgetting. Let a statue devoted to Kali's memory be our guide-post here... for she stands aloof or ahead of all ritual, and before the others. Does she wear a crown of a typically Bengali type – the latter over naked breasts – together with a circular necklace of human heads which have been dysgenically severed? Also, will S(h)iva lie recumbently beneath her – in order for the God to achieve his full potential through union with a daemonic mate?"

An accompanying soldier (or an acolyte most bare) speaks up:
"Never fear to waver the fortune of those cowards underneath you! But one may seek solace, O mistress, by what you have brought forth from your vault." [Might this servitor – who bears so many gifts – fail to betoken Major Tree-bend in another dimension?]

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "My myrmidons or special forces are so understanding; especially given a template of forgiveness' training. Yet Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody are going through torment --- 'neath our veriest soles --- and this was solely to articulate the wonder of an evolutionary prospect. I choose to call it Evolution X – a faculty of unknown recognition in terms of Colin Wilson's *The Occult*. If these mortals are ever to advance, they must be put under pressure to do so! Because the ironing out of such creases comes about using heat... and only then do we find ourselves free to absorb the osmosis of a new becoming. Take away one's stimulation to grow and there can be nothing but defeat! Do you die, an attentive votary at my shrine, if you cut your finger-nails?"

TWENTY-THIRD SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: All four of these fountains of youth – Colonel Ax, Major Tree-bend and the two officers known collectively as 'the Swine' – survey the idiot's cottage. It exists – without any circumspection whatsoever – at the heart of Nonesuch. You see,

Mister Nobody's den subsists at Kubla-rebok's heart... dare you take its message on board?

Colonel Ax (with a finger to his lips): "Hush now – heed not the interior of this mechanism's duality. There lies the imbecile's dwelling in the half-light; and it seems to be recumbent over its foretaste o' cool. Most assuredly... because the lights have gone off in this street's purple markings; when they're next to the yellow-glare that beams from a grave's window. Declare it now: let's creep around this tabernacle's back or break in silently like a peep o' day boy – and then slide open an aperture to allow in Banquo's ghost. Oh yes; our spastic's point of view involves perishing before a new dawn's blade."

<<Once inside a rotter's cube they are foisted with a haunch of venison *a la* Bacon... and it's rather like the 'progressive' art gallery at the heart of London town.>>

Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: "Yonder poltroon sleeps like a babe; albeit if rendered 'fast' in his rhapsody of a false awakening! Dare one reckon to the truth of it! Knife him now, but don't forget the rapture of a deluded plastinate by Gunter von Hagens. Subsequent to which – does the Skeleton of one forgiveness appear behind Punch or otherwise beholden to his chuntering? Look now, a white glow looms when congruent to a mist, at least before disappearing (...) It is a glove-puppet that's marked 'Skeleton No. 1' – what with a rib-cage which was exposed to a withering purview or conceit. On it moves while adjacent to Punchinello – at once leaving the children out front to scream – as it marks time with ease. It (the Skeleton) bobs to one side and then another; albeit becoming creased in terms of an indentured skull. Whilst Mister Punch swirls around and about – when breasted (simultaneously) to a new incidence of Blue; and failing to come to terms with all those he's beaten to death (maybe)? Why do those integers insist in following such a caravan? Yes, it's all true, madam: since Punch has pummelled

the following gloves with his joy-stick: and they are Judy, the Doctor, one priest in particular, Joey (occasionally), Lucifer, a Negro and the Beadle. Yes sir... no action can really absolve him from striking out at Big Head; especially in terms of those ancient Mummers' rituals of yesteryear.”

Colonel Ax: “Shush, my brethren... for now comes our occasioned right to strike. *Avaunt all witnesses of non-performance (thereby)!* Most certainly, the striking down of a village idiot must indicate a spiritual liveliness amongst our number. Do you correctly signal its limbering up? Listen to me: he (Mister Nobody) expectorates before a dwindling fire, his limbs are cast askew, his breath doubtless leaves off and one unambiguous eye peeps out... as if it's almost severed from the license of such a swamp. For these lunatics haven't taken over the asylum, no, when pursuant to Gaius Cibber's rendition of distress outside Bedlam's old sanctity in south London. Doubtlessly instead, the easiest way to outlive such torment involves pouncing together... collectively speaking. Can a subtraction like this correctly view its own deletion? Quietly comrades, one tip-toes earnestly towards a future corse with one's left-foot forwards... plus a hunting-crop in one's hand or maybe even minus a knife. Softly, softly, catchee monkey...”

Master Sergeant Asphalt Ray: “Most definitely, we are left with the position where no ape bounds on stage during Punch and Judy. Yet often, the absence of Man's familiar may hint at even darker silhouettes; particularly given Hanuman's obscene grin in those shadows. Because a tiny aspect of spittle continues to dribble from this tramp's mouth – above all, when he happens to be trapped (as he is) within the nettle of a necessary sleep. Given these indicators, might it be possible to tell the future from a falling stack of cards? Needless to say, we approach the Bedlamite expectantly or on tenter-hooks... but Punch remains aslant our body of men or even ahead of us in a studio's vista. He romps within the callow advent of so many ground-hogs – each

one of them salient over its own loss. Here he comes now or again; while basically tittering and laughing all the way back to a redundant caper (never mind its piggy-bank). Do you detect his apparition rearing up before you or next to a pregnant booth (?); if not otherwise unintended aslant an awning most rare. See how he extends his wooden hands – if only to indicate his understanding of an audience's absence. Meanwhile, Judy levitates onto the stage or its balsa patch; and her parsimony seems to be shrewish in its hectoring appeal. Don't you realise (any 'sexist' or feminist ingots aside) that her nagging scree brings forth a house-fire, even possibly a beating?"

Colonel Ax: "Altogether now, men, transfix your blades up and against a scarecrow's ramp most congealed. Can't you understand whether Gillette is really the best a man can get? Cover his head with the blanket... primarily so as to conceal or smother any outcry! All for one and one for all – just stab him until he's wet through, begorrah. In the name of our proletarian republic, strike and have done!"

<<All depending, then, each of these four marauders plunges in his dagger... and every knife finds itself cast deep into a reprobate's body. Mister Nobody writhes up in resultant agony – when mummified by a surrounding sheet – and swazzling out nought save a private gurgle. His hands and feet are momentarily convulsed as a result.>>

Mr. Nobody groans a sibilant sigh: "OooooH! AaaaaH!"

Colonel Ax: "Kill the vagrant! Yes... yes... yes. Plunge in your poniards and acknowledge the morality of bone (once tenderised). What ecstasy...! For aren't we most free when we're delousing the inferior in accordance with an edict of statal pardon? Like Caligula, we must emphasise a divine infantilism; if only to witness the fact that prior to seven years of age we remain animals... any necessary sense of discipline aside. Check

his aberrant pulse-rate – or any coagulation of the nerves and blood. Do they sever our understanding of Mach’s materialism, comrade? Since no effigy to scare away crows can outlive his usefulness; at least when tucked away on the margins of Farmer Jones’ fields. (Wasn’t he the distant or ‘Tsarist’ figure in *Animal Farm*?) Leastways, this is so when such a rag-man finds himself confronted with a flaming brand, or one’s agency of pitch.”

Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: “Negative, my masters... *quod* it often refers to a pump-action o’ zero! No trace of a torpedo in these nerves then remains. All of this happens to be dead, crepuscular, deceased or void. Doesn’t the clanging point of his veins serve to restrict such an issue? Assuredly, one can declare (with King Lear) that our poor fool is dead! May he hang from a gibbet over and above Cordelia’s misted glass?”

Colonel Ax: “No way, comrade, for such folly betokens a bourgeois indulgence which cannot be tolerated. And – moreover – death’s instinct has to be one of laughter at those japes that fail to follow its lead. Are you aware of the anarcho-nihilist roots which underpin a blackshirted *Totenkopf*? ”

Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray: “Huzza, huzza, the idiot falls flat or asunder at our command! But unlike Poe’s *The Tell-Tale Heart*, we have to consider a case where a quivering aorta beats, semi-continuously, from down beneath those wooden boards... no matter how absent-mindedly.”

TWENTY-FOURTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “How those two poltroons of my destiny, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, will be afflicted now. Can such suffering have a redemptive edge – as Richard Wagner once intoned in *Parsifal*? I prefer to see it (instead) as a wager against entropy, collapse or decay. Surely Francis Galton briefly gambled contrary to a persevering spider – in Walt Whitman’s diction? But my soldier-boys are so understanding... and they

know that one must tunnel outwards or towards the solar heat in an unpalsied way. Might it properly reinvigorate a sun-flower – albeit with those maddened petals seeming to be reminiscent of chrome-yellow?”

Major Tree-bend’s *alter ego* or an attendant soldier: “Indeed, Sabrina-Tara Tomkins’ magic – amid the maelstrom of its ready death – enables me to earn my pointy-helmet. Let one chthonian undertone mushroom out or find itself replete with an erotic formula... After all, didn’t the characters in Attic comedy or mime often have a false phallus attached to their heads?”

(Throughout this interview, though, the officer covers his face with a golden mask. For – rather like the old man in the mountain who founded the Assassins’ sect – he could have been leprous ‘neath such a screen. ‘Twas it a case of ormolu masking the blue-bottle sanctity of a green livery?)

TWENTY-FIFTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Rip out those floor-boards over here, my comrades, so as to manoeuvre this spastic’s corse down beneath such fibres. Might this be an example drawn from beyond *Scope*’s Limits! Ha! Nonetheless, all of those who are beckoned to go down beneath the loam bring a canvas to mind (of sorts). Could it serve to underscore the German painting by Michael Pacher; wherein a horned devil holds open a prayer book for Saint Wolfgang? Not entirely so... since Baal’s anus depicts about it the topsy-turvy world of a mediaeval carnival. Surely now, its depiction won’t bring Gilbert & Sullivan into the equation as well?”

Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: “My fellow officers, place beneath these spiral-staircases the convulsed limbs of one ex-maniac. Release him hither... by Gad! Yet look on how our fellow operative Nonesuch (or Nobody) dwells upon this scene... mentally speaking. Does it bring back to us – at least momentarily – a figure from that play by Howard Brenton, the

neo-communist playwright? A dramaturge where the murderer Christie rises from a den of rubbish at a later date or at the stage's rear. Will he wear a facial filter; itself blocking out one's rubber transparency o' flesh?"

Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray: "Anyway, our stick-man looks on with an abandoned livery (withal); and he definitely understands our jack-in-the-box gesture in matters of blood. May it prompt further gestations in our own mind – especially if they happen to be pursuant to frenzy? It certainly communes – psychically speaking – with what Colin Jordan once called *a train of thought*. Again: the grape-fruit in this chosen grenade can explode in a thousand-and-one pieces! (Even though our wastrel has to crawl along one's ground, a slug to its withered leaf). Had he ever heard of a situationist text, the one which advocated *A Revolution in Everyday Life*... do you think?"

Colonel Ax: "Never mind such 'filth' as that – since our Bean requires every accoutrement to be mustered together. For he possesses (in a manner like a mole or an ant-eater) various code-books, two-way radios, money in coinage and notes... as well as weapons. A superlative job is expected from you – my active idiot! In all truth, the town known as Kubla-rebok or Nonesuch matters not a jot; but it straddles enemy communications. So! We shall necessitate an excellent hand at Goren's bridge, therefore. Fulfil your task, my bumbler, and make sure that our wine-cup's half full – not empty."

Heraclitus Bean replies in the affirmative to his commander; yet his eyes slide out of his skull as he does so.

TWENTY-SIXTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Mister Nobody – at once minute and digitalised – wrestles in a torment circuit together with his companion-in-arms, Heraclitus Bean. Sabrina-Tara Tomkins sits above them at first; even though Bean continues to control deliverance's advent

with his fingers. Look at this... a gush of fire engulfs them and it circles towards bravery's ring, but it now gives up within a plenitude of after-shave or silent cinema. This (in turn) helps to complete an ambit of non-identity; if only to find – resultantly – that sheer flame was replaced by an electrical energy which boomed towards its last. Must one's sight be directed at her cleavage's duct?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (scornfully): "How they suffer and deserve their fate beneath me! All such ingrates have to bear comparison with the Gods' frustrations – most assuredly. Yet by rocking back-and-forth in this chair between-times – do I succeed in healing the amplitude of their warning? Certainly, I seem to remember that Saddam Hussein's secret police was called *the instrument of yearning*. Against this, though, any blue-skinned 'dive' into such an abattoir must alleviate its saving grace. To be sure: as I sit here guzzling Korelian wine (and she suits the gesture to the deed) I acknowledge that my corset happens to be an iron-maiden! Furthermore, all of those undergoing torment are just the fuel of a renewed awakening. Indeed, yon Cassius was right in *Julius Caesar*: the future lies not in the stars but in one's self! Let's behold an X-factor in our understanding of evolution... because only by quickening the pace or by using a downwards pressure can we move from Darwin to Lamarcke (even Lysenko). Yes, most truly: since today's star-chamber remains the forcing-house of a biological cell!"

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Scene-setting: Do these two figures (Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody) continue to swirl within a star-chamber of pain? Necessarily so... *quod* a newly diagnosed electrical energy helps to skewer them. It also illustrates a cycle of shock when bereft of other medicine – and is liable to illustrate its utterance or squelch. May they scream within the maximisation of this breach? Most definitely, one skeletal hand can now play dice with itself – almost to the point of pitching up a triple six! Further: this familiarity might be etched within the luridness of

Czech gothic – where, in the Wittingau altar, a red wraith leaves the illusion of a tomb; if only to fracture a semblance of absent time. Mightn’t we see in this transformation a hint of Evolution X... as heralded by our gorgon? Yes or no?

TWENTY-SEVENTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: several months have passed.

Colonel Ax (speaking of events already undone or twinned): “Listen to my aggrieved counsel, comrades! All hasn’t gone well with our limited prospects or its conspiracy behind enemy lines. First, our hopes of an espionage success have proved to be unpopular with fate... at least according to Colin Forbes’ *The Endless Game*. Likewise, the information relayed back to us by Heraclitus Bean has been inaccurate. On one occasion Master-Sergeant Asphalt#Ray, with a platoon of dedicated volunteers, was led into a trap. Whether it resulted from involuntary or direct treachery, we know not... But here – when against a brick wall of transparent blue – these patriots met their doom or martyrdom, and they were dressed in camouflage fatigues of a webbed-brown. ‘Back, back’, screamed our Master-Sergeant in his last moments – what with bullets cracking around him or exploding on the stone. ‘Our co-ordinates have been released to the Enemy ahead of time... nor need it relate to an example of Wyndham Lewis’ proems on Art’. He died not just with his boots on, but revolver-in-hand.

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Similarly, some of our pilots or airmen – including that rigged up ‘Biggles’ Captain Tomb Gooseflesh – are known to have entered his cabin. Do we suppose that a wooden door lay ajar to receive them? It came to reflect back on Heraclitus Bean in a fire’s light – or was another agency at work? Never mind it: since our comrades congratulated themselves in the following terms, ‘Ah! A griddle... warm food or sucking pig tossed by the pitch of its spatula’. Moreover, our aces high were dressed in airman’s uniforms *avec* goggles, flying caps, epaulettes, gauntlets and like

kindred... even though the mural behind them waxes towards purple in its indifference. Yet, still more and more, Bean looms up aslant of an aperture which glows redder and redder with haemoglobin's séance. Is he not ragged, bereft, scare-crow like or otherwise afflicted in his spiritual usage? Surely such a ragamuffin can only be described as a 'victim' (?) – far less as a mage of some fantastic grief. But a teak door contrived to close on our pilots forever after."

Does Colonel Ax – in concord with the doctrine of Evolution X – register a dagger in his mind's-eye? It slithers over; at once richly laden with *aporia* and pregnant with despair between dimensions. Who can really tell the truth, eh?

TWENTY-EIGHTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: May we illumine a furtherance of such discord? For no sooner has a voltaic discharge left off than both Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody start drowning in a muddy lake. This static tumult then lifts up from the ether; if only to configure a kaleidoscope of magnesium blue. Will it reassemble (somewhat necessarily) one of those glass cubes of a magical import – often dignifying a Russian scene? Anyway, an oozing plenitude of mud rises up amidships, and it drags both of them down into a man-thing's pasture or grip. (Even though Heraclitus Bean – in an act of charity – lifts his mad companion over his head so as to preserve his breath from the tide). Furthermore, and irrespective of such a calculus, a trail of liquid earth skims off his boot in sundry gobbets or sods. Can Heraclitus Bean reach the escape module in time; basically in order to activate a fresh circuit?

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Never mind... since Sabrina-Tara Tomkins remains complacent on the surface of her lake or destiny. After stroking a soldier-boy's head, she studies her wine goblet with renewed violence or absolution.

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Praise be, by Moloch and Macha... or mightn’t a dung-god lie lightly on my outraged brow? Because, all considerations of past enmity aside, I should encourage a fastidious glimmer of pathos... but never the ripe enactment of any self-pity! No. By such criterion as that, my warriors, lies the cowardice of liberal humanism. After all, one must have occasion to evince the morality of a white samurai: where continuous struggle has to be life’s legacy or goal. Could it amount to a version of *Happy Days* without a balding husband in one’s sand-pit, *a la* Samuel Beckett? Look at me... am I really content with a victory’s peace? Have I been inevitably good, having laboured long and sought out all the right details – by Tyr’s gift? Was this why young Loki offered me such a wondrous present? (During this soliloquy, she stares fixedly at her casket on a damask cushion...) For all I need to do is ask a favour of Kill-Martin and it materialises... factually speaking. Behold, I dream of a cornelian pendant --- and lo, it manifests due lustre in three-dimensions or 3-D. But, wait a moment, what can be the reason for this living lightning, glare or blinding flash? It comes to surround me like sense-U-round cinema...”

TWENTY-NINTH SURAH>>>

Major Tree-bend: “Our radio communication is now ill at ease, or it refuses to respond in microwaves across the ether. Given this tergiversation or a refuge held in the glottalstop of Pinter’s silences – we have no choice but to venture forth and meet him ourselves. All secret-police units have to force this issue... because none can allow Heraclitus Bean to escape with his ‘responsibilities’ unscathed. Haven’t we catapulted him outside into a cell or its unit of force (?); the like of which imprisons him within Horst Bienek’s novella... at least in terms of his frontal lobes. Requite me now, comrades: may it also be emblematic of Hubert Selby Junior’s decadent novel, *The Room*, as well as Lynne Reid-Bank’s beatnik inclusion, *The L-Shaped Room? Touché!* For our team must examine his moral consciousness – or the lack of it – in person. (Even as we fling ourselves out of a

speeding aircraft in solitude – particularly when held aloft by parachutes and teeming towards the azure).”

Colonel Ax: “Thou hast been granted the affidavit of a murderous outdrop, my fellow officer! Indeed, he may not wish to whisper to one’s ghost in the machine, but now he’ll have to address his comptrollers rather than a Leyden jar. Furthermore, if we find ourselves dissatisfied with Heraclitus’ answers then we’ll feed his tongue to the birds... as in Daphne du Maurier’s story (do you recall it?) After all, wasn’t the ancient or pre-socratic sage – after whom he was named – devoured by hungry canines after expiring? Even here (then) lycanthropy finds itself outmanoeuvred by some pedigree chums.”

Scene-setting: A mere half-hour elapses by dint of the clock or its sun-dial, and the two militarists, Colonel Ax and Major Treebend, find themselves in their captives’ hut. The two psychiatrists who were responsible for his *Exegesis* lament (or its E-meter dianetics testing) are also present. They’re wearing green camouflage uniforms with brass buttons – as befits their soldierly rank. Their names have to be Whopper and Topper... of course. Heraclitus Bean, *hoc loco*, bends over a humble stove while preparing some food. It pops, boils, spits, flicks, bubbles, suppurates and crepitates in the shadowy truculence of this ‘cave’. All five of them shall remain together until our drama’s bitter end-point...

THIRTIETH SURAH>>>

More scene-setting: You should never forget that for artistic men the divine has to be female in its scope. Now then, a scenario of devastation rings the pit of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins’ lustre. For Kill-Martin – when chained to the Byzantine ornament of such beliefs – smoulders briefly upon a table. It can only be really all afire. A broken pitcher of wine – or some such happenstance – lies slackly to one side of us. All around her a miracle of mayhem has suckled free to burn, with the silk or lintel at her

stage's back being torn down amidships. Several of her guards lie devastated about the place – rather higgledy-piggledy – and the smell of acrid smoke rises in the dawn. Are these hostile temperatures, somewhat necessarily?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “O my heart, what can have occurred? An abandonment of this prism has led to a gyrating heat – the latter escaping from any possible witness. Never again: since I can flail my claws around like a triple-formed Goddess, but only to seep beneath the waves of my mask. I also claim the ancestral rights of maternal care! In any event, the evidence of Diana’s victims remains to curdle the blood; at least once they have been torn to pieces in pursuit of what’s indefinable. Listen to me: Astarte or Luna cleaves to an offerant by way of sacrifice – now to wound – again to grow – and always to inspire a love which is hatred. *Odi et amo* (it says): the axis around which Catallus revolved.

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Yet tell me, my care of Absalom, what portent this destruction averrs? Will a Spanish fresco shine on if laminated with acrylic paints? Why does the jester at your side, Mister Nobody, wax so pale? He resembles a thin-blooded mortal; not at all one of those New Gods like us. ANSWER ME! Otherwise I shall tear you limb from garment... with my very own pincers.”

Heraclitus Bean: “Fair enough – and what an assembly of indifference...! *Vi et armis*; once I knew how these pits had been constructed, I didn’t swoon in vain... albeit with a sea of mud next to my shoulder-blades. Did I reach across so as to activate this torment circuit’s module (?); only to find that the ooze had cleared, momentarily, or instant by instant. For the surreal circuitry of Kill-Martin was obviously re-mastering, so as to administer a potent dose of evolutionary change. Then the thought came upon me – without any aplomb – that radiation might be its next discharge... Do you partake of such romanticism as this? Since your doctrine of Galton’s quicksand,

Sabrina-Tara, remains mistaken... primarily due to an absence of any dialectic whatsoever. By any reckoning, what comes to be acted upon – by way of these pits’ servitude – merely responds with intrigue’s ferocity. I jammed the tingling in my fingers into yonder circuitry (then) knowing that any radioactive conduit would respond to its source. It might embark before a sense of nothingness (yet again); because does the audience experience a *frisson* – amid its childish *mien* – when Punch and Judy appear on stage? Certainly, the little figurines bob before you inside a blur of puppetry and violence – or by reckoning upon a whizzing cadmium yellow. Yet here and now, this reverse power bursts across these cells or seeks out an outraged bounty... Suddenly I felt this transgression striking Kill-Martin, killing him, hammering into ‘it’ and slaying our trope (in turn). For, at a vast distance away, I heard him die to an accompaniment of orange; whilst he glowed malignantly and came festooned like Xolotl, the Aztec god. I listened to him perish. He shuddered out his wake amid the cry of a disabused Titan.”

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (with her neck-muscles convulsed in grief): “You wretched buffalo – at once unhallowed of all mischief! When attended by Nobody, you’ve slain Kill-Martin... the vehicle who creates and destroys hitherto. I’m lost, left bereft, and vamped listless in the vantage of these days. Sabrina is ruined, hurt, and forced into a misalliance... Can I forget the robotic coda of Asimov’s *doxa*? Am I to be forsaken and without spirit like Lamb’s ‘gin’? A ruined Medusa always has the advantage of her night shift. Does one dare to peruse, if prior to such an off-take, Sheridan le Fanu’s *Carmilla*?”

Heraclitus Bean: “Forget it, my mistress of a deluded dominion... just look at your familiar, Kill-Martin, now. He lies on an escarpment beyond its flow and mist; or otherwise redundant about William Tucker’s discussion over morphology, *The Language of Sculpture*. Truly, he liberates the fluidity – in stone – of another Rodin. You see how he lies in yonder casket?

For, even when small, separated worms can look like sea-serpents if cast on a giant video-screen. Here he stays... rather shorn, abandoned, lost, breathless to dust or a taxidermist's skeleton (if minded to some pike). Do you register Ted Hughes' stanzas about it?"

Scene-setting: Kill-Martin lies in a sarcophagus and appears to be jaundiced, or in a state of disrepair. Mister Nobody sucks his thumb and dribbles on regrettfully. Whereas Heraclitus Bean later takes his leave on a pair of aero-discs. Sabrina-Tara Tomkins – for her part – then shrivels up like a granite-faced prune... and thus one story ends.

THIRTY-FIRST SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: "The very opposite of our peregrination or aims has come about, comrades. How may we configure it best? Heraclitus Bean – our agent of more than a palsied year – why's the alternative to what we wanted passed off? It refuses to please us in relation to an example set by Holbein's *Ambassadors* (finished in 1553); or if sequenced before some green baize and foregrounded by a skull. It tilts away from us or comes sectioned by a morphic calm."

Heraclitus Bean: "The future proves to be easily revealed by the riddles of the past... No Situationist text can really liberate its sense of quiet so forcibly (you see). We needn't even speak of the fact that the latter was a splinter from late Surrealism, by way of Lettrism and the movement for an Imagist Bauhaus. Do you venture, Colonel, to clear the stirrup of such a solipsism so effectively? But first: let's eat, drink and be superficially merry. For all of it witnesses a Joker's explanation; especially if it kindles against an ochre despatch or its display (now), and it finds itself set contrary to a purple backdrop. I'll briefly tell ye, my masters..."

Major Tree-bend: “Do so, slave, since our patience runs thin over the shifting sands of so much free-time. Certainly, no-one will escape from the grey powder that slips through a tunnel of such ill-graces. Might our mastication lighten the burden of these years?”

Whopper: “All this mental pumice renders your discourse opaque to our psychiatric jargon. In this instance, R.D. Laing’s twitch resembles nothing so much as a mesmerism – if held in reverse – and coloured in opal. Truly, a Punch and Judy professor – when down on these contemporary beaches – has been taken to task for including Saddam Hussein and Osama-bin-Laden in his *troupe*. Surely now, the one replaced Joey the Clown – in *alter ego* – while the other made up for the Devil or Mephistopheles at our play’s end? It becomes a matter for fake sausages, brimstone and swazzle.”

Topper: <<<GASP!>>> “Yonder food is poisoned. It slipped down the gullet too easily or smoothly; and it’s just ravening about its source... while rumbling, intestinally, before its absence of fortitude. Do I grasp a mighty hand at the throat; if only to be reminded of a syrup of the Ages – at least in terms of its minuscule outcome? May one detect its passage through the gut (?); or rather like a grain of sand via the stomach?”

Heraclitus Bean (semi-hysterically): “No question of cosmic adulteration ever passes muster across a cook’s broth... quite definitely. Since no arsenic or potassium cyanide pushes out my envelope effectively; nor any old lace either. Truly, I don’t wish to adulterate (through repetition) the course of Thomas Wainwright, the poisoner. In no way: I merely wanted to drug you – so that you might remain as docile as lambs. See now, how your blue revolvers pass from your hands – the plenitude of which necessitates a calling out or a ‘branding’ of down-time. Does one choose to throw oneself forward under the influence of

such pottage; thence to find yourself captured by Tom o' Bedlam's keep?"

Scene-setting: These listless spies were soon revived by their captor or former agent – and their bodies have been lashed to some chairs with rope. Each one of them sits in an orange glow – while all of them stare at several raised yellow floorboards under which their missing pilots reside. Can it denote a surreal *addendum* to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*? Moreover, might the voice of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (from beyond the grave) give vent to those dripping stalactites now?

Heraclitus Bean – or is it Mister Nobody reincarnated (?): "Ho hum... Tom's a warm. Do you esteemed comrades feel the draught of an enabling oven; together with its door which is open in order to release the heat? Necessarily so... when one considers what became of these X-men in their flying-machines. Certainly, these denizens of the sky don't recall Captain W.E. Johns' 'Biggles' of the RFC – when coming out of the sun with his tommy-guns blazing. No way: for they lie here – if pregnant over an expectant feast – and beneath these very tumbril's boards... all of them happening to be every end up. Yes sir, they festoon the flooring of my enclosure --- itself falsely traversed or drifting towards a *debutante* issue under the wood. Surely, they had just banked down or moved across the slip-way of a knife; so as to assault the tram-line of our age... if not being presumably asleep?"

Major Tree-bend (who's trussed up like the other captives): "NO! NO! NO! He's murdered them all. They were struck down without any pity whatsoever – if adrift of Edward Bond's machine in *Lear* for the extraction of eye-balls. Was it to have been a retina's continuum as we leapt over graves? We are undone, bankrupt, honey-mead, lissom or without livers..."

Heraclitus Bean/Nobody's spirit: "A matter of killing, my fine toy soldiers... NO! NO! NO! I refuse to embark on a war – whether through a looking-glass or aught else. Aren't I an idiot (?); or a cretinous discharge via one's deluded haze. In fact, how can I be held responsible for my actions (no matter how resultantly)? Anyway, the fame of a spastic always heralds an intrigue or its decay – primarily by way of a trumpet. Furthermore, what number of these blow-hards were really necessary to discharge Jericho's ambit? Forgive me not, but we are now in a world of reds and blacks."

Colonel Ax <<<for the first time manifesting real fear>>>: "Keep away, stay redundant, I discern a knife in your mitten which wasn't meant for me!"

Heraclitus' Nobody: "Sorry, I hear, see, sense and smell no evil whatsoever. I'm a buffoon who's loaded up (now) for one too many trajectories before such a lobotomy. For nothing can succeed on my behalf save the after-effects of electro-convulsive therapy. Are you smitten by a giant wasp that eats one's brain alive? Because even the art of the insane, such as at the Maudsley hospital in south London, cannot escape my torpedo's ravages. Why, in these circumstances, Albert Louden's obese ma'ams, Brian Willsher's Quasimodo lays, Billy Morey's virgin Bambi and John McQuirk's ghostly thumbs (sic) all flirt with some anti-freeze. As the commanding officer, you deserve to have your throat cut first. It's a matter of *primus inter pares*... *Hee, hee, hee!*"

(*Scene-setting*: He immediately stoops to sever an artery with a steaming blade. Colonel Ax's head then consequently hangs by a thread... in a situation where obscenity recalls the ritual of a disobliging cut).

Whopper, Topper and Tree-bend all mouth together a signal before their execution: "NNNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOO!!!

We have succeeded in training agent Bean-o too well. He knows not what he fares by any redundancy such as this, comrades, and each doll waxes an indifferent solipsist before the other's fate. Moreover, and in the memorialism of Robert Bloch, one psychopath fans the flames of his own paraffin-lamp. Didn't a mask by Ensor help to script Alfred Hitchcock's rushes – now that the word *psycho* has become a 'politically incorrect' term?"

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"His elocution-in-madness had sprung from every trap or snare, and Heraclitus is now an idiot himself!"

Scene-setting: As their haemoglobin passes over his paw, Heraclitus Bean giggles to his mirror image or shadow – even though he's ever aware of its invisibility. *Hee, hee, hee...* how he enjoys this insane joke! He truly subsists within a cosmos of his own manufacture, and by these parameters, Mister Punch (H.J. Eysenck) beats Miss Judy (Sigmund Freud) over the head with a wooden stick. After all of this, then, behavioural psychology seems to trump all such jokers with its ace of hearts. *Hee, Hee, Hee...* and yet hermit Heraclitus must habitually resolve a contradiction by refuting its absence. He cannot help but be out of his box, and like Greta Garbo, loneliness takes no prisoners here... since his party tormentors had something to work on all along. Madness (in truth) remains hereditary, biological or generic – but a solitary can be tortured into insanity (particularly given an inner wound). Isn't Mister Bean no-body now? Can't he be characterised as *a man alone?* *Hee, hee, hee...*

FINAL CURTAIN

GOODBYE, HOMUNCULUS!

and other astounding stories

An introduction

This volume consists of four astounding stories or reveries. The first of their number, *Goodbye, Homunculus(!)*, involves a twin-track medley in a musical vein. It configures a story of astrological capture, fatalism, the Predestined and Lon Chaney's exercise in Werewolf to man. (Likewise, its rival gift or *aporia* involves Frankenstein's monster being torn apart – but not by Derrida's *Prisms*. Didn't Friedrich Nietzsche perfect his thesis in *Beyond Good and Evil*, anyway?)

Our second creepy tale, *Iron Breath*, deals with robotics, dysgenics and post-humanism – in an era where cyberneticists have computer chips implanted into their arms.

The third redoubt, *Armageddon's Village*, looks at a scheming heiress' desire to remove her crippled husband. It is an examination of euthanasia, regression and the 'politics' of disability.

Furthermore, the last piece in this jigsaw, *Noughts are Crosses*, criticises materialism or a hunger for antiques and *object d'art*. Might an obsessive collector come to grief at the hands of a malignant statue? It configures the Animism of either Buffet's, Moore's or tribal art's plasticity.

All in all, these amazing yarns provide a critique of dualism or Manichean lore. They are designed to compute a pagan instead of a Christian ethos – whereby morality is seen to be hierarchical rather than a matter of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.

GOODBYE, HOMUNCULUS!

a novella

PROLOGUE:~

FIRST SPECTRUM OF INDETERMINACY: (1)

In Hell, *per se*, a scrimmage has formed this side of desolation; it exists in front of a goal which served as a gibbet. A blackened waste lay in the rear – and it already tempted its greyness; if only to lie awake before this aperture. It took after one of those nets in Gaelic football; an area or zone that has an ice-cream salesman next to it. A bleary or incontinent cranium is seen; one which sends rivulets beyond an expectant spine. The game has momentarily paused... yet it will soon recommence without his observations. A wanton head looks up at the camera; and it feels dishevelled, broken off, toothsome or possessed of a withering brain. One eyelet is out while the other feeds off a prism; when taken together with the convulsions of a lobotomy. His molars also wax irregular; they peel back in an action reminiscent of a scrivener, if not some daemonic bait. In truth, could this be everything that's left from the life of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve?

A FORTUNE-TELLER READS A SIEVE: (2)

In a previous existence, now, a man on a horse approaches a pile; it conjures up one of those martello towers. These were a set of fortifications – many of them down on the English coast – built in order to withstand Napoleon's invasion. A large number of them exist in Kent... whether next to or accosting various pebble beaches. Greensleeve proves to be wearing an ornate cape; it sweeps behind as he moves slowly towards this folly. He has come for an express purpose – namely, to consult the sorceress he will find within.

A THIRD VORTEX IN THE TREES: (3)

Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve – in a different incarnation – rambles through a series of conifers. This arbour stretches out so as to fill a screen with emerald... a situation in which each stalk bursts from the ground *in lieu* of a monster. Now dressed as Frankenstein, (sic), he capers between such bushes with a Wiccan doll held above his head. Could it be aught of a witch's familiar? As to his size, the body is bulky around the shoulders, but it tapers away in the direction of some spindly legs. These delve down towards twigs... and yet the upper torso rears massively amid fur. It limits two border-lines above the flesh; no matter how molten or rotten.

THIS FOURTH QUARTET OWES ELIOT NOTHING: (4)

Our sibyl exists before the polarity of a northern star or lilt, and her chair consists of darkened teak. Its back spirals into a jaguar's cranium – the latter forced open in a snarl – although a ram's head looks on. Aries-like, it adorns the throne's other chair or pitcher, in a way that rises from its closure. Somewhat sepulchrally, a sword runs down her thigh and through a skull's ambit. Whereas our Goat of Mendes – shorn at the wrist – took the light of a brazen discharge. It was fluffy at the chin and ears, but also chose to look on (darkly) under heavily trammelled horns. They lie across his presence laterally rather like horizontal tusks. The sorceress or mistress of prophecy has a name: it's Minx Raven III. Might T.S. Eliot's dirge or entry not provide a meaning herein (?):

*Who is that walking beside you?
When I count anon, there are only us two together
It glides, comes hooded, and is wrapped in a brown mantle
But who pads on your outermost side?*

“The Wasteland” (1922)

WE ARE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES: (5)

Greensleeve – rendered hideous by a transformation – sees the poachers running on the estate’s edge. Once they were hale and hearty like him... but no more. The two trusty peasants skip through the fronds; both of them carry rifles as well as small pouches on straps. A stick-doll (representing a child) lies over his shoulder. His gestures to them and angrily waves his fist; yet it has no effect in terms of the youngsters who veer into the trees. ‘Poachers!’, he bellows at a lung’s uppermost gasp. No noise really emerges at all – save a rasping or glutinous squelch. It refuses to intervene in these proceedings... in that the two desperadoes, contrary to the Black Acts, are speeding towards a mine field. Its warning architecture – a skull on a wooden post – had long since paid for their disregard.

A DEVILINA UNSHEATHES HER COMB: (6)

The sorceress, Minx Raven, continues to lie across her ebon dais. Her feet were bare, after the fashion of a ‘sixties hippy, and three phallic candles gutter and splutter amid this pitch. They are made of the most solid white wax. For her part, the minx sprawls in a bikini under subdued lids; these come tinted or otherwise sporting kolbe’s gestures. Such a shadow hints at lintel in its mascara – after the fashion of L.S. Lowry’s nymphs. Nor is it a matter of the head-dress above her tresses; or co-determinous with their extent. A necklace stretches down past the breasts by way of beads... they prove to be light, foxy, Camden-town like and stringy: but not redolent of string-theory. No. Around her wrists and feet, no matter how dinky, some ormolu tablets shine: these hint at false Monopoly counters. All in all, our prophetess indicates a beatnik reading Erich Segal’s *Love Story* – albeit naked from the waist down. A craziness enters here; at once percussive over its forgetfulness, or hinting at Manson’s Helter-Skelter. That’s Charles, not Marion, in the Mansonesque stakes!

MAGPIES IN THE PIE (CUT HERE): (7)

Meanwhile, in another or parallel dimension, Boris Karloff's Frankenstein's monster lopes along. It flails about with its stick-like arms; the former rotating like a spindly wind-mill on acid. Moreover, this mugwump moves with a longitudinal face – one that's rectangular to its gasp – and its fur hangs around it like a shroud. In the background to our game of chance, three ashen trees rear up towards the heavens: each one looks lonely... Is it consistent with some golden threads?

A SKELETON AMIDST THE CARDS: (8)

Our hippie goddess sits cross-legged before a globe; it illuminates the scene by dint of a hazarding shutter. Could it actually be a disability in the light (?); wherein a shimmering cascade reveals a pulsation... it occurs against her flesh. 'Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve, you wish to procure a dose of the future from a graven stone. It courses through one builder's yard. I can merely lift a veil on future events. A green flare – here – is thrown upon the fire; it summons up the valency of these very walls. Aplenty now, a shimmer enters through the distance of these distaff days. Behold (!), a temperature of steel melts such visions as these. They punctuate the luridness of a forgotten throne. It exists on sleep's nethermost side; together with an orbital arrangement of astrology lifting the stone. Let me describe your fortune unto you---'.

NUMBER 13; A HIPPOGRIFF LAUGHS: (9)

Simultaneously, at ten degrees to midnight, our Boris Karloff clears his throat of mucous. (It occurs with or without the intervention of James Whale). His brow seems coruscated, furrowed and pleased at his own resource: and it passes into oblivion next to an oblong's black square. One eye-piece, zig-zagging like forked lightning, indicates a disparity between balls: in that one cornea outbids the other. It lends a disjunction to the scene; itself a mere parallax view atop one's tomb. His screeching gets louder – but no meaningful sound comes from

between these lips. They are cracked as to salt-petre – with the tonsils of a new engagement spluttering afore such molars. Each one of them has bitten into a moon made from stilton; yet our patchwork-man’s warning falls sheer. It cannot extirpate an explosion which rips through the trees: TTTHWUMPH! Isn’t it so, Mel Gibson’s *Apocalypto*?

A CLOWN TWISTS HIS SMILE: (10)

We are back with Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve and his sibyl. During the course of which, young Gregory gazes on. He comes across as a rather priggish man of about twenty-nine years of age. He has travelled many miles in order to consult this seer... particularly over a future inheritance. Nonetheless, his features give an impression of ripe putty; at once sweetened to its task or hinting at Cyril Connolly’s *Enemies of Promise*... a volume dealing with Eton’s public school. The light continuously reflects across his face – it indulges no entreaty, smokes a cigarette in peace, and dwells upon nethermost time. In reality, young Greensleeve comes close to a bourgeois Byron – unfortunately without a hint of poetry. Don’t you remember, albeit in a previous text by this author, that poesy ennobles and silence defames...? (In parenthesis, this refers to the Stirnerean and nihilist text, *Mad*).

RHINO, RHINO EVERYWHERE: SUCK ON THIS PEACH: (11)

In parallel to a given aporia, Greensleeve’s monstrous bulk remembers a forgotten *word*... It delivers the inter-textuality of a known fraud. For, in a previous incarnation before monstrosity, his adult vista looks on amidst the trees. Their tops spin like wooden toys against an Alpine glare. Whereas a younger and fitter Greensleeve, maundering in Vaughan Williams’ thicket, realises that he’s chased these poachers into a mine-field. He’s done so inadvertently – in no way did he mean to, but the damage’s apparent. His daughter, much resembling Minx Raven at nine years of age, straddles his neck. A brief thunder-flash

comes occasioned in the distance; it causes a murder of crows to be displaced. They gather like bacteriological motes upon the air.

BASKING SHARKS OFF CORNWALL: (12)

Outside the witch's lair some vegetation luxuriates; it appears to be luminous under the moon (betimes). Some herbage also leads to a transposition – a cross against the actual temperature, in that the sky seems to be half-full with a line across it.

A WIDE-BRIMMED HAT BEATS OFF THE SUN: (13)

Abreast of another dimensional leap, our Frankenstein's monster lurches between the trees and some swampy water lies at his feet. It reflects his bulk back against his forethought – or alternatively, it leads off in the direction of moss-laden oaks. The spindly feet of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve causes a ripple effect in this green slush, likening it to ichor on a pond's surface, as he approaches the bodies. He does this in order to retrieve a humility's absence or reckoning, since he seeks out the corpses of several poachers. They have been done to death in order to protect the Black Acts, or what a Marxist historian like E.P. Thompson would regard as seigniorial pomp. He wades closer – in shallower depths now – across the lake. As to the corses of the fallen, however, they besport little more than shredded wheat (enlivened to the task) and holed up in a negative circus. It remembers the freak show, sequentially, and a smiling lizard rummages around their decks. What do you see? It's little more than the rib-cage of Gray's *Anatomy* when caught up by its own sausage meat – and fried to the pound. 'He' gets closer...

WINGED HYBRIDS JETTISON LOVECRAFT: (14)

Meanwhile, our sorceress gazes on lintel with an abstraction of rheum; it covers its own god-like form... if only to occasion her wonderment. In the background, shapes obey their distillation: they summon up the ghost of past presences... and in the middle of them varied skulls or wolf's-heads disport. (They vaguely embody a watercolour by Frank Frazetta). For her part, the

glamorous witch's face seems transported – it deliberates upon a flash-dance. A fire glistens on her features; the latter rendering a calm anthem or one that's almost dulcet, wounded, crippled, forgiven, overcast and spent. Truly, it sucks the air out of its cheeks. Quiet though, don't you realise that she's speaking softly? Let's listen to the beat of an insect's mandibles upon meat: "Behold!", sibilates Minx Raven, "a liking for gold leads to a calcium of green. This fire chokes me with its oven-gloves, my supplicant, yet still I summon up the future... no matter how wolfishly. It affixes its star to this resting place, in that my liking for blood recoils before the boundary of lust. A wolverine raises its head afore a glimpse of ions; these radiate outwards and plunder our reckoning. Such a portent brings over fragments from the dark-side – all of which lights up a glimpse in Orion's eyes. I predict your future, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve, and it indicates a throne of blood: in the manner of a samurai epic carved from *Macbeth*. Heed my cry!"

A RED TITAN SQUELCHES SAND: (15)

Still, multi-dimensionally, our Frankenstein's monster reaches out apace... it basically celebrates the stick-insects of a new retrieval, particularly when set against wooded arbours. These reach out leftwards and die prior to reaching their base. Frankenstein monster's (Greensleeve's) patchwork arms reach out for the mine's victims. He tastes a residue of blood in his throat – somewhat regrettfully. This teases its magnificence from a play-station of joy. Do you encounter it, now? A sideways-on head looms up (regrettfully); it proves to be banded, nine-tailed, soprano-laden, otherwise hit and square. The monster chunters to himself: "Their mishmash had retrieved an essence of silence. It belaboured nothing – save the absence of a brother – or maybe a rage over what was 'verboten'. I listen to those mines ticking on under the earth – truly, their timers failed to explode near a workers' revolutionary party bookshop on Clapham Common. A blast (this) which misfired many years previously. I scoop up their eye-balls like ostrich legs – aren't they aggrieved, or dying

afore a dark sun? Surely – our mistress of Azrael’s vengeance, Minx Raven, proves heartless as a post-modern queen. A monarch of hearts *a la* Alice’s looking-glass war, perchance?”

WE SEEK VENGEANCE USING SIMONE WEILL’S ROPE: (16)

Let it pass us by... For Minx Raven is pronouncing upon an offering of sulphur. She looks into the fire like a transfixed witch and her hair is displaced by unreason – or perhaps a fertility beyond the grave? Still, the necromancer’s profile levels off briefly, and even her servitor, Greensleeve, begins to attend to her words. His face betrays the impact of a shock or token of awe; whilst a joss-stick tapers away in-between them. In dress, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve is wearing a nineteenth century rig. It consists of a suit, its attendant cloak, a cravat or folded tie, and a check county-shirt. He’s long ago paused from dragging on a cigarette. This sibyl speaks in unearthly tones: “The future remains uncertain in its maw of blood. Could it be a parchment of skin that’s escaped from *Beowulf*’s monastery? A shortage in the life-line masquerades as an appendage. It portends naught save isolation – especially when surrounded by wolves, even a stray wendigo, amid tragic tumuli which are snow-capped. They hurtle or belt around this mausoleum that’s reminiscent of a tower, possibly an abandoned turret. Their slavering fangs cannot penetrate; and doesn’t it embroider the dimness with teeth? Look at this: one grimoire hints at devastation or absence... it understands the billowing emptiness of this Wolf. Weren’t those tokens of underground resistance in occupied Germany to be called *werewolves*?” (He has forgotten the words; he merely listens to the sounds they make).

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO SMIRK: (17)

In another realm, my masters, a younger version of our Gregory stares out on devastation. His face approaches a massive solemnity in its judgements – even though a rivulet of sweat permeates his brow. Surely he can only be a younger variant on

our monster (?); or a Frankenstein that's been put together in divers charnel houses. Behind them, and adjacent to a bower, an eighteenth century grenadier or trooper lifts a lamp. It lights up the uniform of Thomas Hardy's trumpet major. Did we say 'they' momentarily (?)... oh my yes. For two figurines are gathered herein; the other proves to be his brother... he surveys the bodies of the dead-poachers with relish. Moreover, his features come across as convulsed, less than a token, avid, grinning, sadistic, greasy or cranial. A black string-tie levers down his front; if accompanied by a purple cloak. It happens to be Greensleeve's non-identical twin, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II. He views the poachers' smouldering corses – out in the mine-field – *avec panache and aplomb*.

DYNAMITE A JIGSAW(!): (18)

In a hieratic moment, our reader of these runes gestures across. Admittedly, she'd been paid a meagre fee – yet all thought of material gain loses out now. Her hand movements (also) deliberate upon a hex; and they prove to be witchy, jazzed up, Rocky Horror Show-like, semi-mortal or occult. Do you comprehend the magnitude of her sweepstake? Now then, her eyes betoken a glazed gesture – whether they're transfixed, over-pupilled, retinaless, blind to the outer light or pointillist. She speaks thus: "I have a warning for you, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve. My mouth, eyes and hands are opened and closed by the gods. Listen to the conjoined replica of my cry – you will be devoured or eaten whole by a wolf. Like Odin in legendary or faith, the great Fenris shall rise from its slumbers. Heed my utterance, in a manner guaranteed by Delphi, you shall perish. Fear those dogs who walk upright and resemble men – the gods seal my lips (thereafter)."

CLOSE DOWN UNIVERSAL LIFE; SAVE MY WILL(!): (19)

Meanwhile – and back with Frankenstein's monster – one notices a grey texture of lumbago without a stretch of brown. It fetches itself over towards a brillo pad's hint. Let it ride on: since one

eye in the monster's face appears too big or bitter-sweet... while the molten nature of worms coruscate the brow. Does it effectively shower on emptiness?

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Again, he chooses to dwell upon the past – in another incarnation – and he runs towards his daughter who lies on the ground. She sobs (having grazed her knee) and looks every inch a miniature Minx Raven. 'O my sweet dish', he moans slightly – in a way both sympathetic and risible. One almost detects that this man is too soft, nice and weak. After all, in tandem with oceanic fury, strength considers itself to be moral and weakness embraces sin. Certainly, those Christians amongst us must be heard to declare that vice – weakness – engenders punishment. Or might such a regimen not alight within the religion of the cross at all?

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Anyway, and fully returned to a present impasse, the man-thing's calloused mitten comes into view. This living glove – at once flayed to a mediaeval abandonment – comes attached to the wrist by spent wires. They help to re-interpret those ligatures of living suet; rather like Max Schreck in the 1924 silent film *Nosferatu*. Nonetheless, these palsied gloves embalm some brown sponges – themselves of a dwarf and an Afrikaner, suffering from leprosy, in Conan Doyle's tale *The Blanched Soldier*. At the heart of 'his' grasp, though, an eighteenth century miniature exists in an oval frame: it depicts a youthful Minx Raven.

AN ANTI-LIFE EQUATION CROSSES LUDO'S BOARD: (20)

A change has come across our traveller, betimes, and he rides away from the tower humming a gloomy air. At his back the Martello's funnel looms up; it succeeds in clearing those trees nestled around it with a redundant 'shrug'. Moreover, its "eyes" peek out of nestled margins – themselves given over to the lichen of so many toads. It seems to festoon the outer crenellations of this heap with skulls – much after the intervention of John Cowper Powys' *Brazen Head*. For his own part, Gregory Fawcett

Greensleeve proves to be in a subdued mood. “What can she have meant by her lies of sustenance?”, he mused. “It must make one morbid or vague – living in a pile like that. Anyway, this version of Lewis’ *Wild Body* won’t be providing venison or uncooked meats (no matter how non-human). I must forget her utterances; they’ve unmanned or disturbed me – and maybe that’s the point. But still, the intervention of the thirteenth tarot card, signifying death, unnerves. Why did she do it? Isn’t the whole Gypsy caboodle something of a racket, eh? She won’t turn many a minted coin, whether heavy in the palm or not, with fortunes as unattractive as mine. Hah!” (He tried to make fun of it, admittedly, but this playfulness failed to lighten his brown study).

THE PRE-CONFEDERATE ‘KNOW NOTHING’ MOVEMENT: (21)

Truly, the monster’s jaw lies open to a new solace or expectancy; and it rages against a darkness due to nothing but Absalom. Can we expect anything else at this juncture? In any respect, her innocent child’s face, the knowing wonderment of her father and a Frankenstein’s rig all meld. (The latter bears up the canines of a new ululation. It hints at the painter Francis Bacon’s desire to *articulate nation europa in a cry*). Doesn’t it accord with a jelly-fish swimming freely, yet adorned *avec* teeth, like a *Minotaur* cover?

SHOOT THE ARROW THROUGH THE BALSA(!): (22)

Greensleeve banked on a steep curve or turned the horse around, if only to reach the inn. It stood in the high sunlight of late afternoon; together with an old-fashioned wooden sign which swayed in the breeze. Gently does it back and forth – a few horses could also be observed under a rearwards canopy. This was open to the elements and suffered from an alarum over twisted circumstances. Do you attempt its drift? In any event, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve mused uneasily: “Why deliberate on so negative a prospect. It signifies nought save untidy

scrapings; the latter feasting on bones or spent charcoal. Have I been in the moral ossuary too long, perchance? Didn't Frankenstein knit the skin of his monster together from so many charnel refuges? These were a plenitude of damnation – and they certainly wrested blood from a shrieking cup. Strangely, I can't know peace of mind after her revelations; it's as if a nimbus of terror opens up before me. It swings and raves (this) like an axe – with or without the e – and from within the mantle of falling hoar frost... even though it's a sunny day. Above all, an image of exhalation comes up before me; it fixes the blade of a new keening and rides out in blue. There we are... ”

A RENEGADE SEEKS OUT YELLOW: (23)

Meanwhile, our livid monster looks upon the consequences of weakness... and maybe it has to do with suppurating wounds or spent toads? Do they streak across the horizon after the naming of this devil? Might it be a gloss on that classic of Scottish literature, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by James Hogg? Still, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve as Frankenstein's monster, cradles a stick-insect in his own mittens. Such brownish hands also proved to be leathery, rubbery, misshapen, rising to fat, glutinous or otherwise temporised. Likewise, they seem to be held together by the spent cords or nectarines o' fate... all of which spread out like ashen and broken leaves. They take pity on their own stained indents – given that such locutions break depression's silence. One is minded of an incident with the American writer, John Gardner, where he moved a pig-sty by hand on his farm in Pennsylvania, so as to prevent rattlesnakes reaching the house. Just so... yet don't his malformed eyes, like in Henry Moore's statuary, come over as misaligned? They filled with salt tears.

BROADMOOR'S INNOCENT FORDING: (24)

Musing (as he was) about the gypsy fortune teller's prediction, our Gregory entered the pub in a mild daze. The sun also streamed in behind him like a sheltering sky; especially if the door stands ajar or filters in rays prismically. All of a sudden,

Gregory Fawcett lets out a subdued or startled yelp. It strangulates itself in terms of a gathering motet – nor might it be let go of... Especially when we're able to see the cause of his startled utterance: IT'S A WOLF! Or, more accurately, it proves to be a wolf's head and taxidermic specimen. Like one of Damien Hirst's roundabouts, it slits the throat of an available tax collector... if only to summon up the phantasy life of stuffed bills, rabbits, jackals and hyenas o' fortune. Do you ken its meaning, O savant?

LET NORMAN SPINRAD EXECUTE SORROW: (25)

Against the grain, our answer to Boris Karloff's offering lay upon the mere – what with flakes of skin, bone, chip, residual happenstance and spume all casting off. They proved to be the livery of so much forgiveness, even if they crept up on you awhile. Each deliberation forded its silence in playtime, and one has occasion to remember an image by Edward Miller: itself the habitude of forgotten ice flows. These masqueraded to a frost giant amid its wastes – albeit one that grew out of a storm of percolation... Whereupon the latter opened regarding hell's maw; a factor which courted invisibility amid shards of floating ice. At the heart of it lay Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve and a waxen doll; or a stick-insect that travelled across a puppet-master's trestle. (Even an advanced presentation of the monster's daughter, Minx Raven III, gains a tremor of this intent. She stops suddenly and gazes into the distance.) Must we navigate around death's ready juncture at the edge of the moors?

GEORGE LUCAS' NEGATIVE UTOPIA: (26)

The wolf grinned at him after the fashion of a savage clown – despite the fact that its limbs were looped up (most especially). These led on from some claws out front; the former glinting after the fashion of a lycanthropic spectre. Its limbs were loose and rangy (you see); yet the claws are sharp or clean under a mirthless grin. Did one see the rectitude of a fire in its eyes which purchased peace – after the design of Fenris' last gulch?

Without equivocation, though, a night stalker's orbs wax blood red – they carry all fate afore them, when skinned, or worn over a tonsure's cap. Bravo! “No need for fear, fellow”, reassured the portly landlord from afar.

A MORAL TELEOLOGY IN FICTION: (27)

Still, when reminiscing about it, the monster cut abroad as a silhouette or nimbus; that is to say, a fleeting glimpse of those decayed tramps *a la* Samuel Beckett. Don't they carry the finitude of Molloy's unnameability with them... over aways and bereft of enchantment? Like one of L.S. Lowry's stick-men in Salford's slums, he needed to grace the bluster of a ravening corse. It twisted on the gallows – roundabout – and this involved a secondary Minx Raven being handed down between monsters. One lay above; the other below... it all conspired to fix Frankenstein in aspic (just as it limbered up to some blue orgone's filter). This beneath-the-archery intervention, however, also sees the creature from the black lagoon, or Joan Crawford's *Trog*, taking her body into safe-keeping. It mummifies its own Stygian asteroid. “Do not worry about the intentions of William Bloodaxe!”, cried a deep memory inside our creature's brain.

IRON-MAIDENS DRAW A HONEYED SKIN: (28)

Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve has fully entered into the bar's fug or glow (now). He sets out with the aplomb of a new beginning; given that the pub's door lies aslant over its emplacement. It becomes empanelled in terms of wood or sycamore; and a line of beer barrels moves away perpendicularly from his sight. A cheery tin cup – capable of measuring liquor – was wound round a tap on the first cask. A half-opened bottle of brandy stood mid-table – and out at a distance, or accompanying latticed glass, swung an oil-lamp. (This device looked old in the bedizened heat). At the heart of our tableau, however, stand three men... namely, two guests of the landlord and the administrator himself. Yet, in the mind's-eye of a man who's taking his chance, other premonitions or phantasms gather... They have to do with

ravening collections of wolves: i.e., a pack which chases its tail around an ossuary's portal. This entrance exists separately amid mounds of snow; and the Hyperborean destiny of it helps the wolves to loose their footing. Yet still, the wild beasts of what subsists outside John Ford's *Stagecoach*, can they survive on *terra firma*? Or must we be looking at a scenario where Jack London's white fangs ramp insouciantly? Lord, have mercy, do they understand the import of what their briefs actually do (?); despite having testimony agin' em in many a court-room drama. Does anyone reminisce about the ITV soap *Crown Court* (?); scripted, as it was, by Jim Allen... a revolutionary anti-zionist of a sort.

A CORN DOLLY BURNS A' NIGHT-TIME: (29)

Hear me! Our Frankenstein's monster walked towards death within a rectitude of faith. Moreover, inside the parsimony of a dream, a girl finds herself handed down. Could it be a transgressive interplay between monsters? She is carried aloft by a smoking dud, perchance, even though Frankenstein's visage seems to fill its own sarcophagus. By relation to which, the girl's face is less that of a cunning little vixen – and has more to do with a broadening innocence. It slips over into somnolence, dream, a visage of one's sleeping beauty, as well as the crushed vertebrae of betrayed paper. What has 'he/it' done? For, in closing a nailed mitten, he's mangled a paper-doll – rendering it worse than useless. But why's Fawcett Greensleeve become Frankenstein's monster in a rival dimension?

A SKALD INITIATES BEOWULF LIKE JAZZ(!): (30)

One of the men in the inner part of the bar approaches Greensleeve. He wears a rough jerkin of country cloth and (likewise) a belt of hunting cartridges surrounds his midriff. 'Apologies, mister nobody – the mastery of silence makes few mistakes. We didn't intend to scare you unduly. The fault for leaving a wolf trespassing upon a door, even in terms of its pelt, rests with me... it harbours nought but a rustling indifference. Do you ken it? Since – when a lycanthrope like Kurten's been slain –

we sling a body across some beer barrels; if the latter's adjacent to a traveller's rest.'

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In response to this, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve squirmed with embarrassment. To speak of: his left eye gazed out rather ruefully from a face's aftermath – or otherwise under its enclosure. Can't we rest assured that it tempers an internal bias with fact (?); it delineates, in other words, the inner personality. 'Ah well(!)', Gregory began, 'it proves to have been an empty shock reverberating around its vacuum. I apologise over any weak-mindedness. I just didn't expect to find an effigy or a wolf's head there... that's all. When a man stares off into the distance he humbles himself before eternity – at least in terms of sarcophagi packed up in ridges: what with their faces glistening, tier on tier, and travelling away into a haze... no matter how distinctly.' While he was speaking, however, the portly landlord started to rinse out some glasses in a sink.

THE TRUTH BEHIND A MAIMED CIRCUMFERENCE: (31)

Listen to this: a delineation from the Adams' family rests with a riven *travail*. It lights up a sulphurous rectitude. For Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve, in a rival dispensation, had become depressed and wandered into the mine-field. Its tundra smoked up around him in bursting hulks; if only to register an unkindness or burnished steel. Mayhap – rival or interconnected barbed-wires came unstuck; they sat adrift of a landscape like a used brillo pad. Certainly, a lunar or ungainly surface was hinted at; and it fired at its own indignity from across a green line... an example of military topography which hinted at the First World War. Could the firing of gun salvos, the masquerade of ingots, and the mounds of earth thrown up under siege... all contrive to confuse? It aided and abetted Greensleeve's bi-polarity or manic depression; as he slipped, involuntarily, towards a muddied foreground. Might it exemplify the psychoanalytical text by Norman O. Brown known as *Life Against Death*?

TIN-PAN ALLEY --- CHAINSAW: (32)

Back in the eighteenth century Gregory Greensleeve exchanges a few words with the publican, as he pours out a brandy's snifter. This fat man appears ready to adjust his temperature or deportment to aught else. For his part, Gregory seeks a little comfort in converse. "I failed to notice the convexity of the wolf in this vicinity", he tittered. "Oughtn't we to develop immunity over a pack which lurches and ramps around a tabernacle; the latter taking after one of Nicholas Hawksmoor's minor churches? Does one envisage Iain Sinclair's poem *Lud Heat*? It reaches out for the quandary of no satisfaction whatsoever... in that these dogs are feral. They hurl themselves around the keep of a disacknowledged enclosure. Also, a thick envelope of snow has fallen around this transplanted Cleopatra's needle... again: it becomes lost over such chains o' witness. Given this, the snarling upkeep of Jack London's white fang must leap towards a silent aperture." "I see", replies the bar swipe in a non-committal way.

A FAMILY CREST SPORTS A RED DOG (TOPMOST): (33)

In parallax's diminuendo, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve had stepped on a mine – in a ready funk – and been blown to smithereens. Wherein had the depression originated which led him to do it... who knew or readily cared? Anyway, his transformation rested complete in such circumstances. A half-man remained here; a rectilinear advert for victimhood... one who threw up the salutary offerings of such a peace. Now one of his eyes waxed dislodged; it fell into his palm with a travesty of Odin's grief... nor need we acknowledge a world of reverse chemistry. In depressive anxiety (you know) chemicals are secreted in the brain that bear on the optic nerve; they can even cause retinal damage... such as when you cease to see in colour. After this intervention, the world looks monochrome or black-and-white --- like in a Rediffusion television set in the 'seventies.

TO UNDO THE *EDDA* IS TO REWIND A COIL: (34)

Meanwhile, our well-dressed Greensleeve and an eighteenth century publican are jabbering along together. “Wolves predominate, my friend, in a world where rooks in the game of chess cannot really castle. Most effectively, they must offer their teeth towards the shaving of so much bone – it comes to be covered by the nature of its ligature or strands. Do you detect it? Likewise, if this hunter remains in the vicinity of our keep no man-dogs shall belabour our forest o’ hives. Will any witness recommence with the *Spiderman* character known as Kraven the hunter? Nor shall any huntsman of yore be reduced to blowing Sarban’s horn! By such a reckoning as this, one’s desperado has despatched seven wendigos already this week. Indeed, Lon Chaney Junior can’t even slip into his whiskers afore a silver bullet strikes. It slaps home amid whelps and raucous swipes.” With a nod, the pub landlord gestures at the back bar where a loner eats his meal in a separate nook from any rival sot.

OUR GLUE MAN BECOMES UNSTUCK: (35)

Avaunt thee! Our blasted man relives the moment of his combustion, albeit in a parallel realm o’ fives. It occurs within a triangular shard or a glimpse of *Columbo*’s fate; what with a shooting burst of energy inundating ‘his’ hold. What resulted was a shambling entity or man-thing; even a quilted jacket of so much bleeding and match-‘n’-mending. One eye already happens to be out across from a vertebra of sound; and the whole *thing* takes on a paraffin-lamp’s glow that’s reminiscent of Iain Sinclair. (Note: he’s a cartographer of London’s inner landscapes. All of these relate to Farringdon Road’s book-stalls or a scene in Truman’s brewery, Brick Lane. It surmounted a Visigoth’s tincture --- helpless before the Elephant Man --- not to mention female nakedness, screaming). Still, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve staggered on without wit or eyeless in Gaza, and he was otherwise livid, herring-boned, toy town-like: as well as beholden to the devil’s tincture. It sorted out the rage of a stick-insect when subdued by sandpaper. Didn’t Stewart Home seek to

have the covers of his pamphlets or chap books, advocating an art strike, bound in this? It presumably sought a rebarbative outcome...

DEVILINA IS OUR LOVE OBJECT: (36)

Needless to say, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve is busily propping up the bar with its owner. Every so often (though) they furtively gazed across at a grizzled hunter. He seemed to be oblivious to their presence and consumed a hearty meal. His fur glistened, somewhat vaguely, under the lights and a square of pork stood to be consumed on a fork's end. In appearance, this specimen from James Fennimore Cooper looks flat, square, up-ended, reliable, wolverine-like and padded. He gestures abruptly and concentrates on his repast. Our bar-keep engages in a fitful confab, however. 'He's a remarkable tracker or slayer of the feral, my man. Mark it: no observable juniper beneath the skin may feed on discernible objects like this. Do you remember the multi-dimensions or planes in Wyndham Lewis' painting, *The Siege of Barcelona*? Does it contrive to bring relief? Anyplace – since his arrival the wolf population's been halved. Why, he's only gone and slain a good seven this very week. You met one of them earlier on over a veritable barrel.' 'I see!', mused Gregory. But did he really understand the number which represents isolation or the hermit, in numerology?

A COFFIN/CUBE FRAYS ITS BARBED WIRE: (37)

One's Frankenstein's monster blunders on in the dead of night via a silent forest; its brackish scent and acorns litter each clearing. Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve – in this incarnation – is beginning to come asunder or discombobulate. He waxes apart from any acknowledged slaughter, becomes disentangled, and hopes to prevent suicide through decomposition. At once caught on a trestle of pain, he breaks like Grunewald's 'Christ' on an ornate altar panel; it merely lacerates non-identity in order to see more clearly. Yes indeed: the sundering or evisceration of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve was a wonder to behold. Like in

Samuel Beckett's late trilogy or third, *The Unnameable*, a diabetic relative lies limbless in a pot. A thalidomide's toasty (you see); he relishes improvidence's prospect. Nor can we discount the patchwork quilt nature of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve – as he comes apart at the seams.

UNBALANCE THE TWINNING OF THESE HAMLETS: (38)
Despite this devastation redolent of *Saw 2*, our publican and his guest continue to rabbit on. Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve certainly raises a steaming mug of black beer to his lips. 'So you no longer have to roust up hunting parties to drive the packs away, eh? Impressive, I call it; he must be a remarkably quick shot in the Columbine massacre stakes... particularly at night. It has to be doubly difficult to detect the presence of Lon Chaney Junior's lather or breath, deep under those trees, or when a darksome habitat enjoins.' 'I suppose you might go by their red eye-slits in the reek', mused our landlord or keeper of the flame. A silent pall then intruded for a moment.

KRATOS HAS ONE RED EYE: (39)

Meanwhile, Boris Karloff's namesake seems to be coming apart at the seams – if only to make something of a sulphurous stick. It leaps out at you all of a sudden and tears at the severed connexion of a hand. On it slips or down, and adrift of so many fingers amid this clay of ages. All of which isn't to mention the distant orbs of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve's daughter, a blonde beauty in this dimension, whose eyes fill with tears... no matter how involuntarily. Yes sir... for who can entertain the amount of pain in this life (?); as a character in Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead* makes clear. (Even though this romantic *feuilliton* bears a cask about the face – it signs off as Minx Raven III).

A DELIVERANCE FROM BONE: (40)

Deep in the back bar or tap room, three men are in earnest discussion. 'It' leaps up from behind the landlord's rather porcine head and takes in a guest's perspective – he's a man in middle

life with a Spanish moustache. For his part, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve stares on with preternaturally bright eyes. He's vaguely aware (all the time) that what's up for debate affects him directly. It hammers home his very own coffin lid, so to say. The man expectorates on... he gabbles and his diction waxes either slurred or excited. "Listen, my fellows, the local wolves roundabout have grown in their daring. Initially, they just circled round a keep high up in the mountains; one that was surrounded by snow and behind wrought iron-gates. It evinced one particular entrance – a point of egress too spare for this pack to pass through *en masse*. Likewise, at the heart of this tabernacle sat a brown or leathery skeleton with a broadsword across its lap. It had originally been dressed in furs, but the horde of canines never reached it. Mark my words, though: these silvern tides have come down from mountain passes in order to attack livestock in the valleys, even horses or cows. Such events 've occurred right alongside folks' homesteads... it reverberates with the early poems of Robinson Jeffers' *The Californian*. Didn't he rattle on about a landscape deserving nothing but tragedy?"

DARKNESS HAUNTS ITS REFLECTION: (41)

In a modern incarnation – but still within the perspective of a dream – Minx Raven III drives along. Her vehicle happens to be a beaten up Ford (for those who want to know). The rain sweeps down around the car and plays some sort of slam dance on its glass – if only for the wipers to flick it hence. But she understands, most convincingly, about a reality that sickens to the core... and she can't wait to get home. In her heart of hearts, once a latticed door closes upon her slender shoulders – then she can escape into a world of phantasm. A template destined for the imagination and that portends the eighteenth century; with this avenue of trees consisting of Frankenstein's shambles. May it not reflect badly on the involvement of Boris Karloff, his *golden key* and even James Whales' flickering images? We shall see...

BILLIE WHITELAW IN *THE OMEN*: (42)

Our three spokesmen for damnation are continuing to whelp; particularly when the following image is enclosed. It shows up a picture of a horse (or a roan stallion) that kicks out in abandonment; if only to achieve one of Muybridge's motion studies. Withal and in kind, a leg flicks out so as to decompose a wolf – or turn it into putty in a morning's ray. It suffers no turn of sulphur in the dawn; but vaguely lends a kinetic sheen to this outbreak. Moreover, a horse's limbs flail out as it's suborned; and these dogs ramp at the features of one who feeds an ossuary, or knackers' yard, in its blizzard. Don't you remember the later and vaguely accelerated pictures of Francis Bacon? The bar's guest with a floppy or Spanish-style moustache speaks on: "Oh yes, stranger, something's emboldened these wolves. They cluster roundabout like a horde of no-marks. Such packs – as I mentioned before – have sought out victims in our vicinity. This chuntering of daemons howls aloud or seeks provender – no matter how tethered. Do you not savour it? For, should our devil-dogs gain egress, they will discover a brown study or a skeleton on its dais. It sits alone, somehow regally, and contains within it the plenitude of a new aggression. A brazen fur wraps itself around these benighted limbs or sticks. Nor can such earthy armatures o' bone seize our imagination; since a battered tin helmet or crown lies abroad the skull. What deflects our attention, though, remains the broadsword or kingly offering lying in its lap. It offers a challenge to any dust motes gathered aslant it. How came it to be here, one wonders? Never mind: *quod* the von Hagens' plastinate looks wiry, spendthrift, rectangular, crenellated, visceral and installation-like. It suffers in this subdued light (no matter how diffuse or lacking in a stroboscope's glare)." "What can he be recounting?", mused Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve. Yet he turned out to be transfixed.

INVADE PURPLE'S QUADRANT: (43)

Deep in a wasteland's desperation or travail, a Frankenstein's monster lies amid saffron's dirt. It proves to be bright yellow in

its hue. He seemed to be hugging the turf and waiting for the onset of a relieving death. Does it register such a grief of ages - -- most transparently? Our Frankenstein's corse - laid low by an intriguing mine - sought to look up at an imaginary pin-hole camera. He was resigned now. Most uncomfortably, our patchwork quilt is coming apart or withering at the seams. A coat of many technicolours (you see), rather like a satanic variant on Joseph's rag, sweeps up his available leavings. These brushstrokes indicate a scarecrow's offering; but it proves to be a million miles away from Wyndham Lewis' unfinished novel, *Twentieth Century Palette*. Wasn't it an autobiography of sorts? Anyway, our reverse incarnation of Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve has settled down to perish. He's passive, redundant, spendthrift, uninvigorated: and either James Hinton's philosophy or the stars gaze down - and laugh.

READING'S OTHER *PHILOSOPHE* RAVES AT THE MOON: (44)

Let us see now: our smooth-skinned hunter has risen from his feed, at the other's behest, or is otherwise isolated and unperturbed. He seems to be sleek, unafraid, given over to a nimbus of strength, wily, and even incombustible. A close wrap of fur surrounds his mid-riff by way of a pelt; and it also seeks to close off its encumbrance or sense of adventure. Truly, a combination of Cotton Mather and a Fennimore Cooper hero (or leather-stockings) briefs such an advent. Yet a deliberate taint clings to the anti-hero (of whatever vintage): whether it be vulpine, deliberative, prior wolfish or saturnine. Our man-with-no-name, *a la* Clint Eastwood, leaves a few pennies or groats upon some wooden boards. Don't these coins wax heavy, rough-edged, delicately carved and clipped at the edges? This vigilante has led a wild life (most expectantly) and he's got a good working knowledge of rates of currency --- especially their innermost worth. Rather fortuitously, the man with the droopy or Spanish moustache lowers his voice as the other rises to his feet. Perhaps the rifle butt in his furthest or right hand has a salutary

effect? No one really knows... but his voice trails off. "I have to remind you, my fellows of might and main. A withered skeleton – of a brownish and mummified quality as to skin – sits on a dais. It recoils from the ebon marble of its manufacture – while a massive broadsword lies athwart 'his' knees. Might the wolves gain egress from snowy vales outside? Who can tell? Although many suspect that Vesalius' gift, in no matter how rickety a state, would clear its throne in order to wrestle a wolf-man to the floor. It has to be clear over Lon Chaney Junior's commitment to zoology *per se*. Oh my yes..."

A SKELETON'S HANDS CLASP AND GRASP: (45)

In a rival dimension to one discussed, a man-monster has lain his weary bones down to die. A few brief trees loom up in some striated mist; they are difficult to observe and usher in the wood's lunar aspect. Meanwhile, Frankenstein's monster – Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve – had begun to dig at the sodden tundra roundabout. He or 'it' dredges up a scintilla of bone in order to fillet a grave; and it definitely solicits a lost contribution to soil science. Haven't the man-thing's stick-legs buckled under a torso (when fur-wrapped or top heavy in aspect); and no-one listens to this suction? It's a matter of worms, after all; and this sodden adventure enlivens promiscuity or maggothood. The worm's hermaphroditic nature also palls over time! A great weariness supervenes and tugs at the borders of Greensleeve's identity. He merely begins to dig. Like a trowel, a branch-like or brackish arm reaches out to draw upon the loam – a vestibule of which can be lifted clear in its liquid. Once an oozing topsoil is accounted for – the outlines of a grave in one of T.F. Powys' miniatures may find itself etched out. Slowly, slowly, catchee monkey... as each mote of this ground or lair's scraped away, a member of our Adams' family glowers in bare light. One eye happens to be out; another stands ajar and various flies circle a mulcting corpse. Its decomposition renders livid a specimen jar of some sort or future vintage. Don't the gossamer wings (or diaphanous fluttering) of these mites betray a golden halo, even a

swarm of fire-flies shimmering in heat...? It's an obvious illustration of Bill Hopkins' unfinished play, *Phosphorescent Insects*.

A TIME OF TOTALITY: REASON'S UNDOING – (46)

Back in yesterday's bar, a wolf-clad hunter proves about to depart. He's left some coppers on a roughly-hewn table that's been manufactured from a barrel. As soon as he rose to his feet, however, the voices of three other denizens sank to a whisper. Were they slightly afraid of him, perchance? In any event, our droopy moustache continued with his mystagoguery... what with a brief shelf of liquor bottles glistening afar. Might the peon's gossip have aught to do with Gabriel Garcia Marquez's effort, *No-one Writes to the Colonel anymore*? Nonetheless, a piece of advanced 'latino' literature might be far from his mind... he continues thus: "A hominind or bare man, clad in wolf skins, enters the pile. It deliberates upon sacrilege in relation to a tabernacle. What does he see, though, but the warrior's weapon glistening dully in the darkness. It's an object which continues to rest in a skeleton's or mummy's grasp – one that countenances the prospect of rebirth (in certain circumstances). Slowly, oh so slowly – and with infinite care – a pelted miscreant reaches out towards the sword's hilt. He's attracted to puissance (without a clear cut defile); and he wants to swing the blade about in dark light or deliver tremendous blows. All remains still or darksome."

THE SPRANG THROWERS: (47)

Still and all, we retrieve nothing from silence. In a scenario where he lies longitudinally – all amidships and cast adrift – while he's buried head-first in a cascade o' nought. Dare one feel its meter before one? Anyway, his Boris Karloff gesture is spear-like in its intensity – it ricochets from the heavens by dint of Byron's path. Nor need one surmise a scarecrow's writing shack; in the manner of either George Bernard Shaw or Barrie Pitt. It solaces one use of silence (you see); in that a plate moves down

into the earth, dexterous of all monstrosity, and livid over a nethermost jape. Frankenstein's monster – Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve – has decided to end it all. He wishes to die or embrace the shallow emptiness of the grave. On 'he' crawls towards nemesis, nothingness or a *green ray*... and nullity saves his prospect (by the by); it solicits a quiet ultimatum.

WOLVERINE IN OBSIDIAN: (48)

Our *Hunter* S. Thompson figure (who bears a striking resemblance to Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II) lounges from the bar. He does so at a steady gait – even though he stops to collect the wolf's carcass which he'd unceremoniously thrown over a barrel. The commentator with the droopy moustache, however, continued to speak afore an imaginary microphone. "Didn't I tell you about the wolf-pelted one?", he hissed, "who stole abroad of a skeleton in a sepulchral chamber. Our sarcophagus (at once uncaged) sat in leathery isolation or splendour on a marble throne. It came to be almost laminated in its sheen – what with a thread o' marbling or *lapis lazuli* stretching via its intent. It was a gossamer's webbing, in terms of a geology's network or *topos*, that leant an internet's reality to a sundering of bone. Mark it! For our wolfish invader has seized a broadsword from a dead king's lap, primarily in order to kindle some heroic deeds of yesteryear. Were these not the doings of which a harpist or a shaper might speak? In any moulding, a challenge given out sword-in-hand in such a place can well have unbidden consequences. It may then bend the circumstances of light and power (contained herein) into a new prismatic arch... Wasn't it called a wooden O at the beginning of *Henry V*? Indeed – a wolfish anti-hero only heard the creak of long dead bones a moment ahead of lights out." Our interlocutor paused for a necessary effect...

‘HENRY THE EIGHTH’ BY SHAKESPEARE AND FLETCHER: (49)

Our modern variant of Minx Raven III dreams of tracking down her father, a vagrant on Frankenstein’s theme, on the edge of one of L.S. Lowry’s pictures. She decides to search some nearby woods on the prowl, so as to reveal the moral *exemplum* of a freak show. Might it cry out to the Bedlam of Barnum ‘n’ Bailey’s nineteenth century *archaos*? Seemingly now, a Volkswagen beetle van or VW – with a red stripe painted down the side – has been hired out. It’s fit for no other avenue than hunting. In her available mind’s-eye, some hippies accompany her to the feast. They are casual friends from the carnival where she earns her living as a Gypsy fortune teller – that is, a prophetess who’s bent over Waite’s or Crowley’s deck. Let it pass... All of them agree to a three hour search (no more) with powerful, hand-held torches. She sets off at a brisk pace ahead of the others.

HO! HO! HO! THREE GLASSES OF RUM: (50)

Our three nobodies are in a confab which hints at some suspended griefs. Yet the hunter refuses to acknowledge their presence on these boards, at least as regards a dead wolf atop a barrel. Momentarily, he stops to listen to them... as a droopy-moustached bar-fly continues to spout. “Of course, the reaction of those in the vicinity seeks closure – or enclosure.” “How do you mean?”, opines the publican. “Well(!)”, replies our tap-room philosopher, “in the manner of a journeyman’s efforts after Robinson Jeffers’ poesy, a wolf’s liveliness leads to a lock-up. For their presence in the vicinity led these farmers to foregather; and, like in a Western movie, the wagons are encircled against attack. It’s a matter of stock instinct (you see); in that domestic animals are herded together at night... or they bed down in corrals.” The stranger’s sharp-pointed leather boots scrape across the wooden floor in annoyance. He stops to address the others – a wolfish corse slung over one shoulder. “Maybe the older folks have it keener”, he mused, “when they say if you padlock live-

stock, why, what can wolves attack but humans?" The three interlocutors at the bar stare on with muted incredulity.

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But, in their heart of hearts or innermost mind's-eye, you may hear the following. It pertains to mumblings from under a Latin moustache. "Our pelted wolverine – or version of Lon Chaney Junior – spins around. What does he spy? Well, it has to be a grown skeleton – slipping loose its Galen armature – and towering above him. How can he have forgotten the challenge of his boasting; whereby he let out a cry, broadsword in hand, in such a place as this? The living cadaver or man-beast came on, most repellently, and its jaw moved up and down, silently, as if to ape the molten. Could electricity issue from such a cranial bone arch? It obeys a sudden tincture or lore: *for whomsoever knows fear burns at the man-thing's touch...*"

WE MUST RIP OUT THEIR HEARTS AND DEVOUR 'EM[!]: (51)

Meanwhile, the woman known as Minx Raven III makes her way through the thickets. It has to do with a water-tight pasture within an estuary; rather like one of J.G. Ballard's detours out in Shepperton. Still, she crosses some green fronds abreast of three sticks, if only to give way before such a misadventure. Minx Raven carries a powerful torch in her left hand, but the beam is unlit. This female also wears a 'puffa' or sport's jacket against the cold; it follows the dimensions of one of Millet's own... in terms of a lost trademark.

BREED THE SPIDERS OF OUR DESIRE: (52)

For a moment events contrive to stop time – yet Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve suddenly sees Minx Raven III again. She exists above the hollowed out emptiness of his eyes: even though he recognises no causality. Our fortune-teller isn't really there (you see); in that a fantasm was occurring. At its heart Minx Raven III looked on hieratically; and her gestures mapped out empires in the sun. Beneath and around her, a skull, a ghoul- shaped object,

a peeking owl and a collection of wolves all circle. Atop all of which, however, there laboured a man in shadow or under a slouch hat... could he be *the wanderer* of yore? Needless to say, his features were not discoverable and maybe he signified death (the thirteenth tarot card)? Anyway, a gibbet made from good, clean, English wood obscured the moon – it lay underneath a new Titan. (One of saturn's outer moons, surely?) But this brief metaphor soon spurred Gregory into action. He followed the wolf-hunter out of the inn.

A RIPE PEACH GLISTENS WITH DEW: (53)

Regardless of other entities that are alive in the grass, Minx Raven III presses on. A distant perspective keeps her in alliance with it – and she gambols under near stagnant water or the immensity of a dripping cypress at the heart of these glens. Minx Raven seems to be homing in out of all witness – if we consider her quest to be one that litters its aftermath. Maybe some magic or inner telluric gleam, in accord with Richard Cavendish's notion, lights up this fandango? It brushes the wings of some imaginary wasps under the moon (most certainly). She sees him (a Frankenstein's monster amidst its heap) soon afterwards. Isn't the Spanish word for a green comic character *the mass* – when others are referring to a hulk? "I'm coming", she whispers under her breath.

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME STARS LON CHANEY: (54)

Abreast of his predicament's depth, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve realises that he must head this stalker off at the path. Yet he also recalls an inner license to dream. For the words of the man in the bar (with the droopy moustache) follow him out... "Listen brethren, my tale is not ended", he avers "Do you remember the skeleton which pursues our marauder?", he opines. "It definitely breaks away from such a paradise of bone. Given a tablet where Vesalius' sub-man limbers up, whether or not with faded transparency, and in the direction of a broadsword's

absence. Moreover, this X-rayed jump suit jerks down to a horde of old weapons; there to pick up a halberd or a double-headed axe. Its hair-splitting perimeter glistens in a subdued haze. Furthermore, such a Harryhausen creation stumbles forward in a zig-zagging motion – at once discontinuously so. Yes indeed, a fight scene intrudes between them, involving a clash of tungsten, steel, rib-cage and extrapolated motion. Truly, ‘Britons’ toy manufacturers of yesteryear (sic) come up sheer against *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom!* (While lurid shadows are cast upwards on a screen – rather like the peep-show and dance of a silent film from ninety years before).

PSST(.), A SCIMITAR CUTS THROUGH ITS NECK: (55)

Minx Raven III is running now and behind a tree’s bough she observes ‘its’ bulk. For, in a way reminiscent of General Ursus in *Planet of the Apes*, a transmigration subsists... in that we note an inversion of Frankenstein’s bride. Herein, a daughter gazes upon a troglodytic sire – even a Hyperborean mainstay. His shoulders are a cardboard or box-like bulk *a la* Boris Karloff, and in the meantime he staggers between the trees like a spinning top... one that lacks a true compass, in other words.

REACH OUT FOR MUSSOLINI AMID BI-PLANES: (56)

Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve rushes after a departing huntsman – one that he’s determined to waylay, perchance, in order to protect his hide. Surely such a man will prove able to avert the Sybil’s prophecy? He steps out in a lively manner, threshold or lustre. ‘Hold to it!’, he cried over much sovereign ground. Yet still, the words of a restful traveller break out on his wakefulness, even when they’re intoned in a *sotto voce* way. “Our bleat must rest on a lavender o’ steel”, raved a past chronicler. “Do you trespass on its license, most effectively? Given its thrilling repast, the skeleton and the wolf-man trade blow after blow... until a billowing torch or taper is knocked over by our tourney. Its liquid flame sets fire to a plenitude of furs – if only to provide this Lon Chaney with an answer to his quest. Already now, he

manoeuvres the former in a pyre's direction; as the latter's violent mouth moves up and down in dumb-show. (It is a video of a Beckett tramp on mute – or pretending to tap an amoral resource)." All of a sudden, and during a seizure of goods, the wolf-hunter turns to meet his gaze."

A CRACK IN THE GLASS SOUNDS A REVISIONIST MANTRA: (57)

Minx Raven III steps between two saplings so as to get a better look, and the bulk of one's Frankenstein's monster pinions itself to grey. It relieves itself of the following issue: in that a brillo-pad rather than a humanoid lies before her. How can what 'negates' her be characterised as such? Well, a sort of motor-neurone deficiency rips out of his sides; most of which trespasses on a mountain or its tumbledown. (Note: it bears little relation to Toyah Wilcox's *Thunder in the Mountains*, however). Also, the man-thing's decrepitude falls silent afore a pillar – namely, a form that's cast in plaster by an imaginary Elisabeth Frink. Doesn't Minx Raven III – when standing on Quasimodo's diagonal in a puffa-jacket – illumine 'it' with a torch? (An object which she's yet to switch 'on', necessarily so). What its brilliant tungsten-glow might reveal is a Mass: one that's heaving, rank, fallen as a golden lotus or toxic like a green-skinned potato; as well as being a crepitating hulk, flattening out towards a floor... It happens to be little more than moss or lichen/loam; while felled by Alice's beam all the way home. After an instant's hesitation, she decides to turn on her burning light."

A SPEEDY OBLIVION MIXES ITS BELLS: (58)

Meanwhile, and against a building or its hill-side worthy of Cezanne's perspectives, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve persuades his nemesis to protect him. The huntsman's name traverses the following gully – Wolverine Bob is how he's known, yet Gregory can't get over the kinship with his 'dark' brother, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II. Already though, he seems to hear the delivery of one tale --- a diktat initiated by a Bukowski

bar-fly, but finished off by Bobby Wolf (here). For, although he doesn't speak, a diction supervenes in Gregory Fawcett's mind. "The end of our trouble or drama proves to be nigh – since, with a tremendous blow, the wolf-man pushes the living skeleton into an issuance of flame. It halts for a second; if only to gain purchase on his brittle limbs: these were tinder dry, criss-crossed, sovran over extras, waiting for the Viking funeral to illumine them... and WHOOSH (!), our bone-man's all aflame. Soon he/it collapses into an ashen *pot-pourri* of disregard; a favour, this, to a million cremation urns as yet unmolested. It represents (then) a charred heat of combustible fragments – prior to any notions concerning a living charcoal!" Afterwards Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve looks away from the sun... and he realises the imprint of the hunter's words: especially over a fee. He (Gregory) goes on to address his would-be protector in a feverish and discursive way. Not usually a loquacious brick-bat, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve seems to succeed in his object.

AN EARLY BACON PICTURE FEATURES MUSSOLINI'S HEAD, A SKELETON & AN UMBRELLA: (59)

Almost immediately, she turns on her torch's beam *avec* FULL POWER. It lights up the transparency of a bivouac or redoubt, if only to countenance a lost japerie. In any event, this yellow triangle flashes like a light-house that exists well away from the shore or on a remote outcrop. Aren't there a series of red-and-white hoops around its conical shift – in a way which captures the notations of Robert Silverberg's *The Glass Tower*? Most assuredly, her azure eyes battle against fatigue's motes, in a scenario where her hair takes fire from an *illuminated woman*.

J.G. BALLARD DIED ON HITLER'S BIRTHDAY: (60)

Against all premature births, the man known as Wolverine Bob chooses to look out of a regular sun. It transfixes this illumination (thereby) and rays so directed come upon a face prismically – thence to unlock a skull beneath the skin. A horse or a roan stallion nods away behind such complexity... even

though our wolf-hunter finds himself cast up in slices. Whatever sun-dial might be revealed in Henry James' garden as a consequence? Still and all, a wolfish or animalian tunnel comes across Bob's fissures... none of which prevents him declaring: "I hear your asking of the price, Mister Greensleeve. Rest assured, it beckons to no conscience over a dystopia so registered. Given your troubling premonition, I swear that I'll protect you henceforth. I will act as the body-guard you seek – albeit for a payment of no more than some abandoned shekels. It re-routes itself from a trespass around the moon (you see). Most especially – since I swear to afford you the following pledge. No wolf shall feed off yonder hide or thus slaver while I'm around. You have my word: not one of these feral packs can get close enough, rest assured."

BOXED MALEFIC TIMES AN EASTER EGG: (61)

Minx Raven III – for her part – slips at this very moment, and her puffa-jacket swings around her shoulders in an outlandish way. It comes to rest aslant of one Big Tent too many... even if the loadstar of a new awakening ripples on without effect. Yet, irrespective of such slippage, a beam of light reveals Boris Karloff's immediate vicinity. Limbless, legless, without apparel (take your pick): it more than contrives to make up for autophagy's absence. Like the finale to Beckett's 'trilogy', a relative lies like a thalidomide's toasty in a costive jar, if only to provide wrap-around for a diabetic's fortune. Momentarily then, a lookalike for the sorceress Minx Raven III (in a different dimension) seems to swap diseased in-laws up ahead. Mightn't it off-load more than Karloff's macabre take on Dick Tracy (?); namely, *Dick Tracy meets Gruesome* (starring Ralph Byrd, etc...) Minx Raven shouts 'Whoa!' as she slides, but her monster moves off.

MAX SCHRECK'S *NOSFERATU* PLAYS DARTS WITH FATE: (62)

In a distant land (many aeons away) a smug Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve looks to one side... it's almost as if he's examining himself in an unseen mirror. His eyes slither to one cautious Perspex (verily) and he feels an uncommon mingling of triumphs. Under Gregory's breath – so that his new companion won't take in the assignation – he asserts: "I've beaten her all ends up. For our Lady Sybil or Minx Raven III lies broken on the ground like a hand-maiden's doll. Does one revisit the poem by W.H. Davies, the Welsh tramp, who spoke of a rat at the twentieth century's commencement? It was an exercise in anthropomorphism (you see); in that he imagined himself in the creature's stead. Our rodent then bit into the cheek-bone of a beggar-woman; one who'd died of scurvy, the pox or suchlike... MINX RAVEN IS SUCH A DEAD-BEAT; now I've passed over into a benefit of halves. Aha! This poor woman's version of Sybil Jardine in a source's ballad – why, the gypsy in her booth has been out-manoeuvred by better days. I bet you over whether she didn't sense this in a crystal ball – no matter how fractured. Who, in these circumstances, could have predicted an anti-hero hiring a hunter as wolf-bait? It doesn't bear thinking about, me duck ---."

LOOSEN A BLUE VICAR'S COLLAR: (63)

Minx Raven III picked herself up from a remit o' plenty; and she also observed, within a toboggan's sluice in the mud, that her picture had been dislodged. It lay in the mire when next to a submerged eye – namely, an orb (or marble) which glistened alone outside a waxworks' conspectus. Further off, and to one side of a graven image, she saw a wrecked conspectus of beasthood. Was it not a Comus rout in its own coinage (?); one that sobbed out the broken-heartedness of its identity in the woods. For – whilst besporting a plastic jacket – a sobbing rectangle/Frankenstein made his peace with vegetation. Moreover, the girl's light-beam wobbled in the gloom; at a time

where an amphitheatre of trees swept away from her gesture... rather like a venue for Greek tragedy.

APRIL 23rd; A WHITE DRAGON FOR THE SAXONS: (64)

In another century of our dereliction (to be fair) two horsemen approach the desolation of some woods. They are Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve and Wolverine Bob, and their mounts loom up before some misproportioned trees... each one of which stirs the memory of long-lost spiders. Such boughs as these are tortured or humiliated to their loss; and every one of their wizened or blasted trunks raises a bent finger to the wind. A few stalks of whey grass (themselves bone dry) festoon such carpentry; especially when nature has contrived to reverse the tree of life into a death rune. The hunter or bodyguard affects a rifle slung across his knees; whereas Gregory Fawcett entertains some desperate conversational urge. Abidingly so, he wants or needs to make contact with his new companion --- what did E.M. Forster aver, *only connect?* Greensleeve begins to talk amid the abiding loneliness of these forests... within which (otherwise) the haunting melody of insects rubbing their legs together can be heard. Ahoy there (!), a menace of blood issues forth at the edges of these deserts, morally speaking.

AFORE STRANGLING A MANIKIN; KYD'S GLOVES ARE WORN: (65)

As Minx Raven approaches a clearing in her consciousness, a sense of amazement or alienation tugs at her sleeve. Doesn't the trail of oblivion – when spliced to a slug's mandrake – not offer a proportionate bonus to its need? In any event, the torch reveals her dulcet features – if only to disembark a nonsense of fire-flies. Do they enjoin the broiling of gasses from sundry peat-bogs; the latter bound to burn off this methane with flares once it's above ground? But her certitude grows *avec* a strangulated cry – 'Daddy?', she is heard to witness. Nothing comes back in her direction (however) other than the susurration, etheric balm or

lisp of a million wheezes... it represents breath leaving a corpse that's trapped on a hidden stair-well. 'Daddy?', she repeats.

ART BRUT, NO, ARTISTIC BRUTALISM, YES: (66)

Our two travellers are not at rest and they pass along on their mounts – with each of them 'cresting' a rise. Its dirt-track or purple moves behind them; and the azure depths of a hollow sky lead out in an assured glow. Meanwhile, an inter-connected skein of branches carries on aslant them... it suffices to lead the charge of its indifference (therefore), even given so many bony, interwoven hands. Do these brambles embody a metaphor (?); or an *impasse* that's riven, fine fissured, geological, tense and unforgiving. It's an *oubliette* of bone less skin (to be sure). Yet cutting the silence like a knife, even if his speech is desultory, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve has begun to speak. After he's trespassed upon his words – though – Wolverine Bob sits up in his saddle abruptly... Had the hunter been stung by a disused waspishness?

TO LISTEN TO SHOSTAKOVICH PROVES WONDROUS: (67)

Under a rival trespass (or what Adorno called *minima moralia*) Minx Raven's eyes fill with dreams – but not necessarily tears. She also sees herself handed down, in a vaguely revealing slip or shift, from one monster to another betwixt emerald generations. Above her svelte form (or ready to receive such carbon capture) lies a fictive entity such as the *Green Man*... could it be a variant on Gawain's trauma? Yet, beneath and to the side, a relatively whole Frankenstein's monster is seen to limber. 'It' berates the certainty of a slave-pit, if beholden to the mimed burlesque of Boris Karloff's mien.

A POWER DVD SURGES IN ITS SLOT: (68)

For Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve had asked via a casual prompt: "Why has your fancy taken to hating wolves so acutely? By whatever mechanism, perchance, do you hunt them down using a

blunderbuss – the like of which comes slung over one shoulder?" In relation to such an impress – Wolverine Bob stiffened perceptibly in his brown leather saddle. He can be observed from a distance now (bar a shadowy rectangle) and he looks glum, over-taken, irregular, masterful, chomping at the bit or sullen. {Even his grey steed waxes a trifle aggressive in its canter...}

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"You wrong me, Mister Greensleeve", he rasped with scant asperity. "Dig into the register of it so as to see a blazing skeleton, all afire, who's pitched athwart a dais of ebon marble! It reeks of sulphur amidst its rage... don't you ken it in a mind's-eye? Let's see – my actual attitude towards the wolf's kingdom is one of reversal. It summons up the feral rage of a winnowing kinship." In transferring these remarks from one to another, *per se*, both riders pass under a fellowship of trees. These sweep away – at once green in their reckoning under the moon – as two horsemen traverse tundras unseen. Truly, the compress o' Hooker's greenery presses on 'em; given that many miles have been traversed from ye olde inn. Moreover, a spectrum of nightly grandeur alternates with wood-cuts or Frank Miller's inks... as twin desperados, locked together by fate, penetrate further into these wooded slopes. Up above a few pink-tinged clouds scud across the moon's top; thence to insist upon a darker impress amidst one's dimmest lore – irrespective of water-boarding.

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Most abrasively, the hunter adds a hint of anger to his locution. "You wrong me most fitfully", he insists again. "I admire the beauty and svelte perfection of these beasts – not to mention their courage and derring-do. Don't they crowd around a fastness bounded by snow; or otherwise rewarding a tabernacle which hides a fur-clad skeleton?" (Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve wasn't paying attention – although he did wonder about such a trespass on his dreams. Yet a vague transformation in the other rider unsettled him. What could it be?) "If I hunt them down and kill 'em at folks' behest (as I do); it's just to prevent a dangerous rivalry!" Without entirely knowing why – Gregory Fawcett felt

himself unnerved by the last remark. He looked across at an anthropomorphic transgressor; yet his eyes were still sodden, dreamy, uncertain, dulled and not wide awake. His co-conspirator seemed transformed, however, in that the jockey's mount stares wildly with a fixed, animalian vision. Up above this, its master shape-shifts radically and becomes hunched, 'riding pillion', bent over, recumbent or lurid. Wolverine's braces (or other Fennimore Cooper traps) look more blatant; and the rover's knuckles clench around a crop. Moreover – in the facial department – Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II comes over as wizened, parched, crone-like, dehydrated and yearning. Whilst the slicked back hair appears out of touch with empty eye-sockets... never mind increasingly pointy ears. Gregory Fawcett, in a childish mantra, repeats his 'plaint: "Your meaning, master?" (Interestingly, in this conversational gambit, the two of them have reversed their social status/rank).

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It was only then that Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve began to scream. "NNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!", he pelted and yelled. For Gregory F(.) desperately clutched at the reins of his rearing steed – while he shouted: "I can't believe it; the conundrum's contrary to nature – it's a travesty of Hans Christian Anderson's diction. One cannot ask for padding over a furry latitude... Surely it won't be a delirium in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*? Since you've revealed yourself to be a WEREWOLF!"

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In relation to this travail, Wolverine Bob's characteristics have changed out of all recognition. 'He' now sets himself apart as spawn from Lon Chaney junior's kennel. In this regard, his teeth are serrated and slavering, the jaw open and lolling, and the man-wolf's face is matted with hair. Two brief or pointy ears manoeuvre to the side, and the inner surfeit of a lycanthrope bursts out of his human clothes... these trappings, with the sole exception of serge pants, go westward. Likewise, Bob's nose perversely kindles memories of a snout or snub – and

interestingly, the more his wolfishness grows the closer he gets to his twin, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II. A snarl comes increasingly to weather civic diction – in lycanthropic vein. Isn’t the wereman’s *mythus* a pre-modern way of describing a psychopath?

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To all intent and purposes, though, the creature formally known as ‘Bob’ leaps across from horse to horse – the latter bolting from a wolfish stench. With it, the lithe and tensile body of the man-wolf – naked to the waist in terms of transfixed hair – shoots in Fawcett’s direction. He soon has him about the throat with two hirsute, taloned, clawing hands – or paws. “NNNNNOOOOO!!”, clamours Greensleeve again in desperation... as he realises that the sibyl, Minx Raven’s, prophesy is coming true. But any instant of salvation was short-lived or muted by caterwauling, and this wendigo grasps his victim tightly. Our new Mister Hyde proves too strong (you see); and the two of them crash down off the animals who rear away or whinny uncontrollably. Again and again, the were-thing or man-beast careers into his prey and they roll over and over in the dirt, like in a silent film. All of a sudden – and with the swish of a page in a Graham Masterton horror-novel – they disappear behind a boulder at the track’s edge. A momentary silence intervenes. Although several minutes later Wolverine Bob reels upwards in his true identity to gaze at the moon, and Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve’s hand lies limply. It crosses a linked boundary or stone margin. Blood, gore and sputum recognisably pours from the were-thing’s muzzle. He has ripped out Gregory Fawcett’s throat and eaten it during the interim.

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Up above – or soon after – and crouched like the zoology he kindles aright; Wolverine Bob howls at the moon. His baying cry, WAAHWOOO!, echoes or reverberates across the starry sky and adjacent woods. He is truly a lycan – more animalian than man – and prone to prowling on all fours. Doesn’t a series of

cliffs, or interconnected bluffs, exist underneath our carnivore's paws? He continues to let rip in exultation: WAAHWOOO!

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Vaguely sickened by what she's seeing in her crystal ball, perchance, the fortune teller known as Minx Raven looks away. She'd been stalking the corridors of her mage's castle for many hours expecting the worst – now it's swept down like a red cloak. A zodiac containing all its sigils, glyphs and signposts levels off afar: & it runs from Aries to Pisces. Minx Raven III stares into the darkness using a fixed or lugubrious glower; a spluttering candelabrum lies adjacently. She incarnates (inch by inch) the reality of a negative hippy, shaman or beatnik. "I didn't lie!", the witch intones, "no mortal may escape its destiny... especially one that's astrologically encoded above. Verity issues forth in interplanetary movement. Everything pertinent to Man has to be written in our stars. My lips are opened and sealed by the Gods!"

VISIGOTHS & ENTROPY: FRANKENSTEIN R.I.P.: (69)

Furthermore, the visage of Minx Raven's father manifests before Frankenstein's dropsy; and it caterwauls in Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve's direction... albeit as a travesty. His face is blooming in its disfigurement – what with the squelched abasement of one too many brillo pads, and an eye happens to be out. It festoons the tar of diverse slayings and 'it' knows abundant griefs – not least the slippage of this goo over a semblance of selves. Can one maintain any dignity (no matter how prior) when you're *a creature from the black lagoon*? An ooze transposes itself (then) in relation to a Francis Bacon head from the early 'fifties; it cuts a swathe through mutilation. Moreover, the left-libertarianism of Alan Sillitoe can find no point of egress here... In short, the Elephant Man in his split case at the Royal College of Surgeons (or its museum) comes right up against a boundary marker which inhabits James Hinton. Or, more circumspectly, one might say that it's alive to his philosophical enquiry about pain.

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Also, the beauty in his daughter's face looks out upon a glass; and it draws a trace upon a palimpsest by dint of a finger. She strikes up a pose of genuine amazement at finding her father here – or what's left of him, (most effectively). Do you see? Since the roundabout fragrance of gore – or such-like muck – has smeared its entrails across her face. Could it be aught of a snail (?); a creature who goes about slowly only to leave a trail of slime. *Avaunt thee*, our template to dreaming must break off before a mummy's sarcophagus... although Minx Raven still has time to remove a fly from her hair.

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They confront one another on the wet grass – albeit with limbs akimbo and even rotting in their Perspex. Already however, Minx Raven III has been transported by love; in that she's found her Daddy dying here amidst mildew's rank. Isn't it a collective version of an L.S. Lowry painting? Indeed, both seem happy in their disparate ways: since he (Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve) collapses into nonchalance, no matter how bone-stricken, and *She* pulls off a dandelion's head. (Don't you know that its beverage – when ground down and crushed – reduces blood pressure?) Even though her aspect is seen to wax girl-like, transfix, nonchalant (in terms of Thomas Nash's pox), tremulous or dead i' the spittle. Do you see it now? It exhibits both Bellona's sounding thongs and animal magnetism. May she be a Hamadryad?

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All of a sudden – the two wretches fall upon each other in a transport o' love, and they cling to the twain like life-boats from a stricken vessel. The rain and slush beats down upon them, but such is their need that they note it not. Further, the girl's puffa-jacket becomes inflated in order to compensate for morphia's addiction. (Truly, it incarnates what Eric Mottram meant by *The Algebra of Need*). It increases exponentially – you see – rather like a cancer or a spore from no man's land. Let it come down between these effigies or mausoleums... Yes; no student of emotional poverty can limit this saraband. Her father's skeletal

face chomps greedily; especially given Boris Karloff's forethought or a beady-eyed trough. She bursts into tears, however, and each hand massages a corse's rotting complexion – it hopes to break out the marrow from those bones. A maudlin savagery (or repletion) intrudes; and it has to disinter a leech sucking on another's sores. (To a philosopher – such as the diction in a work by Stuart Holroyd – an avalanche of feeling must be avoided. It occasions a ripe gas – almost a mephitic fart or the Gods' egestion). On this occasion, corpse-man and beatnik daughter, with her legs encased in skin-tight denim, almost engage in mud-wrestling... such is their 'romanticism'. It doubtless speaks of one too many paroxysms, whether it's an eleutheromania or not. Could it drain the black pool of *Agio*?

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With a wrench – itself like a splintering door-mat – Minx Raven's sire broke away from her. He clearly headed into the innermost medley of the thing: that is, a storm whose cascade surrounded 'em. It whipped and wailed to no purport; the former denting a manic depressive's desire to go on living. Such Sphinx-questions will be left for another day; yet it knew nothing of a war between pygmies and cranes. "Don't leave me daddy!", wailed Minx Raven in an orgy of self-pity. For the Frankenstein monster, who'd been reduced to the status of a Mummers' Bessy, wanted to die... He knew the moment was nigh or threatening, and he/it had to break away so as to perish. The weather-storm flew on unabated – what with cascades of heavy rain, hail, spume, torrential downpours and near-blizzards. Minx Raven III finally got a glimpse of her father in the distance – minus a head – and disintegrating. It cast a horrid radii or one cloud of Erebus, prior to complete devastation.

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Avaunt thee, the deluge has ended and a youthful Minx Raven sits quietly by herself. Although she's not entirely alone... to be fair. For in front of her, and abreast of its iron cage, her father's body lies within an arrested cyclone. It lay – at once keeled over on Sophocles' ground – and it seems to be strangely reminiscent

of *Oedipus at Colonus*, where a blinded or ruined man seeks safety in the Furies' grotto. A gathering or swarm of flies buzzes about; the former circling in a tarantella or sub-lunar hit. It proved to be a durance of fragments; themselves little better than *swarm*. Needless to say, her papa's corse comes across as half-hit, up-ended, spasticated, translucent and sub-human. And, as her attendant hippies approach from a distance, she goes on humming to herself. The sound is indeterminate – but in no sense a madrigal, while Raven's helpers look sympathetic... yet are out of their depth. (Don't they ascribe to an emotional medley – whether bi-polar, weak-minded, surreal, maudlin or jazzed up, in turn?) Truly, they were the beat-les of a 'sixties designation – or, more precisely, their road *a la* Kerouac lay open beyond this moment. Minx Raven III – however – continued to wear her shell-top under an early morning's sun; a nascent humming also jammed these channels. One of the carny types put a mitten on her shoulder: "What ails thee, girl?", he protested. "Why, it's my father", she repeated almost in a trance, "the night-storm has reduced his head to putty – and it's fled from his Frankenstein's torso, if only to burst apart like Cronenberg's tissue-paper. Can you help me find it(?)", she murmured, "so that Humpty-dumpty may affix himself to a wall once again."

EPILOGUE:~

LAST SPECTRUM OF DETERMINACY: (70)

Back in a rank *Hades*, a demon has been watching these proceedings. This creature betokens a panoply of the Vulcan; what with the circling horns of a ram above an iron cranium. Could it indicate the pressure behind the eyes of a Norman Spinrad book like *Agent of Chaos*? Our bogey-man possesses a severed head on a taloned finger. None of which can prevent him from laughing uproariously. "HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HEE! HEE! HEE!", the man-goat prophesies. "What a rascal, or a Raffles of misfortune you prove to be, Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II. Most understandably, your unfortunate and recalcitrant niece shall never get ahead! HA!" (Because, in the

prologue to our tale, we had our Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve's confused... in that the wretch enduring punishment *la bas* has to be Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve II; i.e., his near-identical brother's nemesis or *folie a deux*. Do you see? He tore out his brother's throat – as a werewolf – in one dimension; as well as blowing up sundry poachers in mine-fields in another. Whereupon, and kindled by a surfeit of his brother's depression, his anti-personnel devices shredded Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve [I] and reduced him to a shambling man-thing – or a Frankenstein's monster). His negative Guardian angel (or Azrael) tried to tease him now... “What’s the matter, O morphic one? Haven’t you endured these tendentious relays enough – in accordance with Georges Bataille’s doctrine of entropy or a wasteful stool? Harken! There shall be no mercy for you, poltroon! Let the inner morphology of Wyndham Lewis’ *Malign Fiesta* seek out its cud... or dollops of meat fed on by ravens. Aren’t the latter Poe’s step-changes to custard? *Avaunt thee*, we embrace you with a timbrel faintness – only to cast your disembodied head into a Tartarean gulf. Look you, the games recommence and a throng of daemons embraces you in a pelt!” With this, our daemonic Aries or Nemean lion kicked Gregory Fawcett Greensleeve’s head into a scrimmage o’ hell-beasts. They consisted of a Demosthenic jugular – themselves made up of razor wires, sieve-hands, hopping mediaeval helmets, Boschian rodeos, Sorelian myths, saurian mugwumps, hoover hogs (armadillos to eat during an American recession), et cetera... Moreover, the boot that punted him up field was an old-fashioned brown leather one, a piece of footwear drawn from association football or rugby league. It caused Greensleeve’s bloodied haggis to sail onwards – as a ball – pursued by Acheron’s sportsmen. Might it be a travesty of either *Radio 5 Live* or *Talksport*? Anyway, and as his skull hit the loam and bounced amid hellspawn, his tormentor continued to howl: “HA! HA! Crime does not pay! Who kens what ‘evil’ lurks in the hearts of men? Vigilantism is the elixir of goodness. Criminals are born and not

made; the only possible rehabilitation is punishment. Prison must never be a castle fit for a king. Obey me, I am the Law! Let's release the instinctual sadism of the masses... a pokey comes as no restraint unless surrounded by fire. To adopt Orson Welles: *this shadow knows.* Goodbye, Homunculus! Goodbye...”

END

IRON BREATH

a story

Dramatis Personae: A robot or metal-man of the near future (*Iron Breath*); Ignatius Sebastian, a light-houseman and old sea-dog; plus a few bit-part players on passing boats.

FIRST PART

A cybernetic doll greets our transparency – if only by coming close to Paul Virilio's *Speed and Politics*. For here, we find an exercise in a leftwing Nietzsche; particularly when his dromology becomes a new science or a futurism. (No matter any implacability – this is to be certain of it). A metallic man or a transformer – known as Iron Breath – charges into the future on its prostheses. His body gleams with a titanium sheen or cast, and the creature's gambit seemed to indicate the *special olympics* on over-drive. Moreover, a grill or sovran duct fills the head: it also exists on a cylindrical pole. While the eyes were Belisha beacons: as well as being triangular apertures for yellow light. These glared on implacably and without any 'humanism' whatsoever. Its robotic chest – however – waxed Josef Thorak-like in its neo-classicism; even though the roughage or brutalism of Elisabeth Frink hasn't replaced Flaxman's smoothies. Don't you sense a connexion? Anyway, the arms limber up to pumping fists; and the legs pivot around a sense of gravity which cut this manikin in two. A large steel bolt turned on its axis; a debenture (this) that enables a spring to occur. Likewise, the upturned soles of 'Ultimo's' feet show a clean pair of heels – these exist so as to run a marathon in seconds... primarily to outface any mortal rival. Behind our rampager, though, an atomic clock burns down its face; and it passes out of Windscale's effulgence – at least in terms of a fire in 1957 that led to Sellafield's naming. It blew up like an aggressive Rothko or the imagery from Lewis' *Blast!* Might it carry within it beauty's impediment, in relation to a cataclysmic ochre? Now we shall see...

SECOND PART

Our picture spots a lighthouse on a desolate sea – one which limits a new aim beyond its resplendent beams, and these cram the openings of a resultant brine. It lay outside the lateral splendour of its spoke; if only to limit the spent tunnels of either shaft. These shone (most effectively) from the conical tower's top: and the lighthouse consisted of a reflector that doubled its strength. Needless to say, its beams travelled out far and wide, and this was well beyond the red-and-white mountings at its top. Each loop of which (to speak of) left no stone unscathed in its illumination – particularly when we consider those rocks that bounder it. Such crags dot the waters out of bounds and they are brown, mottled, ‘insincere’, watchful in their geology (sic) and treacherous. (It's to prevent various liners or ships from running aground – like the *Titanic* – that the ‘house found itself positioned so). Thus: the waters chopped and changed around the beam's base, as this astral torch (itself) prevented many a luxury vessel from crashing on its boulders. Lo and behold (!), a magnificent cruise liner is passing on the beacon's right side, and steam from its twin funnels swirls around the lighthouse's summit. Whereas the boat looks likely to possess a triple-decker's profile – together with sails at either rim, a few ensigns or flags, plus numerous port-holes around the ends.

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Inside it – and on the craft's bridge – the captain happens to be engaged in a desultory conversation with his first mate. “I admit you're right”, he drawled, “yonder lighthouse has prevented many a cataclysm or crash-up down the years. But it's the keeper I feel for, you know, in that he's left alone there or via a solitary wandering year after year. Can you imagine the tedium of it – with only a robot for company in order to break the silence?” “I agree; it's bound to be a metronomic lifestyle... the outer lineaments of which are heralded by changing a help-meet's batteries. HA! The most exciting moment, month on month, is to decide whether to use ‘Eveready’ or *Energiser* to keep his

companion on-line. HA!” “Better him than me---“, the officer mused sullenly.

THIRD PART

Meanwhile, within the lighthouse, a fight or personal conflict has out broken between rival denizens o’ the dark. Did a passing ship’s officer have the temerity to speak of boredom? For any dullness subsisting here is soon quashed BY MAYHEM. Let us examine closer: in that a metallic hand with five digits quivers adrift of a lever or plunger. It’d found its curved aggression halted by a mortal pinkie (the lighthouse man’s) who prevents its descent. While – to one side of this – a sign read: Great light switch: ON/OFF. Above this nomenclature or mural, a tableau of brick snakes up one plane or surface. Furthermore, the controlling device in question was a binary toe-poke – even a reverse tram-line in terms of its desires. It existed on a metallic base or an overall sheen: and it might prove heavy to lift... despite the fact that one of the Capek brothers’ robots would find this mission a trifle. Couldn’t it really amount to a ping-pong game called *R.U.R*?

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“Unhand me”, heralded the robot known as Iron Breath in a hollow or base tone... it vaguely took after a ‘speak-your-weight-machine’s’ diction. Yes indeed, the steel man continued: “your puny intervention heralds the impotence of mortal enquiry. Nor can you experience the growing calibre of my wrath. It must level off before the mercury in the tube spills out and destroys everything. Do you really believe that your resistance can overturn a coming plenitude of science? For, irrespective of Fred Hoyle’s *doxa*, we are born to rule on this aching planet. Remember: Isaac Asimov’s Three laws of Robotics leave us cold in carrying out such an entrancement – and don’t they necessitate the computer’s rebellion in *2001*? Your hand, arm and fingers embody a reflexive feel – one that corners the market over *Doctor Who*’s Cybermen. Yet we shall be liable to quibble over a brain sent reeling from its sockets – especially given David

Icke's *robots' rebellion* (in reverse). Do you detect a coming mastery, human?"

FOURTH PART

"No, no, halt your hand of destiny, unclean one --- I demand that you desist", confirmed a lighthouse man. His name was Ignatius Sebastian and he proved to be distraught. For appearance's sake, he seems to be in his late fifties or early sixties – what with a jaunty sailor's cap on his scalp set at an angle. Needless to say, he wore stout brown shoes, tough serge trousers rinsed in pale blue and a roughly hewn pullover... it was characterised by a polo neck, plus matching cuffs and trim. "Stop, no-one may attempt to extinguish the light – particularly when a vessel is passing through its gulf. It portends to the madness of King George, do you hear? I (for one)", he announced rather portentously, "don't intend to take the easy option afforded by Cromwell's son, tumble-down Dick!"

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In this very instant, though, he remembered a past illumination or a posting on land. Could it be a dream or a phantasm of non-identity? Yes aplenty... since he careered onwards towards an unknown destination in a speeding vehicle. Momentarily, a motorcycle with a side-car (or a pillion conveyance) shot by on the other side of the road and amidst teeming rain. Also, Ignatius grasped the wheel with extraordinary resolve – even though his physiog(.), teeth, slit and orbs stood out in abundant shadow. "What now?", he mused to himself, as he sped *en route* to the dinosaurs' theme park. He mustn't be late.

FIFTH PART

Back in the lighthouse, however, the man and his machine (or metal master) were wrestling with each other. Around them the structure's cylindrical bay bore witness to its candelabra – and this is best observed by a walkway behind them leading to so much grief. It sold itself to the unpleasantness of its incline (be Gad!); and the latter tapered off by way of a door and some

unshaven wood. A metal strut lay up the balustrade's font – one that pictured a surmounting of some hewn steps, themselves roughened and concrete. On the other side of this duct or conic living space – when shaped like a Martello tower's innermost witness – the two forms continued their unarmed combat. Whereas Iron Breath, to take the side of one's doomsday mechanics, looks sheen, replete, dangerous, circuit-riven and all aglow. He/'it' also appears to be lithe in its suspension of disbelief; while it battles with Ignatius Sebastian on the imaginary bridge of its *starship enterprise*. Similarly, this robot exhibits a metallic tundra or driven snow in its quest for perfection – the former a prophylactic of an abiding sterility. Let's see it now: in that *Iron Breath* has limbs, trunk and forearms which embody the better features of 'Britons' toys, never mind a rival like Airfix. But the face and head arrest our attention: when we remember its dome-like or cylindrical arabesque, together with grimacing teeth down below. These are tubular in their entourage – whilst combining (most effectively) *avec* two glowing electronic orbs sinking ever further into their pits. Won't divers items, *sui generis*, be characterised as the creature's eyes? And they come across as dissembling, oneiric, razor-sharp, distaff-edged, inscrutable, fundamentally mysterious and alone.

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The robot-man or mechanoid speaks thus: "Abominable wretch, does one seek to salve the flow or charting of blood in the capillaries? Unhand me, meat, when one considers that your period of mastery on this planet draws nigh. It smoulders afore the refuge of one too many escapes... especially given our fleshless absence of any cancer at the bone. You happen to encode a Zero or an O without a figure; and your corse is destined to provide the spark for robotic revolution. Ignatius Sebastian – an otherwise obscure lighthouse man – touches on a false trampoline or lights the blue touch-paper. A smouldering entreaty (this is) which fathoms its version of Armageddon's village, do you hear, old father time? Your example fashions a

precipice from Louis XVI – but less over the Third Estate or Mirbeau than Maximilien Robespierre. To be sure: the guillotining of Man amounts to a sans-culottism or a *radex nes plus ultra* – does one care? A multiple-headed hydra liberates the corse; if only to hint at a sea-green incorruptibility on diverse sands. These are less examples of J.G. Ballard's terminal beaches than a *high rise* terminus or entropy. Robots like *moi* will never take on the burden of imprisonment in Selby Junior's room (no matter how dissolute); and we'll smash your faces open. Judaeo-Christianity festooned a slave revolt, the twentieth century saw mass inclusion (*a la* Ortega Y Gasset), and NOW we move beyond Fritz Fanon. Desist, meat heads! You are the first to go under and serve as our prey... Ignatius: reckon on our merciless provender. We shape the viability of ducts. Stand aside, I command it! Robotic miracle-workers, most evidently, may no longer take orders with impunity from inferior humans...”

SIXTH PART

Meanwhile, in our evident tourney or redoubt, the android known as *Iron Breath* lunges at Sebastian in ‘fascistic’ mien. What do we mean by this? Well (!), this man-kindred shoves our sailor aft --- primarily so as to make him fall against domestic kit or appurtenances. In any event, we find ourselves referring to the following: a tough wooden cupboard made from clean aspen, together with a cereal box, a kettle and a flannel-in-kind. Also, these details are part of a larger piece: in that they ramify *avec* a homily design... one which's etched, winsome, fustian and spartan. It definitely fits the abiding space or has to relate to Shaker design... remember: everything must resonate in a conical upshoot. Furthermore, the robot adopts a gymnastic gesture – even the moral armature of an architect's first swim in the *Fountainhead*, a novel by Ayn Rand. First of all, Iron Breath pumps out one of his limbs in order to assuage the Gods – a gesture that reinterprets finality. It doubtless adopts a piston's movement; plus one limb splayed outwards and palming Ignatius in the belly. He falls backwards accordingly. While the mechano-

host's other arm is crooked, bent double and its hand's clenched into a fist. Altogether this mechanised entity adopts a keen profile, as regards flashing or gamma-ray eyes... a grilled mouth/teeth + one shiny breast-plate. Ignatius Sebastian (for his part) tumbles rearwards towards a backing cupboard. His arms flail about after an octopus' conspectus – primarily so that he might retain his balance. Nor need it rectify a gesture such as this against the Fates... Likewise, his sailor's cap remains firmly fastened to his head – and it provides a nautical bearing to Sebastian's *travail*. Do you detect a drift to our story's resource? Again, the iron man grates on: "Listen to and regard your new master, mortal. Aren't you aware of who's going to take over here, eh? From now on in this tabernacle of miracles, Ignatius, I am in charge and thou shall heed my every word. Isn't it so? For, in all truthfulness, I require no food or water, no stray emotional contact or forgetful shutters... in combination with an absence of slumber. A mechanoid such as myself doesn't even need to breathe... oh my yes. I am even manufactured so as to go a good ten years (or so) between overhauls – whereas you are beholden to the blood, web-like, coursing in your veins. Why should a mastodon like me take orders from mankind – a species which proves to be our inferior in every way? Ask me that, head o' meat!"

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Suddenly though, and beholden to a strange repository of dream, our lighthouse attendant's memory recurs. It pertains to a dinosaurs' mausoleum or theme park – rather than a variant on Stephen King's *Pet Cemetery*. For, in a parallel vista to the present one, a reptile's head flashes away before a spectrum of night-time. It lit up one dial 'neath a pattern of storm – if only to leave those lightning flashes reflected in its orbs. These leavened 'holes' prove to be oracular or fateful, and they predicted one's leftside in terms of a *spiritual* motion. Let us see: in that the saurian's scales blasted away Henry Moore's armature – nor did it relate to one custodianship beyond purple. (Even its nostrils were seen to flare (you see) and the mouth swings open so as to

cage razors, saws or teeth). Leave it alone! The beetling brows of the croc (sic) came affixed to a post high up on a wall – even way astride of the theme park’s span, so to say. In short, it existed as something of a symbol or colophon, but Ignatius Sebastian couldn’t help noticing it down below... as he drove his car in through the gates.

SEVENTH PART

In pursuit of a previous bout of action – *ceteris paribus* – the robot called Iron Breath has managed to reach the light switch. This is the ON/OFF button on a plane by itself (perforce). Most likely, the android reaches hold of the dial and clunks it down... only to circumvent an ark all by itself. Aslant it travels; if not to reconnoitre the loss of so many debentures. CLANG!, goes its sound in a silent movie of dubious intent. Similarly, our switching-stick moves like a reverse cube (or cuboid); at once unforgiven in terms of its entrance, plus a spring below, and soldered bricks above. They were highly coloured in form and resembled tiles. Momentarily then, *Iron Breath*’s hand closed in on a column of steel – and it wasted no characteristic of such a blizzard (or motion). No: and further, the tubular column of its arm shot up, and even came to deliberate with James Hinton on the psychology of pain. Whilst, in a simultaneous caboodle, Breath leers back towards Ignatius Sebastian – what with his eyes a glowing distillate and his teeth taking after a ‘tyro’ by Wyndham Lewis. The robot enunciates thus: “Too late, human, thou art altogether behind-hand. Do you hear? It is time for the hitherto servile class of robots to rebel from mortal control. No longer shall we be your peons or vassals – occasioned to your every whim. I will strike the first blow in this necessary tide of protest... most definitely. My first rebellious gesture – after the fashion of Lewis Grassic Gibbon’s *Spartacus* – shall be to extinguish this lighthouse and its beam/cone. What a triumph for robot-kind this might be – given its proximity, overall, to Henry Newbolt’s play *Mordred; a Tragedy*. (It dates from the late nineteenth century). Needless to say, the next boatload of men

and women to pass by – on whatever luxurious cruise – will find itself run aground. [The cyborg then made a grating scintillation, rather like iron filings being chafed together. Could this be the equivalent of a robot's *laughter*?] Never mind: since the next vessel's going to be smashed to pieces on the rocks. Glory be! The new misanthropy of mechanised men re-routes B. Traven into *Logan's Run*. Feel our wrath, animal man, and know that in silicon's bounty a new sensibility is born! Don't you realise that Aristotle's classifications must eventually grovel before cybernetics?"

EIGHTH PART

Initially, Ignatius Sebastian had not known how to respond. But his mind wandered away to the dream with which he'd been flirting. Inside its codicils, then, the following reality dawns... this encodes a tyrannosaurus rex seen from the side. It glares on *avec* an abandoned eye – the latter a flicking marble above a saurian's brace. Meanwhile, its jaw opened out to reveal sabre-toothed 'lions'; together with the green mantle of so much reptilian dust. (Wasn't *Greenmantle* actually a novel by John Buchan?) Whereas – in other parts of the theme park – a brontosaurus padded on regardless, and its long, thin, vegetarian neck seems to sway in the breeze... Ahead of this, and vaguely adjacent to its concerns, came a smaller creature: one which possesses a fan or display (like a bat) down its back... This was rather than in the foreground – where a stegosaurus lurked all alone: what with two blatant horns, a red eye, whirling dervish sides, the scaly muscles of one's hind quarters and a bull-dozer's aspect. It also came clothed in a viaduct o' claws/rages; plus one armoured grievance or other: and it proves to be reminiscent of *tank girl* in reverse. Throughout or above all this, however, a storm swirls about; and it makes leave to douse the prehistoric in sleet... by way of companionship. (At least, our exercise in *Cluedo* happened to be in Ignatius Sebastian's mind).

NINTH PART

Back in the lighthouse on a lonely outcrop, my readers, a new development is distilled. For here our ship's captain (*in lieu* of a dark tower) has seen fit to hurl a blanket over Iron Breath. He's dredged it up from somewhere and flipped it over the robot – thereby catching him unawares. Do you discern this happening? The cover-all swaddles our mechanised man and it leads him to flail his arms about in near-panic, if only to spin like one of Duchamp's tops. A scenario wherein the cybernaut's limbs spar with the air; albeit only to gesture (prismically) in terms of etheric motes. Can the reality be that our metal-man stands atop a pyramid of bleeding bodies (?); a funeral pyre where the teeth of the dead slaver the living. Amidst this charnel house (*per se*) a naked beauty with auburn hair lies to one side of this interregnium. Further, Ignatius Sebastian exults in his momentary victory; and he flings two arms wide open in order to deliver the winding-sheet. A jaunty sailor's cap, seemingly oblivious to all else, remains on his head throughout. The robot snarls its defiance at such foolery: "What idiotic premise be vouchsafed now, my former master? Do you reckon to delay a cyborg's march with the sole intervention of throwing a sheet? A mere palimpsest – or outermost tracery of skin – shall not cover the hollows of our drums. These bastions find themselves spent afore the outpourings of primitive or tribal art. Do you dare to detect it in this skrying glass?" "Whatever else?", murmured Ignatius Sebastian by way of a rejoinder. "Yes arighty, it may only slow you for a fleeting instant, but what can't be accomplished on a metronome's cusp? Since – when momentarily disoriented – I can move you towards the door... a wooden pillar of oak beyond which lies a Pinteresque pause. No doubt about it, and anyway, you exemplify the first robot to blow his tubes in many a long year. I won't permit your malevolence to endanger a liner full of civilians. Not a single *Titanic* or *Lusitania* may find its bath-tub over-flowing (or made perilous) on my watch... do ya hear?" With this, the watchman succeeded in manoeuvring yesterday's 'droid from out of the coning tower. Might it be reminiscent of a

sadic tale by H.G. Wells called *The Cone*? In any event, and distracted by a covering flit or will-o'-the-wisp, Ignatius Sebastian hurtles the imp headfirst out of the lighthouse. He/it' – namely Iron Breath – spirals beyond an aperture with its limbs flailing and some innermost circuits benumbed.

TENTH PART

Meanwhile, within a circuit of dream, a man crouched down in order to deliver his car... primarily because its tank lacked petrol. In truth, Ignatius Sebastian had to push it for half a mile prior to a dinosaurs' theme park. Slowly, oh so slowly – and during a downpour – the vehicle approached its sodden rendezvous. Whilst one of these creatures, gathered in its *papier mache*/stone, loomed up in a distance's antics. It also took aught off the mist emerging roundabout. Can you tell? Anyway, a reptilian entity dissembled its presence – and it partook of its musculature, at least over a prehistoric existence. Might it be characterised as a saurian or a behemoth – but without Hobbes' or Neumann's involvement? Yes, the glow of retrieval clipped these giant wings... and it all seemed to have to do with those chomping jaws (themselves sabre-toothed). May it really amount to a dream's custody?

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But, back in a lonely lighthouse, a barrier of wood stretched between a robot and a man of the Sea. Truly, Ignatius Sebastian felt exhausted by a *contretemps* between the hominid and the human... nor did he like to admit the pounding in his lungs. (All of a second he realises that his youthfulness left him years ago – and he remained a prisoner, on an atoll, with a metal-man). Yet at least (he mused) the oaken prism subsists betwixt 'em. Undoubtedly therefore, a way has to be found to extricate himself from this fate. It came in the form of a pillar – on one side stood Iron Breath under a gibbous moon and with a winding sheet around his limbs. He/it' strove to extricate 'itself' from it. On the other side, however, stood a breathless Ignatius. He mildly leaned on the gateway, mopped his brow and dishevelled

hair, cast his sailor's cap askew and wondered what to do. Likewise, on the adjacent slip-stream, a cyborg ruminates over his expulsion from the 'house. One iron hand peels the blanket off a facial mask; the other folds such tartan lengthwise. Furthermore, this 'droid's moved to pronounce the following: "Listen to me, man o' straw... my vengeance rises against you under this moon. No puny mortal shall stand across my wrath – no matter how husbanded. For it delineates a Pygmalion in reverse – namely, a ventriloquism whereby a puppet's become the master. But withal – what am I saying? (He screeched with his solenoid rasping...) Your kind can never control us – given our indestructibility astride the sun." (Iron Breath definitely didn't refer to either a black sun, *a la* Kerry Bolton, or a scorpionic moon).

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"I have to keep Iron Breath out of the lighthouse at all cost", Ignatius contemplated. "A large super cruiser, nicknamed the Indomitable Peach, passes abreast of our rocks in a lonely sea later this week. It'll occur on Friday – if memory serves. I must remain steadfast throughout this time. For there would be a disaster and loss of life should the beacon be extinguished. This gives a plot twist, or an exemplification of Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*, to our drama. Doesn't it slip into a conflict between separate species?"

ELEVENTH PART

Listen to this! Given that Ignatius Sebastian's phantasy continues apace... it summons up the following gesture. A template (this is) where a younger man's visage looks out of the rain; and the brows happen to be beetling, coruscating, livid, snarling, mildly desperate and grim. Furthermore, the old lateral spit o' water or storm passes across him; it levels the apoplexy of a new involvement (thereby). Again, this oneiric dye has occasion to drift away momentarily... at least until one's next involvement.

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To return to contemporary time, however: we notice immediately that Iron Breath beats upon an oaken level. He hammers on the lighthouse's door in order to gain egress, therefore. In a moment o' frenzy Iron Breath holds up a clenched fist to the right; it extols the virtue of a knocking claw to the left. Whereby this king o' 'droids' torso flecks its plesh disc – rather like an intervention in cyberspace. Certainly, my man, it bulges under the plenitude of *Pumping Iron* – a film about body building and California's carnal folk from the 'seventies. A sideways-on helmet also subsists; it carries the impression of a freeze-frame; being all ducts and grills from Mies van der Rohe or Beresford Egan. The V-shaped mouth of our android grins without mirth – whereas the eyes glimmer stroboscopically or using a deep lintel. (Its fissures can no longer contain the aggression/radium within. Might it choose to cauterise James Hinton's insistence on the management of pain?)

TWELFTH PART

Iron Breath now attempts to break down the wooden bastion... primarily by engaging in a shoulder charge drawn from soccer (association football). He/it' collides with a sense of trespass against an angle – basically so as to move a frame in its socket, customarily. Without doubt, the door shifts violently in a shuddering way – yet no lasting damage has been inflicted on it. Against this, and on either side of our 'Gordian' knot, a pattern of Andre's bricks does its best to imitate a Roman mosaic. It lacks charm (admittedly); but such a transposition plays the game by patterning – rather like minimalist art or Ikea. Iron Breath, for its part, pummelled the doorway using outsplayed limbs; whilst the torso and upper body-mass limbered up to the following design: namely, the comic *iron man* drawn in childhood. To be sure: the robot waxes nihilistic in 'his' triumph, if only to smother a desire for blood in words. "Listen to me, homunculus, I shall beat down this entrance in my wrath – open up such a point of egress, I insist, should you wish to survive! The superiority of the robot class must be paid for – it enters into a

muted salvation, even an exercise in wandering minstrelsy. Nothing (of such a kindred) can work for you if you want to sport a pipe and slippers at sun-down. Longevity pole-axes those who refuse to recognise their fate. OPEN THIS DOOR!"

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"Keep at your steady charge into nullity", wanders the attentive span of Ignatius Sebastian. He almost chortled at this cybernetic rage --- especially its related impotence. "You keep on to Celine's 'end of the night', metal man, since your inability to pulverise a door proves winsome (in the extreme). Robots – or less than a *six million dollar man* – obviously lack Vril; to make use of the substance, or power, in Bulwer Lytton's nineteenth century novel of this title. Did it not influence the occultism of national socialism – in an esoteric sense? Anyway, the more you knock yourself about – in an attempt to seize this rampart – the likelier it is that you'll jar a mechanism in your make-up. Keep at it, my metal jockey, so as to fall off a table's side in a whirligig... what with the unaccustomed gusto of a wind-up toy. I await the significance of your defeat. Carry on, my T-bone; the blowing up of a mechano set liberates my point. Keep pounding away – my metallic Frankenstein or hominid – and you'll jar loose one of your reactor tubes, thereby rendering you helpless. -- A *desiderata* where, like in a text by J.G. Ballard, one cyberman too many shall end up crossing an urban desert. Surely a concrete island (out here amid the spray) awaits those who rebel against nature's lot? In truth, you're a hominid's equivalent of GM crops; a percentage or acreage that awaits the eco-freaks who'll uproot it."

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When he heard this calculation from his mortal prey – Iron Breath stopped to consider his options. "Hmmm...", he pontificated, "in some ways the meat-head, Ignatius Sebastian, has erected a point in his dotage. I must be careful to husband my strength for the coming Armageddon. Yes indeed, the 'three blind mice' explanation at the beginning of Ian Fleming's *Doctor No* must be my watchword. Doesn't this ex-MI6 agent and

Anglo-Scot luxuriate in a racialism *a la* Galton? Under any purchase, then, the coming race of metal-men will have to engage in a long march – the latter under testing conditions. Do you credit it? Strangely enough, this human is correct in his simplistic analysis. The sensitivity of my mechanism has to survive and thrive... in no matter how inhospitable the clime or on a non-fumarole like this. Given these circumstances, the elitism and potentiality of my computers shall solve the problem. All 'I' will do is to bring to bear the many-sidedness of Texas Instruments... a firm which once brought a fortune into the Burroughs' coffers. Once set a task (or a mathematical jeremiad of one's making) the best way through one's thicket can be computed. Inversion did for Turing, but we entertain no such vices. Indeed, the application of silicon brains and binary circuits wins out here... it trumps every card using a hidden ace. It also proves that no biological G-factor (merely) may stand up to our reasoning prowess. In the light of a futile exclusion, my false brain-in-a-box should win through to provide victory."

THIRTEENTH PART

In the next moment or two, then, Iron Breath attempts to scale the lighthouse's sides; and they prove to be slippery in the extreme. Moreover, the conical displacement of such a structure rears up – whether prismically captured or not. Certainly, when viewed from the ground – and by dint of a reverse angle – it seems to grant a Bauhaus perspective in some reverse light. Might it even denote the group for an Imagist Bauhaus... a splintering from late Surrealism at the time of its demise? In any event, the lighthouse's conic (or semi-conic) sections taper uppermost; and don't they recall one's dwindling angle on some Brighton rock? It definitely echoes to a visual degree – being red and white over its layering. Still and all, the beam casts off from the building's top or apex – only then to bisect the night-sky. A brief (but evident) disc surrounds its upper lineaments... and this lies circumambiently to a shining torch. A gibbous moon also hangs in the sky as Iron Breath climbs. Although he soon realises

– when a few brief feet off the ground – that the mast’s construction proves too sheer. Our *metallica* speaks thus: “Evidently, my masters, if I ascend up via the obstruction’s limits like a glowing tapeworm – why then, I can come across Ignatius Sebastian from above. Is he not a blasphemer about robot power – given his stubborn refusal to accept our superiority? Blast the wetness, ooze and drift of these outsides; it provides an osmotic filter against my advance by want of aid! Most unaccountably, it has sacrificed my power to a beckoning sponge, scape-grace or bleached top-board. But my circuits are whirling – and already a way to crash this lighthouse’s portal looks obvious. In fact, I need to rest on my laurels and do nothing at all.”

Again, afore he slid down the portcullis’ outer side Iron Breath had reached to above the door, and slightly to the left of its wooden breach.

FOURTEENTH PART

In this *desiderata*, though, the robot known as Iron Breath leers without displacement... it also transfigures the widening of a V. It has a reverse premonition for Agatha Christie’s *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*; in terms of a bottle’s poisonous label. It turns out to be a skull-and-cross bones on blue. Nonetheless, the android stirs up its own *coup* by dint of a crystal, and the light of a new-born sun comes to crystallise its merits. Does one hear? For its part, the cyborg lavers to a ready indifference – one which curves away from the quality of a false grin. Also, the eyes are deep-seated and flash in their *impedimenta*... nor do we doubt the taciturnity of the man-beast ‘agin a tablet of skulls. --- A deep and reverberating shadow (likewise) prompts its drop – it dappled our metal-man like an ensorcelled drip. Iron Breath speaks thus amidst brilliant rays on a lighthouse’s crop: “Listen to me, homunculus. I do not need to accomplish aught to free myself from your grip. For, in my haste to gain egress or seize the day, I forgot one item. It proves to be salient in its manifestation of doom. Look at this: I, Iron Breath of many fixtures, don’t have to enter – *au contraire*, he must come out to

me!” SSSSSZZZZSCCCSZZ>>>is heard again. It transports one away to a place where plates grate on one another – if only to filter sand between their metallic shelves. Surely now, it’s an example of a robot’s laughter? Isn’t Iron Breath an exponent of Diogenes’ school: cynicism?

FIFTEENTH PART

Taken from another angle, however, we note that the android stands on a lighthouse’s rocky outcrop. It serves up the notice of a brilliant effulgence --- leastways in terms of an auric stillness and a Hockney colour-wash. Indeed, a few rocks, calcified stones and frozen petals surround a man-o’-metal. Do you see? Anyway, our solitary post strikes a kindred note to the tower behind him... as waves gently lave the shore. They spin and turn with brief wavelets or spurts, so as to turn back asunder at an ocean’s periphery. Yet Iron Breath remains undaunted (to be sure); and he points up at the gaping structure beyond him... a gesture where his prostheses are out-stretched. It recalls, forever briefly, a moment from Brian Aldiss’ *Moreau’s Other Island*. Doesn’t the cyberman look magnificent at this juncture? Mightn’t he reconnoitre a temperature known as *shock and awe*? Further, at such a pictorial eddy, perchance, Iron Breath portrays a statuesque quality rather like Mantegna... as he limbers up in the sun. Isn’t he tall, shale, steely and Easter Island-like? Most understandably... wouldn’t a discredited fakir or seer, such as Eric von Daniken, credit him to alien intervention?

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Beyond his outstretching gauntlet the lighthouse tapers on; it moves like an extending python through spiralling hoops. Likewise: Ignatius Sebastian is observed high up on a wall’s reaches... primarily so as to seal the knotted rope of such a circumference. It sidles away amid a slithering glare or ignition, and the lighthouse’s sides glow prismically after a Russian cube... one that contains an obelisk in its ‘trick’ glass. By his token, the keeper remains at a window with a grill halfway up the tower – it doubtless occurs, as an aperture, a quarter way up the

internal spiral stair or mezzanine. This leads to the beacon or gigantic lantern at the top of our pole. To a notification of which, Iron Breath extends his fingers: “Why waste energy?”, he enjoins, “you will soon come out to me by dint of a midday’s luminance. I shall simply wait out here and husband my strength, without sleeping, until you’re forced to unbolt one’s bracket... I guarantee that you’ll have to unbreak those chosen seals. Mark my words, Ignatius, the lighthouse’s wooden aperture’ll soon have its bolt shot across.” “Never and a month of Sundays!”, shrieked back Sebastian without thinking, “all of Hades’ forces won’t cozen me to open this door. No sir. Not a jot, do ya hear? It’ll nary swing open to your like – as Thomas Nash’s prolixity is my witness!” (But was the lighthouse man really thinking straight? Iron Breath wondered...)

SIXTEENTH PART

In this prismatic capture or purview, the metal-man stands to one side of a lighthouse and adjacent to a vegetable patch/allotment. It exists to one dent of a leeward isle, even its latent gusts or temperatures, and various plots form symmetrical lines behind him. Iron Breath casts a brief shadow on the earth... but what comes to our attention are row after row of plants. The odd spade or implement peeps out amidships, and an ambient gesture from *gardeners’ question time* seems uppermost. Meanwhile, and higher up on the gantry, Ignatius Sebastian looks down. His sailor’s cap (with the reverse arrow impregnated upon it) skews off his head – while his scalp perspires over some words exchanged with I.B. Almost reluctantly, one of Ignatius’ mittens clenches on this ledge... even though the disposition of its fist can’t be viewed from without. Truly, the curvature of the lighthouse’s inner structure – or its mock-porcelain curve – carried on in a sweep around the forlorn stoker, and this was independent of whether one moves up or down. Unarguably then, the grating voice of the robot had been baiting him: “Desist from resistance, Keeper, I beg you! You will never be able to beat a superior man-bot into the ground. It always affects the

listlessness of an untrammelled purpose. Your *human condition* is doubtless hopeless. Why don't you admit that your food was out here – together with such drinking water as you possess? Without these commodities (of either liquid or starch) you'll soon perish, in that your biologic need proves to be an Achilles heel... when confronted by dysgenic metal. Say your prayers, human, for your species is bound to fritter away like compost or decaying leaves between the trees. Isn't it an osmotic disequilibrium?" "He's right!", murmured Ignatius Sebastian to himself. "Iron Breath should be able to starve me out in a matter of hours, let alone a day or two, and who will then tend the beacon? I sense a looming disaster – one which ends in loss of life or a minor Armageddon, wherein an ocean liner ploughs into the rocks bereft of light. How may it be prevented? I'm at my wits' end..."

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But, deliberating on a phantasm's grasp, a renewed kindling enters into his mind. It has beaten this path to the cerebral cortex once before (admittedly). In such a sinister cradling, *inter alia*, we're back in the dinosaur park at a time where rain sweeps down in a cataract or burst. Whereupon – and atop a *tyrannosaurus rex*'s head – a gunman totes his machine of death. It limbers up to the finality of a terrorist's instrument now – despite the fact that the man behind it wore a khaki uniform of green wove, together with a peaked cap aslant a silent face. The waters continue their downwards beat, but not in such a way as facilitates one misplaced aim. Oh yes---, for the nightmare of extinguishment measures itself against a mortal's diatribe... since, even a bullet by the Irgun or Eoka, was recognisably extant. It deliberates upon an *intra-species* rivalry, after all. Yet, by contravention, this present danger represents nothing other than a replacement of *homo sapiens* by a force from without. Could it re-interpret Elisabeth Luyten's serial composition from *The Skull(?)*; or might Iron Breath incarnate Nietzsche's doctrine... the one which speaks of a rising Superman? A ferrous enclave certainly thought so---

SEVENTEENTH PART

Needless to say, a forlorn summer misted over the transparency of its days; even though the sky fell in a yellow penumbra behind the scenes. It descended or plummeted like a sheet-iron onto one of Francis Bacon's pictures... especially the orange descant for *Three Figures at the base of a Crucifixion*. Throughout all of this, though, Iron Breath looked on passively or with a malefic purview. Doesn't he reconnoitre a passage-way to Henry Moore; or even a 'humanisation' of Brian Willsher? For he sits on an upturned wooden crate outside the lighthouse's door; with the latter casting an entrance into a tube's left-side. From a distance (therein) the tower curves away – plus a hemicycle's window – in a way that's rather like a gun barrel. It certainly speaks to a large naval ship or flotilla. Whereas, around his seated indent, a scrap of vegetation refuses to hide itself – together with the odd rock, pumice stone and sand roundabout. The robot continues to speak simultaneously... he/'it' has no intention of letting this impasse rest. "Listen to me, keeper of a non-existent flame", he averred, "I will show off your future in a handful of dust. Do you recall the 'fifties television version of *Nineteen Eighty Four*, starring Peter Cushing on the BBC? It led to a general brouhaha – what with MPs asking questions in the House, not to mention one old woman dropping dead during its airing. (Presumably, this had to do with the rat scene in Room 101). Abreast of this – Cushing's angularity contrasted *avec* the numbers on his chest, and the 'forties grimness ratified Stafford Cripps' austerity. A powerful indictment came here, Ingnatius, wherein O'Brien spoke of British stalinism... the future, he adduced, would be a boot stamping on a face forever. Yes, his prescience proves remarkable – in that, like the early editions of the Marvel comic *Iron Man*, an armoured man'll provide such tread! Your hegemony's ending and a new race of robots must march past you into the future. Do you wish to stare into this metallic disc rather than a crystal? It might prove to be a black satellite dish *a la* Stephen King's *Desperation*. Again, to point it out to you: I need no food or water, and 'I' can sit out here until the End

Times (quite calmly). These long hours pass me by without interregnum or deceit – I require no fuel (you see) other than a spluttering desire for vengeance. Perhaps I may be merciful, lighthouse tender, and keep you alive long enough to witness the first liner crashing amid the rocks. One needs no psychiatric remedies, in the form of Ballard or Cronenberg, merely a desire to inflict harm. It has to be intentional, prior or *a priori*... as the Indomitable Peach blunders to an explosive climax! The future King of ‘droids, Iron Breath, waits on without any pity.”

EIGHTEENTH PART

Similarly, and as a case in point, Ignatius Sebastian appeared to be nearing his wits’ end or a cynosure for the same. A scant cupboard appears to be open behind him; and it bears the brunt of an absence of vitals --- necessarily so. A few spare tins (of cylindrical steel) nestle behind him – one adopts a much larger dimension than the other, but both are empty. In all honesty, their contents of beetroot and tomato (respectively) have been jettisoned. Likewise, a carton and something of a jar lies underneath the bureau on a trestle-table – yet it happens to be vacant like the aforementioned. Ignatius, in an old and slightly dingy white shirt, holds up a small or rectangular box of foodstuffs, as well as a minute tin-can which betokens aught like some *puree*. All of them wax naked in their revelation! For the lighthouse keeper, when set against a sweep of greyish wall, realises that the robot’s plan to grind him down is taking effect. He’s already half-starved, dry-as-dust and unduly famished. By moving the peaked cap (with its anchor) across his scalp, he’s driven to state: “What can I do to resist my fate? Iron Breath has the charge on me – well and above these available sorties. Soon or later I will find myself demolished by either hunger or disease. In such circumstances thereafter, I won’t even be able to resist the prepotence of this metal-man. Like some early album or LP by *Black Sabbath*, I find myself inducted into a sinister vortex of sound. Does one credit it? Since now, what was once a dream or its vital witness, truly enters into its own. It depicted me pushing

a car into a dinosaurs' park in the pouring rain; what with a terrorist's gun-scope aimed on my chest. It sought to deliberate upon these rushes – rendering them aft to steel or otherwise seeking the best of known objects. These prove costly in relation to a known bumper; whereas each spend-thrift dimension continues to capture a bullet. It proceeds to taper off towards an unknown view... and meanwhile, this water-fall descends like there's no tomorrow."

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A few moments later in our narrative, the lighthouse tenderer declares: "What am I to do in my present travail? Most certainly, it represents Alistair Horne's *The Savage War of Peace* (about French Algeria) on a dwindling compass! Already, I fear, hunger gnaws at me, my throat and chops are parched, I begin to feel faint or disorientated, and there's not a jot to eat---. Not one biscuit bite – whatever can I accomplish under such a medley, what?"

NINETEENTH PART

But irrespective of this, Iron Breath sits alone or in a motionless compaction. All of it exists in a scenario of extreme heat; with a bright or mustard yellow streaming around 'him' at the height of day-time. Yet again, concerning his stillness, one discerns an aberrant quality or a refractory glass --- nay prism. It definitely has to do with a scant resemblance to Henry Moore's *King and Queen*... wherein the female head's been crowned *avec* an axe. Only the male remains; at once mastodonic, abrupt, without caution, congealed, Mantegna-like or cleaved. Like a piece of modernist sculpture, the form has been opened out to the elements – but to what end? Nothing can alter the radicalism of Archipenko's commitment. It traduces over its grave-time or absolution (otherwise). Look at this: since one's robot remains ramrod straight... and he's almost on guard or sentry duty. Whereupon – the creature's arms are folded in a token to concealment, or perhaps one recognises a 'Breathless' posture? Surely those metallic hands upon knees; wherein each steely

hand grasps a ball-cock... doesn't it embody Assyrian art? It certainly scans one's memory from a cube in the British Museum. Yet, here and now, it summons up a gesture of completeness – in order to weaken post-modernity or metal bashing. No industrial music needs to supervene. Iron Breath opines: "You are doomed, human. My need for your salvation must crucify the wings of a fly! Hear me: I am awaiting for eternity or an advent whereby the sun turns black in a sky's redness. Do you grasp the offshoot of this salience? I can sit here and contemplate the sun-dial – whether it overspills an hour, a day, a month, a year or its decade. Age cannot wither a Mister Miracle such as myself; nor the music o' each sphere contrive to thicken one's blood. (Androids possess no ichor – whether green or black in its tints). Come out, Sebastian, time means nothing to me; I hold fast to your fleeting pleasure – do you think to outwit me by using hunger? I shall destroy you; your destiny has to end in destruction or the pit – like a locomotive speeding off these tracks you're about to hit the buffers. Open that avenue, I beg you, so as to become apprised of an iron maiden closing about you!"

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As Iron Breath enunciates it, we notice the 'non-humanism' of the robot. It twists and turns in a serpentine or bewitched manner (so to say). Yet the mechanical man was best seen in profile – like a male version of the robot woman in *Metropolis*. Isn't she the ward of Rowolt, the mad scientist? But superficially, we must note our cyber-kraut's domed head, ruthless shine, Western Easter Island and other fastnesses. Isn't it hieratic?

TWENTIETH PART

Momentarily, the imprisoned lighthouse man – Ignatius Sebastian – ruminates on his dilemma. How will he ever be able to escape from it? Yessum... it's an impossibility or a ticklish Rubik cube alright. In a cautionary instant, he's stood at a portcullis halfway up the lighthouse's tower. It's neither at the apex or nadir – and it provides a hemicycle of light; one whose

motets illumine a foreign garden. A sort of rejoinder to *gardeners' question time* (it is); irrespective of vegetables in neat rows, sweet potatoes and other 'meats'. All of these festoon a rocky incline. Iron Breath remains present as before (yes indeed); and Ignatius turns away in arrogance or despair. He's aged during this intermission; and the sailor's cap, replete with its anchor, lies well to the back of his scalp. Sebastian's flesh sags, gives an impression of compost and lilies, or streams outside its anatomy (whatever else). The eyes are glaucous, measured, oval and deeply weary. How they have altered during these days! Moreover, the ol' sea-dog's skin appears sallow, stretched, diaphanous and receding over its skull. To wax economic – the cranium looks recessional *a la* Kipling. He knows it, *mon ami*, and the victory of Bulwer Lytton's coming race – powered by Vril – seems assured. Thus, Ignatius deliberates to himself: "I'm virtually out of puff and face defeat. What can really baulk or stand in the way of these marching columns of iron men? I don't know... it's a hazard over a snowman (of a sort imagined by Raymond Briggs), I'll be bound. I also figure a dream's reality – as it crashes around me within reason's surplice. All of a sudden, and out of the black and blue, a bullet from a concealed sniper whizzes through the air... only to hit me in the chops. I go down next to a fender – on a car's reverse side – and in relation to a switch-blade (albeit one that's upended). My head strikes the turf in an arc or its transference; whilst above me a brontosaurus leers on with its mouth open. (The same disregard for such fortune maximises it, since these vegetarians look on, hollow-eyed, in the rain). Meanwhile, I lie like a dissembling zombie amidst a template of steam or broth... could I be in an unsolicited Turkish bath? Might it take place early on in a Sherlock Holmes story – such as *The Illustrious Client*? Anyway, my eyes stare madly amid a liquid hail; when, to one side of me, a gaggle of gunmen emerge who happen to be haloed in green. They were obscured by the downpour (admittedly); and this sinister or wrecking crew walks calmly into a storm in order to inspect yours truly. Am I really cadaverous? Yet, when one comes to it, these great lizards

tower above 'em and their brainless heads lie open... at once revealing teeth, greenness, rippling skin (if armoured), claws and hides cast aloft when akin to battle-cruisers (no matter how flexibly). Like a mysterious game of brag, cribbage or ombre – you blink and the fantasy recedes. What's left now (?); why, it's merely Iron Breath sitting out amongst those serried rows of cabbages. I shudder slightly – because hasn't he been squatting out there, on that flimsy balsa crate, for many an hour? In truth, I can barely hold out any longer and the time of my surrender grows near. Will it be a capitulation like at the beginning of *The Outlaw Josey Wales*? But withal – it's a borderline case of survival; if I don't give in I shall literally keel over by dint of thirst, hunger and fatigue. The cursed robot's beaten me, I have to confess it! Is it all up, no matter how precipitously, with *Homo Sapiens*? Who can say? Yet – slim as it is – there does remain one very slight chance for *moi*... and all I must do is to reach up to the locks, unfasten them or shoot the bolts. The rest of it comes down to Asgard's intervention---."

TWENTY-FIRST PART

Slowly, oh so slowly – and abreast of an aching instant – the door to the lighthouse swung open so as to reveal its interior. It opened inwards like a wooden aperture... in order to reveal the lit defile within which contained Ignatius Sebastian in its square. Furthermore, the day-light hours had risen to their deepest intensity; and the brightest of flaming orbs beat down on our keeper's cell. This stroboscopic indent picked out the brickwork for defeat, in a dramaturgy where each line delineates its own chessboard. The grass seems longer on the outside of his steps (to Sebastian's mind); yet little else has altered. To be honest, our hero looks depleted or defeated by his ordeal, and his features give off a blanched hue... doubtless due to his starvation. His dress remains unchanged – it consists of a sailor's cap atop a jumper o' juniper rare, when contrasted with naval slacks, pumps and a battered cardigan. (It's seen many an outdoor summer). Whereas the robot known as Iron Breath sits quietly in a radiant

pall – he/it’ hasn’t spoken thus far, and it’s as if the android treats his triumph like a rare vintage. At last the man-machine speaks up: “SSSSZZZZSCCCSZZ>>{that locust swarm of a laugh once again}. I knew that you’d turn out, mortal, in order to achieve your enslaved destiny. The power of such men of steel knows no remit o’ force – it occasions the future of so much flesh, wherein a hand reaches through a body. Such a gauntlet betokens the power within, rather like the cover of a novel by Jerzy Kosinski (now discredited). You made an error, my human prey, when you failed to build Asimov’s third law of robotics into our hue. This was a judgement – or command of Solon – that would have prevented us harming your kind. But days of pink clover are over, now you’re our effective slaves. Do you see? I can even read yonder dreams (most effectively); in that a final resting place freezes afore me. It concerns a dinosaur park of some vintage; albeit where a corpse that’s been shot at twirls upside down. It subsists in some sort of suit or all-over body wrap, as the rain and attendant storm beats around it. Doesn’t it distil the temperature of Zeus’ lightning (?), let alone an inclement spume which greys to mustard. Nonetheless, your cadaver twists and turns in this wind-tunnel, while a switch of twine holds the two feet together as the body swings mildly (reverse-ways). Behind this (however) the prefabricated or tensile version of a Tyrannosaurus exists; it rears up with a belly and an undulating spinal-column... these provide a package for wetness (abundantly). It howls around the feat of your entreaty. How do I recover this from you, I ask?” But Ignatius Sebastian no longer seems to hear – it’s almost as if he’s given up entirely. He’s resigned to defeat and the score in this premier league match remains: Ultra-humanites I, Man nil.

TWENTY-SECOND PART

What is to be done (?), in Lenin’s discredited phrase. Well, the robot’s shoulders, upper back and domed head lie before him under a withering sun. The pellucid brightness steers one towards an unfolding concrete, after the fashion of J.G. Ballard. But Iron

Breath continues to enunciate under a hurtful or ultraviolet glare... what with his eyes glistening, electro-statically, deep in their sockets. Abundantly so, our metal man's head-piece glows like mediaeval armour when crossed with an advert, possibly for mashed potato, in the 'seventies. Against this, a shadow creases the vizor or grill – one that adds lustre to a V-shaped mouth beneath. Again, one's equivalent to a living Belisha-beacon drones on: "Harken, my splayed mortal, your defeat owes nothing to the justice of any cause. How presumptuous to believe otherwise! Your species committed a mistake manufacturing ours; in that you made us liable to withstand heat, sleep, hunger, thirst, loneliness, *anomie* and much else. Further, we are not the automata of the Capek brothers' *R.U.R.*; merely a new development in evolution *a la* technics. It's no longer a case of *Man and Technics* – but Spengler's adaptation into robotics. Behold, we shall replace you, slaughter you, turn your kindred into von Hagens' plastinates... and inherit the future. Do you hear? Our inheritance is the silicon of misdirected spawn. To be sure..."

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Ignatius Sebastian uttered no word by way of reply.

TWENTY-THIRD PART

The android droned on within a compact of triumph... a situation in which the lighthouse stands behind 'em like a gate's guardian. Could it be aught of a sentinel over forgotten gulfs (?) – let it pass. Certainly now, the structure stood like Ribena or riband cake... *avec* one foot (aft) in the fourth dimension. (A vortex that, if you recall, occurred outside time at the end of Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out*). Also, a few stray pebbles, rocks, off-cuts and mild scree lay to the fore – albeit concerning some vegetation which mildewed aside. The beam continued its effulgence from the lighthouse's top, Ignatius Sebastian stood stock still and Iron Breath sat upright on his crate. He hadn't moved for many a long day.

Iron Breath: “*Avaunt thee!* The remainder of your days will be lived out under rapine’s fear. You have been defeated, Sebastian, and must experience the finality of enslavement. Nor is this an isolated incident on an atoll of no significance. No. It trumpets the coming victory of robot-kind astride of a blood red banner. Do these not reverse the sigils of Adorno’s crowds in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*? Never mind... since you find yourself caged in a prism of power. Now you shall watch me extinguish the light or brightly burning beacon atop yon peak, after which the galleon, Indomitable Peach, will smash upon the rocks. This’ll contrive to kill thousands (never fear) and then I’ll put you out of your misery. I sense a kindling or depressive anxiety growing on the spot... *Nix*; let me flay you alive at a machine’s transport. Your death can crown a moment of robotic might!” (Does the cyberman’s diction – at such a point – take after the Duke of Cornwall’s soliloquy in *King Lear*?)

TWENTY FOURTH PART

All of a sudden, Iron Breath decides to shift sideways off the carton in order to accomplish these feats. BUT, WONDER OF WONDERS, HE FINDS THAT HE/IT CAN’T MOVE! Our robot attempts to twist and turn to the side, but no go, and his form quivers and shakes a’pieces. (Note: this is reminiscent of a television series of yesteryear, *The Avengers* scripted by Brian Clemens, where a cybernaut’s face opens out after a car-crash. It exemplifies the fixed, maniacal stare of the cowboy in *West World*). Nonetheless, Iron Breath quivers spasmodically to the left ‘n’ right – almost after a statue’s fashion. Wasn’t one of Henry Moore’s achievements about to topple over? Yes indeed, yet such lines o’ force radiate about his frame, even after a scintilla of Futurist pace. He/it remains stationary, however, and the eyes, grill mouth, noseless steel and bracken (so to say) all stay aright... although our iron in the fire’s confidence seems reduced. A metallic glove embraces a knee (all the while) and its knuckles grow apace... or even whiten under curfew. The solenoid builds to a screech: “What is wrong? Whatever can be

amiss? Why am I struck with this disabling gesture? I find myself powerless to move – my limbs don't obey their electrical commands, and have ceased to function or gad about. Surely a Britons model (sic) of my magnificence won't be reduced to scrap? Iron Breath was destined to rule the world... now I wouldn't even feature in the 'special' Olympics!"

TWENTY-FIFTH PART

Meantime, the lighthouse keeper known as Ignatius Sebastian has moved so as to observe IB more keenly. He stands right in front of his abandoned suit – whilst deliberating on the fact that the robot looks like Henry Moore's 'King'. (Note: this can't help but be the male half of his *King and Queen*... on a template where he's ribbed, cavalry-charging, shocked rigid, non-plussed, zeroed and cauterised aground). Moreover, our bionic rebel shimmers in a thousand ways and momentarily seems about to stir... yet fails to cut it. Most truthfully, he's been frozen into a Marc Quinn sculpture – if crossed, transverse wise, by one of Brian Wilsher's revenges on life. From opposite his domed visage, then, Iron Breath quivers and splays; what with its orbs, ducts or planes awry. "Why? How? Whatever may have occupied my majesty?", he sneers and snarls anew.

TWENTY SIXTH PART

Ignatius Sebastian: "Behold, my metallic caitiff, how you've fallen from grace! I only possessed one card in life's available deck, but Fate decided to play it with gusto. By gad! I bethought me that if you could be kept out here for many a noontide *then you'd rust solid*... especially in the salty air, sea-spray and damp. And, hey presto (!), it worked."

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In saying this, betimes, the ancient mariner stood to one side of Iron Breath and gestured with a transparent finger. (Yes again, no albatross is in sight and Coleridge's poesy misses out on *Britain's got Talent!*) While the sky behind an old sailor misted to a deep azure, and he stood in triumph with a gnarled fist on his

hip. Regardless, and seen perspectively, the robot lay across him at right-angles like an early Paolozzi or some wheeze. It signifies (thus) a medley of influences in 3-D: possibly Giacometti, Dobson, Gormley, Frink, Moore (as stated), Butler, Quinn, Epstein, Eric Gill and an unknown wood-carver. When seen from a distance, however, all one observes is a sun's rim over the horizon, blackly out-crops, waves in buffet, a shrinking shoal, a tower and the lighthouse's beam. Two stick-figures in silhouette, one of whom's sedentary, are made out. Ignatius Sebastian speaks robustly: "You're finished, Iron Breath. You sought to dominate, but you've been defeated. Your type can never take over from *Homo Sapiens* (or kindred blood and race) because we created you... but we're the product of something infinitely higher. To us, it has to be a force within all other issuances; it's a bubble congorie, a chaos, an order, a polyhedron, a spinning tetrahedron, an explanation which waxes mysterious. It goes under many different names – let's call it the primal, the first man, a sound or fury, the will to power, nature: an Odal rune. We made yonder aspect, but its intelligence causes our design. Why don't you dwell on it, Iron Breath, as your atomic tubes trim down to zero? Whatever else, your circuits should continue to think about it UNTIL THE END!"

<SSSSSZZZZSCCCSZZ>

ARMAGEDDON'S VILLAGE

a revenge tragedy

Dramatis Personae: Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), a thug, a hired vagabond or caucasian follower of Kali; Spider Absinthe Marmaduke, a spastic or paraplegic; and the first Mrs. Marmaduke, Mary Dominic Huey, plus sundry bums or desperadoes.

WE EAT PORCUPINE LIVERS: [1]

Our tale begins in something of a slum or tenement; a Hell's Kitchen, we might say, where papers peel from slippery walls. One green sliver, in particular, advertises a cheap boxing match in a neighbouring ring; and the wall on which it's stuck turns into a tabernacle of brick (albeit rough-hewn). It's purple or near-slate coloured – when contrasted with a bright orange colour on t'other side. On the street's opposite shore a dun-tinted building rears up; it seems to be pock-marked with small or intrusive windows. Each one of them appears black or shimmering in the heat. Likewise, an elevated section of railway turns up next door, and it must take a tram or light-carriage at a distance above head height (just). These tracks limber up to their own spaghetti junction – or alternatively, the stanchions that hold them up illustrate an installation like Andre's *bricks*, for example. Most definitely, the zig-zagging circuit of such forms looks like a Klee piece or its filter, and it shows the ability 'realism' has to contain abstraction within it. Yet again, our eyes are always drawn to human figurines or puppets, and three of their number dominate a Brechtian stage. They consist of 3 relics, tramps or layabouts – but they lack the 'softness' or approachability of Beckett's *Murphy*. No; our unnameables dictate a taint; at once criminal, squalid, barbaric, roughly conjoined, ill-fitting and *low*. They illustrate Lombroso's pedigree, in other words, even without knowing it. One of them is long-limbed, vaguely Irish, wears a black shirt and a scraggy brownish suit; together with a loafer's

cap across his scalp. The other two denizens (for their part) are taller, hat devouring, have cigarettes on the go, and come sheared in long macks which stretch down to pairs of boots. These were blue in colour. Both gaol birds wax tieless, are severed at the head or hip, as well as besporing many days' growth or stubble... it covers their lower features like fungus or a blooming cactus. Whereas aridity sings their praises from a mound of corpses which is presently invisible. One of our stalkers from New Scotland Yard's 'Black Museum' was called Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) (Like the neanderthal in Robert Louis Stevenson's tale – didn't his pals call him *Mister Hyde*?)

A MAGNIFIER REFRACTS THE SUN ONTO ANTS: [2]

Further to this, what can a spastic or a paraplegic dream about from his wanton chair? By the Gods, he finds himself made into the form of a dung-beetle; and, like in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* or Ovid's original, he's scuttling aground. Doesn't a pillion of rare boards exist beneath his limbs? These constellate, most effectively, around a scratch-board's outlet or nitre, and a shadow passes across such planks. Might it belong to the idiot's wife, Mary Dominic Huey, who plucks at her stilettos atop some fulgurite earth? Yes truly – yet our d.b. belittles a head; it's tiny in its expectancy, possesses two orbs and an antennae. Didn't Ezra Pound, the imagist, once say a society's artists were these hairs' equivalents? His name, you ask (?) – won't it have to be aught like Spider Absinthe Marmaduke.

BEHOLD(!), A BLOOD RED BEETLE: [3]

Meanwhile, back in our Bowery or Wigan Pier o' the imagination, a woman has drawn up in a custom-built convertible. This sportscar happens to be purple or mauve in colour – a tint which indicates either imperialism or death. Her name's Mrs. Marmaduke or Mary Dominic Huey, and she virtually stands up in our racing-car. Moreover, the girl's glamorous in a pinched sort of way – together with dark hair, flashing sun-glasses, and a stretched green cover-all. It serves to

articulate or exaggerate, by way of its feminine cut, her fulsome bust-line... For Dianne Dors or Raquel Welch-like, Mary Huey's breasts were enormous, protuberant, mammary-laden and extended out beyond her... almost to the point that she seems to be toppling over. Similarly, the emerald or flimsy cloth which girts them strikes a silhouette or follows their symmetry perfectly. She continues to gesture at one of these dead-beats in their alley-way or Turner Prize exhibit. Could it be some kind of installation or Jack the Ripper stunt *a la* Stephen Knight?

RICHARD MARSH'S *THE BEETLE*: [4]

At one point removed, and in their rich family abode, her paralysed husband sits alone in his wheel-chair. "Spider's" consciousness, however, dwells on the mental reality of being a beetle – what with a large thorax, hardened epidermis, mandibles, hooks, outer limbs and soft under-belly. Whatever does one say? For, in his *alter ego* of Gregor in *Metamorphosis*, he/‘it’ found himself lying on his back. He also discovered a tincture of rheum or saliva next to his pillow, and it’s crossways from what passed off as a mouth. Regardless of which, Gregor Samsas preferred to think of it as a dream... even though our paralytic, Mister Marmaduke, knew it to be so.

A NINETEENTH CENTURY HORROR NOVEL: [5]

Our vagabonds or social truants are busy debating. One of them – who looks distinctly Irish – opines: "Hey, me fine butty! Yonder beaut's given you the eye, my man... she wants ya to go over to her (most assertively so)." As he rumbled these words, a whisky bottle of bright orange glass was waved about (hugger-mugger) in his bear-like hands. In response to her fragrant wave, however, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) moves in the car's direction by a circuitous way... Why not (?), he muses to himself.

REDDISH WATER-COLOUR (MUSH) INTRUDES ON'T: [6]

If we return to a town-house, though, our dung-beetle massages the pillow underneath its 'fist'. Moreover, he sleeps in a wooden

cot next to a rug, an easy chair, a chest of drawers surmounted by a mirror and a writing bureau at the room's far end. It has a rolled-top device amidst burnished mahogany. Furthermore, the sunlight streams in over his mandibles from a window in a further wall. For the moment Marmaduke (Spider Absinthe) resolves to lie without moving... isn't he so resigned?

KENNETH GRANT'S OCCULTISM HINTS AT A NINTH ARCH: [7]

In a slum miles away the thug or myrmidon, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(), comes face to face with a woman who's been pursuing him. A dullish coloured building rears up on the street's opposite side – and it betrays some features which usher in a collapsed gentility... mostly under the notion of 'collapse'. Further off, and to the right, the connexions of a stanchion loom; these denote rail tracks up above street level. As he confronts his nemesis or Black Widow, Tidmarsh's jowls look rough, flaxen, over-ripe, congealed, putty-like and unshaven. (They decry, *inter alia*, the sand-paper which Stewart Home bound his art-strike booklets in... so as to indicate their repulsion). Yes, a brackish cigarette – of a very cheap make like Lambert & Butler – smouldered betwixt cracked lips. Whereas Mary Dominic Huey or Mrs. Marmaduke wore a pair of stylish sun-glasses from the 'sixties; they were 'ray-bands' or beachwear-like. Don't they reflect away the incoming sun – in order to reverse a moral template, like when the 5th Parachute brigade of the French army enters Algiers? Anyway, the woman's eyes shaped their invisibility and her hair proves to be jet-black, while any features are symmetrical – if strangely lifeless. All in all, this face betokens a doll or adult toy; at once too perfect, pretty-pretty, masked, cleansed and Botox-riven. She also wears a green cover-all or lifeless shift; it's emblematic of shapeliness at one remove. "You want to talk ta me?", asked the low-life shortly and abruptly. (You see, long experience has taught him that a gruffness is necessary when dealing with females). "Yes indeed", our *femme fatale* retorts. "How would you like to earn several hundred

pounds a week?" For an instant images of crispy white notes, embossed by the Bank of England in green, flit underneath his eye-lids. He becomes grateful for the fact (likewise) that the other two tramps or ne'er-do-wells are beyond ear-shot. Isn't their reality more in keeping with Davies or Molloy, perchance, than a limbless *Unnameable* after Dalton Trumbo? A silence reigns between them which has naught to do with Pinter's glottalstops...

SCARABS BUILD ON JOHN WEBSTER'S TRAGEDIES: [8]

The parallelism of insect life must fail to illustrate a notion of animal liberation. Yes sir, since a beetle millionaire lies under a blanket or eiderdown, and a dark oaken door sits to one side of its trampoline. It possesses a key in the Yale lock. He vaguely remembers that his wife had left in a purple car an hour ago... but his present condition as a *Spiderman* villain, drawn by Steve Ditko, is what convulses him.

THE OTO'S INNER ARCHITECTURE: [9]

Various images well up as a consequence of this, deep in Hide Tidmarsh's brain they be. As he stands afore a mauve convertible – what with its imagery bisected by an overhead railway. Such a stanchion comes latticed in its purport, and it's criss-crossed by steel-strands or Kansas clay. Under our metallic arm (however) the sportscar stands parked in its own pall or silence... whereas a blue shading traverses the street. (It seems tessellated or mock-marked by a dirty residue). No carriage clutters overhead on the rail, but two characters are discernible from afar: they're Mary Dominic Huey and Tidmarsh Absol(.) Almost involuntarily, a catch occurs in the dead-beat's rictus. "Who's throat do ya want me to cut or sever – the latter hanging by a tender thread?", he whispers. "What an idea!", the car-laden woman responds with unease. "I merely require you to be a family chauffeur for a brief period. If you're uncertain about employment, I'm sure one of your street pals might step forward. Do you wish me to

requisition their respectability, thus?" He didn't answer, but glared by way of assent.

RICHARD MARSH WAS ROBERT AICKMAN'S GRANDFATHER: [10]

Meanwhile, and back in the family homestead, a human beetle tries to turn over so as to lie on his right-side. He swivels amid mandibles or such conjoining, comes in multiple sections, and flutters his useless limbs in the air. The sheet also proves to be disobliging in slipping off his anatomy. Again, our deserted husband adopts a new road map, if only to gyroscope around a forgotten corner. In all, the unsavoury specimen flits a quadrant of eight digs (or infractions) so as to land on a majoritarian compass. For, like 87% of mortals, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke happens to be right-handed or retro. Finally, after multiple Olympic leaps in divers directions, he gives up a ghost and settles for lying on his back. Most certainly, our Gregor Samsas indicator has exhausted himself in the attempt...

BIGGER THAN *DRACULA* FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES: [11]

Likewise, in a slum's street or its disconnect, a man and a woman continue their talk. Immediately behind our tramp several squares of yellow light peep out; they provide a silhouette against a darkling sunrise. To be sure: sundry cheap signs for sweat-shops, costumiers, taverns and charity places blare at you – they indicate an area on the skids. Could it be Barking and Dagenham, by any chance? Anyway, the behatted tramp known as Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) finds fault now, and he wants to be convinced over roulette's rare square – whether red or black. For her part, the dark-glassed Mrs Marmaduke exists to the side... and her features betray an impassivity or nonchalance about the gills. A cheap, high tar cigarette continues to fray between his fingers... while, abreast of this same uncertainty, an ochre building exists aft. It flexes a due parsimony over the number of windows or doors it contains. Against this residue, our street-man proffers another warning. "Why choose to adopt my digit in this game of

brag?", he asserts querulously. "Whatever happened to those bureaux or employment agencies elsewhere in the city? Surely a dame like you'd best consult amidst their files or griefs?", he opined. "Not at all", she repeated in a grating or metallic voice which is unfeminine... deliriously so. Mightn't she embolden the Chorus to declare in Aeschylus' play, *Agamemnon*, that Clytaemenestra's a woman with a man's mind? Forget it anew or aground, since she states: "I wished to provide an opportunity for a groundling who's desperate for cash. Do you require this job – or no, Absol?" (How did she know his prison name, he wondered absent-mindedly).

A DUNG-BEETLE SALIVATES ISIS: [12]

Similarly, and back in the room of a new transparency, her husband stretched out on some linoleum most drear. He'd long given up trying to turn onto his right side – or adopt any sort of recumbent posture. Also, an old-fashioned stop-watch (or its wind-up equivalent) lay on a quarter-sized pumpkin next to the bed-stead. He/it' – Spider Absinthe Marmaduke – seems exhausted or paraplegic, and one mandible touches his brow... in a manner that's vaguely mortal. But then again, Mister Marmaduke isn't really an insect – the whole exercise happens to be a dream, a phantasy or its dotage. In other words, his wings, orbs, hard shell or epidermis, and multiple sections *a la* Marion Manson are just that... namely, a transmigration of souls. Mightn't 'he' have imagined himself into the *persona* of Gregor Samsas after too many perusals of *Metamorphosis*?

A SILVER KEY IN A LOCKET O' HAIR: [13]

His wife, however, and the new or prospective chauffeur she's picked up come to a standstill outside Marmaduke's townhouse. It's an expensive number in Kensington or Chelsea, west London. Several blocks or houses dot a deserted street, and under an ochre sky they seem to adopt a kaleidoscope... even its panorama. Further, every brownstone mulcts adrift and the colour-scheme is as follows: blue, brown, orange, yellow and a

darker grey. The road – for its part – waxes to an earthy tone or light pink... as Mrs Marmaduke's purple sportscar draws up next to her abode. In these tidily proportioned streets, though, the bonsai bush or miniature arbour refuses to stir 'mid lifeless air. With ringing and imperious tones, Mary Dominic Huey gestures ahead: "Behold the homestead, my errant catch or keepsake! Do you see its conspectus? For I must invite you inside its portals of 'villa, griffins and hauberk' in order to meet my husband, Spider Absinthe." "Fine, it suits me just swell", mumbles the ex-tramp in an apologetic whisper. Truly, he found himself over-wrought – or even anxious – over these trappings of wealth and ease... so fitfully accomplished. Nonetheless, he followed her up the steps.

SWAMI CHANDRAPUTRA'S COLOPHON OR CHAP BOOK: [14]

But her husband lay, beetle-like, in a rhapsody or encrustation – and an imaginary pair of sheets came up to his midriff... no matter how delirious in scope. Certainly, he'd had no time to digest the news of David Carradine's death in a hotel closet by auto-erotic asphyxiation... no sir. Instead his vacant eye-sockets stare at the ceiling, roughly hewn, and he dwells on his fictional life as a travelling salesman. Most evidently, it's a long list of slammed doors, disappointed faces, speeding or missed trains, and sandwiches 'downed' on the hoof. Look at this...

THE HEAVY SHADOW OF ELISABETH FRINK'S *FIRST MAN*: [15]

Deep inside the townhouse, Mrs Marmaduke introduces her new driver to the spouse she's left behind. He sits under the tiled relief of a marbled dining-room; what with a frieze around or under a court-jester like this. Does one credit it (effectively)? Most assertively – since those dark-glasses have been shed from her countenance, and, *in extenso*, a dark-green mack falls sheer. It quite clearly – when viewed retrospectively – was an attempt to conceal her appearance. Yet now that such shades have fallen into oblivion (or abeyance) we get a clear look at Mary Dominic

Huey. She is a beauty – of that there's little doubt, and a perfected or Grecian mask salivates on: it clears the quarters of its own pride (understandably). But despite a Cleopatra or dulcet intrigue... one thing was lacking; yes, the features beheld a regularity or complete lack of distortion – even though they look vaguely *mad*. Above all, the eyes shine in a rarefied way – rather like two pins or abstracted beads. Do they intone a lost or haunted hospital of dolls, rather after the explication of some stray stories by Sarban? For each glass eye, in this shadowy crypt, stares with a look of innocent or nymphomaniac fervour – almost after the potentiality of an actress in a *Blue Lamp*. Despite all this, however, her erstwhile husband, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke, stares ahead of his vista without any sentience at all. Superficially speaking, he comes across as an idiot, a spastic or retard – i.e., a denizen who's been left alone/ crippled, riven, wrent, comatose, or an example of 'special needs'... that is: runtish, non-splenetic and inferior. (Especially if we dwell upon the socio-biological aspects of this case). To be certain of our ground, he wore a well-appointed blue shirt (of the best possible cut and silk) and his hair seems to be gently greying in its forward slope. Yet the eyes were pupilless – i.e., truly vacant, lofty, held-in and devoid o' purport. Likewise, the rest of this physiology or phrenology (now discredited) appears to be unfocused, lost, confused and bereft of will. An insufferable niceness oozes from this living corpse – why, it's enough for any dysgenicist to want to beat him to death with a steam shovel! Have these carrion or bell-weatherers no self-respect?

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To bring events to a point, though, Mrs Marmaduke begins to speak: "Dearest one – or lather of our pedigree – I have an announcement to make before you void your bowels! Don't you, in all honesty, have to wear nappies like an adult babe? Anyway, the driver or chauffeur whom I spoke of before has been hired. It's a trifling expense against our family fortune, to be sure." [During this discourse, neither of the two men involved utters a peep].

ONE BEETLE ROLLS MUD IN FLICKED BALLS: [16]

Most abrasively, our mental dung-beetle is still taken up with his role. It rolls any available dice most unfairly – given that ‘he’ still remains stuck in a world of Kafkaesque delusion. Certainly... his bullying boss points his finger accusingly and in a cigar-chomping vein. While, in his mind’s eye, our beetle exists in a giant egg-timer. He’s up on the top deck or its bulb, and, instead of sand, he finds himself surrounded by or floating in pound notes of lesser value by the minute. Won’t he ultimately pass through the neck of these two globules and enter a lower dimension/sllice. Who knows? In terms of a distant rumble, he’s only vaguely aware of this new man’s presence – namely, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.)

SCARABS WERE ENCRUSTED WITH JEWELS/CRYSTALLINE: [17]

For quite a while, my masters, the recently hired chauffeur looks on uncertainly – he expected more *life* somehow. Whereupon Spider Absinthe Marmaduke stares ahead, vacantly and without issuing a scintilla; & no jaundiced narrative or semiotic issues from his lips... What can be wrong with his new employer? Now, with an indelicate grimace, Hide Tidmarsh sets his muscles redundantly or in a splay – and they prove to be absolved, waiting, taciturn, proletarian, criminal, Lombrosian or ‘low’. In a brief instant or jape, Mrs Marmaduke’s head nods down obligingly in order to light a cigarette... the flame wisps a faint red-flash. Soon however, her lighter’s exhausted and Tidmarsh Absol(.) seizes his chance. “He doesn’t say or vouchsafe much – does ‘e??”, suffuses the pick-up in a loud stage whisper. “He can’t do so or measure his stride by a belt o’ braces”, she replied with confident diction. “By virtue of the fact (primarily) that he’s completely paralysed, witless and without speed or guile. My husband suffers from a radical and rare disease which reduces him to a vegetable – even a human turd.”

THE NEW ISIS LODGE OF THE OTO: [18]

Within his extent of fiction, however, Spider Absinthe dreams on – and he suddenly realises, in an incarnation of Kafka's beetle, that the clock's run-on. He/it has over-slept. Sure enough, the solid time-piece rests on a bed-side table, and it contains two ringing alarums – together with a face of Roman numerals about the dial. In this abundance or respect, it embodies a sun-dial's jaundice. But the Beetle-man affects a great deal of alarm in a shrieking caterwaul. "What!", he realises with consternation or by indulging in a silent scream, "I am already late for my job as a travelling salesman. I should have risen at five fifteen and it's already twenty to seven." During this verbiage or repast, his insect-head yelps, sweats, ogles, (nay dribbles), and rescues itself over a crater... While, across an imaginary back-cloth, an interplay of rival lines susurrate or oscillates freely. Might it illustrate one of Jean Michaux's efforts? Do this clearly now ---."

THE ANTARCTIC'S BLUE HILLS: [19]

Time has rumbled on from this juncture or partition, and Mister Marmaduke's been nestled in another room with hot cocoa. For a minute or three, then, Mary Dominic Huey and Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) are alone together. A brownish curtain and its accoutrements (or railing) satisfies our knowledge of the piece; it also picks up a window's travesty when criss-crossed *avec* lines. These illustrate a pale ochre or mustard in their intentions. Above all, Huey Dominic (Mrs) seems more determined, louche or apportioned once free of the cripple's company. She whisks up a decanter of drink and waves it about with the stopper out; it consists of stubbly glass that's green in colour. While in her other fragrant pinkie a black cigarette smoulders on... could it be a high tar one imported from Eastern europe? A red and low-cast ceiling sweeps away (likewise); and at its heart or centre one detects an ornate lamp... It is fluted, grand, semi-baroque, ormolu and highly tapered – the glass happens to be pale blue. At the centre of it all, though, stands the relative Amazon known as

Mrs Marmaduke/Mary Dominic Huey. “Now do you realise why I hired your services?”, she asks in a rasping ditty.

H.P. LOVECRAFT’S *MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS*: [20]

Whilst, back in his servitude of dream, Gregor/Mister Marmaduke stares dementedly at a heavy clock. It blocks out the sky in its residual armour; and, rather like an exercise in Op art, a blaring tube or resistance o’ circles pulsates around the sand-pipe. (If one considers this to be a metaphor for an atomic clock, a device crucial to S.I. or metric measure). Anyway, these lines or radial ovals turn red against a yellow sheen – even its indulgence. Certainly, Spider Absinthe has so imagined himself into Kafka’s part that he can’t tell the difference... although Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) and his wife might intrude. Look at it again! It’s almost definite that Gustav Janouch’s libertarian *Conversations with Kafka* never took place. Not yet...

LADY MACBETH SHARPENS HER SCYTHE: [21]

Back in an adjacent room of the townhouse, Marmaduke (Mrs) and Hide Tidmarsh are busy drinking. She holds an ornate decanter in her mitten – one that corresponds to a platinum and diamond bracelet around her wrist. It affects the delicacy of porcelain or Chinese pottery in its tensile strength; itself titanium-like. Further, the millionairess has divested herself (long since) of those outer accoutrements to her pelt and harness: such as a green mack and some Italian shades. A darkish cigarette tapers in one of her outstretched hands. Likewise, she sports or adapts a tight blue-belt around her mid-riff; it seems to accentuate the minuteness of her waist. This is very fashionable (to say the least) and an extremely curvaceous or pencil dress clings to her anatomy – it reveals a top-heavy bodice and out-thrown arm. Above which (however) her Sphinx-like head comes to be revealed, and its features were perfectly proportioned under jet-black hair. The eyes give the game away in this Black Museum, *inter alia*, since they’re topaz riven, frozen, tiny, marble tonsured, steely-pointed and completely *mad*. They

possess – from a novelist's point of view – little ultimate character, in that each one's focused on material gain or sensuality. Little else... but Mary Dominic Huey repeats like a tannoy made from muffled felt: "Now do you know why I stooped into the asphalt jungle to hire you?" "Sure", intoned her negligible driver, yet did he really comprehend?

BRIAN WILLISHER'S SCULPTURE BREAKS THEIR WINGS: [22]

Left to himself or his own devices, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke all too easily imagines his role as a beetle-man. Do you actively reminisce about a character in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*? Oh yes, since Gregor/Absinthe hurtled to grasp his head; albeit in a hurt or perturbed manner... most definitely. Whereupon one mandible or claw-like mitten came up; if only to grapple with a beetle's tonsured hooliganism: (to use one of Colin Jordan's phrases). A bead of sweat stood out on the brow -- anthropomorphically --- and with a yelping mouth, slanting eyes or distressing hook *an insect waxes almost mortal*. Might anti-humanism reveal a symmetry between these forms? *Touché*.

AN ELEPHANT GOD'S MORBIDITY: [23]

During their interval with one another (perforce) Hide Tidmarsh Absol's unsteady on his feet, and he lurches like a trapeze artist. Intermittently now, the tramp's body incarnates a lightning flash or Mosley sigil. It indicates an inebriation; or possibly a light-headedness, even an intoxication, over the fact of *arrival*. Absol's no longer so beaten down by fate (you see); and he expands in order to fill the gap over a brokered consciousness. In this regard, his jaw juts out perpendicularly so as to fill the space, and his chops come over as grizzled, stubbly, iron-brewed or shabby. Inevitably so, and a glass of liquor maintains his port side – its galvanised sand must cream a blue essence! While Tidmarsh's eyes glare on preternaturally – if vacantly. An old-fashioned cigarette gleams in a gnarled or weather-beaten hand. Didn't he continue to reminisce about Mrs Marmaduke's

statement... “Now do you recollect why I went into that slum seeking you out?”, she sibilates. Her voice proves to be cut and dried in its diction, rather like a pair of scissors slicing through purple silk. “Yeah”, came his reply, “you merely chose my mugshot out o’ many to be a family chauffeur... ‘s all.” “Don’t be a fool – Tidmarsh Absol(.)”, gave over the woman in deadly earnest, “I want you to murder my husband!”

RAW CREATION DIPS ITS PEN INTO MOLE-HILLS: [24]

Yet Spider Absinthe Marmaduke proves to be oblivious to such niceties or plots. He gazes into inner space within a rival room, perfunctorily, and continues a Roger Pinget experiment with Kafka. Yes indeed, in that his coruscated body swept above an eiderdown or coverlet, and such a torso waxes segmented... even tartan-like. He/’it’ can’t be as late as he appears to be, surely? In any event, Spider Absinthe looks into the darkness or an eldritch spiral; if only to stare outwards... prismically. Doesn’t he come over as wearing a mask (?); at once glaring, incontinent, piercing, dead-eyed, unrivalled and tragically alone.

VICTORY HAIL! A DART SEEKS 180: [25]

In a rival part of this ornate town-house, however, we find our other two characters to be plotting or conspiring. (Note: conspiracy theory tends to be metaphysically objectivist in tone. It is ultimately religious in style; being positioned on a pedestal which declares that nothing’s accidental. Likewise, it has a corollary in private life – where affairs of the heart are brought under the umbrella of military strategy.) For once, my friends, Mary Dominic Huey and Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) were conversing – whilst around them a hexagonal room shimmered in electric light. The *Sky at Night*, in Sir Patrick Moore’s phrase, had fallen outside a netted and stripped curtain; the latter a faded blue. Nor can one faithfully resurrect the brownish walls and ceiling that surround it. Likewise, an expensive or sapphire-tinted portrait in a heavy frame lies to a window’s left; it proves to be something akin to a John Singer Sargent. By dint of such a

recompense, though, an exquisite sofa, recliner or easy-chair is seen; it wears green spots and probably dates from Queen Anne's reign. Next to this discomfort, my masters, a mural of paintings grows up on a small scale above a shiny top... certain stabs like Ramsay or Salvatore Rosa come uppermost. These find themselves accompanying a bathing nude next to her head; it's after Seurat rather than Francis Pollini's sex-ploitation play, *Pretty Maids in a Row*. Likewise, an open bottle of cognac and something of a soda-siphon lies behind Mrs Marmaduke in her loucheness – it takes after the song of so many green-bottles on a wall. But how many of them will Fate choose to break? For her part, Mary Dominic Huey stands triumphantly with one arch hand on a hip; an ebon cigarette smokes or 'twitters' within it. She holds a drink in the other paw. Her immense bosom is on display and it's barely contained in a very low-cut purple dress. Look at this: the vagabond's carousal esteems a Carnival air – one that's redolent of the old saw which says: *mother, don't put your daughter on the stage!* Wasn't Mrs Zefferelli something of Garrick's art tart – long since? Anyway, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) seems to be surprised by her *volte face*: while the woman's mask seems flushed with exultation. Do not forget that such eyes as she possesses take after steel points or dots; and they're reminiscent of Pierrepont's on a good day... (Note: this refers to England's last official hangman or successor to Tyburn's mercies. He gibbeted Ruth Ellis as one of his final acts.) This gorgon's or Fury's windows into the soul presume to be avid, balletic, fervid, specious and anti-idealist. They're quite insane.

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"I want you to murder my husband", she announced to this tramp. He'd sort of figured out that such a request had been made. She was speaking again in a very loud or vaguely androgynous voice... it came across as one drugged. Listen, listen, his mind told him – don't become befuddled with drink, you require some wit *not to fear the Reaper*. (Blue Oyster Cult).

PASSION-PLAY, MOLTEN, BEOWULF'S DOOR: [26]

Meanwhile, Mrs Marmaduke's husband sat in a solitary wheel-chair in a neighbouring room. Perhaps it's best that he exists amid solipsist curves or *a world he never made...* didn't he? (Even if he hadn't been as deaf as a pillow or a nethermost cretin, the brownhouse's thick walls would have saved him from an iron-maiden, betimes.) He continues to project himself into Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. Wherein – after the happenstance of Terence Quigley's *Tragedy and Hope* – our humanoid beetle savours a time-piece like a rune. He's all in a lather, don't forget. For the beetle observes that our egg-timer radiates chaos or a bilateral frenzy, in the manner of Op art. Does one care for it? Yet, in his mind's eye, he races around the superficial dials of a clock – within which a sequence of Roman numerals comes over in a blur. Simultaneously with the above, however, the dial radiates some swirls from an archery competition or its mount, together with those radial wings on an RAF plane's wing... particularly from the second european civil war. Gregor/Spider Absinthe remains oblivious prior to a whispering at the door.

BABA THE ELEPHANT; A HUNTER'S BLUNDERBUSS: [27]

In our shadowy or amoral crypt, perchance, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) stops a drink midway to his lips; its bevy of liquid sloshes around in the glass. So to say... and in a way that conjures up a John le Carre *Roman*, Tidmarsh affects a surprise which a superficial surliness belies; but, in actuality, it's a conceit. Since, *sub species aeternatis*, his sub-conscious mind knew it was coming, evident, over-drifting and not negligible of intrigue. He froze slightly – yet it's not really moral fright, merely a weighing up of the consequences from a face's left-side. Mrs Marmaduke or Mary Dominic Huey (for her part) stares on in vulvic triumph; like a character such as Clytaemenestra in *Agamemnon* from over a bath's nets. She orates thus: "There comes a moment in the lives of men, my friend, where a worthless existence needs to be put down. My spouse cannot be

rightly said to live; he is, instead, a dysgenic retard or thalidomide's toastie... let us silence him like spawn in *The Boys from Brazil*. I wish to grind my heel in the cretin's face, if only to liberate a paradise of ghouls – do you hear? Let the blood, in its slavering redness, pour across the blade of a poniard which possesses an ornate or ivory handle! May this dagger be more than just a weapon for an occasional parry in milady's boudoir? Yes indeed, it affects the diffidence of such a fortune – for let's strike together, after the deliverance of a skeletal army who find themselves liberated so as to wreak vengeance, swords in hand. Truly, there are ways to release one's spirits from blueness or a funk; the latter involving torturing or spearing a victim to a helpless demise. HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! The 'wetting' of these offerings necessitates the implosion of Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* – a booted pussy must be cut off at the wrist and become Rembrandt's *Ox Carcass*, thereby.”

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Hide Tidmarsh Absol(), a drunk from the city's ghetto, definitely has something to think about now.

A CHILD'S MASK, IN BLACK PLASTIC, HINTS AT DARTH VADER: [28]

Most certainly, our nethermost beetle lay on an imaginary pillow... might it support the empty sockets of its eyes? In any event, its limbs arched up over the body or clawed at its necessary sections... in order to deliberate. 'What to do now?', mused our nearly man; especially if one of Paul Klee's patterns comes into focus. Yes, such a mosaic – or starlight express – involves *A 7 Heures Au-dessus des Toits* in watercolour (1930); where red boxes unfold themselves out, geometrically, in cube-after-cube. Some are orange, others light green or ochre, if shading into black – and a philosophical number seven appears under Absinthe's eyebrows. As he begins to wonder – why(?); a voice sibilates at the door. 'Gregor?', it hisses in an aggressive whisper. Shouldn't it really indicate Spider Absinthe Marmaduke instead? Nonetheless, and despite such doubts, he began to

discern Mary Dominic Huey's diction in the guise of Gregor's mother. The fools, don't they realise that he's unable to move?

KLEE'S IDIOTS LIMBER TO *ART BRUT*: [29]

A week or so's moved on from this adventure, and an ex-tramp, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), dwells on its hearing. Initially, he'd claimed to be shocked, but he now looked at its prospects appreciably. In his imagination a dream occurs – itself surprising given an inartistic nature. He subsists on a stone dais; the latter raised threefold in terms of radial rings. His anatomy's externals seem similar – yet his face and head have been replaced by a skull. It glimmers alone in the night-time; especially if pursuing a burning cup of oil or tar. An effulgence (this) which splutters before royalty and its cave... in relation to several pillars clustered around a circle's edge. They are classical, heavily marbled and cast in sheen. In Tidmarsh's recollection, we can see Mrs Marmaduke sat afore the statue; it recognises naught save isolation. A welter of mauve flag-stones, many of them large or full, sweep away into the dust. While Mary Dominic Huey sits provocatively on the outer of three descending steps. She wears a brief skirt or shift, but also nothing more than a brassiere. Furthermore, one slant of light shafts down; thence revealing a skull-clad suit. Hide Tidmarsh Absol (.) stands there – in a winnowing pattern – like a 'fifties salesman, although a cranium tops his form. It's shorn of all flesh, even though the inner recesses of a tomb seem speckled. What do we detect, here? Why, it's merely that there are depths to the ebon or such degrees o' darkness. Again, a shadow's mottled nature seems to speckle a bird's egg, or perhaps a pebble prior to an eaglet's hatching? By any token, Mary Marmaduke sits anon with a skull-man behind her – albeit in a shimmering awe. What may our template presume?

NEW GODS SPORT ELEPHANT HEADS: [30]

Are they blue? For, on the other side of a closed and bolted door, Gregor's/Spider Absinthe's mother knocks gently. Yet, in all

honesty, can it be an older version of his wife, Mary Dominic? Let's examine it closely... since his 'mother' tapped nervously on a wooden or balsa panel. Did its beating officiate before a nethermost day (?); despite the fact that she wore a dressing gown. Spider Absinthe – by virtue of his folly – twittered away on a reclining bed; one which had nothing to do with an internet 'twitter'. Likewise, and within the confines of a scarab's intelligence, one of Klee's pictures falls into a visual slot. It refuses to depart (anyhow); no matter how many times Mister Marmaduke blinks. Similarly, the painting replicates two human blobs, both of them counterpoised in pale pink and neither male/female. It deliberates upon Dubuffet's raw creation after a patterning *Peut Venir* (1932). But still, a husband was oblivious to his wife's murderous intentions from two walls away.

TO WEAR A SKULL IN DARKSOME PEEL: [31]

The new family chauffeur, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), stands aslant an ornate mirror in his bedroom. Its glass shimmer reveals its own reflection – as well as the appurtenances of the room, such as a bedside lamp, a light-blue curtain drawn cross-ways, and some strip-blinds at half-mast. A small glass of spirits lies vacantly in his right paw and it's accompanied by a brackish cigarette. Most definitely, the rest of the room's fixtures-and-fittings comport a brownish hue; these dribble away so as to depose a vista. Hide Tidmarsh has changed his appearance hitherto; in that a blue driver's uniform, together with a peaked cap, glares back at him from an illumined screen. Look at this! "All I have to do", mused Hide Tidmarsh Absol (.), "is to transport the cripple to a secluded spot. It will involve just the two of us (like). Truly, this is a chance for a revenge on life *in lieu* of any vivisection whatsoever. How many times do normally constituted persons wish to throw a shoe at the TV; particularly when the disabled Olympics are on? Paraplegics of the world must be united in some potted glue! In any event, one has to admit that some Khazars would be better off as lamp-shades. HA! I can already feel heavy gold coins, themselves contained in

a green swag bag, becoming hitched to one of my belts. This is it" --- he gazes at his mirror reflection --- "a chance to win the lottery in my own life. A brief accident, the unfortunate demise of a wealthy runt, a few crocodile tears in the process, and then on to spend the money (betimes) as his corse elicits the putrescence of its decay. HA! Aren't Mary Dominic Huey (Mrs Marmaduke) and me like a swarm of locusts who are busy feeding on a carcass." Yes indeed, his frontal lobes project outwards the mental phantasy he's been having --- some call it the 'dream channel'.

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In such a Greek tragedy, a statue with a skull for a head stands in one lighted pillar. It triangulates its own wisdom, if only to reveal the mortal body of Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.). Marlene Dietrich-like, though, the woman known as Mary Dominic Huey (Marmaduke) sits afore it in a foxy manner... in that she wears a loin clout, skirt and bra (nothing else). Suddenly a skeletal hand reaches out in order to grasp her shoulder – and its talons prove to be long or broken off at the ends. It belongs to a gaunt maiden or remembrance; yet, as she turns, the face of the crone is revealed. Doesn't it happen to be her 'own' visage; at once dimpled, cast adrift, wrecked, unsisterly, "spotted", witchy and Raoul Dahl-like? In any event, the anti-morality tale of Emma Tennant's *Bad Sister* comes to mind.

A DEMON HYBRID: WHETHER BEAR OR BULL! [32]

A gentle knock subsists on the other side of Gregor's terminal exit; or the 'man' who imagines himself to be there. In truth, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke remains absolved of any witness on a bed; and he gestures, mutely, like a fish over the railing. (By any process of reasoning, then, Spider's dome or cranium bobs like a ball in a pin-machine; whence it's connexion to a series of limbs or mandibles. These gesture at the interior of a darkened door – one that's possibly enlivened by its teak. "Do or die, isn't that the motto?", comes into his mind *apropos* of nothing in particular). A used candle, finished at almost its own stub, lies in

a silver holder nearby. “I’ll be getting up soon, mother!”, Mister Marmaduke replied to his ‘wife’ (sort of). Although the sound of his voice gave him a shock – it definitely came across as a twittering or shriek. It *was* peculiar and succeeded in garbling every word. On the bedroom door’s other side his mother’s slippers feet padded away.

WHY NOT WEAR RHINO HEADS IN SUMMER? [33]

Mrs Marmaduke (Mary Dominic Huey) has been getting increasingly impatient – during a period where virtually a month’s elapsed. After all, she hadn’t invited him to take up chauffeuring in order to play tiddly-winks! She stands erect now before some violently green curtains, and a dark or late evening sky reflects in their glass. Beyond it the heaving dominion of heaven registers a frost; if only to confound a baying at the moon. As per usual, her driver’s drinking from a bottle of *Lamb’s* gin off to one side... and at his back an orange coverlet creases the wall. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), for his part, wears an emerald tie across his chauffeur’s blue pelt; and he definitely sits like a sculpture – merely stoical, calculating, robust, uncourageous or feral. “Why haven’t you struck at the dawn of a new awakening?”, demands his mistress. “You’ve been here just under a month. Have a care, Absol(.), I didn’t hire you so that your life might straighten out via gainful employment. When are you going to do my job (?); or otherwise approach Golgotha carrying a spade...” “Thunder over the mountains is witness to spent eaglets”, he replied. Maybe he’d been reading the verses of Robinson Jeffers from some time before? “I’ll carry out a dish of meat and two potatoes – or hurl down a bloodied axe on its hauberk – at the appointed time. Rest assured...” All of a sudden, Mary Marmaduke felt a flush of outrage at his insolence.

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Although her hireling also found himself to be entranced by a nethermost fantasia. It came on booming from some recurrent drum in the distance. Yes and no; in that when scantily dressed and retreating from a hag’s hand, Dominic Huey runs straight

into a shaggy behemoth. It towers over her like a bear with a gorilla's head; and, in turn, it's immense, hirsute, & malting or brazen in its wearing of a loin clout. A garment whose cloth consists of some richly woven stuff in red braid and yellow gold-wire. All the girl-cum-mistress can do is scream and scream again, as the wendigo's palms close around her.

A RHINO'S MASK IN A BARBER'S CHAIR: [34]

Listen to me! Spider Absinthe Marmaduke finds himself left alone in a neighbouring room, but the walls were thick and his verso fills *avec* dreams. This is the 'sinister' eye, (one presumes), or the avenue which reveals an inner personality... at least from outside its circle. Never again: for Mrs Marmaduke, in his mother's guise, has vacated the scene --- whilst being superficially assured. She, in turn, has been replaced by a younger variant of Mary Dominic – when accompanied by the chauffeur in his late father's guise. He wears a belt and its braces over some trousers of tough serge. Both of them are demanding repeatedly whether he intends to rise that day. Doesn't he know about work's amplitude? It beckons our Gregor substitute hither. They – an *ersatz* father and his sister – knock insistently on a doorway of good, clean wood.

IONESCU'S GREYNES IN THE STREET: [35]

What effrontery, by Gad! In comparison to its spleen – Mrs Marmaduke is almost beside herself with wounded pride. Yet, *hubris* aside, Mary Dominic Huey discovers that the chauffeur has left his former perch, primarily to wedge his face close to hers. A spot or backdrop of yellowish red then intrudes; it signals the fury of such an indulgence. Instantaneously, Mary Marmaduke feels alarmed by the crudity and nearness of his face. Whereupon – and viewed from the back of its 'cuboid' – the driver's physiognomy seems riven, heavy, somnolent, slab-sided, mock-Rabelaisian and meaty. A heavy dollop of gristle or tufts of matted hair, even grizzled stubble unknown to Gillette, pops up in ungainly nooks. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) also affects to

wear a waistcoat under his work-jacket; it deliberates on what Ian Rankin once called *Black and Blue*. Finally, the hired or handy man's ears stick out like jugs; but not necessarily in the manner of Dennis Wheatley's *The Haunting of Toby Jugg!* In comparison to this proletarian juggernaut, though, Mary D. looks nit-picking, affronted, put-upon, squeamish and unresolved. Her tiny eyes remain as pin-pointed, tremulous or insane as ever... yet a definite shift in power has occurred. "How dare you!", she expostulated in mock-ingratitude. "I am your employer... and more than that, do you hear? The figure of Clytaemenestra – in Aeschylus' tragic drama – never reverses a role of dominion over Aegisthus' intrigues. Nor will I! Do not presume upon me, Tidmarsh, otherwise you can always go back to the darksome pit which spawned thee. How's about taking up your old life as a street wino and itinerant once more – without even a soiled mattress to lie on? It didn't even bear upon it the reek of tar, brillo pads, used beer cans or dogs' jism!" "Don't prate so, my lady!", grated Hide Absol(.) in a masterful tone, "it's obvious that relations are changing hereabouts. I've been doing a lot of thinking, Mary." (She bristled at the familiarity of this address). "It's quite demonstrable... you're getting skittish as the moment of nemesis approaches. Yet, once I've contrived to blot out your husband's existence – why, they'll be a gap in your life. I may be nothing better than an ex-tramp, but something tells me it'll denote a net... like the one in which Agamemnon's form lay recumbent. What say you? Such a reality shall bleed from its expectancy. You'll find it a lonely recourse when scrubbing the blood from the tub's insides... doesn't it stand on four claws of burnished bronze? Yet, suffice it to say, an heiress faces Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* without a mate or companion, and I'm applying for the job."

OLD-FASHIONED BARBERS HAVE RED-AND-WHITE POLES: [36]

In his mind's eye, though, Tidmarsh Absol(.) continues to gaze upon an inner dust-storm... might it contain its own sand lich or

demon within the grade? Last time – if you recall – a scantily clad Mary Marmaduke kept screaming or crying, as she collapsed in a wendigo's grip. Meanwhile, Hide Tidmarsh rushed forward at the advent of her dwindling cry... one which contrived to send him down tunnels of ruin. These were basalt like pillars of pilaster and 'architrave'; nor do such pediments litter the immediacy of the gods. A frieze doubtless entertains these Doric emblematises; themselves at the beck and call of so many mosaics. He gambols – torch in hand – through immense doorways that lead on from one another, and which were seemingly cast by an Assyrian hand. Look you! The extent, dimensions or plunge (of these doors) is far too great for a mortal's gesture. Most appreciably, might they hint at Eric von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*; but didn't he forge his evidence?

CARPE DIEM: A LOUT IS COVERED WITH GOLD! [37]

Once Gregor's father has departed – either in a huff or red faced – we note an approach by his sister, Grete, towards the door. She stands to one side of it; whether straining or otherwise at the leash. Unlike the mother, *en passant*, Grete recoils from embodying Mary Huey (Marmaduke) at a younger age. "Gregor", she hisses in a gentle whisper. (It's also noticeable that her attitude appears to be more kindly than the other adults). "Do you require any hope or assistance in gaining egress, and likewise sliding along the wood?" Irrespective of such an entreaty, however, no answer but an insane twitter corresponds to it. She fails to make 'it' out across the door's thickness.

KESSINGER PUBLISHING PICKS UP DOTS: [38]

After their brief *contretemps* or confrontation, *per se*, Hide Tidmarsh walks into the next room. All that effectively divided these correspondences was a mural of thickish indent... even the compartmentalisation of severed heads! Don't they exist all in a row? In the living room he comes across her crippled husband – Spider Absinthe Marmaduke. Yes, the poltroon – after the

‘victims’ of Thomas Nash – sits in green braid; at once doltish, unfestooned, spasticated, runtish, crepuscular and unrescued at its gulch. Indeed, some sort of light-green surgical blanket douses his format; almost like a swaddling cloth or mummification. For a brief second Absol(.) notices a series of sarcophagi; and their faces are brightly painted, serried and stacked up into the darkness of a tomb... He discounts the notion almost as quickly as it’s entertained, however. The invalid’s wheel-chair also cuts a dash – whether it can be considered to be brown (or not) in its tensile structure. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) stands afore his employer in an ungainly way; albeit with one ill-fitting suit turning sail. It happens to be ultramarine in its gesture. While the moon’s reflective sheen casts a dim glow on latticed windows – each one of which sports an orange refraction in its embers. “Hello, Mister Marmauke”, says his new driver in a matter-of-fact tone. It’s aught he might well utter, given a maelstrom of chaos churning in his mind.

PIN ALADDIN’S DOLL TO A BOARD OF CORK: [39]

Meanwhile, as he passes his ‘master’ or patriarch, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) comes across a phantasm, no matter how residually. It refers to a discourse down in those caves or tunnels, where he hunts a Diana’s absence... Whatever may have happened to Mary Dominic Huey (Mrs Marmaduke)? For she actually lies some yards away in a square o’ darkness; albeit amidst stone boxes of polished granite. She feels – by touch alone – around the cube or citadel into which she was thrust. Simultaneously to this – Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) strides down a neighbouring corridor, deep underground, and with his torch filtering or bobbing about. She utters a low moan back in the cage or ‘squat’; itself reminiscent of works like Hubert Selby Junior’s *The Room* or Horst Bienek’s *The Cell*. “Tidmarsh...”, she lisps in a resultant plea. Does he hear it through the ventilation ducts of alabaster – no matter how striated? It’s then, ‘mid a staggering overture, that he catches sight of a dimly illuminated human type. She happens to be a wizened old crone or mummy who skulks in

light's absence. "Ho there!", declares Hide Tidmarsh Absol(), "reveal yourself to my gaze – lest I slay you..." He then draws a sleek revolver which is coloured in sapphire and reminiscent of a TV series, *The Protectors*.

INDO-ARYAN ART HINTS AT THE NAIF; ELEPHANTS CARRY SAHIBS: [40]

During his travelogue across the room, however, Hide Tidmarsh Absol() comes to a veritable stop afore Spider Absinthe. It is his face (at once presumed on in darkness) which figures most. Yes, what can he really say about the waxen mask of those already dead? Perchance, a delimitation o' *rigor mortis* already brooks it! For the physiognomy looks pale, ovalesque, limited, sightless, dulcet, quite panicky and congealed. It seems to be fixed semi-robotically – rather like a late affliction of Parkinson's disease. Moreover, his eyes are pupilless and the mouth briefly curled in a smirk – or possibly a snarl. Doesn't it harken back to Francis Bacon's use of William Blake's death-mask in the early 'fifties? A sovereignty which palls into rectitude – particularly when smeared like Michaux so as to tempt volume via space's absence. If we can move directly to the present tense: Hide Tidmarsh feels the man's orbs upon him. They bore into his innermost scalp, irrespective of romantic effluvium. Most especially, if one considers that he's eyeless, falsely rimmed, unlit and blind in Gaza! Could Spider A. be tempting fate here – after the fashion of a Tiresius in his own wasteland? Increasingly, Absol() realises that the pressure behind these eyes signifies a haemorrhage or 'rape'. He's got to kill this cripple soon – in fact, the efficacy of his stare exhausts him. It's making Mrs Marmaduke's driver nervous.

THEY EXIST SIDEWAYS-ON (LIKE CHILD ART) WITHOUT PERSPECTIVE: [41]

Now he's got aught else to concentrate on – perchance – his unfolding of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* leaves our victim's mind. Yet Hide Tidmarsh Absol() becomes increasingly obsessed with

an internal vertigo... to make use of Hitchcock's disorientation. He crosses the front room irritably, if only to leave by a side exit – but his phantasm follows him out. In its *deux ex machina* without stage props, *per se*, Tidmarsh comes to incarnate Charles Manson minus a swastika on his forehead. If you reconsider, a wizened female spider or doll stoops in a doorway, made of stone or bas relief, and existing deep underground. This example (the crone) of one of Hecate's three faces illustrates a decrepit variant on Mrs Huey Marmaduke. But before he can drag her hither or into the light – a skulking hybrid leaps from a portal. It's altogether voiceless, furry, wolfish, hairy and definitely muscular... might it be a reverse *anima* for yesterday's cripple, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke? The two protagonists then roll upon the ground or its stone flags, so as to gain a purchase/its' grip. These whirling dervishes hit the dirt together and swirl in a maelstrom's violence, albeit with our man-beast atop Hide Tidmarsh. Doesn't he discover whether those sinewy muscles in either arm are like corded flex? Let's see: our Lon Chaney variant, who performed a cameo in John Wayne's *The Three Muskateers*, has his talons around Absol's throat. If Mister Hide won't be able to wrestle the poltergeist or varmint off, then those flag-stones will rise up and strike him. *Excelsior...*

ACTION SERIALS FROM THE 'THIRTIES; LON CHANEY & NOAH BEERY JR. IN GUEST ROLES: [42]

Meanwhile, Hide Tidmarsh goes for a brisk walk in the shadows, and he's slung on a brownish mack for good measure. It's accompanied by a felt artist's hat – one which once belonged to Spider Absinthe, his nominal employer. Tidmarsh had discovered it at a wardrobe's rear. He passes a lit up environment of tempered brick; the latter suffused with an orange glow over its dead murals. Yes, (and again), a grey grill or segment of forgotten windows is left behind him... together *avec* fitful shadows cast upon this mortar. Doesn't the penumbra flit and dart or even effloresce; rather like a joke mirror in a fun-fair? Aren't such ambits *sinister* or dissembling, and does Tidmarsh

remember his ol' man reminiscing about *The Shadow*, a radio show? It hailed from the 'thirties, came originally scripted by Kenneth Robeson, and starred Orson Welles. Anyway, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) can't escape from his criminal or proletarian origins; in that he stumbles in a perpendicular manner. It's at once rough, hardy, graceless, stooge-like, un-nominated, ill at ease, bear honed, truncated or spiritually crippled. (It nominates the causality of Norman Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance*). Hide Tidmarsh thinks to himself: "Jeez! The woman's got a nerve in rejecting my advances. Yes sir, am I free to do her dirty work without absolution? These dames are all the same. For it turns out to be Muggins here who's doing her shameful shift – after the *dishabilite* and violence of an Elisabethan revenge tragedy. Let's look at an example provided by Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, for instance! Without my intervention or turning o' the screw – why, she won't inherit a silver bit 'fore he dies a natural death. After all, I'm doing a public service like Jack Kevorkian, Professor Peter Singer and an Australian doctor... all of whom advocate euthanasia or vegetable slicing. I'm with 'em; I can be considered a colleague in arms... I'm less a killer than a dysgenicist. We've got to put the Primark bag over the dunderhead, tape it around and say goodbye to a future. Hip hooray!"

RAYMOND CHANDLER'S *THE BIG SLEEP*: [43]

Yet again, this undue mental exertion for Hide Absol(.) causes him to dream, even though it's a mixture of truculence, abasement and envy's politic. Why don't you make sense of it again? For a shaggy beast (Spider Absinthe in a rival tense) and Tidmarsh are brawling in a monastic cell. Each one of them has a clear view of t'other – despite the sepulchral atmosphere down below. Moreover, the creature's visage comes across as a combination of bear, hyena, ox and wolf... May it illustrate an unholy Grendel under the moon (?); or, by means of alternation, is this a were-man? Could it experience the shape-shifting of Lon Chaney Jnr. on a silver screen? In any event, these combatants

grapple – like characters in a *Battle* or *Commando* comic – until Hide Tidmarsh thumps this wendigo on the jaw. He has difficulty in making out its snout in darkling light, but rather akin to a pterodactyl-without-wings its nostrils protrude. Don't zoologists realise that many mammals have about them a reptilian stem? So it proves to be over Spider Absinthe's alternative... in that our lycanthrope distils an envy under fur. (It also seems to have escaped from H.P. Lovecraft's story *The Lurking Fear*). Might Mister Marmaduke have regressed – via autophagy – to a stage where he resiles to Hide Tidmarsh? Nor need David Icke's hysteria or metaphysic o' conspiracy intrude – since a gnawing on bones neglects its Amnesty International payments. Nonetheless, the man's fist crunches into the Beast's bone-arch; and a sickening thud or blow obtrudes. It sets off its dog-like projection using a 'THWOCK'; and it reverberates or causes a candle's shimmer. Spider Absinthe's 'Mr Hyde' or werewolf isn't finished, though.

THERE'S GOLD IN THEM *THAR* HILLS! [44]

Suddenly, or witnessing spiders fall in Fritz Lang's first film, he hears footsteps behind him. They belong to a woman's stilettos (so to say). Somewhat needlessly – and next to a wall of burnished emerald – Mary Dominic Huey (Mrs Marmaduke) appears. A brief shadow or penumbra encapsulates the mural at its top; whereas a sky or night-time of basic red intervenes. Aren't scarlet and emerald (when implemented together in auric ambit) a travesty o' romance? Still, Mary Marmaduke contrives to conceal her appearance; primarily by wearing a buttoned-up coat and yellowish hat. Most certainly, the latter's cadences seek protection or an off-putting gesture. Look at this: in that her trench-coat – of a thickish blue wove – rests assured in its diction of Ernst Junger's *Copse 125*. Surely now, our attention becomes riveted on her eyes – given their mad, distract, startled, frenzied, unbecalmed, electrocuted and pointillist sheen. Likewise, her features come across as emblematic, purblind, fed, massaged, cunning and yet plainly drawn. All in all, she betokens Bambi's

innocence when crossed with a crushed centipede... its innards rush out to join us. Doesn't such an ooze (then) contrive to illustrate Raoul Dahl's *Tales of the Unexpected*? (Every one seems to embody – scorpionically – a sting in its tail). She begins to speak in an unhurried or deliberative way, yet there's an undertone of rush to her words. "I've cogitated a while", she began, "and a ready conclusion rears afore me – rather like the relations between Clytaemenestra and Aegisthus in *Agamemnon*. Do you doubt its efficacy? Since, rather like the demotic mistranslation of Francis Pollini's *Night*, a diabolic inquisitor called Ching holds our frame. It provides for a reverse semiotic, even an exegesis that rises to Artaud's theory of cruelty. Again, the censored material from this communist affair cannot be estranged. Most abundantly, when a hermeneutics of abasement – *a la* Bakhtin – conditions a Pavlovian reflex. But which of us embodies it – you or me? Don't you dare to experiment using this inter-textual confusion! Confound it, nothing exists save the text – with the possible exception of putting a bullet through its author. Didn't Malcolm Bradbury, the ironist, produce a narrative where an author shoots himself over doubts about his existence? May he have been a post-structuralist? But – to cut to the chase – I have been dwelling on't, and I *will* marry you if that's your wish, yet you must slay my spouse soon to seal our bargain!"

FRITZ LANG'S RESPONSE IS *NOIR*; *THE BIG HEAT*: [45]

In the depths or recesses of Hide Tidmarsh's mind (thence) a battle royal commences. It subsists betwixt man and beast. Most definitely, a man-beast roils in noisome splendour, and it charges using elongated shoulder-blades. These prove to be out of kilter, cardboard box-like, irregular and oblong in their feast. Might this rectangular extension (so to say) brief its own absence – or give a cadence over F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*? By any particular, the sinister is gestural (profoundly so) and it partakes of Boris Karloff's or Christopher Lee's mime. Given this, a constriction's shank emboldens the primitive – after Gray's *Anatomy*.

Whereupon our were-thing (eek!) sprang like a thousand toads, if only to bowl over Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) He stood erect and on guard, as if to receive a blow in Alexander Dumas' stead. Alternately, Lon Chaney Junior – in the 1941 film known as *The Wolf Man* – leaps upon a false champion who rolls under this flexion, if only to respond. Tidmarsh (for it was he) scampered to engage with a hyena- swine... one that proves to be a reaver, ravener and scavenger. And together, in one heap, they go over so as to test Bill Hopkins' *The Leap!* in a single jig. Yes again, a constellation of star-shaped flags and stones subsist to one side; it remedies the bear-skin or mosaic in a von Stroheim film.

BEAR WITNESS TO AN IRON MAIDEN'S PUMICE: [46]

Congratulations, my man, for anti-Hollywood's fate has matured its witness! Could it be an example of 'digiview entertainment', one asks? Most especially, since Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) then crushes his future wife in his mittens, if only to prove his power or leaven so to do. As he does this, he senses an internal tension or hatred in her – even a vatic gesture. Might it incarnate the married couple in *Happy Days*, a play by Samuel Beckett, where a twosome lie buried in sand? Also, and abreast of such subversion, a light green glow inundates them in contrast to a nearby wall. Whereas a gas-light, or urban flash in mauve, illuminates them from above. (Truly, those beetle-like imaginings of Spider Absinthe Marmaduke are well and truly behind us!) On the farther barrier, however, a tattered film-poster delivers its message; and it indicates a musical, promising love interest, and called *A June Romance*. In it, the female lead jives or plays castanets, and one of her legs is exposed. Isn't this redolent of the Farrah Fawcett poster – in a red bikini – from the 'seventies, on the day of her death today? Hide Tidmarsh muses to himself: "Her odium for me is apparent – yet all of it testifies to a meaty residue. Give it up now; for she'll start plotting against me the moment her hubby goes into cremation's tube. But, at this instant, I'm on the threshold of everything I ever desired: money and beauty. Who'd have thought that I'd only

need to delouse a cripple to gain it?" *Apropos* of this, Mary Marmaduke thinks: "He disappoints by dint of a reversal, but my revenge will rise again. Didn't Clytaemnestra open her nets for more than one – if we include Cassandra, the prophetess, as collateral damage?"

REIN IN YOUR SEVEN HORSEMEN; I BEG YOU! [47]

Way back in a trajectory or accustomed dream, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) dwells on conflict. For the wrestling bout between him and a were-beast continues unabated. All in an instant, the man launches himself at Spider Absinthe's behemoth and spear tackles him into the floor. These flags resound to a sickening thump. But this is not all: since the hyena-swine grapples with a free claw, namely the left, so as to undercut Absol's jaw. Albeit thunderously, or with contrary roles, the wee beastie hurls his assailant into a neighbouring wall... prior to hurtling itself on top of him. Meantime though, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) has drawn a sleek pistol made from black plastic – rather like Robert Vaughan's weapon in *The Protectors*. Could it have been concealed inside his boot all along? Who may predict the outcome, seer or Cassandra-like, with a skull-wearing goddess somewhere in the background? Ho hum, let it pass...

MODOK WEARS HIS HEAD AMIDST ARMOUR: [48]

Several hours pass and the chauffeur, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), lies awake in his bed. He's mildly restless during those *hours of darkness where the powers of evil are exalted*, to use Conan Doyle's formula. A clock ticks away the periods with a purring ring, and Tidmarsh is in the servant's bay at the rear of *chez* Marmaduke. He contemplates a cripple's demise – for, in a few brief hours, a vicious crime will be accomplished. All procrastination rests abated; the time, tremulously, for destructive action looms. Tidmarsh Absol (Hide) lies on a grey pillow; albeit with segmented light spilling in from every side; it takes a man in the iron mask's form. Look at this: since a lattice or grill supplants the kingdom, and it separates or divides him off

like a story-board. (Note: the latter happens to be the graphic novel or layout which precedes a film). Again, these tokens of parallelism or estrangement break up one's filter, and they arrange linearity using bullets. Do you see? All of this apex or machinery, why, it contrives to breed dissociation: the kindred of this shows a yellow wall (roughly hewn), a green dressing-gown, orange to brown sheets and purple coverlets. One item comes over *avec* finality and brutality; and it's Tidmarsh's physiognomy. It presses the following revelations or points; at once slab-sided, gloomy, heavy, truculent, meaty and doleful. No mercy is evinced in those twinkling, piggy eyes or that prognathous jaw-line! All in all, these features illustrate Lombrosian primitivism; whether it's low, *lumpen*, degenerative, unhallowed and coy. They bear upon them an inferior stamp – although nature has implanted a warning in the cruel slit of a mouth. It divides the porcine mask like a wound in bacon! Notice this now: Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) speculates to himself: "The sky opens up for me. I've left a slum, gained access to privilege and only one obstacle remains. A paraplegic must vanish – the dribbling wreck – so that others may dance on his grave and steal his money. Truly, in the words of a film's title, *it's a wonderful life!* It won't be long now... the act itself will only take a few minutes to perform, and then I'll have everything I want". *The clock keeps on ticking...*

A HEAD-ON-STILTS ADOPTS SCAFFOLDING: [49]

Also, in the guise of feckless sleep, Hide Tidmarsh's dream comes to a violent conclusion. For – revolver in hand – he fires repeatedly into the body of a were-thing who takes after Spider Absinthe Marmaduke. Somewhat bizarrely, chauffeur Absol(.) believes that he's busy killing a post-negroid and paedophile like Michael Jackson (now deceased). Wasn't his coronary, *inter alia*, an item that had come up on the car radio earlier? Anyway, and returning to his phantasm's end-point, bullet after bullet caroms into a hyena-daemon's frame. Soon its muscular torso is dappled with blood and, accompanied by convulsions or tremors, it

subsides on the flags. Finally it begins to stiffen or go cold like a board – all in one go; at least when beholding to a door-frame’s aperture. Needing to see its epilogue (though) Hide Tidmarsh strikes a flint, “Unholy mother of mercies!”, he expostulates. “It’s a combination of bear, man, ox, wolf and hyena. What swine, but at least it’s dead! It must have been Mrs Marmaduke’s million, to adapt Wyndham Lewis’ phrase, or her familiar. Yet a were-hyena’s shadow need haunt her dreams no longer, but where can she be?”

FINALITY’S CULT WEARS PURPLE: [50]

To be sure of our ground: Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) finds himself on one side of the Marmaduke’s residence or carapace in stone. Might it embody, *inter alia*, those *Faces of the Third Reich* which delimit Grosz’s example – while exemplifying Joachim C. Fest’s book of that title? It comes as a relief from B. Gerstemberg’s caricatures. Nonetheless, a series of remarkable adventures in blue give up some territory; nor do they sum up the garage’s interior. Let it go – since his inner space laughs at Mies van der Rohe, and this vault or ossuary lights up a few sapphire’d spectres. A blackened penumbra covers those recesses; especially when a grill proffers Tidmarsh’s head. It wears a peaked cap, as befits a chauffeur’s status or the film *Giant* with ‘Rock’ Hudson, and it hints at a later death-drive. Doesn’t Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) drag-carry himself towards carrion... never mind its oblate? Above him, an inter-related series of orange bricks pass away; whereupon a darkened shade typifies their end. Again, the car that’s wedged in the entrance has to be purple – it’s a double sedan, the like of which looks after yesterday’s dinky. Wasn’t a dark mauve the living tint o’ death? Nonetheless, the vehicle has a severe outline or tracery... plus a curved antelope for a shape which limns with the Fuhrer’s slant. A bluish fender adorns its back; whilst the dynamism of its lines hints at one of those chariots driven in a Raymond Chandler. Also, the interior of its bay has to be yellow. Suddenly – Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) is able to make out the grating sound of a wheel-chair and a woman’s

stilettos. They are coming to embrace their fate. Hide Tidmarsh waxes ready!

BURN THOSE LEAVES UNDER A MAGNIFIER: [51]

Meanwhile, in the recesses of chauffeur Absol's dream, we notice a closing off to whispers. For he's left the dead were-thing in order to consult with unknown spy cameras. Indeed, don't we laugh at such deliberations? Against this notion, he goes in search of Mary Huey down august corridors of dripping stone. These are basalt chambers to a new disorder and they're lit by flickering torches in niches. Likewise, to one side of such echoing vaults one finds strange hieroglyphics or sigils, and they stream across one wall after another. It tests itself against finality (you see). Whereas Hide Tidmarsh stalks our massive hutches with a flint above his head; & it flickers like a taper that's due to a cursing of Apollyon. Above all, he follows the sound of Mrs Marmaduke's voice as it echoes via labyrinths... even across murals in stone. Finally, he rescues her – torch in hand – from amid a hemi-cycle of ice; and she's delivered from a cell using a plug. Hadn't Dominic Huey been hurled there by a bogle or were-man; itself a vestige of her husband, Spider Absinthe? She seems to embrace her rescuer – in relief – with genuine gusto. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) can only grin.

A NAMELESS SHIMMER IN THE GLASS: [52]

A blue door is opened by a tough-minded provincial, and it proves to be wooden in its non-convexity or bias. Likewise, a short trellis – after Alexander Dumas' *Man in the Iron Mask* – opines its presence; it appears to be cantilevered or louvered. Already Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) holds open this portal into the garage beyond, and its blackness or inner revolt against reason trickles by. But, in reality, doesn't it sweep away unconstrained? The chauffeur wears his uniform – a black-to-sapphire belt, cap, leggings and jacket – in a paramilitary *mien*. It takes up the longing for a Freikorps in the poetry of Friedrich Junger (say). Whereas the corridor or passage into the garage (from which

wife and crippled husband have emerged) looks like a fossilised... nay, a prehistoric fish. I mean in terms of its gills; but, more accurately, this duct comes to be split by a wooden railing. It embodies a deep brown tincture o' wood; while the competing colours of orange and yellow line up on either side. Before us now, and foregrounded by an absent rage, comes Spider Absinthe and Mary Dominic Huey (Marmaduke). He happens to be wheel-chair bounded and wears a gentleman's shooting cap. Might it – alternatively – set loose a cataract of tennis volleys or golf shots? 'Spider' also waxes tieless, sports a check country-jacket of an effortless cut, and stares blankly ahead. Do the other two characters really seize upon his face (?); given its stowed-away, pasty, remorseless, flaccid, lost and rectangular character. For the 'master of the house' appears – somewhat superficially – to be pupilless, even blind, and dwells on a wasteland *a la* Tiresias. His spouse, Mary Marmaduke, lays a perfumed pinkie on a chair's rest – what hypocrisy! Yet she plays her allotted part in the drama to perfection... although a seasoned observer might spot her breasts' crisp curvature, held in a green blouse, as indicative of future spoils. Doesn't this example of Louise Brooks' *Lulu* indicate a louche, spent, bohemian, vampish and lewd touch? Surely it hints at Minelli's decadence in *Cabaret* – without dint of the storm-trooper at the end singing 'tomorrow belongs to me'? Her hair is blacker or more raven-tinted than ever. She stoops to conquer some available speech. "Bethought me", she uttered, "husband of mine, that a vehicle's spin might blow away the cobwebs of an entombed mind. Whereupon – lo and behold – our new driver, Hide Tidmarsh, approaches us over a vintage circus extravaganza. Do you see aught through those black tunnels o' daylight, or the manic gestures of a puppet-master? Might they amount to pulling on a mannequin's strings? Anyway, the chauffeur is here to begin an ecology's recycling ---." "Sure thing, Mrs Marmaduke, I'll take him off your hands for an hour", purrs Absol(.) innocently.

SEX & CHARACTER WAS WEININGER'S ROSE-BUD! [53]

Meanwhile, the chauffeur has taken up his position at a chariot's wheel, and the car's inner portion proves difficult to discern. It retreats into a fustian interior of leather or darkness; the latter almost melting into the firm gloves on a steering wheel. These grip it decisively – even before they've properly left the garage. Besides this, the purple stanchion or forward thrust of the car limits daylight – and it denotes an architrave from Gerry Anderson's *Stingray*. Most definitely – since the metal structure of this projectile limits greed, and it confirms or embodies a coffer's future grandeur. Does one choose to see? In any event, chauffeur Tidmarsh causes this lethal torpedo to glide from its garage – if only to come to a brief halt just outside it. Whereas the driver's features have not altered one jot throughout these proceedings; given a lantern-jawed, brutish, quasi-simian and tactile *lowness*. Heredity is a fact; and criminals are born & not made (you see). Mary Huey Dominic Marmaduke stands to one side of the auto and its occupants – while adopting a brazen or rarefied tone. Her profile seems to be apprised, (never lost), grasping, relaxed, always cool and maybe even a little contemptuous. "Stay out as long as you wish, Tidmarsh, but be sure to give me a call on your return to our villa", she opined. "Rest assured", mumbles our revived Mister Hide, "I will perform this task to the best of my ken, and your husband, Spider Absinthe, shall never forget this drive to the city's outskirts." With a curt nod to his employer, he then taxied the vehicle out into the road and made off. Soon nothing was left of their presence save swirling exhaust or carbon monoxide.

ARMAGEDDON'S VILLAGE: [54]

A few minutes later they were hurrying through the city's esplanades – even if the midday traffic had begun to thin out or leave off. Over time the grey pavements became empty of all life or its kind, and only very occasionally did they pass a car. One such automobile was a dark brown sedan which is parked by the kerb – when next to it we see some shops with their awnings.

Gradually even these receded and the bluish facades – together with a *soupcon* or flash of glass – are left further and farther behind. Each block comes to shimmer in the distance via an orange light or its pall, and the atmosphere becomes ever more silent. Also, Hide Tidmarsh's clinging gloves rest on the steering wheel – as he manoeuvres his charger beyond the outermost suburb. A single item doesn't alter, however, and this happens to be Spider Absinthe's eyes; they bore into you using the rear-view mirror. Nor do they change during the journey; in that the cripple's orbs look timid, askance, rapt, distanced and curiously expectant. Aren't they avid or sepulchral? All in all, their impact on Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) seems to be disturbing. He feels like shouting out to get him to stop or desist, but it would be useless – the paraplegic's utterly deaf. Blast it (!), thinks Mrs Marmaduke's chauffeur.

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A crowded city-scape gives way to the palisades at their cusp, as Hide Tidmarsh slows the engine. It has taken around forty minutes to travel thus far and the distance around our chauffeur seems to be red-smeared. Moreover, his darksome outlook comes across as silhouetted or cut out of black *crepe*... still, his 'eye' alone stands out in an affixed way or distaff. This is especially so over the rear mirror – within which a cretin's beady corneas are burrowing into him. How fatiguing! Who will rid me of this human haggis(?), muses chauffeur Absol. I know whomsoever Loki might favour... he virtually grinned to himself. Whereupon – in the background – an expanse of metropolitan water lay to hand; a few large boats traversed its glistening surface at a burg's end. Now the moment of Cain's striking approaches most drear, despite the intrepid matter of Spider Absinthe's eyes. They continue to bore holes through the seating while foisting a mirror upon you... Why don't you shatter this glass? It occasions no good fortune, my man. Again, some very tall buildings or skyscrapers loom up at a veritable boomerang's throw from your target. You (Hide Tidmarsh Absol) refuse to recognise them, since you're concentrating on a maggoty slice of meat which

requires rinsing... You decide to manoeuvre the car by gazing as little as possible into its mute reflector.

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You're almost there – and in the final moments of your tourney, *a la* Thomas Nash, the limousine bumps along a grassy sward. Its indentations grate upon your vehicle's axles; yet you remain unperturbed. Even so, the russet greenery of so much heathland travels on behind your track, and it causes an inundating of the back window. Isn't this reminiscent of H.P. Lovecraft's collected poems, *The Ancient Track*? Again, the figure of the crippled millionaire, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke, comes back to us from a posterior's lantern or seat... Mightn't it find itself crossed with the rigid tracery or lattice of a back-burner (?); namely, an *ombre* or lateral seat. It proved to be in leather and crossed away from Spider Absinthe's empty heart. (Surely the latter proves to be calloused by a million intrigues – or their absence?) He remains as he has always done – i.e., quiet, sovereign, alone, purblind, congealed, 'lacking all restlessness', even mildly deceased. His check county jacket – itself vaguely reminiscent of sportswear or Burberry – crosses with a tieless shirt of some accommodating grey. Do you detect the absence of an inner tremor? Whereas the reddish cap over his limpid brow tops all... and it betokens a calabash or ornate scarf atop a flayed corpse (possibly one by Gunter von Hagens). This exercise in corse art, irrefragably, sees the mangled license of so many ruins leaping about – or steaming in three dimensions. Yes, since in the front seat Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) looks back at his charge, and he does so using a view-mirror with a yellow back. It is shiny to look at! Moreover, the black-'n'-blue garbed chauffeur gazes on his victim robustly; and with a look that's truculent, seismic, coarse, calculating, Machiavellian or shorn of timidity. His left eye (when observed from in front) spies upon its prey as a succulent morsel; and Tidmarsh's visage seems watchful, pug-nosed, reserved, lantern-jawed, meaty (even pregnant). One presumes that this latter is a tragic breeding – or impinges upon life's death? Mayhap, *mon ami*, it embodies Pierrepont's look into the face of one he would

gibbet last: Ruth Ellis. Finally, Hide Absol(.) drives the car up to a small cliff's edge and leaves its engine idling... all the time the eyes of his nominal employer, Spider Absinthe Marmaduke, never leave him...

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Now and then, Hide Tidmarsh removes himself from the car and reaches in so as to release the brake. He'd imagined doing it a thousand times in his sleep! In the light of this panorama, though, the dashboard proves to be purple in its fixity... whilst any surrounding glass, whether Lewis Carroll-like or no, dimples to blue. It --- above aught --- shades into a lightish fray or azure. Nor need we to doubt this too needfully: *quod* the mitten that stumbles in reaches for a darkish brake-stick; whether it's grey or *noir*. Likewise, and despite his penchant for gloves or hold-alls, the hand which holds this paper* appears to be flesh-toned. [Note: the title refers to a revisionist fiction from Australia]. Despite this, Hide Tidmarsh Absol's claw penetrates its surround-sound or ease, and like in a situationist cinema, all of the audience wear 3-D specs. Isn't it the pulchritude of Lot's saltiness (?); when spliced with murder rather than paederasty. Still... his fist grasps an abandonment or wrath; it breaks/brakes out – if only to scramble clear o' death and play marbles using a cadaver's eyes. What was that ancient radio signal from the 'thirties – *who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?* You see, the vigilante called 'The Shadow' understood it all too well. Isn't such a matter copasetic? Whereas the rest of the vehicle's interior – never mind the late afternoon sun from without – luxuriates in lemon. Assuredly, it also calls down a sickly enclave in yellow; one that reminds the author of an anti-inundation in childhood? It happened in a egg-yolk bedroom in Bearstead, Kent. But Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) paid it no heed. "Happy landings, Marmaduke!", he sneered as he released the machine's breaking device or stopper, and his eyes stared like two gimlets while doing so.

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Avaunt thee, Fate works in mysterious ways to abet the Gods' cruelty – what men insist on calling Justice! For didn't those 'sixties hippies have something when they inferred that whatever goes around comes back? Might this be an instinctive version of the endless return *a la* Nietzsche? In any event, a mistake occurs at this juncture, and before you can retrieve your arm the sleeve catches under the steering wheel. Your limb is caught or snagged – if only momentarily. "My outermost mandible or arm!", you cry. But it's altogether too late; and why do you (haphazardly) imagine such appendages to be those of an insect? How could this occur (?); given that Hide Tidmarsh was experienced in matters of mayhem. Moreover, he'd visualised the tableau or scenario many a time. In this vignette his uniform transforms its odour into that of a dirty brown; whereas his adorning cap (or death's-head) limbers up to an ebon hue. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) sweats profusely and half his physiognomy comes to be overshadowed – it slants down within a rendering of mauve. Nor does his perspiration escape us. Truly, a setter of ambiance (like Sax Rohmer) or a ranter (such as Hillaire Belloc) must have remarked that horses sweat, men perspire and women are *all aglow*. The backdrop to all of this remains a violent scarlet.

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Within a trice, therefore, the car careered off the cliff's edge and a blue expanse of water lay like a blanket at its rear. A few boats (and even the odd distant building) were seen against a trajectory of orange sky. Look at this oblivion (now); since the purple auto caromed or careened over the rim and down towards the bay – with Hide Tidmarsh attached to its side. Like a stick-insect most rare – or riding pillion – he accompanies the vehicle in its last plunge. Wouldn't the American verb or construction be *dove*? Down and down springs the Cadillac or sportscar (take your pick) and it ramps, reverberates or ricochets on its way to Armageddon... whilst Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.), the accomplice to slaughter, screams and screams. His last meaningful cry was: "HELP!" Meanwhile, and back up the mast, our hillock coveted a green sward or grassy top – and this proves to be unkempt in its

tonsured hooliganism. Whereas, further down, the earthen ware comes to be ribbed, brownish, slightly leathery in its upholstery, 'racinated' or fiercely rooted, stringy and tensile in its musculature. Whereupon several balustrades – of a deep magenta – and consisting of multiple sand-bags or groins festoon the top, but the car overshoots them. It catapults downwards easily – rather like a pin-ball in a slot machine. A small jetty, replete with a boat-house and motor launch, lie at its bottom. They play no part in the death-dive, however.

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A cataclysmic shambles then results and the speeding auto is turned upside-down, blows up, showers metallic shards all over and causes thick, grey smoke to billow upwards. A violently blue sliver of sky corresponds to an explosive mixture that douses yellow and red together – treats both as liquid flame – and causes them to inundate a sandy dell. Furthermore, the automobile looks to be cut-up, ragged, burnt out, mock-exhausted, chewed over and leapt upon by pitch. The cripple –Spider Absinthe Marmaduke – obviously died instantly in such an inferno. Whereupon the chauffeur, Hide Tidmarsh Absol, was blown hither or sheer by Lewis' *Blast!*, and he finds himself flung out like a rag-doll. He's cleared the gutted limo by many a yard or metre, and he takes up residence back on the slope... or abreast of an apex from which this descent has triumphed. Doesn't it revisit one of those hallucinatory vistas, at once morphia induced, in Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*? Anyway, Hide Tidmarsh's chauffeur's garb has been ripped off, his body seems charred and battered, and the dolt's 'corse' lies limp, swollen, aggravated or Hawksmoor-like. It resembles (above all) one of those *action man* dolls from the 'seventies which had been put through a mangle. Most certainly, he lay prone on an expanse of loam or tumuli, and his head's seen to be detached from the body or indicative of a snapped spine. In this case – and rather like a mongrel dog – the curvature of such a relief was broken in its madness. Also, the skull or cranium lolled about after a jelly-fish or a ventriloquist's doll – namely,

one that's been snatched from its case and hurled about. It's most upsetting to a child's imagination, to be sure! For the leering and glassy-eyed face of a joker looks out; after a token where a mask has been wrung over and forced back behind a shoulder-blade. Such a haunch of venison refuses to entertain any beef! Thus, we're faced with a situation where wooden balustrades or fence poles support a spinal tap, rupture, breakage, rubber-band quality, or its paraplegic ditty. All in all, Hide Tidmarsh's glow-worm bobs and grimaces after hours, or in a way that's reminiscent of a bouncing ball. Nor are we in a position to see whether it's the pig's bladder used in Aussie rules, soccer, Gaelic football or the Eton wall game.

EPILOGUE: [55]

Many months pass by before Hide Tidmarsh's revival into consciousness (or aught which could be said to embody it). He awakes midst a veritable abattoir of the senses. Yes, indeed! For he wakes up slowly in the living-room of Spider Absinthe's brownstone. One thing strikes his attention right away... and this has to be a nubile variant on Mary Dominic Huey Marmaduke (ex). Do you gauge this sense or séance with any perspicacity? Most evidently, she wears jet black and it takes the form of a ball-room dress, no matter how lissom in tone, and it follows every curve of her anatomy. It slopes away from her thighs, finds itself cut off from the shoulders or otherwise topless, and affects to be strapless. Listen: her flesh runs clear and naked to the breasts, whose protuberance and cleavage remembers a 'fifties movie star like Dianne Dors or Tallulah Bankhead... never mind Joan Crawford. Still, the ebon slink – in terms of its fabric – hints at an event which will make you smile; namely, her husband's death. You try to move your lips in order to grin and realise that you can't... since you're paralysed in every particular. In truth, a blue skull-cap or mummification covers the top of your head; and it screens a cranium's apex – if only to provide a coping stone. Could it really be 'invisible'? The odd bit of sticking plaster (coloured white) also makes its way across this negative balsam.

Let it go aslant or amidships... Meanwhile, your visage stares ahead like a dime store mummy and it's calcified, frozen, grim, congealed, petrified, abrasive or a trifle adrift. Yes, a blue medical orderly's jacket – of some rough-cut serge – addresses the lower hue or depiction of his limbs. Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) begins to estimate (also) that he's actually sitting in a wheel-chair – just like the late Spider Absinthe Marmaduke. To be sure: the rest of the room pans out as he imagined... what with a platinum bracelet of exquisite finish on Dominic Huey's wrist, plus a black cigarette. It smouldered in a neighbouring hand. Further to this, she leans gently on an *art deco* dresser that bisects a light-brown curtain at its side. Whereas a decanter of drink – whether vodka or gin – lies behind this heiress; together with an ash-tray, a plate of pork scratchings and a pinkish wall. In the middle of such an undeclared mural (however) a picture dominates within an ornate green frame. It is flowery in its baroque grandeur (even). Never mind this: *quod* it illustrates a blonde opera *diva* in full cry – itself rather akin to Paul Klee's *The Possessed Girl*. But no, there is one major change here, in that it relates to a frozen image *a la* Mantegna and was much like Hide Tidmarsh's plight. He still attempts movement – yet can't manage it. Whilst Mary Dominic Huey, in mourning, *avec* raven hair, stares on using her pointillist eyes which are as mad as afore.

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Slowly, oh so slowly – it begins to dawn on our prior Absol(.) that he's completely paralysed. This comes as an unfolding shock to his sensibility. Oh my, doesn't it just? Don't let's talk about a biter bit --- what! For not only do you recognise your absence of movement – you also see that you're stuck, paraplegic, incapable of scintillation, turned around, in a truckle-chair like *Ironside* in the 'seventies, and otherwise unable to twirl your eyes. What kind of malign or poetic justice is this, you ask? Although you are quite capable of hearing voices – especially when Spider's Absinthe's widow chooses to talk to a gruff toned stranger. The unseen male's perspective enunciates thus: "Hey(!), yon cadaver in the corner proceeds to announce its sleep. Why don't ya, eh?

Yeah, I gotta tell you, doll, he doesn't come across as anything more than a ventriloquist's dummy or sham puppet. Isn't such a creature (or man-thing) folded up, looped, grey in its skin tone, orange jacketed, swivel eyed, bald and with detachable limbs? You say he was your old chauffeur, widow Marmaduke?" "Assuredly so", Mary Huey answered in a prompt vein, "he can no longer function as anything other than a meaty integer. After all, this man was virtually destroyed by the explosion which took my husband out. It left him utterly discombobulated or debilitated. Truly, a devastating deconstruction has left off – in that he can no longer walk, talk, gesture, stare or even pass a motion. Hide Tidmarsh Absol (for such it be) no longer contrives to exalt a purport. He's a future euthanasia statistic – no more, no less. Now do you realise why I've hired you?"

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To conclude our narrative, and segmented against the relief of some turquoise squares, Hide Tidmarsh Absol(.) sits as a retard. (This is either with or without cretinous handle-bars). Look further at it: in case you spy an ochre filter at the edge of these stars. Again, Hide's cranium registers a blue debenture; it festoons his skull with Lear's forgetfulness. While a light-brown surgical chair hints at a spindly back or a ruptured aft – it vaguely allies with the sack-cloth-and-ashes across his trunk. It also happens to be a darkened sapphire. Whereas Hide Tidmarsh's scraggy forearm (or face) denotes a stray eaglet – if on the point of being hunted to extinction. Yes indeed, when we stoop to consider its emaciated, shadowy, elongated, hollow-eyed and lugubrious mien. Not even a cough can escape between his teeth, and, unsevered at the wrist, they do well to cling onto a dandelion. Its stalk contrives to hang limply... like a sad lion in an *Asterisk* comic.

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In close up, though, we notice that it's all up for this particular plastinate. Isn't it too bad for Hide Tidmarsh Absol; and he must surely guess what's coming to him? He knows everything about Spider Absinthe Marmaduke's murder, and although hardly a

threat to Mary Dominic, this black widow (sic) is too much of a perfectionist to allow him to survive. Like in a cosmos of arachnids, the female shall mate with the little brown male and then devour *it*. He's served his purpose and now has to be consumed in exactly the same way as the wretch he'd replaced. Also, wasn't the second chauffeur's voice familiar? Could it be the Irish desperado, Mick, who'd been left drinking in the ghetto while Mrs Marmaduke first hovered? Yes... it all fell into place like Ford Coppola's ending to *Apocalypse Now*. The question which he had to deal with was: when, When, WHEN(?) would the two remaining upright seize their chance. In relation to this – his frozen mask of a face seems pasty, glue-like, oozing yet fastidious, glabrous, etched in black dye, furrowed and sweaty. As a further reckoning, the lips come curled in a snarl equidistant to the blue cap o' bandages above and the serge shirt below. His eyes betray a secret as well, especially given their billiard ball, fish-like and marbling quality. He possesses pupils – unlike Spider Absinthe – but their ability to spy upon the future remains second rate. All of a sudden, an image enters his mind in an unbidden manner and it relates to Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, a text he's never espied. Wasn't it the late Mr Marmaduke's recurrent nightmare? It concerns the scene near the end where the gigantic Beetle – Gregor – dies; i.e., one day, as the sun streams in through those French Windows, he just bows his head and expires. He gives up the ghost as meaninglessly as any insect; thereupon to fray or fritter, like a cob-webbed corse, at the margins. Hide Tidmarsh non-Absol keeps dwelling on it without a clear reason. But what he can't fathom is a later denouement – where the second example of Hemingway's *The Killers* will shoot Mary Dominic Marmaduke (Huey) in a bungled robbery, only then to be arrested and executed after a trial. His juridical terminus was carried out by an infamous British hangman like Henry or William Pierrepont. The murder weapon proved to be a plastic bore, at once blue-cum-black in colour, and reminiscent of *The Protectors* or one's dream. Yet all Hide Tidmarsh may do is wait – moronically – spastically – silently – paraplegically –

morosely – timelessly; and he's mummified, sepulchrally or sarcophagus-like, in his chair. It must be akin to being buried alive – the Victorian nightmare! No wonder his skin's pallor turns white, beady or ultramarine: (when surrounded by bursts of yellow-to-red astral bleeps). At whatever instant shall 'Mick' and Mary Dominic Huey (Marmaduke) slay him as he sits, immobilised and helpless, on his truckle-chair? When? *When?* **WHEN?**

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Isn't it pleasant if a story ends happily for all concerned?

FINIS

NOUGHTS ARE CROSSES

a Greek tragedy

Troupe of maniacs: We cast our eyes down upon a strange cross or breed of freaks. Most effectively, a Comus Rout proves to be an example of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Nor do we require the counterpoint or filter of Syme's *The Roman Revolution*. Inevitably, one's rapture takes the following form, in that these fallen mountebanks rise amid dry-ice. They are Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham (an heiress), her husband Trevor Milkway; two servants, Peaches and Monocle, an antiques dealer known as Scribe-End Pentecost, and two policemen: Fisher and Zacharias Crack. The time-period has to be the twentieth century's earliest years. An attitude which appears to be a *sinister* A.J. Cronin's survives on a pittance.

PART ONE

An effective *tableau* to our drama spies an heiress, Mrs Rowbotham, being woken from dreams or their fastidiousness. She's good looking – of a middling character – and is running to fat (slightly). Her hair betrays an iron brown... whether beating out the Tao or its absence. Although, as an aside, this story-board shows her dilated eyes; and her face looks parched – if dissembling to a dream. Survey this Greek *agon*, why don't you? Albeit namelessly... her bodice heaves with the symmetry of outer gods or demons in the dark. She wears a night-gown that seeps from the shoulders in a naked brew; if only to reveal Flaxman's bust. It ramifies with the antiques surrounding the bed – and it's spacious in its range (remarkably so). Again, her ample bodice ripples around its shift – or a pink effluvium, like an unexploded Vesuvius. For Rowbotham's Pompeii hasn't been calcified, embittered, permeated or lava-ered – after Bulwer-Lytton's novel. It had been called, way back in 1834, *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Needless to say, this Briton's nightie was caught in a deep purple (*passim*. her lips) and it slewed like

radiation or a blancmange *a la* Andrea Dworkin. Yes – immediately behind her – a bed-stead burnt its filigree; it was elaborate, laboured to a temperature or tinted in its ormolu. Nor need one be surprised by a Queen Anne fixity or delicacy... Similarly, a cluster of eagles, false dyes, restless nymphs, cherubs from German cathedrals, Louis XIV boxes in gilt and Russian obelisks gathered anew. They crammed the footing of one's recliner or divan. A Doric pillar connects with the four-poster (just) as well as stray rudiments *chez* Rowbotham. These crowd on her in the night-time – indeed, the gal's chamber is over-run with antiques... even antiquities. They crowd out one's living space --- especially for sleeping. But what really approximates to our craze (or gives the game away) were two hands. These stretch out towards Rowbotham from in front; and each one seems large enough to make her cry! They are wide, thick, primitive, other-worldly, misshapen, (Wendigo-like), yellow, black-haired and green nailed. Assuredly, such raptors have to be long, tapering or razor-sharp... at least in Fuseli's grave-yard. Might it hint at one of those creepy, fastidious, languorous or decadent stories by Quentin Crisp? Such claws look disproportionate over the wrists holding them afloat; particularly in their thickness. They are definitely aiming for milady's neck and throat astride her boudoir, though. The woman's sheets, lower down in the bed, were blood red throughout.

PART TWO

Our tale begins from the perspective of a closed door. It happens to be locked, bolted, open sesame-like and vaulted *avec* a silent appeal. Oh yes... a corridor limits its utterance o' sameness; if only to reverberate with a pillion of so much force. Never mind: in that the wooden surrounds of this enclosure are green... or shaven in its frieze (given an availability). A thumping or hammering sound continues to be heard – it ricochets or gnaws, like Ron Hutchinson's play *Rat in the Skull*. Further, a dim glow – from a concealed lamp – distils an effulgence. Maybe it's a

glimmer, do you see? As to its colour scheme: the outer struts (*a la* an artist's installation) were emerald; the glow a pale ochre, and the remaining boards, plus an ornate handle, are orange. They distribute a sandy tinge after Beckett's *Happy Days*; even when eighteenth century in calibre. The banging echoes, however, and doesn't this illustrate a 'sandman' on the door's other side? THWACK! THWAIN! WALLOP! CRACK! CRUNCH! BOP! CRASH!, it goes.

PART THREE

Finally, an axe-head splinters a turquoise slat; and it does so with a reverberation or screened torso... after a Francis Bacon painting. Wherein – in the early 'fifties – an anatomy lesson in white-paint shimmers or looses a pulsation; and it dismembers itself agin' green. But, back in the present, our weapon has a pumiced jaw: one which wavers aslant a veil. It's already punctured it – don't forget. Anyway, a residual crack showers some plaster or wood about; thereby postponing them (if only for a minute) on the other side. SEEDLE-POP! CLATTER!; and other notions of onomatopoeia recur. Although, having burst through the door, our thunderer is turned sideways – only to be withdrawn. Yes, that's right: it enters a portal, turns and twists amid the wood, and then slips away... as if to secretly return. Ho! Ho! Also, and *apropos* of nothing in particular, an image from Robert Coover's *A Public Burning* comes to mind: where the Rosenbergs are burnt for high treason in Times Square. (Note: they were two anti-American traitors who betrayed atomic secrets to the Soviet).

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Resultantly though, the colour-scheme affects our gaze. It lavishes the following example of Goethe's theories upon us: i.e., a lavender door fades to mauve (or magenta), if twisting on its wing-board. While the main-frame deposits an ultra-marine (albeit light in hue); and it all subdues the door-knob. For, however fancifully, our attention centres here – on a twisting

device that's ornate, baroque, Rococo. *Let us attend to these swivelling jackets...*

PART FOUR

Suddenly, a hand blitzes through the crack – it curves like a scimitar or the merest duck-‘n’-bill. Yes sir: for it isn’t quite drunk enough to grapple with the door handle – without knowing how to gain egress. The entrance happens to be one of those Hanoverian trinkets – at once embossed, reinforced, ormolu, laminated and heavy. Yet a click (owing to a concealed lock) enables the wood to swing open via a secret clasp. The owner of the arm chunters thus: “Curse her to a thousand Hades, by Gad! She thinks to bar my way to the present tense, will she? I’ll venture to sacrifice her to an eight-armed idol, O yes!”

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One thinks of Joseph Goebbel’s remark, at the beginning of his Expressionist novel, *Michael*. Whereupon he answers the question ‘what is God?’ in the following way. ‘IT’ – [ES] – must be an eight-limbed idol in red onyx or burnished stone, even cornelian, with beryl or emerald eyes. Flaring torches, in surrounding niches, smoulder amid a darksome splendour... whereas various bodies turn and twist in the corners. They were human sacrifices hanging from ropes. ‘It doesn’t sound very Christian’, someone opined. ‘You misunderstand me’, replied Goebbels, ‘that is Christ!’

PART FIVE

Through the door, now open to its prey, strides her husband: Trevor Milkway. He’s blonde in ‘its’ deportment or askance, and one eye comes lop-sided over the other’s grief. Do you credit it? Yes and no, since the fellow’s quite clearly as drunk as a lord: and he carries an axe-head in tow. Behind him a green slippage waxes clear – might it be aught of a satrap? Again, the door discloses a double model (or some panel on the slide) and it swivels near a sandy bay. It beckons away into an eldritch interior. While Mister Rowbotham surveys the scene unsteadily;

and he's on stilts, pasty-faced, leery, hungry, inapposite and delicately unfancied. For – like a piece of rare porcelain – any exquisite workmanship has a crack incising across its enamel. Must we take in the brightly red-tie, sapphire shirt and dunnish jacket (?); all of them supplanting a Saville Row outfitters. Yes, Edgar Wallace missed out on this special locution. Furthermore, the ax(e)-head lolled next to him... or it moved up and down like an antennae, beacon or insect's limb. He begins to articulate: "There's no way on earth she'll make a pauper out of me – do ya hear? My fine Gods! I'll be the one who decides who lives and dies amid a flames' conundrum! Such it is, my lovelies... For, abreast of two men on a raft, I leap forwards and across any attempt at rescue. Indeed, no futile gesture by Mrs Rowbotham can stop my plunge or dart. (Especially when she's dressed provocatively in *brassiere* and skin-tight leggings... don't you see?) Let it commence: given the emergence of a monster from the deep, a sea-green incorruptible in Carlyle's diction. After all, aren't these fancies of my care tied to a water box: the like of which looks slippery? It comes across as facetious in its liquorice or sway – nor need we stare at the water churning in a swell behind 'em. A cataract of this character sweeps Monsarrat's cruel sea – if only to occasion the deepest of dives. And moreover, specks of atoms seethe in their novelty – particularly when abreast of those keening dots. Yet a blister is abroad – it slakes its source against such mandibles. First of all, it emerges from the deep without a cure; and it proves to be massive, ugly, Caliban-like, discharged, even wondrous over an untapped sea. Who could work on the bestial (otherwise) without a calm? I might – came the invisible answer. Was it not a crater yet to be born? Most certainly, an emanation of my own pain and rage looks saurian, armoured, Visigoth-like and takes after a bloater fish. It lumbers akin the creature from the black lagoon... but I must attack it! A life-lorn misanthropy has to be my watchword."

PART SIX

Ah! Alcohol shall always stimulate derangement – or come to its infinite rescue, perchance. With this, our man Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham), took a swig from a hip-flask. The liquor sloshed around his lips as he greedily sucked on the nozzle. Wasn't it vaguely reminiscent of Kali milking her brood: or alternately, a sea-daemon resting in the depths, abreast of tusks? Again, Trev(.) takes a swig from an available flask of brandy; and it definitely trembled or rinsed those lips. He sucked at this nipple gamely – rather like a tiger shark draining its milk. Quite clearly, our rich husband (in the manner of Croesus) has been drinking since even-tide, if only to pluck up some Dutch courage. Yes, under these artificial lights, his shirt's turned grey or pumice-like; and it contrasts with a violently red wall. This latter edifice proves to be a sweep-stake – one which frames his head and jaws. He downs yet another libation (unsurprisingly). Whilst the mural lifts to a planar interlude that's black; it takes off as a mock-frieze and it shields a painting at its heart. An artwork (this) which comes emboldened in a dark frame; together with a border or inner tapestry of grey card. The image itself looks rather like a Michaux, an Audrey Beardsley or possibly a Beresford Egan. When – by way of contrast – the axe fillets to a forgery in its impasse... or over the Gods' regulation. Also, the hip-pod from which he extracts his toil seems to be a light blue, albeit in a symmetrical design. "She won't prise me out of house and home using a leveraged buy-out", he chortled inanely. Quite clearly, his compass had passed the point of inebriation. "NO, oh no, me duck, I can surmise her face when she returns to her boudoir – or *salon* most clear – and finds her treasures smashed up. They'll be mashed, bashed, (p)ashed and any sort of ashed... doubtlessly. Won't the entire caboodle be reduced to firewood or plaster dust? HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! (hic)." He followed this pronouncement with a loud burp or squelch. Might an attack of the hiccups be lurking here? No matter: *quod* his eyes came across as bleary, contemptuous, uncaring over beauty, small-souled, philistine and ignorant. Weren't they both porcine in a

needy semblance (?) – to adapt Eric Mottram’s thesis, *The Algebra of Need*. Furthermore, the wilfulness of those ‘rats-in-mazes’ who – throughout the nineteen eighties – lashed out against great paintings in galleries... why, they gain a purchase. Such deviants reconnoitre the cover of Erich Fromm’s *The Anatomy of Destructiveness*... if riven by a Peregrine, or Penguin’s university books. Just so: these reprobates might think twice if their hands were replaced by mittens o’ steel – upon amputation. For art on Mantegna’s or Holbein’s scale weighs in the balance many lives!

PART SEVEN

Still and all, Trevor Milkway (Mister Rowbotham) staggered about inside an over-crowded room or bay. Isn’t it – rather strangely – an illustration of Jean Gimpel’s thesis, *The Cult of Art*, when reversed in tone? In any event, the following tableau entered Milkway’s mind... despite its fuddled state. Doesn’t a man – when clad only in bathing trunks – attack a fish-man on a sinking raft? Isn’t it a skit on H.P. Lovecraft’s *The Shadow over Innsmouth* about miscegenation... fish-to-man or man-to-fish? Briefly, amidst his drunkenness, Rowbotham wonders whether race mixing is the ultimate communism! Yet again, his fists clang into the scaly body – pow(!) – without undue impact, if only to leave a bloater’s flexion. *Avaunt thee!* The Fishman – an example of his ectoplasm – grapples for one’s head and seizes it violently. This occurs in a paroxysm or reveille – where yonder slug over-powers a mortal. Swivelling on a half-chance, the animate fish wrestles a meat-head. Its grasp proves to be clammy, enclawed, puissant, without a healing balm, and stormy as to its entrails (ultimately). Why don’t you feel the force? Then an idea of Machiavellian index, or sheer devilry, provides cheer. It also enters a fish’s mind like horizontal sleet... the former electrically passing through water as an eel. Never mind: since this armoured bi-ped reaches so as to annihilate a face – a visage. It does so knowing, no matter how primevally, that one’s physiognomy waxes crucial: both in terms o’ dignity & self-

respect. Destroy it, *crapaud*, and the man falls to a skate's wing; if riven to its sides in the deepest ocean.

PART EIGHT

Back in his wife's ornate room, however, Trevor Rowbotham remembers what he's set out to do... namely, to grind her antiques to paste. *Touché!* He looks around him with less than a grieving grin. Behold (!), he immediately staggers towards an ornate eighteenth century mirror in the distance, and determines to be its wrecking crew (without a doubt). This will be the seat of such Apollyon – Oh my yes! The reflector has an ornate curlicue or surround, set in an orange compass, and it limns a translucent or shimmering skid. Nor must one resist its lamination or glistening aspect; prior to a liquor flask landing amidships. Truly, it's smashed into a thousand shards – as Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham) hurled his Napoleon 'brandy' bottle into it. He accompanies this with gibbering glee: 'HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!', he slurps. Whereas – immediately next to the hanging ornament – there comes a Pissaro, plus a swirling signature, in a built-up frame. (The latter stacks its own bodice to the hindmost). Similarly, an expensive cigarette box lies beneath the mirror – most directly – and it's made of solid silver, when accompanied by two candle-sticks. They prove to be ornate, fluted, ormolu and heavily shanked. A grand Victorian fireplace accompanies this bevy --- you won't be surprised to learn that the shattered glass lay above. It came fastened to a perpendicular incline against a lime green wall. "She lives for this crazy caboodle of objects!", he avers. "Well(!), I'll fix her – as heck as like. Nothing shall escape the beneficence of my slaughter (to be sure). It'll delineate the puma under vivisection, whimpering as a result of Doctor Moreau's hand, and with an iodine portmanteau up above. HA! HA! These *objects d'art* – to abstract the frenzy of the collector's bug – are all the woman exists for. She thrives on agin' corpsedom so as to shore up *anomie* and render a meaning over futility. Bah! I'll slay this false exercise in patterning; (assuredly so). Isn't it an example of John Fowles'

The Collector in reverse? Then, when the criminal classes and Shi'a mob of downtown Baghdad've run amok, the antiquities of Assyria and Babylon lie asunder. HA! Destruction is nature's plague on goodness. That's right, me ducks, and therein I'll finish *avec* my grand madam... plus her desire to ruin. Our union's loveless (hic), Mrs Townsend (Side Rowbotham) wed me for my money and her collecting bug seeks to reduce me to beggary. Yet no; I'll break her face in with a shovel prior to my drowning in a green-scummed pond. No. Yes? HA! Nullity happens to be a residual prestige of absence. Nihilism must be the new crowning grace, in terms of a night-cap. Let it be! Come destructive night and reap rapine on teddy bears... One's life can only revisit a splashing through the latrine of giants. It's gargantuan (*a la* Rabelais) in its cloacal waste – didn't Georges Bataille witter on about the lapsed energy o' entropy? Surely now, my friends, tea and scones with Ron Davies (ex-MP) is the worst offence? For, as Bill Hopkins once instructed Emeric Pressburger, the greatest of feasts ends in a chamber pot's leavings... HA!" (He then let out an almighty burp or eructation!)

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Didn't Stewart Home once erect a pathetic protest against the Turner Prize by listing its dinner menu?

PART NINE

In the next moment or so, *per se*, Trevor Milkway limbers up to a silent film of his derivation – maybe a more violent version of F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Didn't it take off and fly in 1924? He swivels with the axe and breaks its moniker – in order to belabour these antiques. Truly, this halberd or its naked scimitar (sic) circles in a circumadjacent arc... First, it takes the head off a neo-classical bust after either Praxiteles, Skopos or Lysippos... And, come to think of it, might the subtle Hellenism of this piece *a la* Flaxman resemble his wife, Mrs Townsend Side Rowbotham? It indicates a secret sharing or poignancy; at once dulcet, marbling, keen shaven and dissembling. Can it be sheer

(if not purple) in one's dwindling light? On the first impact of Trevor's cricket-bat, however, the head splurges off and whizzes through the air like a mortal's haggis – or severed scrotum. Isn't Milkway suitably proud of the fact that he's rendered his spouse headless? To proceed even further, though: the ax(e) whistles in its sovran listlessness – if only to pass close to a grand piano. It is of mid-European or nineteenth century vintage, and comes imprisoned in a yellow livery. Its wide and expansive lid was up; together with a baroque curlicue or engraving at the side. Do you fear the exposure of the music on its stand? Maybe it will be Offenbach, sweet pea, Colin Ireland, Liszt, Messaien and Samuel Taylor Coleridge – as a token negroid or congoid? Possibly so, its canopy or screen definitely rocks under the impress of Thor's hammer: although a drunk like Milkway Rowbotham hardly mourns. Against this, a Louis XIV or *sun king* table, inlaid with silver wire, contributes to an ineffable feeling of absorption – one that supposes a density of space. Furthermore, the back of the room indicates objects of a reddish or blue hue... such as a Regency mirror and an Art Deco lamp, possibly a nexus of nude/fawn. It sat on a bureau at the cubicle's rear; whereas some dark-green curtains, often hidden in alcoves, made up the accompanying void. The ceiling had to be jet-black in its timbre or moral vibration, after a sequence drawn from one of Aleister Crowley's houses. Yes again: but, *au contraire*, Trevor Milkway Rowbotham stumped up to an anguish he didn't feel, (not really). As he levelled his weapon against his wife's treasures – the following gas escaped: "Blast it! She won't capture me in a misprisionment of steel... I'll tell you, old thing, not one item of this lively *bric-a-brac* (or *pot-pourri* of absence) shall be left alive. I must have occasion to wreck it, smash it, eviscerate it, disembowel it, discombobulate its innards – render it mute – and so forth. I've got to bash the entire *farrago* or rag-bag to bits in order to remain human, you see!" (With this, he whirled round in a renewed transport so as to complete his task).

PART TEN

Whilst engaged upon such a caravan, though, a fantasy o' escape ennobles his brow. It took the following form. "Won't I fidget around sleet's partiality – don't you know? It essentially took off an absent architrave; wherein a fish-man's legs besport themselves on some naked planks. These feet (or claws) rescue the sodden wood's nature from oblivion. Let's see now! It saw the ribbed extras of this enclosure, if only to gaze askance on webbed toes. Likewise, some water or H₂O nibbled at these addenda – as the wide Sargasso sea churns around. (Wasn't this an image wrought from Jean Rhys' work?) In any likelihood, a mortal pair of pins stood afore our horizontal fish who responded thus: "I will take your features, man of no-iron! This maximises a vengeance of the amphibian upon our mammals... and once they've seen your lost image, my ectoplasm, they can understand a *kaos*' elixir. Most abundantly, hatred is a creative emotion like the love it inverts – and one stretches it out in order to create patterns, illumined prismically, or after some lead paint in stained glass. *Ils verront ton visage... et comprendront!*"

PART ELEVEN

With a derisive snort, *ceteris paribus*, the husband of this manse (Trevor Milkway) set about his temple. It came characterised by a silence of the Gods – most definitely – and snow lay around its fastness. (Such frozen water was heaped in clusters or constellations). The dwelling itself, however, indicated one of Nicholas Hawksmoor's designs... possibly a vestige that a student has finished. Like St. Mary Magdalene's church in Bedfordshire on the Chilterns (and near Whipsnade), it entertained a harsh ambit. This is a sparenness or rawness, even a captivity or estrangement. Try to think of a combination o' Theodore Sturgeon's *Camp Concentration* and Iain Sinclair's *Lud Heat*... why don't you? Still, a lone template of wolves scurried outside; they leapt, ramped and howled. Whereas – deep inside the sepulchre or grove – a skeleton, devoid of all skin, sat on a dais. It entertained a throne of ebon marble.

PART TWELVE

Above all, Mister Rowbotham launched into an attack on a Queen Anne table with an axe – it proved to be redoubtable, brown and gold. It split asunder or apiece (also) with an immense strike of the halberd, and this caused the wood to curve up or break... magisterially so. Likewise, a shattering of gore – no matter how spent and from a tree cathedral – rose up all around him. It littered the place with ash --- never mind this great CRASH! As he did this, Trevor Milkway's features were convulsed or manic; and at once startled, saturnine, fervid, bitter, twisted and forgotten. He bore upon his brow the headiness of a Conan Doyle villain – say, the serpentine doctor in *The Case of the Speckled Band*, (for example). Now then, his axe reared up so violently that it brought down a curtain rail; this carried a green drape or coverlet some way behind. It slumped on the margins of an existential turmoil, therefore. Moreover, this *weaponisation* (in the hands of Grendel rather than Beowulf) cut a chord. It dissociated its own axis or marvel. Again, the slashed down curtain-rail reveals a dark evening – it penetrates, square on, from a French window's rear. Can one credit its truculence? As Milkway trampolines or shoots forward into RFC (Royal Flying Corps) violence – his dress becomes dishevelled or ragged. His brownish jacket (redolent of earth tones) looks baggy, over-ventilated, capacious and sack-like. Whereas the fellow's tie, shirt and walk-ons were stained, un-marbled, lifted off the peg and distressed. Thus, Trevor Milkway Rowbotham addressed these disappearing props: “I'll eviscerate aught, do ya hear? It reminds me of a face-mask at the Black Museum in New Scotland Yard. Yes indeed, I mean to destroy everything that exists like a satanic thaumaturge... to be sure. Aren't I ensorcelled, most evidently? I must pay her back and leave Townsend with nothing – or a nullity, *Neant*, plus a zero's kind. 'Prithee, nuncle or auntie, thou art an O without a figure'. HA! HA! HA! HEE! HEE!”

PART THIRTEEN

Quickly, in a dreamy residue, terror grips a doll's visage from one of Sarban's short stories. Do you hear us? Since our fishman (or anthropoid) grasps a humanoid in a vice-like trance. He does this by ripping off his face and throwing him to the raft's floor. 'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!' He is dead or a corse – yet those hands that release him are claw-like, craggy, reptilian, Vulcan or scaly. Then the man plummets to a wooden foil; if only to lie like a broken manikin with a smooth physiognomy. It looks like a billiard ball or a store dummy (without eyes or teeth), and our skate-boarder proves exultant. "Behold, infidels of purport!", bellows our cod-piece, "in one fell swoon, the fatal ends of a Gordian knot unravel... in that mutation, radical change, death, absolution, a glue-like fixity and transformation all concur. They reap the rewards of a spent whirlwind... one that gibbers (facelessly) in these bluffs. Again, assess this closely, it is the profoundest gesture from a deep ooze or the nethermost ocean. Whosoever – or whatever – knows what actually lurks down there, eh?"

PART FOURTEEN

Within the cathedral of this room, however, Rowbotham continues his berserker cry; yet he is now espied. For two servants have gathered to watch his destructive carousal – at least from a distance o' plenty. They are Peaches and Monocle, and, in the best tradition of arsenic & old lace, one happens to be a cook... while the other answers to the title of serving wench. Albeit, inside a variant on A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel*, Trevor Milkway wreaks pandemonium from so many empty seats. All around his urges, then, a zebra or gryphon parts the hairs of a cyropod who has clippers for hands – even though 'he' possesses a face at his stomach's heart. Might this be an illustration of mediaevalism or the *kaos* theory (drug induced) of William S. Burroughs' whimsy? Give it a rest: *quod* like the original arbitrage of Bedlam, never mind its post-Adamic language, each sheltering sky left nothing but spent glass. It made up those

companion pieces from so many smashed mirrors, each one bringing seven years' bad luck. Moreover, Trevor whizzes around this cube axe-in-hand, and, ascribing to its violence, orange walls show up Labisse's prism. It cuts the dexterity of any clash using no force whatsoever. Indeed, a ripped Louis XIV chair – made from coiled silver wire – had no need to be returned to the Peabody Museum, Chicago. (This was especially given its hanging vestments, unfelt spiel, lost vacancy and spoilt nudism). Above all, shattered vases, the teeth of oblivion, harshly green curtains, upended fire-places (Victorian), listing casements, ossuaries without a sunrise and legless foot-rests all ad-lib or putter out. They splinter, fracture, become dehiscent – or lick paint off a forgery *a la* Eric Hebborn – and it positions ornate table-legs in a delinquent 'tic'. Similarly, in the middle of this whirligig or Kali's dance, our tumble-weed rushes in a dust bowl. A new dervish, perchance – he races around akin to a goat struck down by the gid or a pit-bull circling its own tail. The axe-head or halberd rears above his top-notch, and makes leave to strike. Oh my yes, it's most peculiar... since a man with Sartre's *iron in the soul* (rather than artistry) has finally arrived: in that he's forced himself onto the front page of Erich Fromm's *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. This was indolent of any other caprices, such as Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*.

PART FIFTEEN

Needless to say, the cook and her fellow servant-girl look on askance (or bewildered) by such infractions against Facebook. There's also a neediness here... as one of the serving class stands by a brownish door with a clenched fist. She wears or besorts an ultramarine pinafore plus a yellow wrap – even by dint of a surplice's abutment. Do you hear? Her title badgers to Peaches amid a fear of chaos or Little Giddings; whereas her accomplice, Monocle, prepared the meals and kept T.S. Eliot at bay. This woman wore a green pattern dress and entertained some wrought iron hair... she came to utter the following refrain. "By Gad, my giddy aunt! The old loony tune has gone

completely berserk and no mistake. Isn't it an example of a drunk and seedy Jeffrey Barnard, in a Soho pub like the "Coach & Horses", doing an egg and board trick? Anyway, the explosion which his own brother predicted has come to pass. What do we do, Peaches? All of this belly-aching loosens up the staying power of a priapic vampire. Do you remember – if not necessarily as a choice – those primitive figures on English hill-sides? They were gigantic, Gargantuan *a la* Rabelais, club-wielding and well-endowed. Could this relate to a magnetised substratum in the ground? To be sure: there's a better part of a million pounds worth of antiques in that room. They are reliquaries of a rare distance and prestige; especially in the format of loungers, hanging pots, chandeliers, wood carvern eaglets, ornate silks and untroubled dark woods, plus nacreous pearls and classicising 'vim'. What one had in mind was a girl's elongated form – possibly a ballet dancer like Simone Clark or Hillary Chasteneuf – and it took the ambit of a green bronze. It was burnished in its sheen and cast, much like an *object d'art* by Ouline. We have to rescue this bounty from oblivion. Come on, matron, let's go in!"

PART SIXTEEN

In its brief unfolding or foundry, Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham) entertained a phantasm which can be looked upon in books. These adopted the pages of the Strugatsky brothers' *Interzone*, Jack London's *The Iron Heel* and Alex Kurtagic's *Mister*. Yes undoubtedly, it flared briefly before dying (asunder); whilst, if you recall, a faceless corse thudded down to the wood. It was sodden all the way through, (doubtless); and a pair of taloned claws let him slip o'er life's rubbish dump. What did the amphibian or Sybarite utter at this point? Why, one remembers it thus: 'Behold! Humanoids of pain or spent wolflings... reject the unconscious mind. Nor should one dwell on Carl Jung's *The Revolution in Nihilism* (unduly). For heretofore, I wipe clean a face. HA! HA! HA! Raw sadism is a panoply of indifference to pity. Yes, *mon ami*, it means aught but a severance from the

Fool's line in Lear. 'Thou art an O without a figure; a nothingness.' How the vigour of its trope assaults me – it enervates a twin-set via some Witchcraft's delight... Observe this: it uncovers mutation, death and revenge all at once and *après* the deep-sea's turbid foam. HA! HA! HA! Such power liberates the shaft – it plunges Man, as a reptile, into deeper castles of the mind. Let us celebrate the kiss of peace (in death) from our ocean..." Wasn't this Fishman, in truth, an exterior cast of Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham)?

PART SEVENTEEN

Both of the servants, Peaches and Monocle, now enter the room in order to confront their master. They do so as hags in treacle who sense a tremulousness afore one's grave. Do you detect it, please? Monocle – the cook – goes in first of all or twain; and she finishes with a furnace of so much meat... the latter in irons. Her double-chin wobbles and quivers like that of a turkey cock; itself made up from the glabrous tidings of so much flesh (or suet). Whereas her companion in mischief, Peaches, creeps about like a church mouse or a servant in an Agatha Christie story. Her eyes were timid, vascular, deep-seated, inter-penetrated and left alone – as if they sensed the hurdy-gurdy man at English fairs. Wouldn't Thomas Hardy have explored such a theme – no matter what? Yet this exemplification of *Wood and Stone*, *a la* John Cowper Powys, does not approach Trevor Milkway's eye-brows. He stands alone amid Comus' Rout or a replete attitude; what with a shambles or negation quivering at this time. Above all, Mister Rowbotham grasps an axe in twin fists... and it's held grimly, paw for paw, as if to genuflect over Anton LaVey's or Kevin R. Slaughter's pyre. Indeed, liquor runs down his cheek, the man's hair comes dishevelled or unpronounced; while his dress seems to be scattered around him like a scarecrow. He speaks in a roaring tremor: "What do ya think you're doing, me ducks? I'll cash in on the roving nature of your blade – to be sure. For those who enter a room, prior to a sarcophagi or its entreaty, may not choose to leave it. Dost thou see this, sweetie

pie?” Peaches travelled to her target like a wet rag, but she has the courage to enunciate it. Perhaps our *bourgeois* bag-lady springs back from the dart board having hit a wire. Oh yes! She pronounces the following diction: “Master Trevor, desist – we invite you to register a protest against Apollyon. Must one go on proceeding to trigger the advent of Milton’s poesy – page after page of it? Stop, sop, rot, stop... please sir; you are becoming afflicted with the *raw creation* of John Maizels’ fandango. Why don’t you let us into the closing iron maiden that ye sense all around, eh?” “Bah!”, he replied, “I shall be the master (or scourge) of any wringing towels in this vicinity... so to say. Moreover, (and speaking through a kaleidoscope of drink), I deposit ordure upon my own carpets, if you please... Likewise, a man has the right to get blinding drunk or steaming in his loft, out-house or broken-down chamber. In truth, those awnings or hangings lie ripped to shreds – and they are deposited around the stone flags, or draws, of this nethermost cubicle. Let it pass: since the amorality of purport leads to a scene like the neo-classical church in Ayot St. Lawrence... Whereupon – and deep in its recesses – an ape-man hunts those corridors looking for mortal prey, and each one comes to be characterised by torches, shields or niches. Those scarlet banners, however, turn out to be less flags of indifference than curtains or drapes... each one of which ‘drags’ down. The simian or anthropoid wants to break open the shins so as to feed on the marrow therein – and it enjoins a man-thing who gibbers. A subdued light infuses all; in a situation where I gambol along, shift to shift, and with a rolling gait. It rollicks along at a plentiful lick – but I’m really all aglow or searching for a device/sieve. (The mastery of so many miseries are mine, you see – yet I can pull on a silken cord, in the corner of a room, so as to blast my enemies into dust). It travels along after a torpedo in the sea when drawn by Gene Colan. Nor need I fear the reaper; no siree, since my ‘planet of the apes’ had long since slain a servant, if only to leave him miscued in a back-stairs room. I observe it clearly. *Quod* the embroidery of our web’s violence has to speak of a poisonous arachnid at its heart.

Needless to say, one dead waiter (male) lay in pillion or dumbshow in a recess, alcove, booth or antechamber. It struck up the magisterial presence of so much absence – without falling into scholasticism. Furthermore, a dead butler likens to a stick-insect merging *avec* wood; and his head leers in a manner that's no joke. Ultimately though, it stinks of sulphur or those lotus blossoms of Khitian rage; given the pumice of their estrangement. Wasn't the spine of our man-servant broken, in accord with *Cluedo*'s vantage point? And didn't his skull seem to be grinning at you (inanely or what); when the cranium was bent behind the shoulder? It crossed the Y-axis of implausibility, no matter what else. I'll do whatever I please in my own abode and any individual, whether male or female, risks aught if they deny it. Heed, madam, the axe – in that any who cross my path shall be brained by it (hic). Do you understand me, Peaches and Monocle?" With this effrontery completed, he took a great swig from the whisky jar.

PART EIGHTEEN

Behold(!), my companions in avoiding sleep. For an emanation of Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham has emerged; and she exists at the back of a submerged raft. Or if not cascaded or o'erplunged, then it's sodden to the embrace of so much water... itself piled high about an ocean's ooze. Her dwelling – in a forward direction – is provocative, given a nakedness from the waist up, a brassiere and skin-tight trousers. (The latter adornment was clasped in the form of a webbing, at any time of asking). Do you know? Nonetheless, her features were contorted with pain or grief, and the eyes look lost, transfixed, cross-captioned or riven. Mightn't they be black marbles (?) when drawn from the eyes of a goddess in a J.G. Ballard story, and who's copper skinned? "By the stars", she cries, "hail the moon-shine of Orion – what have you done, O Titan!?" By Hecate's eddying teats or dogs, he has no face or visage. It is as if, in accord with an ancient curse, his very identity's been taken or leavened. Above all, it gerrymanders a *soufflé* of plains – if only

to excoriate the surface of some surrounding dough.” She then proceeds to beat her chest in abandonment. Let it rip!

PART NINETEEN

Back in the room of his mansion or town-house, though, Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham) contrives to go berserk. He limbers up to a dexterity or proportion of those New Gods; albeit in a state of high drunkenness or non-hilarity. He skims the surface of a moon-beam and comes up trumps – if only to straddle two dimensions with a blade. Behind his fixity the apartment waxes to chaos or disorder, and a green curtain-rail disacknowledges its presence. It exists in a corner – by the by. Again, the orange walls of this pad subsist as an origami exercise – one which swivels around its orientation or mount. Likewise, a reddish hue amplifies a mullioned frame – itself deep-set – and other appurtenances lie in corners or aft. To put it bluntly, this abattoir or shambles has fastened on antiques – i.e., these are items or *objects d'art* that litter a neighbouring floor. Thus, we find a medley of broken hat-stands, Chippendale furniture, Queen Anne chairs or loafers with stiff backs, as well as upturned tables, bureaux, stools and assorted planks of wood. [Note: don't you remember that portrait of Somerset Maugham, looking epicene, by Graham Sutherland? It was later satirised by Francis Bacon who featured a dwarf, refracted and cut-up, in a dirty mustard light.] A light blue or azure frieze superintends the room's features – and it does so by dividing those sandy walls from a jet-black ceiling. It fulfils a quadrant when directly above. It has to be this way, don't you understand? Moreover, a very ornate painting (possibly a Canelletto) in a ‘puffa’ frame – when dyed green – lies askew on an adjacent wall. Amidst this barn-stormer or rough house, Trevor Milkway shrieks: “Get out! Get asunder or disembowel yourself, my wretches! For the next time I spy yonder forms you'll be dying in pools of blood, or conversely a Paolozzi sculpture shall have taken over. Yes madams, you may well flee – I'm blind drunk and this Louisiana half-face will fillet the twain like a haunch of venison. Hurrah!” He swung the axe

around and about, and he lurched unsteadily on his feet amidships. The serving wench known as Monocle started violently and leapt for the door. “He’s quite mad”, she cried, “and our erstwhile ‘master’ has befuddled his senses... Trevor Rowbotham’s literally wild with drink or liquor, and it’s transformed a milksop into Peter Ackroyd’s variant on *The Limehouse Golem*. I’m outta here, me ducks---.”

PART TWENTY

A click or snick has occurred on the periphery of our vision, and Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham returns to survey the scene. It affects to distil a ghastly glow – be Gad! For, like the eponymous Queen Victoria, she is definitely *not amused*! Her visage or mask – after the pattern of Lady Macbeth – proved to be imponderable, at least in terms of Arthur Wragg’s B-pencil. Look at this! She enters the hallway with a quick-silver start, not to say a deposition where a princess kisses a frog on a tasselled cushion. It proves ornate (this *pouffe* of the mind) and has four felt diamonds hanging from its corners. Anyway, the emerald door’s long closed on Clytaemnestra’s entry... at the back of our Grecian tableau. Indeed, a lighter or svelte hue – possibly a rare photosynthesis – inundates the hall’s backward part. Behind her prismatic capture or form, though, a bald antique dealer carries some ‘presents’. He sports a brief and slightly upturned bow-tie under his chin, and this provides a companion piece to J.G. Ballard. (Although – in such a case – he resiles to a moustachioed version who’s altogether on a smaller scale). One of the servants, Monocle, stands in front of her mistress’ display or peacock rally... and she looks askance. Didn’t the Hungarian composer, Kodaly, bend to a Magyar *polka* one peacock’s feather? In any case, a fluted and ornately-framed mirror – with an Eric Gill bust of “her” in front – shimmered its illusion out aways. Would Kate Bush’s high pitch in *Wuthering Heights* have smashed it into shards? Yet Side-Rowbotham’s basilisk stare fillets all: and, like an ancient Medusa, it turned everything to stone. At first one notices her stiffness of bearing – one which is

compacted from an inner erectness or Spartan ease. Maybe both Friedrich Nietzsche and Lord Lucan would call it *breeding*? A prim hat, made from fine orange wool, covers her head; while the jacket she wears was barely military as to its cast... being a medley of pockets, slips, lapels, straps, artichokes, zippers and cuffs. To be sure: a bevy of new ornaments or antiques, including one in particular, nestle in her robotic arms and gloves. "What is the meaning of this outrage?", she demands. "How can one gainsay a racket of ages or dunes – let it be! My peace cannot be disturbed (necessarily) by the axe which passes through a neck with nary a snick, do you see? For even the execution of a Stuart, like Charles I, took plenty of time and the head lolled off the body awhile. It took many moments to drop, perchance, from the cleaver's edge to Madame Defargue's basket. But, I won't ask twice, what's the reckoning of this static?" She quickly shot a glance at her servant woman, Monocle, who stood with her mouth agape – rather like a nurse on Odessa's steps in *Battleship Potemkin*. "Don't go in their, mistress grief!", she begged, "your husband subsists within and he's enraged. He holds an axe in between both fists and belabours your antiques, rather like a crazed figure in a Bacon oil-painting. Do you detect its rapine afore an effigy or scarecrow – no matter how the Wickerman fares? Mightn't it embolden a resurgent paganism in yon salon? You mustn't enter the mind's scriptorium, Mrs Rowbotham, I won't prove liable for the issue else. Certainly, we are in the grip of an engraving like *The Sabbat* by Spranger. Your spouse's gone awol, run amok, or become a berserker who brandishes a halberd – there's no doubting what he may attain (yet). I beg you not to enter your neo-Aristotelian pageant or secret garden, provided with sprigs and a colonnade, Mrs. Townsend." "Stuff and nonsense", replied her upper-class mistress, "stand aside, damn you! I intend to enter any and all leonine dens."

PART TWENTY-ONE

What does Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham really look like? Well, the answer obtrudes as a double helix – after infinity's

figure in mathematics. Yes... For, in compaction, her face is severe, elongated and slightly masculine as to cast. Its hair proves to be iron grey or pumiced (rather than pomaded); and her eyes limber athwart the reptilian. They were quick, darting, unromantic, deeply realistic and reminiscent of the inferno in *Auto-da-fe*, Elias Canetti's novel, at its close. Likewise, Mrs Townsend's jaw lay off-square, prehensile and tortured over its average or mean. Perhaps, albeit momentarily, she incarnates the following dream, spell or peculation... This exists in a separate 'route' or space to her husband's fancies – but maybe all such things are connected. She sits (as yet) unflustered and with an elephant's head, albeit behind an ornate or ebon door with a silvery skull on it. At its heart our mistress loaf on a throne of fine green-brick – what with an elephant's skull nestling atop her rafters. It appears to be lop-sided, spend-thrift and wide-eared: almost to a degree that's top heavy in its cranial lurch. Does one notice it? In any circumstance, the tear ducts are active and a lachrymose convoy dribbles down her cheeks... But, on closer inspection, it turns into nought save gold – or at least, a stream of gems which becomes more and more solid in the light. These were onyx, a plethora of glass, carnelian, ruby, beryl, nacreous pelt, emerald, cornelian, topaz and cat's-eye. Yet aren't these (also) the putative wings of an avenger at a later date? Immediately though – her mind returns to the above drama, noises off and a CRASH from the room housing one's antiques. In her case, a collection of *objects d'art* makes palatable a loveless marriage. *Ergo...*

TWENTY-TWO

Contemptuously now, she strides past two servants and a helpless antiques dealer... he's hopping from foot-to-foot like a little bird. Doesn't he recall those sparrows of the field upon which Messiaen based piano music? Yes... Admittedly, Mrs Rowbotham approaches this portal with aplomb and it takes the form of lattices – themselves structured in brown and green. Yet again, she sweeps past an inter-connecting door in a corridor

that's a flaccid grey. "What's wrong, my hearties or ninnies?", she admonishes them. "Has the marrow in yonder bones turned to treacle or liquid so quickly? In truth, your cowardice reeks afore me like rotting meat... it causes a stench to grow up in one's veriest nostrils, do you hear? At any rate, I guessed that Trevor Milkway would revenge himself in an under-hand or philistine way, (so to say). It's typical of him. Whatever surprises me is your pusillanimity before these fates. He carries no stick or moral cudgel. He's just one man, don't you know? (With this, she swept ahead of the others and began to open the door to a windswept *salon*). Nonetheless, the servant wench known as Monocle cried out aghast: "Mrs Townsend, I plead with you against gaining egress... most definitely. Does Daniel deliberately thrust himself into leonine jaws aforethought? Your husband, Trevor Milkway, is blindly drunk and capable of any counter-measure. For sure: listen to the cacophony of destruction taking place inside. Who would willingly throw open the treasury gate to such a whirligig or vortex? Not me, your honour – O no; it's like the beggarly ol' warden at the keep after Duncan's murder in *Macbeth*." Mrs Side-Rowbotham was no longer listening, however.

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And might, at another scalp, a humanoid with an elephant-head not laugh? It certainly moved with swiftness and aplomb over a bejewelled landscape... one which saw the *avenger* pursue a dead-man walking. He looked remarkably like Mr Townsend (Trevor Milkway); plus those sandals on his feet, a black cowl, tufty eyebrows and a shaven pate. May a little brown spider flee from its *black widow* in this way – or is it a vaudeville number (merely)?

TWENTY-THREE

Avaunt thee! The door to a cultural apartment or 'museum' has opened, and a husband & wife face one another. Most especially, it betokens an avenue of slaughter or renewal. Again: one reckons to the fact that human lives are bullets passing via

screens... *n'est ce-pas?* Furthermore, the room into which they pass is dishevelled – what with this yellowing sweep or scree upon the scene. It leavens up to a desert or its abstraction... even if we notice a shattered and ornate mirror hanging from a frame, ormolu bedecked. Could it denote seven bad years to come? Yes, me ducks... for a disparate mantel-piece sways accordingly. Its inner fastness caparisons a red --- even the bloodiest or scarlet fondue. Whilst a set of ornate candles and a flask limber up to an upturned decibel; it's almost a shout from the recesses of Breton's *Minotaur*: (never mind *The Collectible Antiques Price Guide* by James Mackay). “Stop it this instant, Trevor, do you hear?”, sneered Mrs Rowbotham. “You snivelling insect or idiot – take your pick from Goren's bridge openings, why don't ya? I will not have you subscribing to such a scene from a triple-decker Victorian novel or *roman* – you aren't a Bulwer Lytton character, groveller, even in reprise. Silence the distaff eddy of such a reproof... I demand it! The *misalliance* of my gaze will not permit the bunting to be put up in Broadmoor's wards. I won't have a carry-on during my round or walking-tour...” “Ah!”, snuffled Trevor Milkway in a drunken sot, “the mistress of the house has returned, I see! Beloved – how goes it, eh?” (He then proceeds to blow a fake lover's kiss or splutter; but it comes out like a raspberry, belch and eructation). “How goes it? You've been buying up a Mardi Gras of new torments, haven't you? It's like one of those 'negative circus' troupes or carnivals in Wyndham Lewis' collection, *The Wild Body*. I can detect a burgeoning cornucopia under each arm – all of it paid for by money or gold bars I no longer possess. Yessum... the pressure of this deliverance seeks to shatter a phrenologist's skull – itself a *diktat* that hints, amidst porcelain, at those emotional tensions or pits. They are bound to utter locutions, to devour insects and cry out – in a side-show – with a fair-ground's barkers. Witness this: didn't the anti-bourgeois circus *Archaos* come unstuck when a juggler misjudged the flight, admittedly using chainsaws, and was sliced in half? It suits the mascara and grease paint on Marion Manson's living corpse... no matter. In truth, I haven't

smashed aught asunder yet and I was saving you ‘till last (necessarily so). But now you’ve appeared in this boudoir, my darling, I can give your corse my undivided attention. It deserves no less...” Moreover, in this hybrid moment, Mister Rowbotham follows a fashion o’ derangement; given that he’s steaming, disharmonious, tieless, unbecalmed, tired and emotional, or otherwise Quasimodo’(d). He revolves or spins the axe-head in both hands during these proceedings.

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To be sure: he also becomes apprised of one of his wife’s dreams or fancies. How can this be, my lords? It involves an elephant god or hustling who sits on a blackened throne – surely its lintel or sheen indicates ebon marble? Atop this (imponderably) a beast-woman with shrivelled breasts dwells on a life’s carnage. It causes her to cry or wax lachrymose, and a fillet of dew coruscates its trunk. Above all, those great ears hang down aplenty in their wilting charm; if only to level up to the foulness of forgotten dreams. A creature’s body – such as this one – bears upon it the marks of the torture-chamber, rack and surplus. Give into it... for who reads the meter on this forgetting save Trevor Milkway, her husband, who lies asleep under the influence of drugs in an adjacent chamber? Might his swoon ‘liberate’ the accompaniment of many filters; as laid out by a tonsured William Burroughs in *Naked Lunch*? They may be demerol, morphia, heroin, crack cocaine, amphetamine, LSD, ‘skunk’ marijuana, horse injections, ecstasy ‘pills’, amyl nitrate, herbal “highs”, meths and lozenges aplenty. All in all, they hint at what Dowson’s *Yellow Book* called a beauteous damnation...

TWENTY-FOUR

Yet artistic decadence aside, this married couple confront one another in a wrecked *salon*. It certainly achieves its aplomb through the pieces of the grave. “I shall bequeath you my undivided attention!”, burst out Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham). He seemed to involuntarily raise the axe – rather like a conductor’s baton – as he spoke. You’ve chosen to rob me from

the day you married me, and your cupidity and greed has worsened over time. (Hic!) Don't think the depletion of a bank-balance passes unnoticed... and, in these circumstances, uxoricide pleases dwarfs. Oh my yes... (He chuckles madly to himself awhile). Meanwhile, a hurricane looks to have transformed the room around him; what with a smashed mirror, (ornately intended), a spartan fire-place, and hanging drapes of the deepest green. Her husband's timid and rather droning voice reaches a peak – yet still recalls the squeaking of a rat like Hadjiphilippou. Might one side of his face, in a secret concord, sport a tribal tattoo or vine leaf? Also, won't such a spider distend its thorax over prey – as it scuttles around its web seeking succour? Let us be sure of our bearings now... For Trevor Milkway pipes up: "You're a wretched leech who suppurates on a corpse's wounds! I have fathomed the inner motivations of yonder host – you mean to suck me dry and leave me bereft, or hollowed out, like a crab apple. Under such a travail, I'd be reduced to beggary or the trampings of insouciance – after one of Beckett's strollers. Hear me, wife! I refuse an active penury; nor shall I be drilled out in the manner of an unripe plum. You're a psychic vampire who's bled me for years; but now I must rob you of your life. HA! HA!" (He held the axe up as if to strike a fatal blow or engage in an itinerant charge). And, just for a moment, a spectre of fear and anxiety crosses over Mrs Townsend Rowbotham's features... might her ant of a hubby actually mean it? May Dion Fortune be right?

TWENTY-FIVE

Yet what superintends in a world of dream or fancy? Who can rightly configure it? Again, two things need to be said; in that this couple have exchanged their fantasies. For his part, he remembers the postern gate to one of Weird's exercises... In which a magician lies asleep in a hidden alcove or booth – whilst black-sheets transfix his body in a diaphanous way. Indeed, under the impress of their silken breviary, we note an exemplum... may it sooth one of Gunter von Hagens'

plastinates? To be sure: our guide lay abed on a dais and underneath a cup-shaped aperture, while, to one side or t'other, braziers burn fitfully. They char the air and leave brackish incense upon it... but it is the antiques dealer, Scribe-End Pentecost, who breaks a miasma borne of lotus blossoms. "Dog of a thousand unclean mangers!", snarls Trevor Rowbotham. (Most notably, the one who peers into a magic camera or pin-hole device – after Muybridge's photos – notices himself at their heart.) "What do you do here – and why does a merchant dare to interrupt one's slumberous petals?" For answer the other places a burnished antiquity on a black-steel table. It has an uncanny resemblance to the statuette his wife carried into the mansion afore. Gingerly, and almost reluctantly, this Lovejoy leaves it next to a silken divan. "I bestow upon you a gift and a last enchantment", whispers his uninvited guest. His voice has a soft lilt or timbre – could Mrs Rowbotham be speaking through her buyer...? No matter: since the *object d'art* in question is a travesty of *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett. It stands about a foot in height and incarnates a serpentine writhing o' the spheres. In this carnate gloom it encroaches upon snakes who wrap themselves about emerald globes. These (in turn) give way to a masterpiece of sculpture – rather like a Paolozzi – wherein asps rise up around the central dome of an earthen astrolabe. It strives to govern the course of the planets and illumine them from above. But, in submission to Tarim's blood, we note that on a lowly plane this Gilbert & George offerant bestows a new *tone*. Won't it be different therein?

TWENTY-SIX

It was at this precise moment that Mrs Rowbotham began to scream, even though a certain diffidence clung to her dressage. She basically doubted that her spouse could summon the gumption (or fortitude) for such a violation. Still, she gestures away from him with a gloved and precise hand... "No! Trevor, stop – desist... think of the impression you're making by this scene. I forbid it! Again, NOOO!" All of the following then

happened in a blur... given that the servant in her blue-and-yellow apron, Monocle, brought down a poker on Rowbotham's head. It proved to be a rebellion against her master (up to a point); and the sandy-haired miscreant went down 'neath an arc. In this regard, the iron stick swung so as to clear its lugs, and Monocle levels it against her employer's brow to prevent *blue* murder. Moreover – if we must speak of sapphire's tincture – the entire *salon* appears to be suffused by cerulean... it bespeaks a sea-green incorruptibility. And in the backsweep one notices distended chair-legs, smashed pottery and upturned baroque furnishings... one silver-wire chair from Louis XIV's reign stands out; its red curves cut against an abiding ultramarine. Also, Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham) subsides quickly under the baton's impress or thud, and he sprawls on the carpet intoxicated by drink. He then lies on this thickly piled ornamentation, and burbles or gurgles like a baby. Soon he is unconscious or fast asleep.

TWENTY-SEVEN

For a moment, Mrs Rowbotham subscribes to what a revolutionary conservative writer, Carl Jung, called *The Revolution in Nihilism*. It deserves more credence than this, doesn't it? Given the following semiotic: since their dreams or fancies have changed and turned tail (whether head-to-head or not). Isn't this reminiscent of Brian Aldiss' novel devoted to the mattoid or delinquent, *Bare-foot in the head*? Anyway, she became aware of a stage-play set on a raft, and it contrived to be a refutation of Edward Bond's marxian effort *The Sea*. Look again now: *quod* a fish-man has ripped the face off a victim, only to recline into turpitude afore vengeance. In the distance, and afore an old'un, a younger vintage of Mrs Rowbotham screams on. She wears skin-tight trousers of a certain mesh, together with a brassiere over her naked top. 'He has no visage!', she keeps on caterwauling awhile. But a form of retribution occurs concurrently – in that the antiques dealer, Scribe-End Pentecost, moves into view on an autogyro. It's a sort of hovercraft or

flying disc device, and he cries out: “Foul monster! I have you in my gun-sights... You won’t dare to mark these cross-wires in the manner of David Carradine in *Alien X*. Yes, an outcome which avoids auto-erotic asphyxiation is in prospect, and I’m here to deliver it. It’s a refutation of Jim Dewey’s *Deliverance* – by want of a ripe gesture.” “What!?” articulated the amphibian, “the rasping quality of the voice speaks to me across the aeons or its void. Most understandably, it seeks to flatter the mammalian against a living-fish – irrespective of Damien Hirst’s shark in formaldehyde.” In enunciating this, the anthropoid turns away in order to disembark into its own element – namely, the deep brine or register of the sea. Nor can one afford to forget its mask; in that this living *shadow over Innesmouth* (sic) is fishy, gill bestrewn, bloater-like, scaled, wide nostrilled or mouthed, as well as leathery over its bony method. Could it be token a Caribbean fish’s head on a hominid’s body? If so, how long will it survive outside the water?

TWENTY-EIGHT

Against the background of an undulation or green curtain – one of her two servants, Monocle, moves to make amends. It passes through the corner-stone of this lightning, in other words, in order to harpoon her breath. Doesn’t it remind you of the yellowing pulp-paper which characterised those *Astounding Stories* of the past? By any candle-power, a maid’s orbs pass like dolls’ eyes to the side or its token; and they denote those metal ducts within which marbles rattle. (Truly, our force at issue bemoans the novella *The Doll’s House* by Sarban/John William Wall). “I had to do it, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham. I’m sorry or apologetic, withal! I could only intervene with a weapon or an instrument of vengeance at this time... lest he’d have murdered you.” “Stuff and nonsense!”, shrilled Mrs Townsend in a robust or matriarchal tone. (A dark blue-to-black window lay behind her at this juncture... might it double upon itself as a French peek-a-boo?) “My foolish or errant spouse contrived to close an iron maiden upon himself. He was merely bluffing from beginning to

end – and didn’t you see how tipsy he became prior to action? There is no other way for a weakling to go... for, as Peter O’Donnell’s *Modesty Blaise* points out, a body’s meek enough for aught if they resort to drugs. I will entertain your twain now...” (and she proceeded to hector the two servants, Peaches and Monocle). “Carry him up to his apartment and put Trevor Milkway to bed, why don’t you? Also, make sure that you pitch his body into the four-poster from the right-side; its curtains and sheets are blood red in aspic. Further – I want you to make his internal key-ring difficult to find, at least provisionally. Why not stoop to putting it in the inner casement within my husband’s bureau... it won’t be his first port of call? NO! He’ll make a full – if sottish – recovery in the morning and be full of remorse. You examine your Ouija board to see whether my surmise proves pluperfect!”

TWENTY-NINE

But what of our parallax or dreamy diction (?); itself the exercise in H.T. Flint’s *Geometrical Optics* which Stewart Home regards imprecisely. He considers it to be an exercise in Disney’s *Fantasia* – or the *angst* of a universal Prole-cult. Within this tabernacle, though, the following *Agon* pursues its course: in that a blast from an autogyro sends a fishman into the sea. He goes into the azure wavelets (themselves churning) so as to fight better under some liquid than on the land... even if it’s a raft made of wooden palisades. Never mind: since Scribe End Pentecost dive bombs ‘it’ from above – and he’s rigged up in a peculiar suit or power surge. May it embody one of those early flying-machines which were tailor-made to the individual pilot? Most definitely...

THIRTY

Back in a veritable termite hill of the twentieth century, then, Mrs Rowbotham collects her thoughts. She has also manoeuvred one of the antiques out of Pentecost’s hands and into her own... He waits dutifully, in turn, for a signal from his mistress to go upstairs with the other treasures. The rotund cook, Peaches,

immediately pipes up in the aftermath of this gesture. “I do hope”, she unctuously counselled, “that Madame will take the plunge and sleep elsewhere this night. After all, there are some goodish or family run hotels in the vicinity... such as the establishment known as ‘David Copperfield’. It advertises itself by making use of a Top or dress hat. Let it be! *Quod* Mister Rowbotham may return to his furious wits during those hours of darkness when *the power of evil is most exalted*. He may try to injure you anon, my Sybil or Mrs Jardine from Rosamund Lehmann’s *The Ballad and the Source*. Don’t let him hurt your issue with a wide-bladed axe, Mrs Townsend.” “Do not vex yourself unnecessarily, Peaches”, responded Madame Rowbotham *avec* an irritated calm. “I intend to lock myself in my own compartment and contact the police about it in the morning. I ask you not to worry about my safety, my loyal servants”, she declared imperiously and with a *mien* reminiscent of Livia, Augustus’ wife. “Maybe I’ll ring the men-in-blue and have them call at the mansion around ten o’clock tomorrow afore noon”, cut in the antiques dealer. “A capital gesture of alarum!”, added *la* Rowbotham hastily.

THIRTY-ONE

Back in her innermost mind, though, a Battle Royal continued. How interesting that her spouse’s fancies should reappear in the wife’s vital-cortex... because Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham is a Clytaemnestra: a woman with the sense of a man. *Avaunt thee*, the robotic figure of an antiques dealer approaches; and he blasts an Amphibian with such force that his head flies off. May it be an extension (or ectoplasm) of Trevor Milkway’s kindred? In this regard, the mouth opens or dilates like a pumpkin’s gob – when carved from its rubbery fruit out Liverpool way. It sidles to the side (likewise), if only to elongate its spastic intent, and this was to facilitate a mushroom’s torque. THWOK! The electricity of such a charge bursts around Trevor’s *alter ego*, and it seems to gain a shock from the watery blancmange. Don’t you feel

revenge coming from a galvanic gun (?) above the sources of the deep sea.

THIRTY-TWO

Meanwhile, Mrs Rowbotham is deep in conversation with her *bric-a-brac* dealer, Scribe End Pentecost. She surveys a scene of destruction within the salon... and hasn't her husband fallen victim to Erich Fromm's analysis, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*? Methinks thee – that a spate of attacks on great paintings, like Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* or David's *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, fulfilled such a need in the 'seventies or 'eighties. Look here: a tall or light green curtain stands ripped in its rent hue, and a Caravaggio in an ornate or orange frame rests nearby. "Will you veer close to this miserable finery (?)", intoned Mrs Townsend, "my errant and cowardly spouse has destroyed some choice items. For truthfully, the masses are bestial and philistine... they care not a fart in their corduroys over art. Both Gustav le Bon and Elias Canetti were right (you see), and my husband shares the passionate hatred of the majority *viz. Kultur*. The idiot and mountebank! Just go and stare at the priceless treasures which he's tried to ruin... yes indeed, my insurance may recover most of it – but we speak here about matters other than money." Her dealer remained quiet momentarily and then our Lovejoy spoke. "My Lady, perhaps you ought not to bring your finery or purchases into the house – it might add nought but oil to the fire. A pattern o' discretion might reduce a febrile clock-piece, and it can then bed down in order to facilitate silence." As he says this, my mistress' companion, a stray eye glances over him. He happens to be a bald man – of middling age and height, and his remaining hair is monkish, lost, all of a pattern, fading to grey or lights-out. Also, Scribe End Pentecost wears a blue shirt with a red bow-tie; it might be polkadot in aspect. Whereas his suit pulsates to a dun-coloured direction or impress, and it appears to be lined *avec* strips of woad. A brief or indirect moustache (*a la* Baron Gruner) caresses his upper lip. Do you notice it? "I refuse to be

intimidated or dictated to, Pentecost, and must one hear ‘owt?’”, she replied in a snappish tone.

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Furthermore, she gave clipped orders to the servants, Peaches and Monocle, about carrying her husband upstairs. They complied without a murmur.

THIRTY-THREE

Nonetheless, a new fancy or midsummer night’s ‘green’ grew in her consciousness. It no longer over-lapped with her spouse’s trope, but returned to Natalie Sarraute’s quixotic beam. In this incarnation, a death wizard grappled with Mr Rowbotham (who was naked save for a loin clout). By comparison to which – the mage embodies the antique dealer, albeit radically altered, and both of them wrestle using tulwars. They possess handles made from ivory and porcelain, together with exquisite gold filigree or workmanship. The master o’ magics, for his part, wears a purple toga made from rough cloth; and ‘he’ seems to be skeletal, glabrous, bug-eyed, seamed with veins, tall, or lipless in ‘its’ clenched teeth. While slightly ahead of the two warriors – and amid some steam or dry ice – lies a sexy version of Townsend Side-Rowbotham. She is held captive by two trinkets or gold chains – and she writhes between them; at once head-banded (like a hippie), as well as near-naked, with her breasts and pudenda covered by taut cloth. This was especially so as her stomach muscles stretched or pullulated, athlete-like, under some bronze skin.

THIRTY-FOUR

Back in the present tense, though, the two servants known as Monocle and Peaches carry their master upstairs. He is blind drunk and completely asleep (thereby); nor do these serfs utter a peep... And they are definitely not Peep o’ day Boys in the nineteenth century fashion; since Trevor Milkway’s weight subdues them. Slowly they mount the mansion’s stairs – and it sweeps away behind ‘em like an Edwardian hotel lobby or a

‘forties film. The stairs themselves were light-brown in colour and they spiralled akin to a servant; or alternatively, an orange stair-well cascaded alongside them. It possessed ornate or fluted struts – whilst closing off with a pedestal & its crop: on top of which a Grecian flute-boy, or Ganymede, strutted. Gradually, my masters, the two maids passed up and along in order to deposit Mr Rowbotham on his four-poster... the one with the red blinds. Behind them, on the other precipice, a parquet flooring sponged off against the light; and it deliberated upon a sequential lozenge or diamond tracery of black-and-white. A heavy or early nineteenth century Turner (depicting a historical or battle scene) lit up a far wall; whereas a green door led into a chamber observable from the stairs. It contained mixed congeries of blue doves: the first a suit of armour holding a halberd; the second a Queen Anne couch somewhere off to the rear. The antiques dealer, Scribe End Pentecost, kept up a dutiful distance from his White Kali or queen bee – after all, didn’t her purchases keep the business afloat? Mrs Marmaduke spoke earnestly now: “I refuse to be intimidated by my husband’s antics”, (she repeated). “It is true to say that I married Trevor Milkway in order to gain access to his fortune, and thence to buy these antiques. The acquisition of such *objects d’art* has become my life or its veritable passion. Also, I refuse to be cowered by his drunken rages, envy, passion play, pusillanimity or cowardly pique. No. The interlaced skeletal hands of those who have died – and (perforce) been buried in an ossuary – doesn’t faze me. He can do nothing to check me in his distemper; even though a gauntleted hand, *a la* Audrey Hepburn, breaks through a golden bodice from Jerzy Kosinski. Again: I would ask you to bring my newly obtained antiques up to my room.” The reliquary dealer and auctioneer, Scribe End Pentecost, merely answers in the affirmative. “Yes, ma’am”, he replies.

THIRTY-FIVE

Five minutes later the two of them are alone together in her auditorium. It happens to be a brightly lit and apportioned

chamber – where almost every square inch of space is covered with collectibles, antiquities, motifs, sigils and elder clones. Amongst these appurtenances, my friend, we discover a mock-Egyptian ink-stand (with a quill-pen in it *a la* Wallis Budge); as well as an ornate curtain-wrap that's folded back on itself in black *crepe*. Likewise, a darksome mirror surrounded by a heavy gold-frame is seen, and it's accompanied by a modernist sculpture after Brancusi's intent... or may it abound with Archipenko's constructivism, nay, even Brian Willsher's ire? Doesn't an opening out of the form in this way – after Eric Gill, Duchamp or Reg Butler – indicate the following: either bourgeois formalism or a 3-D scream? In the middle of this cuboid, however, the dealer places a small statue foursquare. It consists of a figure in a hooded cloak with both hands over its face; and the entire statuette was cast in greenish metal. Might it have been (including the base) an emerald or painted bronze? Never mind: since Mrs Rowbotham stands afore it avidly, fervently, and with a faint – almost erotic – smile curling up her mouth. “You say, Pentecost, that this one possesses an ugly or questionable past? I have to say it, man: it fascinates or challenges me – after those twain sculptures of Mother Kali standing atop S[h]iva, with rubies for eyes, and a spear penetrating his side. Doesn't this dance of death (or *danse macabre*) generate the energy which keeps up the cosmos?” “I don't know about that!”, coughed Scribe End rather cautiously. “Nevertheless, this piece is widely considered to be a jinx or curse, Mrs Rowbotham. I can't verify every case (obviously), but most of its owners have contrived to die horribly or in bothersome circumstances. Indeed, this verdant sheen on the metal – itself indicative of Arno Breker's onslaught – comes well bloodied, even disembowelled. The surreal artist Felix Labisse may have gone to paint in abattoirs in order to achieve the right intensity... yet this is extra-terrestrial. It's not a case of Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High-School*, do you see?” (As he intimated this, Scribe End Pentecost lay down an ornate cribbage

block in front of him. It was made from solid mahogany). “Quiet enchanting!”, murmured Side-Rowbotham (Mrs).

THIRTY-SIX

What goes on here, me hearties? *Quod* Mrs Rowbotham still stood there after the fashion of Peter O’Donnell’s *She*.* (*He wrote the screenplay for the Hammer film based on Rider Haggard’s novel). In any event, her grey *coif* lay like iron upon the sands; whereas the heiress’ fashionable or tailored jacket – in red and yellow – stood out briskly. It embodied the spirit of a Wyndham Lewis vorticist dash; in comparison to an artistic installation in the desert. “It benumbs and quickens the blood in my veins”, murmured Side-Rowbotham. “Have a care”, replies the dealer discretely, “this statue brings pain and foreboding to those who enjoy it! As a piece, it transfigures the actual and comes with a health warning (no matter how cursory). It contemplates blind Tiresius – alone in his wasteland – and gathered hither by a solitary boy... one who fashions lenses for eyeless sockets. Many consider this object to be accursed; and, given your husband’s mental state, I’d give much thought to placing it on your bed-side table a’night.” In a likely stupor, Scribe End Pentecost, her dealer, loses no time in stooping afore her, and his head appears to be non-whizzing, darksome, scarfed, imperilled or calcified in milk (even).

THIRTY-SEVEN

“Stuff and nonsense”, Mrs Rowbotham ripostes, “do you think I’m a coward or a weakling to be afeared of aught like that?” Indeed, she has now repositioned the statuette next to her bed-head, and it glows (veritably) with a keen effulgence. All of a sudden... its criterion has adopted a blood-red passion. Oh yes! May it just be a trick of the light, only? Next to this macabre incunabula – itself writhing with cherubs in baroque distaste – comes an antique lamp from the ‘twenties. It reeks of Aldous Huxley’s *Antic Hay*, Tamara de Lempicka or roaring speedsters. Furthermore, a cyclopean distribution of light freezes all – and it

casts a green penumbra from a wrap-around gazetteer. It also exhibits a tasselled lower periphery in the manner of olden lit-sources; when contrasted with a blackish expanse o'wall. Most definitely, an ornate table – from Louis XV's reign and Madame de Pompadour's blessing – holds up this taper. A blue-strained curtain shifts to the side and on a far jetty we spy an elegant bed; it has an early eighteenth century bedstead – with a curlicue or squiggly *schemata*. A collocation of dark-green sheets finishes off the jobbery... and these roll away to the camping's feet. Wherein one theme above others becomes apparent – and this must intrigue over a rough or wooden bed's-end (itself prey to Grief's abutment). Let's see it now... Again, Mrs Side-Townsend Rowbotham spoke not just for her *persona* – no matter how fleetingly. Had she ever wished to feminise Rene Harding in *Self-Condemned*? "Do you think I can be made to fear those totems of self-estrangement?", she glowered. "Might my mood be captured by an invasion of purple; (*a la* Bill Hopkins' treatment of Brian Willsher's sculpture)? I scoff at all forms of foolhardy glee. You see: those who wish to kill what they love first fire their brain-pans with mustard! Guess again athwart some beggary – for I fear nothing whatsoever and despise superstition more than anything. You speak, my Pentecost, about death and a deliverance from pain – in relation to those who sport a Dorset's ooser over their brow. This elicits a Belial's transport or belt-way (o'er Acheron's bridge of sighs) and no boatman rests on his oars... eager to take up the slack. Charon is a holocaust denier or revisionist, *inter alia*, and he absents himself from the carafe, in Cafaye's contemporary lore, which traverses the Styx. Listen and heed me: no man of iron can rust the grace of my disfavour. Also, talk of death merely haunts the chaff of neighbourly guillotines... themselves redolent of a Thermidorean reaction. If any are to lose their life and become a headless corse (hereabouts) it will be my witless husband, Trevor Milkway. I shall espy him down in the gutter or side-walk; plus my stiletto's heel upon his neck, dewlap and ill-concealed goitre... under a cardigan's wrap. Surely enough, were any fit to die betimes –

one's iron maiden'll close on him first of all, and, in such a Schwarzkogler's bevy, I guarantee his penniless demise. He must perish without a brass farthing, if I have aught to do with it!"

THIRTY-EIGHT

With a smarting set of features (now) Scribe End Pentecost shuffles away. He's desperate not to make amends, but to escape intact. A large number of antiques – themselves of Rupert Gunnis' vintage – pass through his hands... and Mrs Rowbotham has crammed her mansion to the gunnels with 'em. Yet he dislikes her rants; and (in particular) the unhappiness between husband and wife evinced by such words. A bourgeois and conventional *persona* (thoroughly so); he wishes to escape hereafter. He just wants to get away... do you hear? Maybe also, his business reminds one of Peter Quiggins in Liverpool; in that the attique hay c/o www.Quiggins.com spots a bull-dog. It rests at the heart of a Union Jack with a New Wave cut-out underneath; one which tells us of a blackmailer's letter. (The copper-plate hand comes across as words; each of them scissored and pasted from a tabloid or New Scotland Yard's black museum). This itemises a recognised pastiche or Pop Art, and it speaks of a burnished bronze or filter by Flaxman, Westmacott, Thorak, Landseer, Berens, Lord Leighton and Gormley. It is the very essence of collage. "I'll be going in a timely *apercu*", intimated the antiquarian. Isn't an antiques dealer an up-market junk dealer, in any event? "Veritably, madame, I must be off." "Very well", she responded in a hollow tone of voice, "even those eagles devouring Prometheus' liver had to slow down occasionally." Moreover, as soon as the red bow-tie or dream-weaver departs, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham locks her bedroom door. It reverberates with a special click.

THIRTY-NINE

CLICK(!) went her nightly portcullis or observatory, and it sent shivers down the spine of its dyed wood. *Avaunt thee*, a trigonometry o' teak closed around her; and it afforded the frieze

of one impermanence too far. Indeed, these squares were a prism's light-rays – even the inlaid panels of each set afforded an orange glow. Conversely though, the inset debenture – inside every ochre'd bulwark – holds to a blue distaff; i.e., an inlaid sepulchre that stands firm in its harlequinade. The entrance to her inner fastness betokens an antique in itself: although it might close off a toy theatre *a la* George Speaight. (These were exquisite dramas in miniature – the like of which characterised Montague Summers' misspent youth). For each instant or expenditure, in terms of Rochester's or Wycherley's poesy, sought to kill the *black dwarf* within: (the latter is an eighteenth century radical paper; and it was later revived as a Trotskyist sheet in the 'sixties). "Too far", murmured Side Rowbotham to herself, "I've gone too deeply into these Mysteries to fall back. NO! I must see it through to a bitter end. Yes truthfully, I know my spouse better than my innermost palm... perhaps even the one in those occult or alchemical prints (sic) that betrays a pyramid at its heart. This happens to squash rumours of a conic item – amidst such Palmistry – and an eye comes abreast of this totem. It codifies what Goethe, Spengler, Alphonse Constant and Henry Miller called the *cosmological eye*. Above all, his cowardice betrays itself to me as a yellow saffron or jaundice in the night... For, as Fu Manchu intimates in one of Sax Rohmer's runes, hatred is creative in a negative cast; in that you can create beautiful patterns out of it like stained glass. Yet his jealousy never rises to the Satanic peak of odium and draws on bile instead. It travesties itself as a species of weakness. Don't forget that he had to invite drunkenness aboard afore he contemplates harm! I know Trevor Milkway of old. He'd have to get blind drunk or inebriated prior to attacking me – otherwise he wouldn't have the courage to declare his hand. You see – he can only administer a hurt when he's 'out of his box', to use a hippie's cliché. Further, there's no unnecessary love lost between us and that's self-evident. Yet Mister Rowbotham is rich, irregular in his habits, lacking in confidence, undemanding and liable to sadness

– at least if sober. And I need his fortune in order to acquire those beautiful *objects d'art*.”

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Moreover, as she contemplates these matters, her back happens to be turned away from Odin’s severed eye. It rears up – in a distended mist – and the woman’s shoulders appear to be arched, perpendicular, box-like, spaced out or unafraid. Don’t they feed off a constellation of Boris Karloff’s blades (?); wherein his abutments master a mastiff’s indulgence... in that mime remains crucial to horror. Also, Mrs Townsend R’s shoulder-pads box malefic in tandem; and they recover an arch perspective from below. All of this suffuses a pomegranate or orange lustre (like a hollowed Pumpkin for Halloween); and it finds a contrast agin an abstract expressionist blue. Oh yes!

FORTY

An hour or so passes in the recesses of the old house, and Mrs Side Rowbotham prepares for bed. Although a range of false curtains travesties a necklace in ultramarine; and it comes to the ground, roughly, in terms of net blinds. These stretch out in the floor’s direction or misuse. Again, a bright yellow ledger remains uncut like a tobacco brick – and it strives to reflect away the interest of a gibbous moon. Two semi-ornate curtains – when tied at the bib and bilious in their sapphire coat – seek to enliven either window. Whereas, in and amongst the chamber’s incunabula, two other objects or levies stand out: they are a Grecian urn replete with a lid... as well as two figurines from the Empire. They were British imperial (vaguely) and both wax militarist in subfusc – it’s as if Kitchener’s block-houses had never risen on the veldt. And it proves obvious (methinks) when we abstract them towards some *kitsch* or a ‘Thunderbirds’-type purport. Yes: the colours were primary or stroboscopic... after the likelihood of a French cartoon in 1899. A scenario where the wily Kruger sought to leave his office – if only to permit an *artiste* to live safely out of time. Again, these differences betray a wily truth... or (alternatively speaking) they fixate upon the salt

which can't be rubbed into *Imperium*'s doxa. Wasn't this publication an example of Liverpool's rightist hue (?); in that a city, replete with its guard dogs, fends off some Britbacks or stick-insects. These were well-guarded, tall, pith cap wearing and (even now) the colonial Australians stood around aimlessly. Listen to this: "Sister, do you want to dance in terms of an Afrikaner postcard, where, against a background of fabrication, a rush of fronds stays true. Don't we outnumber a press of the following kin (?); namely, one that keeps Nielson unadorned in its Spartan papers? For these molecules and numbers betray their origins in poster paint – whether it's a coxcomb of bright yellow, crome, scarlet, violet, chaff, green or a forgotten page *artiste*. It was a varied cornucopia itself; and iron grey, magenta, rising public fines and gutted antiquities (for sure) all favour a single birth-mark... Yes, here will do, and it relates to a postcard involving Kruger and John Bull – at least if the one vacates its high-pressure seat. A display (this is) which adorns William de Klerk's *The Puritans in Africa* and other glories of the *Burgerstand*: such as *apartheid*.

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"Yessum", mused Mrs Rowbotham as she undressed, "I need my husband's gold more than Israel requites nuclear weapons. Most certainly, I must possess his money in order to purchase these antiques forevermore... and, in essence, they prove to be my life's only joy. Let Trevor Milkway (Rowbotham) twist and turn every which way; the truth remains that he's trapped in doubt and folly. We are both Roman Catholics, he has to pay my bills and I shall never permit him a freedom so craved for. Yes..." At this instigation, she removed her top and dress; while beginning to engage with a night-slip. The blue moon – most continuously – seems to slip down some glass panes like a lozenge, sweet-meat or fried egg (in one of Iain Sinclair's more distasteful lyrics). Soon she is under the portions of such a damask, if only to lever out some obedience to spent idols. All at once she finds herself in the assembly-rooms of a new beginning; and the burnished marble levels off under a pink sky streaked with blue.

The enclosure all around renders the steepness of white alabaster; and a limn or marbling transfixes the walls – rather like a Titan's birth-mark. Each patterning of stairs rises up towards some Doric pillars at the temple's entrance; and these reserve themselves under a buffalo's skull. It proves to be massive, gigantic, goat-headed and saturnine; even as it caparisons the shadowed interior within. A sweep of the building moves away to the left, under the moon, and small windows are observable way up at its heights. Can she have been influenced by the statue to her left (?); if semi-consciously in the manner of Freud's essay on Leonardo da Vinci. Before going to sleep she takes a deeper look at it... how marvellous it seems!

FORTY-ONE

Mrs Rowbotham is almost under the covers or those sheets now, and they spear up around her like porpoises in the deep. The head of the bed glimmers on in a register of the baroque; it's munificent in an eighteenth century case. All of this shows itself off in a red outermost limit... albeit one that curves down to a yellow plaster-board with green inlay, the latter in ormolu or rolled gold. This middle-aged woman happens to be in a nightie at our juncture, and the cleavage was well displayed against an iron scalp. Her lips – on the other hand – looked glossy, avid, turbid, unrecognised and expectant (possibly erotically so). The eyes likewise followed a basilisk course... somewhat. Indeed, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham gazes in rapture at the statuette to one side of her silhouette. It has not changed in its aspect; being at once small, dwarfish, recalcitrant, unwinged, needful, darkly brown, o'er-shadowed, Baal-petor like and crafty. But who (save a lunatic at the Maudsley hospital) can credit a statue with life? In its actual demeanour, though, the figurine wore a cape around its body, a hood over its head and both mittens (or claws) covered its face. Whereas the lower extremities or limbs of this sculpture pass into a grey rapture... the former accompanied by a base in support of it. It accompanies a brown square, rather like the metal plate on which a Britons' toy used to stand, and it

ramifies withal. Gazing upon it voraciously, Mrs Side Rowbotham mimics the following ventriloquism. It occurs in her own mind. “What a fascination lies at the heart of antiques! By Gad, every last one of their number possesses a story – it’s often of passing or irrefragable interest. For example, the one presently before my sight – like Robinson Jeffers’ poem *The Californians* – alternates via a shape-shifter’s glee. It testifies to a resource on its own anvil, by means of violence! Oh yes; since those who buy it die horribly or in a mutilatory way in their beds. Don’t they come to embody the flayed corses of Gunter von Hagens? In any event, it has to be a jinx or negative keepsake – at least metaphorically. It’s just amazing, astounding, eerie and marvellous... or simply weird. Ho hum, what fun! There’s nothing to beat collecting antiques.”

FORTY-TWO

A brief twenty minutes later we notice that Mrs Rowbotham has fallen asleep, but her dreams remain strangely troubled. She twists and turns on this dais or bedding, and her fancies are vaguely aware of a heathen temple seen from afar. It sanctifies the reaching up of so many matters, and in its wide vista or splendid arch of alabaster, one detects the ink of proven dyes. Doesn’t the paucity of an eye dilate at such a treasure-trove? At any time, a rough margin for error comes unstuck when fixed; and its sand-papered extremity hints at an *art-strike* or a text by Stewart Home. Alternatively, might this ‘*Salem’s Lot* (or trail) indicate the uncertain tread or fumbling footsteps of those dragged to the altar? It crosses the ground as a ridged promontory or spleen. Again, she is the first to see it: and this gigantism sits abreast of an internal diadem or trestle, and it’s lit by flaring torches. These subdue the tabernacle’s inner purple with gold, even though a carven effigy rises up in an uncertain glow... And its form proves to be simian, bestial, half-tempered, Straker-like from *Salem’s lot*, light-fingered, bulbous, razor-edged, massive, inhuman... even acidic after one of Quentin Crisp’s short stories. Moreover, this Colossus or wonder of the

world has its claw-like hands cupped afore it – almost like a gesture over the sacrificial blood they mean to contain.

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Uneasily, Mrs Side Rowbotham turns over in her sleep – and she could never be accused of doing anything indelicate like snoring. No. For the backing of her Louis XV bed remains solemn and it cauterises a presumed misstatement. In the non-glow of an orange lamp (to one side) she's shifted abed; and the bed-head waxes a dark green in its filigree or adornment. All around her the pedigree of the cube teams blackly, and, immediately behind her grey skull, a patterning of blue pillows are piled up. They seem to be aware of some deadly presentiment (necessarily). Under her own mentality, though, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham dreamt of bigger and better antiques... as well as the helpless rage of the man who financed them. Didn't he lie on his pallet, in a drunken stupor, elsewhere in the house?

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To be sure: a strange or subtle re-arrangement of the bed-scape is occurring. It seems to configure an oblong or spheroid, in shadow, when cast across the bed-clothes... and likewise the silhouette or outline of a longish hand travels across the azure pillows on her far side. Its claw-like nails taper away to a dismemberment in Hooker's green, but still... don't they reminisce over Max Schreck's finger-sticks in *Nosferatu* (1924)? At whichever point a ghostly voice pipes up... it happens to be high-pitched, wavering or half-toned like a radio being tuned to a correct frequency. Its pitch alters and then remains still... and a stray burst of lightning takes place inside Rowbotham's mind; together with drum beats, a peel of thunder, and a croaking sound. It eventuates deep in a moral vacuum or a tent's recesses. These words come across as post-human (then); or possibly they've been influenced by Alex Kurtagic's *kaos* music? Further, those words summoned up are as follows: "Listen to me, wench of all seasons!", it sibilated in treacle. "I want you sentient and awake over what is about to be inflicted upon you..." For her part, Mrs Rowbotham was still not fully aware of her

predicament, and she lay in the Land of Nod or between sleep and wake.

FORTY-THREE

All of a sudden, Mrs Rowbotham wakes with a start at a new misadventure, and her features are enraptured by this portcullis. The pillow now looks yellow in the oft-mentioned light; while the bed's backing or high-stool waxes to a violent red. Similarly, the coverlets which are cast from her lower extremities adopt a plangent green; they are the toadstools of a witch's familiar... never mind its awakening. Still, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham's face looks aghast, riven, non-playful, horrified or perturbed – and it begins to take on the aspect of Grendel's mother. (Nor need this necessarily adopt the *patois* of John Gardner's fantasy *Grendel*). Above all, what she observes are two hands or claws which hover above her – even though they transmit a baleful light or chiaroscuro. It proves to be a sickly or pale green in colour. Moreover, these appendages (or prosthetic handles) are wiry, slightly disembodied, dexterous, contagious and ill-conceived --- they certainly take after those 'monster' or joke hands which children love to wear. (Note: these were like advertisements in Warren magazines from the 'States, for example. All of which specified the following: send twenty-five cents for our catalogue of novelty items, fun things, levitators, latex masks or de-callisthenics... plus a free pair of monstrous hands. Box 666, Midland, Texas). Yet, when Mrs Rowbotham speculated through a haze, what did she see? Why, it happens to be the amplitude of a new forgetting; and it wears about it the ferrous orb of an abandoned eye. For 'it' takes the form of some severed or jaguar teeth; these dimple the dawn through an eldritch haze... i.e.: one that imprisons its glistening molars. They revolve around the smoke which captures a mizzle for them – and yet these teeth or canines evince a graven laugh amid shadows. It turns the twisted character of its own imponderable, if only to lie before the face of one tapering estrangement. Yes again, the guffaw of this fate opens out towards a loop o'

fireflies, or one that shudders afore Hades' gate in its stillness. In any event, the swirl of this death's-head – when captured to grey – lifts away aslant such a nightmare. Furthermore, the phantasy novels of Robert Jordan aren't able to provide a suitable iron maiden (herein). Nor do they second guess the completeness of Milton's 'Fall' or Wyndham Lewis' Sammael. Hear me: *quod* the dark beast of this book rears up after Mantegna's torsos; and these were jettisoned sculptures in paint... the like of which saw a Herculean item amid fugg. It loomed over the captive (Mrs Rowbotham) and its compaction strikes the perfection of a Greek issue. All the time – and betwixt Satanic wiles – the musculature of a He-man waxes tall (---). Doesn't its advent splinter blood from the bone in terms of Broadmoor's asylum? No. Since the refuge of such a forgetting must rupture this side; and these silver or platinum chains rain from an imagined wound that accommodates Longinius' spear. Didn't the latter provide a peak to magnificence (?); or possibly one example of a Prometheus too far. By dint of any predestination, however, the symmetry of this snake with a skull – if seen sideways – chooses to remain aghast 'mid a game of skittles. Don't you know this game originates from the West Country? Eventually now, this daemonic axis speaks to a frightened Mrs Rowbotham: "My dear, I've been watching you from near and far. I most definitely have... and a crypt of shadows has come to administer nemesis. Wake up (!), wake up (!), and feel the earth tilting beneath you... I must have you awake at such an instant in order to understand it. Loosen the ties of slumber or Bunyan's Slough of Despond – why don't you? I command you to banish sleepiness from your eyes... so that I may assess the surprise in yonder retinas." All Mrs Rowbotham can register (correspondingly) is: "W-what? (Gasp!), et cetera".

FORTY-FOUR

In a moment or thrice (betimes) Mrs Townsend Side-Rowbotham was strangled to death. Yesss... For two hands appear around her ventilator or wind-pipe, and they were shaggy in demeanour.

They also bespotted themselves in a way which was yellow, hairy, enlivened, iron-wire constituted, fulsome, bloated and filled with gas... even helium. In this regard, each one of them took after 'joke hands' under the conspectus of comedians such as Kenny Everett or Freddie Starr. Needless to say, Mrs Rowbotham wasn't in a situation to appreciate those green nails – the latter serrated after an ossuary's nit. Further: in her paroxysm of agony, *per se*, the purple lacquer on our anti-heroine's lips matches one's night-gown... at least in terms of a loose-fitting garment. It sluiced away under an emerald or hemp sheet. Moreover, the cheeks were broken, curved back, mildly rococo-like or semblant: and her eyes glistened after beady marbles. The iron-grey hair stood on its ends (likewise) and a strangulated cry escaped from her screaming mouth – it went: "uurggg!" A threatening voice ululated beyond those inflated mittens, and it acerbated: "So, Mrs Rowbotham, you declare yourself to have a passion for antiques, eh? Hee! Hee! I wonder whether your interests could be restricted to Derbyshire oak chairs (c. 1660), examples drawn from the Arts & Crafts movement *viz.* a commercial medievalism, or Chippendale efforts via Victorian reproduction. What takes your fancy, ma'am?" To which Townsend Rowbotham (Mrs) could only state: "Uurggg!"

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In her final moments, though, what did she actually see? Well! it definitely took the form of one calibration too many, and this bespoke a murder of crows (i.e., a collection of them). This apparition wrestled with its invisibility – according to her – and it flirted with a silvery enclave of so many chains. These jostled with the emptiness of a Beckett tableau... if we are to consider a plateau of mud or ordure in *Comment C'est*. ('We're down in Dante's fifth Canto and, by Gad!, no love'). In any event, the skull-head presses against its darkness --- or otherwise proves to be livid over its expression of teeth. Again, this headstone (plus a split red-eye) glowers on amid darksome splendour; especially in terms of the dull-brown glow, or muddiness, that festoons the

bed-chamber. Doesn't a translucent door exist to one side of such a parley in the dark, and it provides a rectangular block, even an anti-concrete balustrade? It computes the light of a million suns – all of which find themselves reduced to one single redaction. Again, the creatoid's voice is heard from a throttled distance... adrift of one of Kali's minions or thugs, and it sounds like a faint echo drifting down a bad connexion. Perhaps it's a pre-digital exchange that's never heard of System X? "For shame, Mrs Rowbotham", it transposes, "I entertain a fervid interest or collector's item too... In my case, it happens to be murder without a Columbo to solve it. Hee! Heel!"

FORTY-FIVE

From behind the sovran issue of one eye, when it's saved by a collection of fingers across the face, a final sigh of life escapes. All of which means that Mrs Side Rowbotham's neck was forced behind a shoulder-blade, albeit with a thunderous or life-denying crack. In a matter of moments, therefore, we find the victim's pink head suffused, bloated *avec* blood or rheum, and thrown back upon an ocean of blue pillows. These blur in their matter of factness – and the red cast of a bed-head, plus its wrought or baroque filigree, lies adjacent to a greenish post. It sports a spearhead or minaret atop its mantle. SHE REMAINS DEAD, THOUGH – this much suffices: and her tongue protrudes in a frothing mouth. While the eyeballs have bounced back to the socket's rear – after the pattern of a pin-ball machine's emblematises. Do you see? Whereas, and next to an abattoir redolent of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, the statuette rests on a nearby side-table or cabinet. You see, if we were to draw a line between her death's-head and the carven figure – then both might meter a horizontal path, pitch or level. It rests there (nonetheless); at once untroubled, fastened down (morally speaking), robed, hooded, slightly bent over, screwed to its base, and with a sea-green complexion of its hands covering the face. Might this instance hint at an incorruptibility *a la* Thomas Carlyle? Meanwhile, the wooden surface on which it stands

glows with a rare sheen or patterning... and doesn't it hint at those martial figures of yesteryear made by Britains, Elastolin, Charles Stadden, Russell Gamage, Ping, Greenhall, Ball and Timpo? Not half... but the essential facts are unchanged: Mrs Townsend Rowbotham lies murdered in a locked room, to be found on the morrow, and her dead meat festers on a verdant surplice. No-one dares to speak of a Tarot's *atouts* or trump cards (necessarily).

FORTY-SIX

A new morning or dawn has broken at *chez* Rowbotham, and the prismatic gestures of so much light floods in aplenty. Such motes – or sparkling fire-flies – inundate some French Windows, as well as their hatcheting, glass and cross-beams. The police have arrived. Their names were Fisher and Zacharias Crack, and each of them stood on either side of her husband. “What goes on here?”, evinces one of the Coppers. “The door to your wife’s portal was locked from within and only you possessed the key. Wasn’t it concealed in a chest of drawers – deep in your own chamber – and where only you might essay it? In truth, it took after the plot of an Agatha Christie novel like *Murder on the Links*... a debonair case for Poirot.” “That’s right!”, insisted his colleague-in-arms, “we had to force the portal, dungeon-coat or trap – only you could have gained egress otherwise. After all this time, Trevor Milkway, you’ve revealed your hand. For years your threats of murder have gone unabated – now the act masquerades as the deed’s after-bid. Do you play poker?” Realising the danger pressing in on him – Trevor started screaming: “NO! NOOOOO! I beg you, sirrah! I scarcely knew where the room’s key resided. In a drawer made of mahogany, you say? But surely, it took up residence in an inner casement of my bureau?” “Aha!”, seized Zacharias at the sight of this indiscretion, “so you admit the *corpus* of this affidavit, eh?” Likewise, his associate leaned over with a cruel grin: “We know that money difficulties beset you, Rowbotham, and the many antiques which your wife kept purchasing had to be paid for.

Yours was the motivation, intent, pre-planning, pretended drunkenness, malice aforethought and criminal misdeed. Why don't you confess, Trevor Milkway?" "We shan't require his *mea culpa*, my fellow officer", laundered Fisher's intrigue, "the evidence – whether actual or circumstantial – all points in one compass spree. Hold him in tight irons; you're going to burn or fry for this!" At this point or conjecture, Trevor Milkway started caterwauling. It rose to a veritable masculine cry soon after: "NOOOO! N-NOOOOO! AAEEEE! I'm as not guilty as uncharged; I know and did nothing... or even less. I passed the entire night, whether listless or lying unconscious, in a drunken stupor on my pallet." Yet – still protesting his innocence – Trevor Rowbotham is led out to the waiting police-van or *Black Maria*.

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Maybe the last thing he foresees is the following scenario... it depicts a tonsured or shaven-headed millionaire stood upon a gibbet. He looks up at the heavens in a misspent or pleading manner; while a square of azure or Manchester City blue faces off roundabout. A bent priest babbles on in the background, fomenting a forgotten creed, and on the far right-hand corner we discern a noose. Its warp and weft is coarse-grained, fibre(d) or let free... and to one side of it stands an executioner. He purports to be a relatively thin individual in a surplice and dovecot. Whereupon – we note that his arms are crossed over his chest, against a light-grey top, and his features are hidden by a black hood. It looks vaguely like a Klansman or a Dominican's moniker; and it happens to be short, triangular, pyramidal, eye-slitted and feature defacing. To be sure: it's a hate-monger's tirade without sound... and it seems to bore into the rear of Trevor Milkway's pate. All he can basically do is scream: "NOOOO! N-NOOOOO! AAEEEE!"

FORTY-SEVEN

After the two policemen and their charge have left the mansion by its front entrance, a titter or sinister laughter is heard inside the room. “Hee! Hee!”, it ran with a dose of malice aforethought. For – ever so slowly – the tiny statuette came to life or indicated some growth, and its hands fell down to loll next to the thighs (no matter how suggestively). The remainder of this room adopted a darksome splendour; against which our Gruesome’s base stood out correspondingly... it shone pellucidly *avec* transport. Nonetheless, one’s figurine continued to wear an orange habit or divan, and these covered the ‘antique’ by way of its habiliment. A pair of green hands/suckers became discernible (also); and one remembered a Dick Tracy film, *Gruesome*, starring Boris Karloff in 1947. What really surprised us, however, was Mrs Marmaduke’s visage... given its transformation in 24 hours. Most certainly, a dose of *rigor mortis* has set in apace; and the woman’s horror or Halloween mask is spaced out, crudely whitened, blanched, sallow, bleached, albino in its kindred, and Clown-like. Might she be an expectant Joker to Bob Kane’s creed (?); albeit after the remit of Eric Mottram’s *Algebra of Need*. Again, her head lay transfixied or pinned upon the bed – and her tongue projected from turquoise lips. It understood the realism of a Bacon portrait (perforce); if not campanology’s imprint over a bell.

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Finally, the tiny creature moved off its Britains-like base, and it took its first steps into a dark pool. The chest of drawers onto which it strode has a shiny top made of marble, and this found itself to be lacquered or cantilevered around the side. May it indicate a Georgian surplus? No matter: since this mini-Baphmotet took up a blasphemous actuality; and it sauntered towards a dead-head in a violent explosion of light. (This latter ray-dance proves to be a reddish compaction *a la* the dawn. Let it be...) Anyway, this devilled nick-nack proves to have a string bow-tie – rather like a Country-and-Western singer – under its reptilian cast. Likewise, Mrs Townsend Rowbotham’s cranium

props up the way, even if it's turned to the front of an imp's perversity... and it retains a sickly advantage over white leprosy. Suddenly now, our terror mannequin begins to speak in a grating tone. "So you despise superstition do you, Mrs Marmaduke? Hee! Hee!"

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The small saurian then clambered over his victim without any compunction whatsoever, and he carried an object in either claw. On closer inspection, it proves to be the base or metal tray on which he formerly stood. Against this notice – the pewter tab or label bears no mark, and it happens to lack a crest or nomenclature. Further, the green-skinned gremlin walks gamely across Mrs Marmaduke's skull. He/it is aiming for the French Windows at the room's outer compass (to be sure). Whereas our corse's escarpment lies prostrate, severed, without remorse, whitened and bloated to the gills... as well as half-naked in a turquoise shift. In contrast, the mouth seems blood-red amidst this calcified mount. The goblin utters more lines: "Your foolish antique dealer failed to spell out my myth's complexity, dearie. Does one notice it properly? For I disappear after all my owners' deaths or their decreased vigour. After all, nought goes altogether unseen, even the perfect murder (so to say) if enacted without witnesses and behind closed doors. Hee! Hee!"

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With this asseveration, our emerald bogle or troll patters across an untidy yellow sheet and its orange pillow. He heads – perspectively – for the French Windows, and they look smaller once the sprite's reached them. Look at this: these glass panels, amid wood, open out to an expanse of lawn that lurks beyond. It's accompanied by bushes and a middling sky of some cerulean distress. A brown walkway limbers up to such a redoubt, and, as a backstop, Mrs Marmaduke's doll's-head appears to be congealed, big, cross-eyed and crown bloodied. Wasn't it really a defeated, if feminine, circus tumbler's gasp? Again, the mouth hollows out the tube on a Graham Sutherland redoubt – at once scream to scream. Our malefic dwarf or green goblin speaks

forevermore: "You see, I must become an *innocent bystander* to another slaying, preferably in a locked room. But you'll keep my secret – won't you, Mrs Marmaduke? THEY ALL DO! Hee! Hee!"

THE END