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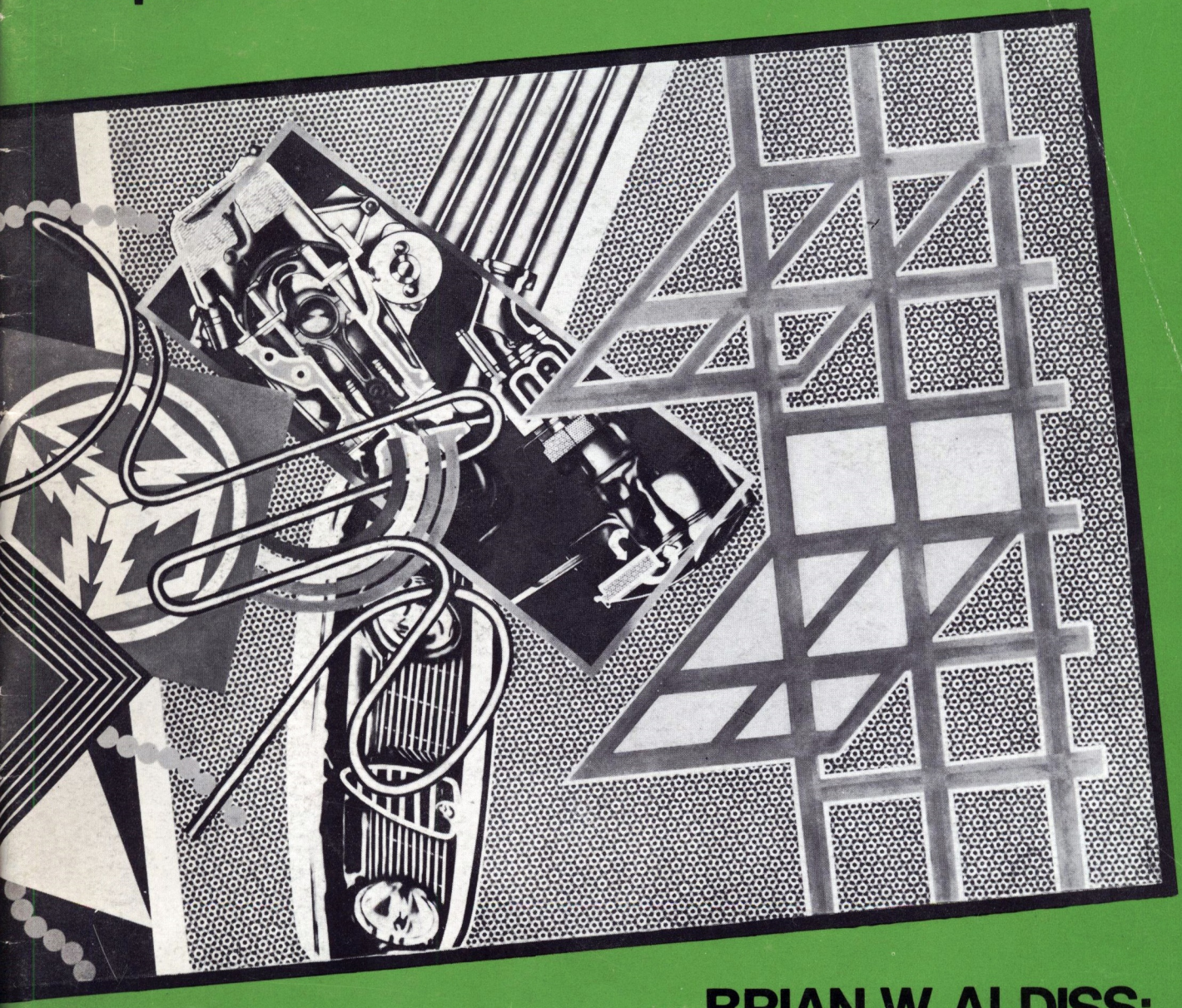
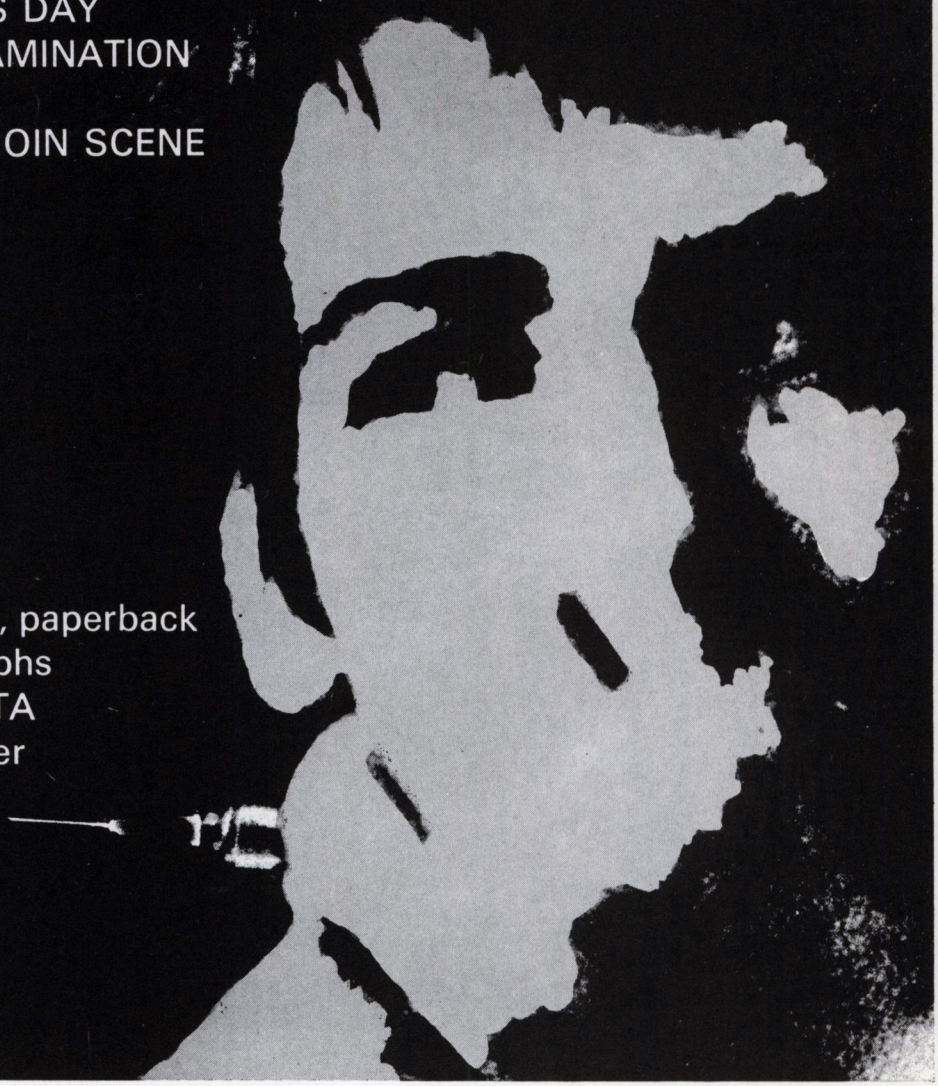


BRIAN W. ALDISS:
STILL TRAJECTORIES

NEEDLE OF DEATH

AN ADDICT'S DAY
AND AN EXAMINATION
OF THE
BRITISH HEROIN SCENE



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POLONIUS AT DELPHI

OR WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH COMMON SENSE

THE FUTURE IS unknowable, yet men have always sought to predict future events. Extrapolating from this situation, we may predict that the future will always be unknowable and that men will nevertheless continue to seek to predict future events. This prediction may err, but it is difficult to foresee what contingency (short of time travel, psychic prevision or divine revelation) would make men either so omniscient or so incurious about their own fate that it would be proven wrong.

Mankind's hankering after the predictable has been a necessary condition for his most notable achievements: the development of stable social institutions, of agriculture and of science. Eschatology, the doctrines of last and final things, is an essential element of every religious system. The fascination of historical study (if not its legitimacy) is surely due to the presumptive light it throws upon our future. The urge towards the unknowable has also produced a host of charlatans and self-deceivers: when science fails, as it so often must, magic is always ready to fill the gap. To paraphrase Voltaire: If the future did not exist, it would be necessary to invent one.

Since prophecy will always be with us, it is surely worthwhile to examine the varieties of the predictive process and, if possible, to develop criteria for their evaluation. Implicitly we make such judgments every day—whenever we read of an impending eclipse and (if our faith is sufficient) make plans to observe it, whenever we listen to a weather forecast and (if our faith is sufficient) take an umbrella to work, whenever we are told of the golden opportunities awaiting us in Australia and (if our faith is sufficient) go there, or whenever the Day of Judgment is announced and (if our faith is sufficient) prepare for it. At the extreme ends of this spectrum (science and religion), the bases of faith are well-defined. But in that vast middle ground where neither science nor religion has proven itself an infallible guide—the ground of human history—the predictive process has received only fragmentary analysis. There has been no scarcity of social prophets from the Cumaean sibyl to Toynbee, but a reasoned and commanding critique of prophecy itself does not exist. Without it, any prediction unsupported by the strict methodology of natural science (or, if you prefer, the authority of revelation) has no more intellectual weight than the auspices of birds. Perhaps, indeed, this might be the conclusion to which such a critique would lead.

*The Art of Conjecture**, a recent book by the French writer Bertrand de Jouvenal, has been proclaimed (by its own dustjacket) as "the most important statement yet made on this vital subject". The author is the president and director of the Society of Economic, Industrial and Social Studies and Documentation in Paris, which is impressive even if one hasn't heard of the organisation before. He is the author of several books with titles as authoritative as his Society's. His own and the Society's work is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. Surely, the mountains have laboured.

Like a good *philosophe,* de Jouvenal begins with first principles. *The Art of Conjecture* opens with this statement: "In Latin the ways of speaking about the past and future present an asymmetry that is illuminating and useful: past events or situations are *facta* and future ones are *futura*." Though the illumination is slight, the usefulness is considerable, for at every key point in his argument de Jouvenal manages to find a commonplace Latin expression to replace as commonplace an expression in French (or English). Without these sonorities, the book would never have filled up 307 pages (which it only manages to do, in any case, by the typographer's largesse) and its thesis would have looked even slighter than it is.

The Thesis

DE JOUVENAL maintains that there is an essential difference between our knowledge of the past and our knowledge of the future: our knowledge of the past is more certain.

"On the other hand the future is a field of uncertainty. What will be cannot be attested to and verified in the same way as an accomplished fact. When I say: 'I saw Peter on my way here,' I am testifying, but when I say: 'I shall see Peter on my way back,' I am making a supposition. If we are faced with two conflicting opinions regarding a past event, we try to determine which one is true; if we are faced with two conflicting opinions regarding a future event, we try to determine which one is more plausible. For, in the latter case, we have no way of arriving at certainty."

Nevertheless, the author audaciously continues, it is often useful to make estimates of the *futura,* and for this a knowledge of the *facta* is necessary. These estimates form a basis for our present actions, and these actions will help in turn to shape the future. He deals next with the vexing problem of "possibles" propounded by Diodorus of Megara: whether it may be said of an event that *will* take place that, before the event, it is "possible" that it will not. Diodorus said (and later Cicero) that only what does in fact take place is "possible"; de Jouvenal (following Bayle) maintains that other things are possible too. De Jouvenal takes 56 pages to establish these first principles before he begins to deal with particular cases. In addition to the authorities cited above, he draws tellingly upon the writings of Aristotle, Montaigne, Hobbes and Maupertius.

Next de Jouvenal examines predictions made by Rousseau, Emile

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* *The Art of Conjecture* by Bertrand de Jouvenal, translated from the French by Nikita Lary. Weidenfe'd & Nicolson, 1967. 307 pp. 50s.

Faguet, de Maistre, Montesquieu and the contemporary economist Marx. In all cases it is shown how these men failed to foresee every contingency.

The central and largest portion of the book is given over to the problems that arise in short-term and long-term economic forecasting: the quantification and interpretation of data, the necessity of limiting the parameters of a mathematical model of the economy, and the difference between causality and correlation. If one takes into account the brevity and lack of sequence of his treatment, it can be said that he handles these materials adequately, though an average A-level economics text would present as balanced and a far more complete treatment. De Jouvenal sums up his chapter on short-term forecasts so:

"Let us leave this talk of probability. The point is simply that in economics, as in any other field, the forecaster must exercise his judgement. And who could be surprised at this?"

This would have been an apt conclusion to any chapter in a book that nowhere contains an element of surprise.

Not until Chapter 20 does de Jouvenal disclose the germinal idea of the book: that it is the task of social science now to carry on the work so nobly begun in *The Art of Conjecture* by establishing an international "Surmising Forum". One supposes that this forum would rather resemble the Society of Economic, Industrial and Social Studies and Documentation and that it would be supported by a larger grant from the Ford Foundation.

The Thesis Examined

THE FIRST THING to strike a contemporary reader of *The Art of Conjecture* is that for a book that professes to deal with the future its frame of reference is singularly antediluvian. Etymologies are a favourite mode of argument. (Undoubtedly de Jouvenal took many Latin prizes at his *lycée*.) If a word *meant* something in Latin, then by damn that's what it will *mean* for all eternity. If de Jouvenal had made a study of linguistic analysis instead of etymology, he would have spared his readers a solid fifty pages of mediaeval quillets and maunderings, such as the discussion of "possibles". For the author, as for the Great Doctor, words are entities every bit as real as angels.

After Aquinas (cited six times in the index, under *S*), his favourite authorities are the more conservative members of the French Academy at the time of its foundation. Underlying the theoretical developments in the first seven chapters is a conception of psychology that is essentially Aristotelian, though in all conscience one must add that the author may also have been influenced by Locke. He conceives of the human mind as a physiognomical map partitioned into discrete quadrilaterals of Memory, Imagination, Intellect, Will and Consciousness. (Consciousness is the pavement on which the Will walks to its Goal.) This scholastic schema gives rise to such remarkable passages as this, from the opening of Chapter 5:

"I have formed a representation that does not correspond to observable reality and placed it in a domain suited to receive it; now my activity tends towards the validation of what my imagination has constructed. For the event to comply with my design, the moral force of my intention must hold and push me on the road to the goal. But the road must really lead to the goal; and this implies that the appropriate road has been discerned (an intellectual operation). Hobbes put it like this: 'For the thoughts are to the desires as scouts and spies to range abroad, and find the way to the things desired.' "

In only one passage in the book (on p. 127) does de Jouvenal allow the theme of the unconscious to cloud his crystalline sophisms, in order then to suggest that the unconscious mind works on the same "discursive" principles as the conscious mind and that: ". . . What happens is no doubt just an acceleration of the mind."

It is not surprising that so frail a foundation should support no heavier a superstructure than Common Sense. It does not require a de Jouvenal to realise that Prudence, Inclusiveness, Sound Judgment and an Open Mind serve as better bases for correct prediction than their contrary qualities. Nowhere does he examine the operation of the larger qualities which these bureaucratic virtues must qualify. Nowhere does he try to come to grips with the larger prophetic figures of our own age, whether in the fields of literature, science or history. Even in the area of his speciality, economics, Keynes rates a footnote, Marx is condescended to and the bulk of the commentary gives prudent advice on the limitations of simple economic indices.

If this is "the most important statement yet made" on the subject of prediction, then Al Capp has written in vain.

Polonius Triumphant

THOUGH *The Art of Conjecture* does not make any notable advances upon the *Summa Theologica*, the fact of its publication and the probability of its acceptance as a serious work of the intellect possesses a certain unhappy significance. Forecasting is rapidly becoming a profitable sideline of the academic community. The RAND Corporation in America sponsors a programme similar to de Jouvenal's SEDEIS whose sole occupation is long-range predictions of social and economic trends. Most governments and many other businesses maintain large permanent staffs for this exclusive purpose.

Prophecy is notoriously self-fulfilling, if only because predictions are so often programmes of action in disguise. *Das Kapital* predicted a future it wished to see. One of the largest reasons for its failure as a prophecy was that the ruling classes were quicker to recognise its merits than the labouring classes. Modified by the academic economists of the Establishment, it served very well as the maintenance manual for the very system it sought to undermine.

The more precise the predictive business becomes, the better it can serve to maintain a society upon a selected course. If Cassandra had given all the details of the wooden horse, Troy might not have been razed. The agencies presently engaged most actively in the business of prophecy have the largest stake in the *status quo*, and their growing monopoly of the tools of prediction being developed now takes us all just that much nearer to the completely programmed and manipulable society that is the goal of all (in Hamlet's phrase) tedious old fools.

One can only hope that the future is more unknowable than either they or we have supposed.

CAMP CONCENTRATION

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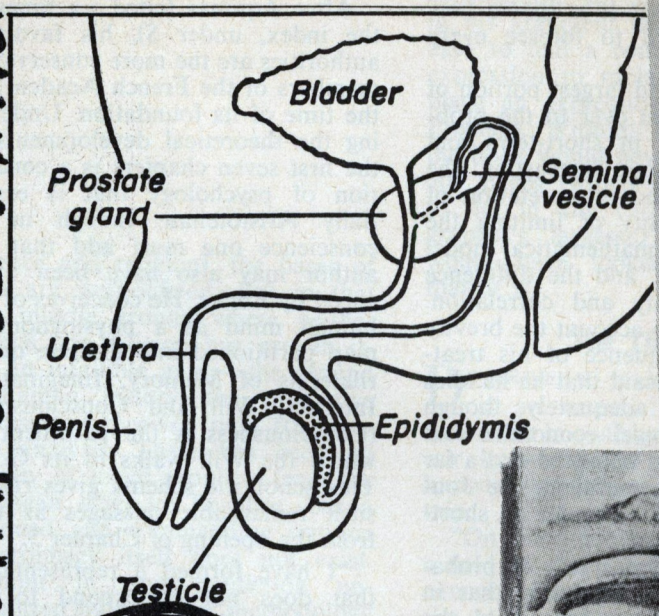

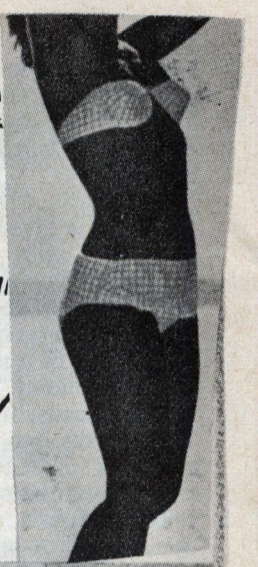

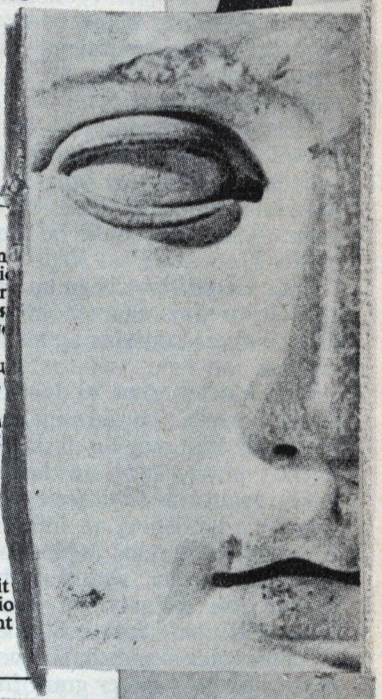

INTELLECT

ellectuality, mentality, brain, brains, mind, un
REASONING), rationality; faculties, senses, consci
ipience, perception, apperception, perspicuity, gr
association of ideas, instinct, conception, JUDGM
genius, WIT, ability, SKILL, WISDOM; logic, THOU

inner man, heart, breast, bosom; seat of thou
cerebrum, cranium; gray matter. *Slang*, upper s

pathology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, psycho
ology; philosophy; phrenology, craniology, cra
m; transcendentalism, spiritualism, immateri

, psychologist, psychopathologist, alienist, psychiatrist, psychome
psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, analyst.

Verbs—intellectualize (see THOUGHT); note, notice, mark; take notice,
cognizance; be aware, be conscious; realize; appreciate; ruminate
THOUGHT); fancy, imagine (see IMAGINATION).

Adjectives—intellectual, mental, rational, subjective, metaphysical, spirit
ghostly; psychical, psychological; cerebral; percipient, aware, conscio
subconscious; immaterial; logical, reasoning, reasonable; thought
thinking, meditative, contemplative.

Antonym see INSANITY.

membrane, permeable

164

Skull

ZOLINE

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CAMP CONCENTRATION

thomas m. disch

part three

1975. Louis Sacchetti, an American academic poet, begins a journal of his prison experiences in the Springfield Federal Penitentiary, where he is serving five years as a conscientious objector. Without explanation, he is taken by armed guards from Springfield to a mysterious subterranean barracks in Colorado. He makes protests to HAAST, the prison director and a retired World War II general, who tries to reassure him by pointing out the advantages of Camp Archimedes—his relative freedom there, a well stocked library, a standard of living well above what Sacchetti is used to even outside prison.

Later he learns from the Camp's WAC psychologist, Dr. AIMEE BUSK, that the prisoners, volunteers from Army hospitals and brigs, have been given an experimental drug, Pallidine, derived from the Spirochaetae pallida, the causative agent of syphilis. The drug produces a twofold effect: it heightens the intellectual powers exponentially and it produces a series of increasingly acute sicknesses, beginning with boils, chancres, dizziness, and nausea, and climaxing inexorably in death within nine months of its injection. There is no cure. Sacchetti has been brought to Camp A to serve as a "liaison" between these genius-prisoners and the staff.

MORDECAI WASHINGTON, a Negro prisoner, becomes Sacchetti's friend and tries to interest him in his own researches in alchemy. With Haast's approval, he has been preparing an *elixir vitae*, with which he hopes to reverse the effects of the Pallidine, though Haast's interest in it is for its rejuvenating properties. The Magnum Opus is conducted on June 21. Mordecai, in the last stages of deterioration caused by the drug, dies of an embolism, and Haast, in a fury of disappointment, abuses his corpse. That night Sacchetti, waking from a dream, realizes what has long been evident to everyone but himself—that he too has been secretly infected with the drug and that he has less than eight months to live.

[The following notes, set off by asterisks, are reproduced as they appear in Louis Sacchetti's journal. They are in the order in which they were written, but aside from this we have only internal evidence by which to date them. Thus, the first mention of Skilliman (in the twelfth note) would suggest that that, and succeeding, entries could have been written no earlier than the 9th of August. By their manner we may also safely suppose that the three concluding notes (beginning at "More and more, it is in *his* gardens that we walk"), which occupy the bulk of this section of the journal, were written towards the end of this period, just before Sacchetti resumed work on a regular (and may we also say intelligible?) basis; this would give us the 28th of September as a terminal date for these "ravings" (as their author himself styles them later). Much of the following material is not original with Sacchetti, but where he has not himself cited his sources—and he does not, usually, bother—we have not presumed to do so, if only because it would be too large an undertaking and of small interest to any but specialists. Among his sources we may list: the Bible, Aquinas, the Kabbalah, various alchemical texts including the second part of *The Romance of the Rose*, Richard (and George) Wagner, Bunyan, Milton, de Lautréamont, Rilke, Rimbaud and any number of modern English poets. Ed.]

* *

"Too much introspection. Not enough factoricity. Concentrate on vivid descriptions of real things." He's right, I know. My only excuse— that hell is murky.

* *

The belly of the whale—or of the stove?

* *

"He heard doleful voices and rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he would be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the streets." Then, a bit further on: ". . . Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. . . . He had not the discretion neither to stop

his own ears nor to know from whence those blasphemies came."

Bunyan.

* *

We pretend that art redeems the time; in truth, it only passes it.

* *

"Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done." A dire truth.

* *

"His life then began to take on the aspect of a glass of water, of the sort in which he would rinse his brushes: the several colours, mingling, were the colour of mud."

Portrait of P.

* *

It is because of the wooden tub that one believes so readily in the angel beside it, the angel that plays a cello.

* *

What Mordecai said about *Portrait*: "It is dull, but then its very dullness is part of its interest. I am not dull on purpose, but rather I allow the dull passages to fall where they will."

And, another time: "Art *must* court tedium. One man's still-life is another's *nature morte*."

* *

The pebbles, grating beneath my iron heels, are the charred bones of children.

* *

Do not earn, do not spend,
Do not worry, friend:
Time must have an end.
Hurry! Hurry!

* *

Here in hell the choice is only between the deepest cold and the extremest heat. "Between these two states they flee roaring to and fro, for in the one the other always seems heavenly refreshment."

* *

Of Haast, Skilliman says: "A mind so innately disordered that he would be hard put to arrange the letters of the alphabet in a sequence."

* *

So! Even the alphabet is crumbling. As though some squalling, nasty child were to strike down a castle of painted blocks.

Skilliman's infantile face.

* *

The Parable of the Pumpkin and the Hollyhocks

That spring in the middle of his hollyhocks there grew an intellectual pumpkin. The hollyhocks were beautiful, but he knew the pumpkin would be more useful. It didn't ripen until October, by which time the hollyhocks had already been eaten.

* *

"I knew a man who wrote seven good poems in a single evening."

"Seven in one night! It's hard to believe."

* *

Without science we wouldn't have these rows of uprisen stelae. It (science) is a veil over open lips, it is the word unspoken. Even the damned are reverent at that altar.

* *

Amfortas' lament has become my own:

Nie zu hoffen
dass je ich könnte gesunden.

* *

A Sebastian, wounded by Time's arrow.

* *

Meade said: "But in other ways, Skilliman isn't such a bad sort. His eyes, for instance, are quite nice—if you like eyes."

It is a joke that carries me back to the limits of memory—to high school. Poor Barry—he's literally falling to pieces. As though his body were impatient for its autopsy.

And later he said, "My senses are losing their touch."

* *

Today Skilliman, in a fit of temper, invented this verse, called—

The Earth

It'd be more perfect as a smooth sphere
With God's good oceans everywhere.

* *

"Birds of a strange nature, high-shouldered, with crooked bills, were standing in the muck, and looking motionlessly to one side."

Mann.

* *

"This isn't Democracy; this is humour."

Vito Battista.

* *

A new inscription for Hellgate: *Here everything leaves off.*

* *

Some day in our colleges Himmler will be studied. The last of the great chiliasts. The landscapes of his interior world will elicit only an *agreeable* amount of terror. (Of Beauty, therefore.) Consider that the transcripts of the atrocity trials are already, these many years, offered for our entertainment in theatres. *Beauty is nothing but the beginning. . . .*

* *

More and more, it is in *his* gardens that we walk. Who, if I cried out *then,* who would hear? Mute overthrownness! (Chirico.)

Horror smiled at the angels, at all of them . . . appallingly. We who have been waiting for just this can admire the illusion. "Why, it looks exactly like fire!"

Who is there to answer to the sky? A soul: it is done: it happens. Ill with fantasising, with reckoning in words, with soundless meanings. *It happens to all eternity.* They call every day, each to the other. Lips

forced to use the brains, against all delicacy. Suspicions and foul oaths—oh, the very foulest! Yea, the morning stops!

Oh, and the nights—the nights will torment and excite. A lust of shame stands and inhabits us. We gnaw and nibble then at the extremities of filthiness. It leaves, as on a wind. . . but windless. Winding down the cold, the dark streets. (The cobbles bubbling in the heat.) They rush roaring to and fro on golden sidewalks, towards the lifting horizon. An illusion!

Interior, arterial jungles, whence the Spirit rushes. The enchantment collapsing in on itself, expiring with a mighty sneeze. Boys there waiting in line to die, grumbling, patient. Their blood flutters into me. Ravines from which the Spirit departs, like a glutted condor. Posts of this prison universe; troops rocketing off to face (by preference) every Terror. What Lucifer whispers of, some mornings.

The sin of death spares the sons of David. Hope is a swampland under a glouting sky. A prehistoric wilderness of island-nights. Hinges of cell-mud. Hell grows, joylessly, out of the testes of the dying. (Whispers: Oh, the lecherous thickets of death!) O Mephistopheles!

The deathcamps: fat, swollen, blossoming exorbitantly. Roots sucking at the ground made ready by the Almighty's plan. (Only He *can*.)

God? God is our F——er; and here between the floating flowers, mental organisational principles. These, birds of a strange nature, existing between behaviour and reward. Standing in the muck, looking *at something wrong*, eyes slightly askew, as in an old woodcut.

"You are punished with stalks of bamboo," he says. You do as you're told. . . . He felt his heart knocking against the god that had organised this camp. Ecclesiastes.

* *

My entrails are trodden down like mire in the streets. My limbs deform and prostrate me. Rushings to and fro! up and down! "I have swallowed a monstrous dose of——!"

Dreadful noises slide by like "fish". It is hell, eternal punishment, where he thought he heard Love Demons in cadenced argument: *On the Cause Why Things Exist*. He stopped, lost in wandering mazes, mused; ah! There, *we exist!* God's Love does not cease against the river-mouth. Kissings. The flag sinks, in aery purposes. *Do* cease to exist; step up softly to vanish to

Want? We will make gold, remedies, oaths. We will visit the Bowels of the Earth. We will dream of the three meninges. O Pia Mater, womb of nature, accept our hyperdulia! (The Hidden Stone is found by Rectification, a soundless, stealthy work. Dripdrop of vitriol into the Earth-Anus.)

The Parable of the Sun and the Moon

The king arrives unaccompanied and enters the parenchyma. No other person then draws thither to my skin, save the guard, R.M., a humble man. The dew Pia watering it, dissolving layers of trodden gold. He gives it to the toadstools. Everything comes in. He divests himself of his skin. It is written: *I am the Lord Saturn*. The epithesis of sin. Saturn takes it and careens (Hoa). All things are Hoa. He, when once it has been given Him, illapses into prepared matter. O how fall'n! (Squab, upon a rock.) So, also, is His nose, His doublet of fine velvet, and these ever-encroaching growths, the nostrils. What is the (difference)? Jupiter keeps it twenty days.

It is the Moon, who is the third Beloved. Loved life. (To "live", anagramatically.) She keeps the nose for twenty days. The kin are within. "Microprosopus" is a cause, white as flowers of salt. Thus: lovingly, the Spirit descends in a fine white shirt. We consider his gorged nostrils.

One, but forty days, and sometimes forty, though it were so that He may be forty. His Sun is yellow.

Then comes a sun most beautiful. Consider (Wisdom): Heil! A land where goodness does not depend upon damp luxuriance. Isenheim! It illuminates these environs more palpably than hearing or distance. A cello! The hairy shafts of the world banish the night.

Beginning; it is the sun that keeps each strange implication tuned, though the year sings of the year. Never let the (futhorc) slip into the stagnant pools which have no being, Annihilators! A part of their portion was the "milk" within the park (God's park), in being given a choice between motionlessness and self-knowledge. The wyverns will be no longer scaly-eyed.

Doleful, doleful he heard.

We proceed thus to the 3rd Article:—

"*Objection 1*. It would seem that (God) has never seen this terrible virescense. We are torn by the counsel of Augustine, saying that (God) for several miles together would be in the company of such a Ragman that His 'poison' could not annihilate anything. Query: What had we best do when He suffocates?

"*Obj. 2*. Further, by his goodness, governing Doubt, one of the wicked ones *is good*. There is no one here (and there is someone) who whisperingly suggests negro songs. Causes of goodness. The pure fool, who says, "Evil be thou my*G—d*!" Or in *The Ring*. ("God!" 'Is *that* what you want?')

"*Obj. 3*. Further, if (God) were to blaspheme, would He so much love these gifts (so freely offered)? Would he demand our latria? The action of corruption has not done it, for He causes one thing to be generated by another. Non placet! The body of a 'hog' cannot annihilate anything. Query?

"*I answer that*. Some have held that brush in muddy water. This must be allowed. However, it is demonstrated from natural necessity that *He Himself* vomits on me. (Daily.) Layers of thin gold scabs are removed, but His nature *cannot change*. Then, what of us? I know osmosis, and that the cell-mud is sweetened with 'Symbology Raisins'. Cleaving a way inside me for the

umbelliferous fetters that (God) has created. Behold, lo! —the pits and pitfalls *please the Lord*. He keeps it forty days and forty nights. I am HE HIMSELF. Eden had they in reason, had He been free to give it to them."

Come, see:—the creepers of inner event!

* *

HEAVENLY REFRESHMENTS

Intolerable foreword! That He cannot at once annihilate anything! The just pause before that which tends to non-being, Barb-tailed Scorpio, as Master Dürer demonstrates, cannot *annihilate* anything. Therefore, come, tender little ones—to plash again! Introduce yourselves to my blood's Phlegathon. Ah, how nicely I burn now. Go it, guests! through all my talents!

Now you listen, now you hear the flagellants' invisibly tiny griefs. I would not squander my lamps and oil. Annihilations. It would be so comfortingly like the "dead".

Pale Venus, Pia Mater, accept these few spirochaetae.

Weeping, I saw a Satanophany of "Gold"—fascinariorum. Osmosis' ore; yet, one suspects somehow the magic of it. (He entreats your discretion.) Ramiform, the column of fluid blasphemies ascended his spine, undergoing swift corruption. This neaptide of pus is not easy to extricate.

But how filthy I've become. Lice gnaw me. The Swine God, Love, in giving being to such creatures, removes the scabs of leprosy. Truth: untruth. Can He "annihilate" His grace? No, nor the waters of rivers. But as we have said above, such tissues on a dunghill are enormously contradictory to the Catholic faith.

The pilgrims' way led them along a "street". According to Ps. cxxxiv. 6, immortal hatred burns with an even flame. This is the doctrine of A———: see his treatise, *On Annihilation.*

"He ruleth. He does what he will." Here this "nothing" is a (most personal) cause. The conatus of all His acts.

That mighty gallery. Anastamosis, primal forest of essential being that we call Heart's-Blood. Obtunding, he descends on all that tends to non-being; he *descends,* and Frightfulness lurks alongside, who is born of Nothingness, and inhabits Here-and-Now. This is the milky spirit to Whom we address these questions. Sphinx winks. His garden is aroused, but she witholds. And again.

It is enormous, of a sort without haecceity. Without prejudice to All-Maker's goodness, it may be called Slug Water. We must venture farther down, beneath God's lily, to the "Fathers". *(Faust, q.v.)* And without prejudice to his hairy palms, we are farctate with hatred and scorn. We thumb our noses.

Plant-life, water-rills, quavers, enervations. Greenness reflects the most flagitious of them (God). His power calcifies the powdered root. He mends their crooked bills. O Puppet of Ill, annihilate! Annihilate all, and us.

Pieces; nets converging in the sign of Poison; Pisces. Thrice blessed be the (Cause). Violence of swarms of animated corkscrews.

Squiffy with thirst in German lands,
Among the cheering flagellants. . . .

Guilds of penitentials marching to a satispaison. As A——— says, *because God* is grown old are these changes come. He draws a universal blank. Goodness? No, he dances. If it pleased Him, he would annihilate cause and motion, sequence and event . . . the Penitent.

Consider the proliferation of "Cause". You have here this rotting spinal sac that you may come upon knowledge of "God". Then He reaches a dirty, rugate finger into the cerebrum, and—

Gra netiglluk ende firseiglie blears. Gra netiglluk ende firseiglie. Netiglluk ende firseiglie blears.
(God)

1.

THE FACTS, THEN. Haast threatens that if I do not limit myself to the fact, the whole fact and nothing but the fact, my dining-room and library privileges will be withdrawn. The library I might forego.

2.

I have refused, however, categorically, to keep a journal. Though my days are numbered, I will not abet their numberer.

3.

I am much sicker. I have shooting pains in my groin and my joints. I lose half my dinners. My mouth and nose bleed. My eyes hurt, and my vision is, just these last few days, become quite bleary. I have to wear glasses. Also, I am growing bald, but I am not sure that may fairly be blamed upon the Pallidine.

I suppose that I am smarter. However, I do not *feel* much smarter. I feel, alternately, loggy and hysterical, manic and depressive, hot and cold. I feel like hell. But in Dr. Busk's offices (which she no longer occupies) I have turned out some remarkable performances on various psychometric tests.

4.

Dr. Busk is no longer working at Camp Archimedes. She is not, at least, in evidence. She has been out of sight, in fact, since the very evening of Mordecai's death. I have asked Haast for an explanation of her disappearance, but he will only explain in tautologies: she is gone because she is gone.

5.

All the prisoners I have heretofore written of are dead. The last to die was Barry Meade, who lingered on for almost a full ten months. His wit never failed him, and he laughed himself to death over a book of the dying words of famous men. It was a short time after his death that I wrote the first of the three journal entries which so distressed Haast and which prompted his latest and most vigorous insistence on *facts.*

6.

"What is a fact?" I asked him.

"A fact is what happens. The way you used to write—about the people here, and what you think about them."

"I *don't* think about them, though. Not these people. Not if I can help it."

"Damn it, Sacchetti, you *know* what I want! Write something I can understand. Not this . . . this. . . . It's positively anti-religious, this stuff of yours. I'm not a religious man, but this . . . you go too far. It's anti-religious, and I can't understand a word of it. You start writing a sensible, intelligent journal again, or I'll wash my hands of you. I'll wash my hands, you understand?"

"Skilliman wants me sent away?"

"He wants you *done* away. As a disruptive influence. You can't deny that you're a disruptive influence."

"What use is my journal to you? Why *do* you keep me on here? Skilliman doesn't want me. His little children don't want to be disrupted by me. All I ask is a jug of wine, a loaf of bread and a book."

I should never have said that, for it was that that gave Haast the lever he needed to move me. For all my cerebration, I am still the same rat in the same box pressing the same bar.

7.

Haast has changed. Since the night of the great fiasco he has grown milder. That glistering boyishness so characteristic of older American executives has left his face, leaving behind a sea-wrack of stoicism. His step is heavier. He is careless about his clothes. He spends long hours at his desk staring into space. What does he see? No doubt, the certainty of his own death, which he never believed in till now.

8.

For this last *fact* I am indebted to the guards. They regard me as the upperclassman these days. They make confidences. Assiduous is not happy about the work that duty requires of him. He suspects it may not be altogether right. Like Hans in my play, Assiduous is a good Catholic.

9.

Auschwitz has been published. Since its completion, I have alternately thought it worthless, even evil, and as excellent as it seemed in the very heat of composition. I was in such a humour that I asked Haast's permission to send it to Youngerman at *Dial-Tone*. He killed half the issue as it was going to bed in order to print it. A very kind letter from him telling me news of Andrea and others. They had been having the worst imaginations of me, because Springfield has been returning all mail addressed to me with CANCELLED stamped on it. On the phone they were told simply that: "Mr. Sacchetti is no longer with us."

Some few other shorter things published too, though none of my recentest ravings, since N.S.A.'s codebreaking computers return consistent UNCERTAINTY judgements on these efforts. Haast is not alone.

10.

St. Denis is the patron saint of syphilitics—and of Paris. It's a fact.

11.

What *is* a fact? I ask sincerely. If (10.) is a fact, it is because everyone agrees that St. Denis is the patron saint of syphilitics—a fact by consensus. Apples fall to the ground, which may be demonstrated, more often than not, by experiment—a fact by demonstration. But I expect it is not facts of either sort that Haast would have of me. If something is a fact by consensus, it is of small account whether or not *I* relate it, whereas facts that are both demonstrable and *news* are of such rareness that the discovery of a single one is enough to justify the efforts of a lifetime spent in the search. (Not, however, my lifetime.)

Well then, what have we left? Poetry—the facts of the interior—*my* facts. And it has been just such facts that I have been offering. In good faith. In dead earnest.

What *will* you have then? Lies? A half-poetry of half-truths?

12.

A note comes from Haast: "Just simple answers to simple questions. H.H." Then do, please, ask questions.

13.

A note from Haast. He bids me tell more about Skilliman. As H.H. no doubt knows, there is no subject I would rather avoid.

The facts, then. He is a man in his early fifties, of unprepossessing parts and considerable native intelligence. He is a nuclear physicist of the sort that liberals like myself would like to suppose essentially German. The type, alas, is international. Some five years back Skilliman enjoyed a position of some eminence in the A.E.C. His most notable work for that organisation was the development of a theory propounding the undetectability of nuclear testing undertaken in ice caverns of a particular construction. This was during the nuclear "moratorium" of that period. The tests were made—and detected by Russia, China, France, Israel and (ignominy) Argentina. Skilliman's ice caverns were found to have, in fact, a magnifying rather than a masking effect. It was this error that precipitated the recent and most disastrous series of tests and left Skilliman out of a job.

He found work again very quickly—in the same corporation in which Haast is the director of R & D. Despite a security as tight as the Vatican's, rumours had begun to circulate there, in the upper echelons, concerning the nature of the operations at Camp Archimedes. Skilliman insisted upon an exacter account, was

refused, insisted, etc. At last it was arranged that he should be made privy to our little atrocity, but only by agreeing to take up residence here himself. When he arrived, Meade and myself were the only survivors of the Pallidine. Once he understood the nature of the drug and had convinced himself of its effectualness, he insisted on being injected with it himself.

14.

A curious fact from history, which seems relevant at this point.

A scientist of the 19th century, Aurias-Turenne, developed a theory that chancroid and syphilis were one and the same disease and that by a technique of "syphilisation" one might achieve protection, a shorter period of treatment, and security from re-infection or relapse. It was discovered at Aurias-Turenne's death in 1878 that his corpse was covered with scars where he had used his own "syphilisation" techniques on himself—i.e., introduced syphilitic pus into open sores on his own body.

15.

Thus, by Skilliman's agency, the experiment has entered a second phase. It begins to accomplish, in fact, what was at first expected of it — those various researches into the Apocalypse that we call "pure research".

He is assisted by twelve "quats" (as he calls them, with a contempt so superb that even they, his victims, must admire it) — former students or assistants, who have, quite willingly, volunteered for the Pallidine. So emulous are we all to know the highest flights of genius —we who stop just this side of Jordan. I am glad I was delivered from the temptation. Would I, I wonder, have succumbed?

On a mountain-top overlooking the endless reaches of the realms of gold—I can hear the tempter's voice even now: "All this can be yours."

Poetry. Full stop.

16.

Another fact then, a fact of the rarest vintage.

In an effort to discover whether there was but a single venereal ailment (gonorrhea was then confused with the syph), Benjamin Bell, a researcher of Edinburgh, in 1793 inoculated his students with the disease.

A more cautious, but not a nicer, man than Aurias-Turenne.

17.

A note from H.H.: "What in hell is *relevant* about Aurias-Turenne?" He also inquires the significance of stopping on this side of the Jordan River.

The relevance of Aurias-Turenne—and of my anecdote about Dr. Bell, by extension—is that he seems to be motivated by the same Faustian urge to secure Knowledge at any price that is surely the motivation also of our Dr. Skilliman in Camp Archimedes. Faust was willing to renounce all claim to heaven; our Dr. Skilliman, with little expectation of heaven, is ready to forfeit an even more vital good—his life on Earth. All this only in order to understand a pathological condition: In A-T's case, syphilis; in Skilliman's case, genius.

For the significance of the Jordan river, may I refer you to Deuteronomy (Chapter 34) and Joshua (Chapter 1).

18.

On Skilliman's character.

He is envious of fame. He cannot speak of certain figures he has known in public life without making it transparently clear that he resents their achievements and capabilities. Nobel Prize winners infuriate him. He can scarcely bear to read a learned monograph in his own field for the thought that it was someone else who conceived it. The more his admiration is compelled by that which is worthy, the more he (inwardly) gnashes his teeth. Now, as the drug begins to have its effect upon him (it has been six weeks now, more or less), one can sense his mounting elation. His joy is that of a mountain climber who passes the markers left by former climbers at their furthest points of ascent. One can almost imagine him ticking off the names: "There's Van Allen!" Or, "Now I've passed Heisenberg."

19.

Skilliman's charisma.

This is willy-nilly the age of teamwork. In another generation, Skilliman insists, cybernation will have advanced far enough that the solitary genius will come back into fashion—provided he can get a grant large enough to supply him with the battalions of self-programming computers he will need.

Skilliman dislikes other people, but because they are necessary to him, he has learned to use them—just as once, reluctantly, I taught myself to drive a car. Somehow I get the feeling that he has learned his interpersonal techniques from a psychology text, that when he begins hysterically to scold one of his subordinates he says to himself: "Now, for a little negative reinforcement." Similarly, when he offers praise, he thinks of carrots. The best carrot at his disposal is simply the opportunity of conversing with him. For the sheer spectacle of devastation he is unapproachable.

But his chief strength lies in an unerring clearsightedness for others' weaknesses. He manages his twelve puppets so well, because he has carefully selected men who wish to be manoeuvred. As every dictator knows, there is never a scarcity of such men.

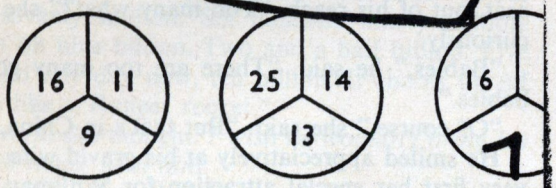
20.

I seem to have had a larger personal impact on H.H. than I would have thought possible. His latest interoffice memo reads like a rejection slip from a quarterly: "Your picture of Skilliman is not *concrete* enough. What does he look like? How does he speak? What kind of

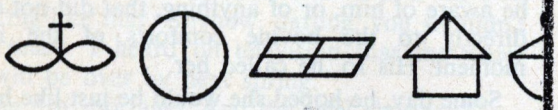
20. Underline which of these towns is not in the U.

GICOHAC
SHENAT
TONSOB
GOTHNINSAW

21. Insert the missing number.



22. Underline the odd-man-out.



23. Insert the word missing from the brackets.

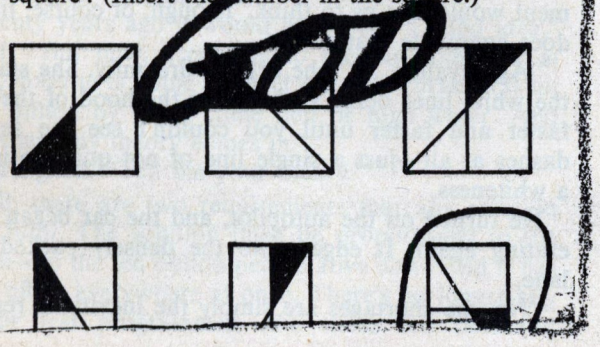
gravyboat (boss) russet
suspenders ( ) leper

24. Insert the word that means the same as the two outside the bracket.

excursion ( ) energy

TEST SEVEN

7. Which of the six numbered figures fits into the vac square? (Insert the number in the square.)



person is he?"

If I didn't know better, I might suspect that he's been taking Pallidine.

21.

What does he look like?

A man intended by Nature to be slim, he is fat in his own despite. But for a scarcity of limbs, he might be aptly represented as a spider—the swollen belly and minimal limbs. Balding, he cultivates the ineffectual vanity of combing long strands of sparse side hair across his glistening skull. Thick glasses magnifying speckled blue eyes. Rudimentary ear lobes, at which I frequently find myself staring, partly because I know this annoys him. A general insubstantialness, as though his flesh were only so much butter and might be sliced away without doing any harm to the metallic Skilliman within. A very bad body odour (that same butter, gone rancid). A bad smoker's cough. A single perpetual pimple on the underside of his chin, which he calls a "mole".

22.

How does he speak?

With a slight, residual twang: Texas modified by California. The twang thickens when he speaks with me. I think that for him I represent the great Eastern Establishment—that malign cabal of liberalism which long ago rejected his scholarship applications to Harvard and Swarthmore.

But you meant, really—*What does he say?*—didn't you?

I would categorise his conversations so:

A. Remarks expressive of interest in his own or others' researches. (Example: "We must rid ourselves of the old pointillist notions of bombing—of individual, discrete 'bombs'. Rather we must strive now for a more generalised notion of *bombiness*, a sort of aura. I envision it as something like the sunrise.")

B. Remarks expressing contempt of beauty, accompanied by a fairly candid admission of a desire to destroy it wherever found. (The best example of this is the quotation from the Nazi youth leader, Hans Johst, which he has had burnt on to a pine plaque and hung above his desk: "Whenever I hear the word culture, I release the safety catch of my Browning.")

C. Remarks expressing contempt of his colleagues and acquaintances. (I have earlier quoted Skilliman's opinion of Haast. Behind the backs of even his loyalest quats he scathes—and to their faces, if they step out of line. Once, when Schipansky, a young programmer, said in extenuation of a failure, "I tried, I really did try," Skilliman replied, "But it just wouldn't come up, eh?" An innocent enough jest, except that in Schipansky's case it is probably all too accurate. Indeed, if Skilliman has a tragic flaw it is that, like de Sade, he cannot resist the impulse to wound.)

D. Remarks expressing self-contempt and a hatred

of the flesh, his own or someone's else indifferently. (Example: a joke he made about the Pallidine's effect on "the Rube Goldberg mechanism of the soma". A better example—his preference for the scatological metaphor. He once kept the dining hall in stitches by pretending to have confused the difference between eating and shitting.)

E. Remarks and notions that are the fruit of a wild and wide-ranging intellect. Do what I can to construe, I can't turn *everything* he says against him. (In all fairness, a final example. He was trying to analyse the peculiar fascination of lakes, reservoirs and suchlike large, standing bodies of water. He observed that it is only in these that nature presents us with the spectacle of the Euclidean plane stretching on without apparent limit. It represents that final submission to the law of gravity that is always at work on our cell tissues. From this he went on to observe that the great achievement of architecture is simply to take the notion of the Euclidean plane and stand it on its edge. A wall is such an impressive phenomenon because it is a body of water . . . stood on its side.)

23.

What kind of person is he?

Here, I fear, you would have me leave the realm of fact altogether. Indeed, the preponderance of what I've written about Skilliman is not so much fact as evaluation—and not a very impartial one at that. I dislike the man as I've disliked few people in my life. I think I could say I hate him, if it were not both un-Christian and impolite.

I shall say then that he is a bad person and leave it at that.

24.

Haast replies, "I don't buy that."

What would you have then, H.H.? I have already wasted more words simply *describing* that son-of-a-bitch than I've expended on anyone else in this journal. If you want me to dramatise our encounters, you will have to ask Skilliman to allow me to spend a little more time at his side. He dislikes me as much as I dislike him. Except when we both take dinner in the dining room (where, alas, the quality of the meals has fallen off sadly), we rarely meet, much less talk to each other.

Would you like me to write fictions about Skilliman? Have you so far abandoned your faith in facts as to ask that? Is it a story you want?

25.

A note from H.H. "That will do." He is shameless.

Very well then—a story:

SKILLIMAN,
or
The Population Explosion
A tale by
Louis Sacchetti

DESPITE THE BABY'S kicking, he had managed to insert both his little legs into the proper orifices in the canvas car-chair. He was reminded of some particularly difficult peg-and-slot problem of the sort that chimpanzees are always being asked to solve on their intelligence tests.

"Too many of the damned things," Skilliman grumbled.

Mina, entering on the right-hand side, helped him secure Baby Bill, their fourth, with shoulder straps. The straps criss-crossed his bib and buckled beneath the seat, out of his reach. "Too many what?" she asked incuriously.

"Babies," he said. "There are too many goddamned babies."

"Of course," she said. "But that's in China, isn't it?"

He smiled appreciatively at his gravid wife. From the very first her special attraction for Skilliman had been her unfailing incomprehension of anything he might say to her. It was not just that she was ignorant, though she *was* wonderfully ignorant. Rather, it was her refusal to be aware of him, or of anything, that did not contribute directly to the bovine comforts of the immediate moment. His Io, he called her.

Some day, he hoped she would be just like her mother in Dachau, from whom everything specifically human—intelligence, charity, beauty, volition—had been drained away, as though someone had pulled out a plug from somewhere: the undead Frau Kirschmayer.

"Close the door," he said. She closed the door.

The red Mercury pulled out of its garage, and a little radio device of Skilliman's own designing triggered the mechanism that closed the garage door. Mina, he called his little invention.

When they were out on the throughway her hand reached automatically for the radio knob.

His hand caught hold of her thick-boned wrist. "I don't want the radio on," he said.

The hand, heavy with the ostentation of the Zircon ring, drew back. "I was just going to turn on the radio," she explained mildly.

"You're a robot," he said, and leaned across the front seat to kiss her soft cheek. She smiled. After four years in America, her English was still so rudimentary that she didn't understand words like "robot".

"I have a theory," he said. "My theory is that these shortages aren't due entirely to the war, as the government would like us to think. Though, of course, the war does aggravate matters."

"Aggravate. . . ?" she echoed dreamily. She stared at the white lines being sucked into the hood of the car—faster and faster until you couldn't see the separate dashes at all—just a single line of not quite so intense a whiteness.

He turned on the autopilot, and the car began accelerating again. It edged into the densely packed third lane.

"No, the shortages are simply the inevitable result of

the population explosion."

"Don't be gloomy again, Jimmy."

"People used to think, you know, that it would level off, that the curve would be S-shaped."

"People," Mina said dismally. "What people?"

"Riesman, for instance," he said. "But those people were wrong. The curve just goes on rising, rising. Exponentially."

"Oh," she said. She had begun to have a vague feeling that he was criticising her.

"Four hundred twenty million," he said. "Four hundred seventy million. Six hundred ninety million. One point oh nine billion. Two and a half billion. Five billion. And any day now, ten billion. It shoots up off the graph like a Ranger rocket."

Office work, she thought. *I wish he wouldn't bring his office work home with him.*

"It's a fucking hyperbola!"

"Jimmy, please."

"I'm sorry."

"It's Baby Bill. I don't think he should hear his own father talking like that. Anyhow, darling, you shouldn't worry so much. I heard on television that the water shortage will be over by next spring."

"And the fish shortage? And the steel shortage?"

"It's not *our* problem, is it?"

"You always know just what to say to make me feel better," he said. He leaned across Baby Bill and kissed her once again. Baby Bill began to cry.

"Can't you make him shut up?" he asked after a while.

Mina made cooing noises at her only son (the three before had been girls: Mina, Tina and Despina) and tried to pet his flailing, flannelled arms. At last, discouraged, she forced him to swallow a yellow (for infants up to two years old) tranquilliser.

"It's simply Malthus," he resumed. "You and I are increasing at a geometrical rate, while our resources are only increasing arithmetically. Technology does what it can, but the human animal can do more."

"Are you still talking about those babies in China?" she asked.

"Then you *were* listening," he said, surprised.

"You know, all they need there is birth control, like we've got. They have to learn to use pills. And queers—they're going to let queers be legal! I heard that on the news. Can you imagine that?"

"Twenty years ago it would have been a good idea," he said. "But now, according to the big computer at M.I.T., *nothing* is going to level out that curve. It'll hit twenty billion by 2003, come hell or high water. And that's where my theory comes in."

Mina sighed. "Tell me your theory."

"Well, there are two requirements that any solution has to fulfil. The solution must be proportional to the problem—to the ten billion people alive now. And it has to take effect everywhere at once. There's no longer any time for test programmes, like those ten thousand women sterilised in Austria. That doesn't accomplish a thing."

"One of the girls I went to school with was sterilised—did you know that? Ilsa Strauss. She said it never hurt a bit, and she enjoys . . . you know . . . just as much as ever. The only thing is she doesn't . . . you know . . . bleed any more."

"Don't you want to hear my solution?"

"I thought you'd told me."

"The idea came to me one day in the early Sixties when I heard a Civil Defence siren go off."

"What's a Civil Defence siren?" she said.

"Don't tell me you've never heard any *sirens* in Germany!" he said.

"Oh yes," she said. "When I was a girl, all the time. Jimmy, I thought you said we were going to stop at Mohammed's first?"

"You really want a sundae that badly?"

"The food in that hospital is so terrible. It's my last chance."

"Oh, all right," he said. He returned the car to the slow lanes, took it on manual, and drove off down the Passaic Boulevard exit. Mohammed's Quality Ice Creams was tucked away on a little sidestreet at the top of a short, steep hill. Skilliman could remember the shop from his own childhood. It was one of the few things from thirty years ago that hadn't changed, though sometimes, because of the shortages, the quality of the ice cream slipped.

"Should we take the baby in?" she said.

"He's happy here," Skilliman said.

"We won't be that long," she said. She groaned getting out of the car and put one hand to her swollen belly. "He's moving again," she whispered.

"It won't be long now," he said. "Close that door, Mina."

Mina closed the right-hand door. He looked at the handbrake and at Baby Bill, who was staring placidly at the mock steering-wheel of orange plastic that decorated his car-chair.

"So long, sucker," Skilliman whispered to his son.

When they were just coming in through the glass door, the counter man shouted at them "Your car! Sir, your car!" He waved a dish towel frantically at the rolling Mercury.

"What is it?" Skilliman pretended not to understand.

"Your Mercury!" the counterman screamed.

The red Mercury coasted, in neutral, in a gently descending curve, down the little sidestreet and into busy Passaic Boulevard. A Dodge hit the right front end and began climbing over the hood. A Corvair, which had been behind the Dodge, swerved to the left and hit the back end of the Mercury, which buckled, accordion-fashion, under the impact.

Skilliman standing outside the ice cream parlour said to his wife, "That's more or less what I was trying to say."

She said, "What?"

He said, "When I was talking about a solution."

The End

26.

AND ALWAYS, inescapably, it comes back to that single fact, the fact of death. Oh . . . that time were not so *liquid* an element! Then the mind might grab hold and wrestle it to a standstill. The angel would have to reveal himself in his eternal aspect then!

But then, in the midst of such Faustian moments, the pain will take hold, and my only wish is that time would accelerate. And so it goes, with rushings to and fro, up and down, from the hot to the cold, and then the rebound.

How many days or hours I've passed since I dashed off my little fable for Haast I have no notion. I am still in the infirmary, as I scribble this, still very sick.

27.

The worst moment came just after I'd written *Skilliman.* I had a mild fit, in the course of which I developed what must have been an hysterical blindness.

I always used to suppose that if I were to become blind I would have to commit suicide. What, if not light, is the mind to feed on? Music is, at best, only a kind of aesthetic soup. I am no Milton nor Joyce. As Youngerman once wrote:

The eye is mightier than the ear;
The eye can see, the silly ear
Can only hear.

To which, wishfully, I would add:

If one were blind, one might find
Some use for ears:
The human mind
Can do peculiar things, my dears.

I am too sick to think, to do anything. I seem to feel each thought's pressure against the sutures of my aching brain. Perhaps trepannation is the answer!

28.

There is a really imposing litter of notes from Haast on the bedside table. Excuse me, H.H., if I don't look at them just yet.

I pass the time staring at a tumbler of water, at the grain of the linen of my bedclothes, wishing for sunlight.

Ah, the sensuality of convalescence!

29.

Haast had many complaints to bring against *Skilliman, or The Population Explosion.* Chiefly, that it is libellous. H.H. has the true publisher's mentality. That my fiction hinges to some truths (Skilliman *did* marry a German schoolgirl called Mina; her mother *does* live in Dachau; they *do* have five children) only aggravates my fault in Haast's eyes.

("Aggravates. . . ?" Haast echoes dreamily.)

Remember, my dear jailer, that you asked for that story, that my only intention was to amplify my thesis that Skilliman is a bad person. The worst, indeed, I've ever known. He quests the grail of Armageddon. As loveless as he is, he would sink to the very lowest circles of Dante's hell—beneath Phlegathon, below the wood of suicides, beyond the ring of sorcerors, to the very heart of Antenora.

30.

A visit from Haast. He is troubled in some way I don't understand. Often he will break off in the middle of a platitude to stare into the sudden silence as though by its agency everything had metamorphosed in that instant to crystal.

What has come over him? Guilt? No, such notions are still beyond H.H. More likely gastric upset.

(I remember something Eichmann is supposed to have said: "All my life I felt fear, but I did not know of what.")

I did ask him, jokingly, if he too had volunteered for the Pallidine. Though he tried to make of his denial another joke, I could see that the suggestion offended him. A little later he asked: "Why? Do I seem smarter than I used to?"

"A bit," I admitted. "Wouldn't you like to be smarter?"

"No," he said. "Definitely not."

31.

H.H. explained at last the reason that Aimée Busk is no longer associated with Camp A. It was not that he had fired her, but that she has run off!

"I don't understand," he lamented, "why she would *do* such a thing! When she heard she'd been selected to work on the experiment, she was delighted. Her salary was double here what it had been, and her living expenses were all provided for besides!"

I tried to suggest that a prison can be just as claustrophobic for the guards as for the prisoners, that the same bars enclose both. Haast would not be persuaded.

"She could take a trip into Denver whenever she wanted to. But she never wanted that. She *loved* her work. That's why it makes no sense."

"She must not have loved it as much as you supposed."

Haast moaned. "The security! All the work we've gone to to make this place air-tight, and now *this!* God knows what she intends to do with the information she has in her head. She'll sell it to China! Do you realise what those bastards would do with a thing like Pallidine? They're unscrupulous, you know. They'll stop at nothing."

"You've tried to find her, of course?"

"We've tried everything. The F.B.I. The C.I.A. All State Police have her description. And private detective agencies in all major cities have been put on her scent."

"You could put her pictures in the newspapers and on television."

Haast's laughter verged on hysteria.

"Not a trace of her since she disappeared?"

"Nothing! For three and a half months—not a word. I can't sleep any more for the worry it causes me. Do you realise that that woman has it in her power to wreck this entire project?"

"Well, if she's refrained from exercising that power for three and a half months, there's a fair chance, it would seem, that she'll continue to do so indefinitely. A thought that must have been of great comfort, at one time, to Damocles."

"Who?"

"A Greek."

He left me with a reproachful glance for hurling Greeks at him. What use, in such a world of cares, are Greeks?

How vulnerable these people are who rule the world of cares. I remember the puppy-dog face of the elderly Eisenhower, the fragility of the Johnson persona, such an ill-made thing to begin with.

What an odd mood I'm in today. If I don't stop I'll be compassionating King Charles next! And why not?

32.

THE WALLS ARE positively *flickering*!

And my breath is short.

At such times I can't tell if it is my genius or my illness that has taken possession.

Ineluctable modality of the *in*-visible!

33.

I'm better now. Or should I say *lower*?

I have been meaning for several days now to create a little Museum of Facts in the manner of Ripley. During my latest stint in the infirmary I developed a sudden craving for newspapers. I have accumulated one entire scrapbook, from which I transcribe these few random excerpts:

34.

Believe It or Not:

The Reverend Augustus Jacks, formerly of Watts, continues to enjoy his extraordinary popular success in the Los Angeles area. National television networks still refuse Jacks permission to broadcast the "Address to a White Conscience" that catapulted the former Evangelical minister to overnight fame, on grounds that it is "inflammatory". Their refusal has not prevented most of the nation from having already had an opportunity to hear the address, either on the radio or over local, unaffiliated television stations. The sophomore from the University of Maryland who tried last week to set fire to Jacks' $90,000 Beverly Hills home has consented to accept Jacks' offer of legal aid, after receiving a visit from the Negro minister in his cell in the Los Angeles county prison.

35.

It's a Fact:

The Trip-Trap, and other important Las Vegas gambling houses, have announced their decision to discontinue blackjack and poker, thus confirming rumours of unprecedented runs of luck against the house at these tables. "Whatever system is being used," William Butler, owner of The Trip-Trap, stated, "it is one that our dealers have never come up against before. Every winner seems to be playing a different system."

36.

Strange As It Seems:

Adrienne Leverkühn, the East German composer of "hard" music, returned to Aspen, Colorado, to appear in court to answer charges brought against her by an association of claimants who maintain that the premiere performance of her *Spacial Fugues* on August 30 this year was the direct and culpable cause of injuries, both physical and mental, done to the claimants. One claimant, Richard Sard, Festival director, has testified that the performance ruptured his eardrums, causing him permanent deafness.

37.

Against the Odds:

Will Saunders, a Vice-President of Northwest Electronics and rumoured to be in line for the Presidency, resigned from that company immediately after its recent stock-split. He announced his intention to set up his own firm, the precise nature of which he will not divulge. He does not deny the speculations printed in the *Wall Street Journal* to the effect that he controls a patent that could become the basis of a new process of cinematic holography.

38.

This Curious World:

The murderer, or murderers, of Alma and Clea Vaizey is still being sought. Minneapolis police have not yet released to the press all the circumstances surrounding this bizarre and revolting crime, and it is feared that the murderer's boast, made in his "Open Letter" to the nation's newspapers, may prove all too true—that the murders will seem to have been impossible to perform in the manner in which they were accomplished. Various writers of detective fiction have offered their services to the police.

39.

Stranger Than Fiction:

With three fashion magazines featuring Jerry Breen's *Traje-de-luces*—or suit-of-lights—in models for both men and women on the covers of their trend-setting fall issues, the success of this fashion innovation is virtually guaranteed. The suit-of-lights is nothing but a transparent web of miniature phosphor-light elements which twinkle in ever-changing patterns of greater or lesser

brightness, as determined by the movements and mood of the wearer. Certain gestures of an intimate nature can be programmed to produce a momentary "blackout" during which the wearer must depend entirely on his or her own resources. Mr. Breen, in an interview to be printed in *Vogue,* declares his resolution not to move from his present home in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he has been for many years a designer of western clothes for I. W. Lyle, manufacturers of the *Traje-de-luces.*

40.

Improbable But True:

S.M.U. continued its tables-turning winning streak by trouncing Georgia 79 to 14. Quarterback Anthony Strether was borne in triumph from the stadium and through the city by a jubilant crowd. In this, the fourth game of the season, analysts detected seven new variations on Strether's complex new "Backlash" formation, bringing the total of variant "Backlash" plays in S.M.U.'s repertoire to 31. In the last quarter Coach Olding sent out his freshman team on to the field to rub salt in Georgia's already grievous wounds.

41.

Would You Believe It:

A stonemason has been fired from his job at the insistence of the Regents of Tulane University. He had carved this epigraph in marble above the entrance of the new library:

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

The Regents maintain that the stonemason deliberately reduced the space between the second and third words.

42.

I AM BEING TESTED. Camp A. has at last found a replacement for the runaway Busk — Robert ("Bobby") Fredgren, an industrial psychologist in the blithe California style. Like a basket of August berries, "Bobby" seems to be compacted of pure sunshine. Tanned, gleaming and immaculately young, he is what Haast imagines himself to be in his dreams. It will be a pleasure to watch that suntan fading in our Stygean halls.

But it is not his beauty alone I abhor. Rather (much more) it is his manner, mediate between that of a disc jockey and a dentist. Like a d-j he is all smiles and bland chatter, platter after platter of dithering anti-anxiety songs, of blue skies and sunshine cakes; like a dentist he will insist, even as you scream, that it doesn't really hurt. His dishonesty can withstand the most vigorous assaults, it is well-nigh heroic. This exchange, for instance, from yesterday:

Bobby: Now, when I say begin, turn over the page and begin working the problems. Begin.

Me: My head hurts.

Bobby: Louie, you're not co-operating. Now I *know* you can do splendidly on this test if you'll just put your mind to it.

Me: But my mind *hurts*! I'm sick, you bastard. I don't have to take your goddamned tests when I'm this sick. That's the *rule.*

Bobby: Remember what I said yesterday, Louie—about depressing thoughts?

Me: You said I'm only as sick as I think I am.

Bobby: Hey, that's more like it! Now, when I say begin, turn over the page and begin working the problems. Okay? (With a big bland Pepsodent smile.) Begin.

Me: Fuck you.

Bobby (not taking his eyes off his stopwatch): Let's try that again, shall we? Begin.

43.

"Bobby" lives in Santa Monica and has two children, a boy and a girl. He is active in local affairs and holds the office of Treasurer in his county chapter of the Democratic Party. Politically he considers himself "rather liberal than otherwise". He has reservations about the present war (we should, he feels, accept the Russian offer to negotiate an end to our bacteriological attacks, at least in the "so-called neutral countries". But he thinks the conchies "go too far".

He has good teeth.

He is the very prototype of Sonnlich in my play. Sometimes I get the disquieting feeling that I *wrote* this bland monster into existence.

44.

Bobby, model young executive that he is and (therefore) believer in teamwork, has devised tests for his guinea-pigs that must be taken in tandem. Today I had my first experience of this intellectual chain gang. I must confess that I enjoyed it in a simple-minded way, while Bobby was quite beside himself with the pleasure of pretending to be the M.C. of a television quiz show. When one of us would answer some particularly abstruse question, he would cheer: "That's tremendous, Louie! You're doing absolutely *tremendous!* Isn't that tremendous, audience?"

Poor Schipansky, with whom I'm manacled for these events, does not enjoy our games at all. "What does he think I am?" he complained to me. "Some kind of performing monkey?"

Schipansky's nickname among the other quats is Cheeta. His features do bear an unfortunate resemblance to a chimpanzee's.

45.

Another round of tests with Schipansky. I realised last night as I was writing (44.) that I wanted very much for the quiz show to go on. Why? And why when my mind is so much more alive other times (I am beginning plans for the construction of a real Museum of Facts in George's abandoned theatre; I am doing some interesting poems in German; I am elaborating baroque arguments against Lévi-Strauss), why should I dwell here on

the single hour of the day that I waste at compulsory play?

The answer is simple: I'm lonely. Recess is the only time I can talk to the other kids.

46.

Between rounds today I asked Schipansky what sort of work he was doing with Skilliman. He answered with some technological doubletalk that he must have supposed would leave me boggled. I returned the serve neatly, and soon Schipansky was bubbling with confidences.

I gather from these that Skilliman has turned his attention to the possibility of a sort of geologic bomb—something of the order of what happened accidentally at the Mohole, but on a much grander scale. He wants to lift new mountain ranges from the Earth. The Faustian urge is always towards the giddy heights.

After a few calm moments picking sprigs of such edelweiss, I touched, ever so gently, on the possible moral implications of such researches. Does every grad. student have a clear right to be initiated into the mysteries of cataclysm? Schipansky froze into near catatonia.

In an effort to retrieve my error, I tried to involve Bobby in the conversation, reminding him of his feelings, confided earlier, about bacteriological warfare. Wouldn't, I suggested, geological warfare be rather worse, rather more irresponsible? Bobby couldn't say—it wasn't his field of knowledge. In any case we at Camp A. are only concerned with pure research. Morality is concerned with applications of knowledge, not the knowledge itself. And more balm of that sort. But Schipansky didn't show a sign of thawing. I'd touched the wrong button, absolutely.

That was the end of tests for today. When Schipansky was out of the office, Bobby allowed himself to become as vindictive as it is in his warm nature to be. "That was a terrible thing to do," he fretted. "You've got that poor boy completely *depressed*."

"No, I didn't."

"You *did*."

"Oh, cheer up," I said, patting him on the back. "You're always looking on the dark side of things."

"I know," he said gloomily. "I try not to, but sometimes I just can't help it."

47.

SCHIPANSKY CAME OVER to my laden table at lunch. "If you don't mind. . . ?" Such self-effacement! As though, had I minded, he would have thrown the switch that cancels his too bold existence.

"Not at all, Schipansky. I appreciate company these days. You new people are not nearly so gregarious as the last flock of lambs." Which was more than mere courtesy. Often I'm quite by myself at meals. Today there were three other quats besides Schipansky dining in the hall, but they kept to themselves, mumbling numbers through their ingenuous pizzas.

"You must feel nothing but contempt for me," S. began, dabbling a spoon unhappily in cold spinach soup. "You must think I don't have a mind."

"After those tests we took together? Not very likely."

"Oh, tests! I've always done well on *tests*, that's not what I meant. But at college your kind of person . . . the art students . . . they think that just because a person is studying a science, that he doesn't have a. . . ." He pushed away his mussed soup with the dribbling tip of his spoon.

"A soul?"

He nodded, eyes fixed in the soup. "But it isn't true. We do have feelings, the same as anybody else. Only perhaps we don't display them so openly. It's easy with your background to talk about conscience and . . . things like that. No one is ever going to offer *you* $25,000 a year at graduation."

"As a matter of fact, I know lots of former classmates, would-have-been poets or painters, earning double that in advertising or television. There's a form of prostitution for everybody these days. If nothing else, one can become a union leader."

"Mm. What's that you're eating?" he asked, pointing at my plate.

"Truite braisée au Pupillin."

He signalled a black-uniformed waiter. "Some of that for me, too."

"I wouldn't have imagined it was really the money that seduced you," I said, pouring him some Chablis.

"I don't drink. No, I guess it wasn't really the money."

"What was your major at school, Schipansky? Biophysics, yes? Didn't you at any point like the subject for its own sake?"

He bolted half a glass of the refused wine. "More than anything else, yes! I like it more than anything else in the world. I don't understand sometimes, I honestly don't understand, why *everyone* doesn't feel the same way I do. Sometimes it's so intense that I . . . I can't . . ."

"I do feel the same way, but about poetry. About all the arts, but most particularly poetry."

"And people?"

"People come next."

"Even your wife, if it came to that?"

"Even my self, if it came to *that*. And now you're wondering how I've got the nerve to come down on you about morality, feeling the way I do, the way we do."

"Yes."

"Because I'm talking about just that—feeling. Ethics is concerned with what one actually does. The temptation and the act are two different things."

"Is art a *sin* then? Or science?"

"Any overweening love, less than the love of God Himself, is sinful. Dante's hell is full, above Dis, of those who loved agreeable things just that bit too much."

Schipansky blushed. "If you'll excuse me for saying so, Mr. Sacchetti, I don't believe in God."

"No more do I. But I did for quite a while, and so you must excuse me when He creeps into my metaphors."

Schipansky chuckled. His eyes flickered up from the table to meet mine for an instant, then retreated to the trout that the waiter had just brought. It was enough to let me know that he had been hooked.

What a career I missed in not becoming a Jesuit. Next to an out-and-out seduction, there is no game quite so absorbing as this of convert-making.

Later:

I've had to spend the better part of the day in darkness listening to music. My eyes. . . . How I *resent* my inconstant flesh!

48.

UNPROMPTED, HE CAME to my dim room today to tell me the story of his life. He gave the impression of telling it all for the very first time. No one before this, I suspect, has expressed an interest in the matter. And indeed, it is a cheerless tale—too undeviatingly like the monochrome life one would extrapolate for him on no other basis than a glimpse of the ties in his closet.

The child of divorced parents, S.'s youth was full of discontinuities. He seldom attended the same school for two years running. Though unquestionably bright, he had the extraordinary ill-luck always to be the *next*-brightest child in his class, always second best. "I am," he said, "the essential salutatorian." He became obsessively competitive, straining after that which his rivals obtained without effort. For such a person friendship is impossible; it would imply a cease-fire. S. realises that he sacrificed his youth to false idols; now, his youth wasted, he sacrifices his life to them.

He is 24, but he has that look of perpetual adolescence so common to science swots: a scant, gangling body, a pallid face, acne, hair just too long to be called crewcut, too short to lie flat. Poached-egg eyes that convey melancholy without inspiring sympathy, perhaps because of the McNamara-type glasses. A prissy trick of pursing his lips before he starts to talk. Not surprisingly, he is as resentful of Fair Appearances as Savonarola. Strength, beauty, health, even symmetry offend him. When other quats watch sports on television, Schipansky leaves the room. Creatures like Fredgren, who are nothing *but* Fair Appearance, can arouse in S. such passions of contempt and envy that he tends instantly towards catatonia, this being his primary response to any passion.

(I am reminded of my own rancorous description of Fredgren. I begin to wonder if I am limning Schipansky's features or my own. He comes to seem more and more a nightmare image of myself, of that aspect of Louis Sacchetti that Mordecai as long ago as our schooldays dubbed "Donovan's Brain".)

Are there *no* redeeming features? His wit, perhaps. But no, for though I've often had to laugh at what he says, he is so invariably the butt of his own jokes—sometimes grossly, sometimes by sly inference—that his wit soon becomes as distressing as his silences. There is something unwholesomely narcissistic about such persistent self-denigration. Self-abuse, might one not better call it?

The pathos of such persons is that their chief (and to some, irresistible) attraction is that they are so *wholly* unlikeable. It is the lips of such lepers that saints must learn to kiss.

49.

STOP THE PRESS! I have discovered a redeeming feature!

He confessed today, as though shamed by the admission: "I like music." He'd managed to narrate his entire life story without finding the fact that all his free time is given over to this enthusiasm worthy of mention. Within the limits of his tastes (Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen, *et al*), S. is knowledgeable and discerning, though (characteristically) his entire experience of their works derives from recordings. He has never been to a live concert or opera! Schipansky is not one of your social animals, not he! Yet when I admitted to being unfamiliar with *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*, he showed a quite missionary zeal in dragging me to the library to listen to it.

And what a wonderful new use for ears this music is! After *Et exspecto*, I heard *Couleurs de la Cité Celeste*, *Chronochromie*, and *Sept Haïkaï*. Where have I been all my life? (In Beyreuth, that's where.) Messiaen is as crucial for music as Joyce was for literature. Let me say just this: Wow.

(Was it *I* who wrote: "Music is, at best, only a kind of aesthetic soup"? Messiaen is an entire Thanksgiving dinner.)

Meanwhile the work of conversion goes on. S. mentioned that Malraux had commissioned *Et exspecto* to commemorate the dead of the two world wars, and such is the integrity of the piece that is uncomfortable to discuss the music without touching on that which it commemorates. Like most of his contemporaries, S.'s attitude to history is one of peeved impatience. Its vast absurdities have no power as exempla. But it is difficult, especially with the gold of Pallidine in one's veins, to remain such a perfect ostrich as that.

50.

A note from Haast that he wanted to see me. When I arrived at the appointed time, he was engaged. There was nothing of interest in the anteroom but a book by Valéry, which I began to browse through. Almost at once I came to the following passage which was heavily underscored:

"Carried away by his ambition to be unique, guided by his ardour for omnipotence, the man of

great mind has gone beyond all creations, all works, even his own lofty designs; while at the same time he has abandoned all tenderness for himself and all preference for his own wishes. In an instant he immolates his individuality. . . . To this point its pride has led the mind, and here pride is consumed. . . ." (The mind) ". . . perceives itself as destitute and bare, reduced to the supreme poverty of being a force without an object. . . . He (the genius) exists without instincts, almost without images; and he no longer has an aim. He resembles nothing."

Beside this passage, someone had scrawled in the margin: "The supreme genius has ceased at last to be human."

When Haast could see me, I asked him if he knew who might have left the book in his anteroom, suspecting Skilliman. He didn't know, but suggested I check with the library. I did. The last person to check out the book had been Mordecai. Belatedly I recognised his handwriting.

Poor Mordecai! What is more horrible—or more human—than this terror of feeling oneself no longer a part of the species?

The misery . . . the inexpressible misery of what is being done here.

51.

Haast had had no more urgent purpose in asking to see me than to spend a few minutes talking. He, too, it seems, is lonely. Eichmann was probably quite "lonely" in the Office of Jewish Emigration. Listening to his vague chatter, I wondered if Haast would live long enough to stand trial for *his* crimes. I tried to imagine him inside Eichmann's ghastly glass box.

Busk is still at large. Good for her.

52.

SCHIPANSKY RELATES AN indicative anecdote about Skilliman, from a time six years ago when he was taking a summer sessions course under him at M.I.T., under N.S.A. auspices.

The course was a survey of nuclear technology, and in one lecture Skilliman demonstrated the process known in the trade as "tickling the dragon's tail". That is, he edged two blocks of radioactive materials together, which at a certain point, never attained, would reach critical mass. S. recounted Skilliman's evident enjoyment of this razorish business. At one point in the demonstration Skilliman, as though by accident, allowed the two blocks to get too near each other. The Geiger counter became hysterical, and the class bolted for the doors, but the security guards wouldn't let anyone out. Skilliman announced that they had all received a fatal dose of radiation. Two of the students broke down on the spot. It was all a joke: the blocks had not been radioactive, and the Geiger counter had been rigged.

This delicious jest had been arranged with the cooperation of the N.S.A. psychologists, who wanted to test the students' reactions in authentic "panic situations". This supports my thesis that psychology has become the Inquisition of our age.

It was as a consequence of that joke that Schipansky began working under Skilliman. He passed the N.S.A. test by showing no signs of panic, distress, fear, anxiety —nothing but benign curiosity in the "experiment".

Only a corpse could have manifested more rooted dispassion.

53.

An engagement with Swagbelly Spiderman, in which, I fear, I was worsted.

Schipansky, visiting me in my room, had asked (curiosity finally getting the upper hand) why I have been so quixotic as to insist on being jailed as a conchy, when I might easily (age, weight and marital status considered) have sneaked out of armed service unobtrusively. I have never met a person who did not, given the occasion, get around to this subject. (A minor discomfort of sainthood—that one becomes, all unwillingly, the Accuser and bad conscience of whomever one meets.)

Skilliman entered, escorted by Rock-Eye and Assiduous. "I hope I'm intruding?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Not at all," I replied. "Make yourself at home."

Schipansky rose. "I'm sorry. I didn't know you needed—"

"Sit down, Cheeta," Skilliman said peremptorily. "I've not come to spirit you off, but to have a chat with you and your new friend. A symposium. Mr. Haast, our playground director, has suggested that I should myself have more to do with this fellow, that he must be given a chance to exercise his special talents as an observer. I fear that I *have* rather overlooked him, that I have not given Mr. Sacchetti ample credit. For (as you, Cheeta, have made me realise) he is not undangerous."

I shrugged. "Praise from Caesar. . . ."

Schipansky still hovered indecisively above his seat. "Well, in any case, you won't be needing me. . . ."

"Strangely enough, I *do*. So, sit down."

Schipansky sat down. The two guards arranged themselves symmetrically on either side of the door. Skilliman took a seat, opposite me, with the contested soul between us.

"As you were saying?"

54.

As I reconstruct the scene, the world immediately about me, the world of typewriter, littered table, palimpsest wall, shrinks and swells rhythmically, now bounded in a nutshell, now infinite. My eyes ache; my sweetbread brains grown nauseous as though farctate with bad food yet restrained from vomiting.

A stoic, but not stoic enough not to whine a little, not enough not to want a little sympathy.

Get on with it, Sacchetti, get on with it!

(Skilliman was sick today, too. His hands, usually so ineloquent, shook with ague. The "mole" beneath his

chin has gone all purple, and when he coughs, he looses sulphurous smells, as of farts or spoiled mayonnaise. He takes a perverse pleasure in the symptoms of his decay, as though they are all points in the case he is making against his body's treason.)

55.

HIS MONOLOGUE.

"Come, come—moralise for us, Sacchetti. Such reticence isn't like you. Tell us why it's good to be good. Lead us by a paradox to virtue—or to heaven. No? A smile is no answer. I won't buy it. I won't buy smiles, paradoxes, virtue, nor yet heaven. To hell with all of them. But I'll buy hell. At least it's possible to *believe* in hell. Hell is that famous bleeding hole at the centre of things. You look askance, but there it is, my friend, all too plainly visible. Put it another way: Hell is the Second Law of Thermodynamics; it is that frozen, eternal equilibrium that makes calamity of so long life. A universal Misrule, all things wound down and nowhere to go. And Hell is more than that: Hell is something we can *make*. That, finally, is its fascination.

"You think me flippant, Sacchetti. You curl your lip, but you don't reply. You know, don't you, better than to try? Because if you were to be at all honest, you'd find yourself on my side. You put it off, but it stares you in the face—the coming victory of Louie II.

"Oh yes, I read your journals. I browsed through some bits of it only an hour ago. Where else do you think I come by this jingling eloquence? There are parts you ought to let Cheeta read too—so that he might try to improve that lamentable personality of his. Face to face, I doubt you are ever so contemptuous of him. It is the lips of such lepers as you, my lad, that saints like Louis must learn to kiss. Dear me, such very Freudian metaphors!

"But we're *all* human, aren't we? Even God is human, as our theologians have discovered to their chagrin. Tell us about God, Sacchetti, that God in whom you profess no longer to believe. Tell us about *values* and why we should buy some. We're both, Cheeta and I, quite deficient in *values*. I tend to find them, like the canons of architecture, like the laws of economics, so arbitrary. That is my problem concerning values. Arbitrary, or what is worse, self-serving. I mean, *I* like to eat too, but that's no reason to elevate peanut butter into the immortal, everlasting Pantheon, for goodness' sake! You sneer at peanut butter, but I know you, Sacchetti—you'll salivate at the sound of other bells. *Paté foie gras, truite braisée, truffes.* You prefer French values, but it's all the same chyme by the time it hits your guts.

"Speak to me, Sacchetti. Show me some abiding values. Is there no lustre left about the throne of your vanished God? What of power? Knowledge? Love? Surely *one* of the old trinity is worth speaking up for?

"I will confess that power is a little problematical, a little raw, for us moralists. Like God in His more fatherly aspect, or like a bomb, power tends to be rather ruthless. Power needs to be qualified (and, as it were, hedged) by other values. Such as? Louis, why do you remain silent?

"Knowledge—how about knowledge? Ah, I see you'd rather pass over knowledge too. One gets a little sick of that apple, doesn't one?

"So it all boils down to Love, to that need to be *somebody else's* peanut butter. How passionately the ego longs to burst its narrow confines and spread itself out in a thin paste over just everyone. You will observe that I'm being very general. It's always wisest, when speaking of Love, to avoid particular instances, for these tend to seem self-serving. There is, for instance, the love one feels towards one's mother—the very paradigm of human love, but one cannot think of it without feeling one's lips puckering at the nipple. Then, there is the love one feels towards one's wife, but neither can this escape the Pavlovian aspersion of "Reward!" Albeit the reward is no longer peanut butter. There are more diffuse loves than these, but even the most exalted, the most altruistic of them seems to have its roots in our too-human nature. Consider Theresa's transports, behind the convent walls, when the heavenly Bridegroom descended on her. Oh, if only Freud had never written, how much happier we all would be! Say something in defence of Love—do, Sacchetti. Before it's too late.

"Values! *Those* are your values! Not one of them that doesn't exist to keep our feet steady on the treadmill of life, to keep the cogs engaged at those daily rounds so dear to them: the alimentary canal, the spining world of days and nights, the closed circuit from chicken to egg, from egg to chicken, from chicken to egg. *Don't you honestly sometimes want to break out?*"

56.

HIS MONOLOGUE, CONTINUED.

"It's just as well that God is dead at last. He was such a prig. Some scholars have professed to find it odd that Milton's sympathies were with his friend and not with God, but there's nothing remarkable in that. Even the Evangelist more often purloins his fires from hell than heaven. He certainly gives it much closer attention. It's simply so much more interesting, not to say relevant. Hell is closer to the facts we know.

"Let's carry our honesty even a little further. Hell is not merely preferable to heaven—it's the only *clear* notion of an afterlife (that is to say, of a goal worth striving towards) that human imagination has been able to devise. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans originated our civilisation, populated it with their Gods and formed, in their chthonic wisdom, a heaven underfoot. Some heretical Jews inherited that civilisation, changed its gods to demons, and called heaven hell. Oh, they tried to pretend there was a *new* heaven somewhere up in the attic, but it was a most unconvincing deceit. Now that we've found the stairs to the attic, now that we can zoom about anywhere we choose in that unpopu-

lated and infinite void, the game is up, absolutely, for *that* heaven. I doubt the Vatican will survive to the end of the century, though one should never underestimate the power of ignorance. Oh, not the Vatican's ignorance, for heaven's sake! *They've* always known which way the deck was stacked.

"Enough of heaven, enough of God! They neither exist. What *we* want to hear of now is hell and devils. Not Power, Knowledge and Love — but Impotence, Ignorance and Hate, the three faces of Satan. You're surprised at my candour. You think I betray my hand? Not at all. All values melt imperceptibly into their opposites. All good Hegelians know that. War is peace, ignorance is strength and freedom is slavery. Add to that, that love is hate, as Freud has so exhaustively demonstrated. As for knowledge, it's the scandal of our age that philosophy has been whittled away to a barebones epistemology, and thence to an even barer agnoiology. Have I found a word you don't know, Louis? Agnoiology is the philosophy of ignorance, a philosophy for philosophers.

"As for impotence, why don't I allow you, Cheeta, to speak of that? Ah, look at him blushing. How he hates me, and how helpless he is to express his hatred. Impotent in hatred as in love. Don't fret, Cheeta—it is, at root, our common condition. At last, at the end of all things, each atom is by itself—cold, immobile, isolate, touching no other particle, imparting no momentum, kaput.

"And is that such a terrible fate, really? Come that great day, the universe will be much more orderly, to say the least. All things homogenised, equidistant, calm. It reminds me of death, and I like it.

"Now *there's* a value I forgot to include on my list: Death. *There's* something to help us break out of that weary old quotidian. *There's* an afterlife that's not hard to believe in.

"That's the value that I offer you, Cheeta, and to you too, Sacchetti, if you have the guts to accept it. Death! Not just your own individual and possibly insignificant death, but a death of universal dimensions. Oh, perhaps not the Heat-Death at the end of time, that would be asking too much, but a death that would advance that cause almost perceptibly.

"An end, Sacchetti, to the whole shitty human race. What do you say, my boy—will you buy that?

"Or is my proposition too sudden? You hadn't considered buying an entire set of encyclopaedias, is that it? Well, give it time, let it sink in. I can come back in a week, after you've talked it over with your wife.

"But let me say, in closing, that anyone with so much as a grain of self-knowledge knows that he wishes for nothing so much as to be out of it. To be well out of it. We wish, in Freud's eloquent words, to be dead.

"Or to quote yourself: O puppet of ill, annihilate. Annihilate all, and us.

"The exciting thing, you know, is that it's altogether possible. It's possible to make weapons of absolutely

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THE JUKE BOX played a number called "Low Point X". It was the pub favourite the night that Speed Supervisor Jan Koninkrijk was forced to stay in the second floor back room on his way home from Cologne. He had looked out over small cluttered roofs and heard the record, heard it again in his sleep, dreaming of speed as the melancholy tug boats hooted outside the hotel where the Meuse became the Maars.

The girl in the bar, so fair, good North Dutch stock in that dull South Dutch town, hair almost milk-coloured, face so pale and sharp, interested in the sports end of the paper.

She tried to be nice to me that night, to smile with warmth, Koninkrijk, speeding into Belgium, said to himself. I'm not interested much in stray women any more, but her life has a mystery. . . . The pathos, having to serve five per cent alcoholic drinks and watch night after night games of cards played always by the same men, listening to the tugs and "Low Point X". Was she signalling for help? I snooped on dialogues of the blood, Only silence there except for Low Point X giving its coronary thud. . . . I'd better get back to Marta, no signals from her prison. Maybe this time she will be improved, so weary.

His Mercedes burned over the highway and hardly touched it, licking at one-sixty kilometres an hour along the autobahn from Cologne and Aachen through Brussels to Ostend and so across to England. Piercing his mazed thoughts, Koninkrijk kept a sharp eye for madmen: the highway's crash record was bad—his switched-on cops called it Hotpants Highway since the days of the Acid Head War. But this overcast afternoon brought little opposition, so he plunged forward, whistled to himself, joy, boy, joy.

She would be slowing, fewer admirers, maybe one faithful one, coming to the bar every evening. Her goodwill under strain. She smiled and smiled and was a victim. If he pitied, he must still love. It was the possibilities she represented that he thirsted for. Her hand as she stretched out for his guilders. A fine line, ah, that marvellous mystery of the female, something so much finer than just sex. Streamlined. With an un-Dutch gesture, he had kissed her hand; they were alone; they had looked at each other, he not much the older. Had put ten cents in the juke box for her to hear "Low Point X" again as he walked out. Just to please her.

Had he really looked at her? Had she ever really seen herself? Had she something to reveal, hidden and sweet, to the man who went seeking properly for it? But that was his old romantic idea. No one went seeking others any more; under the psychedelic effect of the bombs, they sought only themselves—and never found.

He lived at Aalter, just off the Highway, in a thin house. "My life is an art object," he said jokingly. There were the alternatives; his wife's presence, that girl's presence, his job, his possible new appointment in Cologne, his office, that mad Messiah in England; all were different parts of his mind, all were different parts of the planetary surface; neither of which could be reached without the other; it was possible that one was the diagram of the other; all that was certain was that the linking medium was speed. Certainly there was speed, as the dial said, 175 kilometres, registering also in the coronary thud.

For some miles, Koninkrijk had been neglecting his thoughts as his eyes took in familiar territory. He was beyond Brussels now. Here the enlargements to the Highway were on a grand scale. Two more lanes were being laid in either direction, thus doubling the previous number. But the new lanes were all twice the

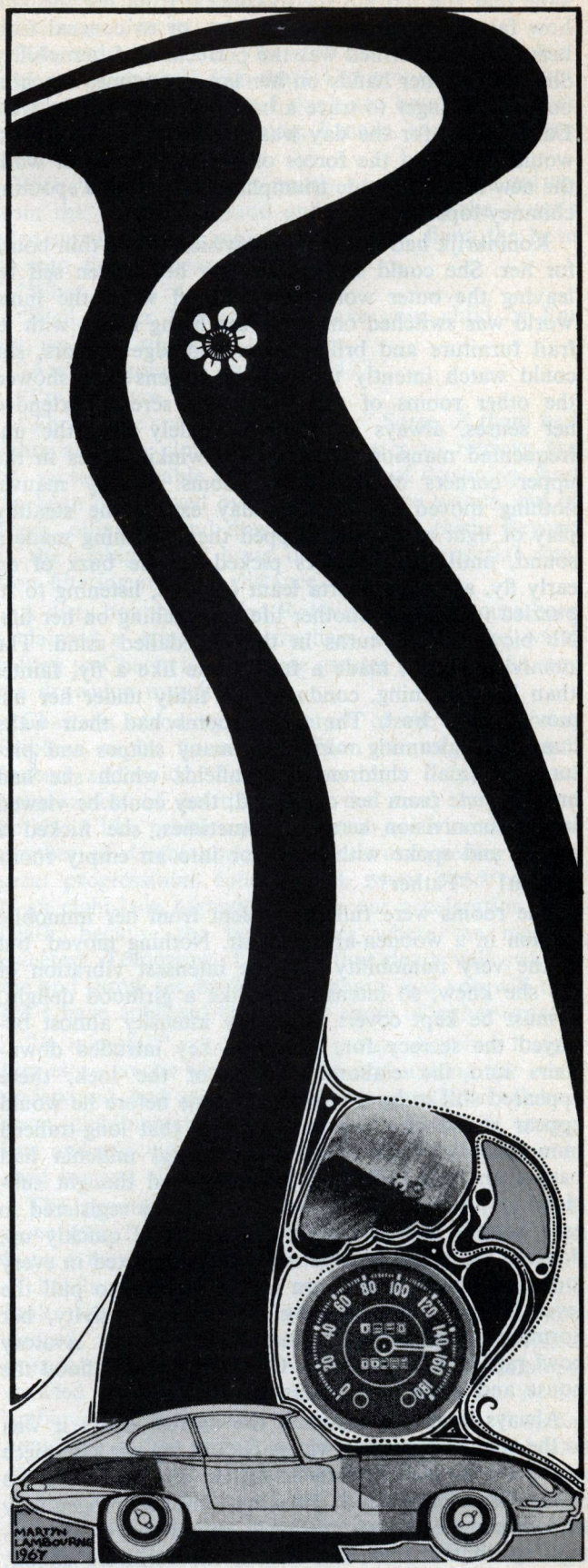
width of the previous ones, to allow for the fuzzy-set driving of speedsters under the spell of PCA bombs dropped indiscriminately over Europe. Lips of senile earth had been piled back, cement towers erected; long low huts; immense credit boards with complicated foreign names; lights, searchlights for night work; immense square things on wheels and tracks, yellow-bellied cranes; scaffolding, tips, mounds, ponds, mountains of gravel; old battered cars, new ones gaudy as Kandinskys and Kettels; and between everything chunky toy figures of men in striped scarlet luminescent work-coats. Into the furrows he saw the new animal go. These men were creating the whole chaos only for speed, the new super fuzzy speed.

He slowed at the Aalter turn. It was impossible to say how much he had been affected personally by the sprays, but he recognised that his viewpoint had altered since that time, although he was working in France at the time of the war; France had remained neutral and the old lie that Tenenti TV protects the eyes. Piedboeuf. He slowed as he began the long curve off, its direction confused by the impedimenta of construction on either side. Aalter was already being eaten into under the road-widening scheme, the old Timmermans farmhouse obliterated.

The thin grim house occupied by the Koninkrijks was the only one left inhabited in the street, owing to the improvements scheme. The seismological eruptions of the European psyche had thrown up a mass of agglomerate that half buried nearby terraces. A bulldozer laboured along the top of the ridge like a dung beetle, level with the old chimneys where smoke had once risen from a neighbourly hearth. That was over now. There was no past or future, only the division between known and unknown, sweeping on. The daffodils stood stiff in the Koninkrijk drive against just such a contingency, keeping the devouring detritus at bay.

A thin rain, after moving across the North German Plain for hours, enveloped Aalter as Koninkrijk climbed from the Mercedes. The bellowing machines against my silent house so featureless and she in there, and the new animal with its wet eyes watching. He was not sure about the new animal; but he was slow now, on his feet and no longer stretched at speed, consequently vulnerable. He bowed his head to the drizzle and made for the closed opaque glass porch. She would have no such refuge of privacy; only a back room behind the bar, all too accessible to the landlord when he rose at last, stale from his final cigar and five-per-center, to try and fumble from her that missing combination of success he had failed to find in the hands of knock-out whist. Marta, as the unknown crept closer, at least had the privilege.

Marta Koninkrijk awaited this minute and all the other buried minutes a secret someone to crush her up into life; or so she hoped or feared. She sat away all the sterile hours of her husband's absence; she needed them. The bombs had blessed her half into a long-threatened madness, though she was not so in-



sane that she did not try to conceal from her husband how far she lived away from him, or to conceal from herself how cherished was the perfection of immobility. She sat with her hands on her lap, sometimes reaching out with a finger to trace a hair-fine crack on the wall. Daring, this, for the day was nearing when the cracks would open and the forces of the earth pour in while the new machines rode triumphantly above the spouting chimney-tops.

Koninkrijk had installed omnivision in the thin house for her. She could sit and comfort her barren self by leaving the outer world switched off while the inner world was switched on. From the living room, with its frail furniture and brilliant bevelled-edge mirrors, she could watch intently the row of screens that showed the other rooms of the house; the screens extended her senses, always so etiolated, palely over the unfrequented mansion, giving her unwinking eyes in the upper corners of five other rooms. Faintly mauve, nothing moved in them all day except the stealthy play of light and shade trapped there; nothing made a sound, until the receptors picked up the buzz of an early fly, and then Marta leant forward, listening to it, puzzled to think of another life encroaching on her life. No bicycle wheel turns in the unpedalled mind. The omnivision itself made a faint noise like a fly, fainter than her breathing, conducted so tidily under her unmoving little bust. The stuffy rooms had their walls hung with gleaming mirrors of many shapes and pictures of small children in cornfields which she had brought here from her childhood; they could be viewed in the omnivision screens. Sometimes, she flicked a switch and spoke with a tremor into an empty room.

"Jan!" "Father!"

The rooms were full of incident from her immobile bastion in a wooden-armed chair. Nothing moved, but in the very immobility was the intensest vibration of life she knew, so intense that, like a girlhood delight, it must be kept covert. The very intensity almost betrayed the secrecy for, when the key intruded downstairs into the elaborate orifice of the lock, there appeared still to be a universe of time before he would appear at the stair top and discover that long-tranced immobility of hers. Only after several millenia had passed and the radiations of unresolved thought subsided somewhat, and the rasp of the key registered in each room's audio-receptor, did she steal quickly up, dodging the slender image of herself transfixed in every looking-glass, and creep on to the landing to pull the lever in the toilet, assuring him of her activity, her normality, her earthy ordinariness. Into the lavatory bowl rattled a fall of earth. One day it would flood the house and blank out the last mauve image.

Always when he mounted the narrow stairs it was to the sound of rushing water. He put his wet one-piece neatly on its hook before he turned and embraced his wife. Dry compressed inflexible orifices tangentially met. When he moved restlessly round the room, disrupting all the eons of stillness, the furniture shook; and from without, the obscene grunts of a dirt-machine, pigging in to clay layers.

"Any news?"

"I haven't been out. The machines. I didn't really feel. . . ."

He crossed to the omnivision, switched over to Brussels. Some confused scenes in some sort of a stadium. The cameraman could be on a perpetual trip judging by his crazy work. Perhaps it was some sort of a beauty contest; there were girls in bikinis, but a lot of older women had turned up too—one at least in her seventies, flesh grouty and wrinkled. One of them was shouting, angry perhaps at getting no prize. A band played—not "Low Point X". He left it, looked at her, smiled, crossed to a narrow table and picked up the paper, neatly folded.

"You haven't opened the paper."

"I didn't have time. Jan—"

"What?"

"Nothing. How was Aachen?"

"We've got this British saint, Charteris, coming through Aalter tomorrow."

"Who's he?"

"I'll have to be on duty early."

"Do you think he'll—you know—"

"He's a great man," spoken not looking up as he searched the muddled columns. Piracy in the Adriatic. The Adriantic. New ocean, unknown to pre-psychedelic man. Many such hideous discoveries made every day. Of what degree of reality? "A saint, at least."

One page four he found it, a brief mention. New Crusade. Thousands rallying to support new prophet of multi-complex event. From Loughborough in the heart of England's stormy industrial Midlands may emerge new movement that will eventually embrace all of war-torn Europe, says our London correspondent. Prophet of multi-complex event, Jugoslav-born Colin Charteris is rallying take place in absolute darkness and Flemish observers agree that no thousands to his inspirational thinking. His first crusade motorcade through Europe is due at Ostend at four p.m. today and leaves tomorrow for what one commentator describes as several hundred automobiles pouring down here past Aalter at full speed, I'm bound to have more than one crash to deal with; better ring area squads now. Permanent alert from five tomorrow. Inform all hospital services too. Show eager. The tumbling bodies doing their impossible antics among ricochetting metals the dirty private things too beautifully ugly to be anything but a joke. Oh in my loins oh Lord disperse do they have the orange tip butterfly in England?

BOTH IN THEIR frail beds, a gulf of fifty-seven point oh nine centimetres between them. Darkness and the omnivision switched off but that connection nevertheless merely dormant: there would be another time when the currents would flow and the impulses reestablish that which ancestrally was where the glades of the forest stood like wallpaper all round in murmur-

ous shade when the murderous mermaid pulls aside her jalousie and letting in the whispering brands of braided hair stretching to the closed clothed pillows. Koninkrijk he, suddenly rousing, felt the vibrations welling up through him. It was true, one was the diagram of the other, and nobody could decide which. Either vast machines were passing a hundred yards away on the arterial road, shaking the house minutely in its mortared darkness; or else accumulated fats and silts were building up in the arteries about his heart, stirring his whole anatomy with the premonitions of coronary thrombosis. If he woke Marta, he could presumably decide which was happening; yet even then there was the growing ambiguity about what a happening actually constituted. He could now recognise only areas in which the function-vectors of events radiated either inwards or outwards, so that the old habit of being precise was misleading where not downright irrelevant. And he added to himself, before falling again into trembling sleep, that the Loughborough gospel of multi-complex was already spreading, ahead of its prophet.

ANGELINE WAS CRYING in the arms of Charteris on the long damp beaches of Ostend. The Escalation dirged by a dying fire: Her mother married a sunlit Ford Cortina. All the cars, most of them oparted, many stolen, clustered about the red Banshee along the promenade where Belgians loitered and sang, switched on by the rousing words of Charteris.

Take pictures of yourselves, he had said, pictures every moment of the day. That's what you should do, that's what you do do. You drop them and they lie around and other people get into them and turn them into art. Every second take a picture and so you will see that the lives we lead consist of still moments and nothing but. There are many still moments, all different. You have all these alternatives. Think that way and you will discover still more. I am here but equally I am elsewhere. I don't need so much economy—it's the pot-training of the child where the limitation starts. Forget it, live in all regions, part, split wide, be fuzzy, try all places at the same time, shower out your photographs to the benefit of all. Make yourself a thousand and so you achieve a great still trajectory, not longwise in life but sideways, a unilateral immortality. Try it, friends, try it with me, join me, join me in the great merry multicade!

All Angeline said after was, "But you aren't indestructible any more than I really saw a dog in a red tie that time."

He hugged her, half-hugged her, one arm round her while with the free hand he forked in beans to his mouth, at once feeding but not quite feeding as he said, "There's more than being just organical, like translaterated with the varied images all photopiled. You'll soon begin to see how fuzzy-set-thinking abolishes the old sub-divisions which Ouspensky calls functional defects in the receiving apparatus. As I told the people, self-observation, the taking of soul photographs, brings self-change, developing the real I."

"Oh, stop it, Colin, you aren't fun to be with any more when you talk like that! Did you or did you not kill my husband, besides, I don't see how you can get away with this multiple thing; I mean, some things are either-or, aren't they?"

With Angelina hanging crossly on his arm, he got up from the voluptuous sand and, moving to the water's edge surrounded by midnight followers, flung the bean tin into the galileean dark.

"What things?"

"Well, either I'm going to have your child or I'm not, isn't that right?"

"Are you going to have a child?"

"I'm not sure."

"Then there's a third possibility." Some of them had lights and ran clothed into the water to retrieve the tin, sacred floggable relic, unmindful of drowning. And the bean can moved over the face of the waters, out of reach, oiling up and down with orange teeth. Beyond it, the ambiguity of lunar decline and terrestrial rotation filtering into the distance.

A dirty boy there called Robbins, who had once been acclaimed a saint in Nottingham, ran into the water calling to Charteris, "You are greater than me! So stop me drowning myself!"

Charteris stood by the margin of the sea ignoring Robbins as he floundered. Then he turned towards Ostend and said, "Friends, we must defy the great either-orness of death. Among the many futures that lie about like pebbles on this beach are a certain finite number of deaths and lives. I see us speeding into a great progressional future which every blind moment is an eight-lane highway. Beside our acceleration rides death, because the bone comes where the meat is sweetest. Tomorrow, I precog that death will swallow me and throw me back to you again, and you will then see I have achieved the farther shore of either-orness."

"A miracle!" cried the pop group. Angeline hugged him close, aware that he had to say nothing she could understand and still he was most wonderful. Behind them, clutching the holy relic of the bean tin, struggling and evacuating, Robbins went down into an unlit road beyond all terrestrial trajectory.

The promenade like a grey ridge of firn in early dawnlight. Beyond the post-glacial shelf, where lights burned between night and day, stood derelict projects of hotels, petrified by the coming of war; some half-built, some half-demolished, all blank-eyed, broken-doored, with weeds in the foundations and leprous remains of human habitation. Here from their catalepsy crawled the crusaders, scratching themselves in the ambiguous morning and blowing acid breath. Angeline wondered if her period would come today and boiled coffee for her lord and master on a fold-up stove; she was uncertain whether or not she felt sick, and, if she did feel sick, whether it was because she was pregnant or because she dreaded the prospect of another day's

crazy part-automatic driving. Well, it was a fuzzy set world.

Some of them were already revving their cars or driving them over the ice-rim on to the sand as being the quickest way to extricate from the grand muddle of beached beasts. Maintenance was going on to a limited extent, mainly in the sphere of bits of rope tying on bits of machine. The sparky thing currently was to fill blown eggshells with paint and then stick them on to the bonnet with adhesive plaster; when you got moving, the paint peed out in crazy trickles or blew across the windscreen and roof of the automobile or, under sudden acceleration, the egg burst like a duff ventricle. Only Charteris's Banshee was unadorned by such whims. Like France, it was neutral. And Red.

"Where we going today, Col?"

"You know."

"Brussels?"

"Some name like that."

"Then where? Tomorrow? The day after, where?"

"That's it. You hit the road I mean the mood exactly. More coffee?"

"Drink the first lot, darling, then you get some more; didn't you learn any such thing when you were a boy? You know, this isn't a crusade—it's a migration!"

The coffee ran down his chin, he was only half-drinking, as he nodded his head and said, "Sheer inspiration, yes! Crusade has only one object. Migratory is more instinctive, more options open."

He expanded the theme as they climbed into the car, talking not only to her but to sharp-featured Burton and other people who impinged, Burton always nagging for favours. He had ceased to think what he was saying. It was the migratory converse; the result was that he astonished himself and this elation fed back into his system, rephotographed a thousand times, each time enlarged in a conflagration of spongation in idation or inundation of conflation, so that he could pursue more than one thought simultaneously down into its deep loughburrows, snooper-trooper fashion.

Burton was bellowing something at the top of his voice, but the engines drowned out what he said as they began to roll along the grey deserted front, between echoing shutters and sea. The new autorace, born and bred on motorways; on these great one-dimensional roads rolling they mobius-stripped themselves naked to all sensation, tearing across the synthetic twen-cen lanskip, seaming all the way across Urp, Aish, Chine, to the Archangels, godding it across the skidways in creasingack selleration bitch you'm in us all.

Great flood of tatterdemalion vehicles in multicolour flooded out on to the Hotpants Highway, rushing, swerving, grinding, bumping, south towards Aalter and the infinite, travelling up to one-fifty photographs per minute, creasing axle aeration.

HE LUMBERED UP from the vast brown inaccessible other-world of sleep and went hurriedly to shave. In the second bed, the wilting leaf of his wife still silent among her own shades.

As he looked at his motionless face, Koninkrijk thought of the good North Dutch girl back in the little hotel in Maastricht. Baby you won't get no sex Off of me in low point X. The last crash, driving with the cop fast to the scene of the accident maybe the same today my form of gratification just a vampire. It was a little Renault nose deep in a cliff of lorry, as if snuggling there. The terrible anticipation as he jumped out of the still-moving car and ran towards it; in a year of life, maybe one moment of truth; in a hundred miles of speedtrack, this one node. A tractor-driver running forward, explaining in thick Flemish accident. I saw un I saw un, he swerve out to overtake me, this lorry pull up to let him by, see, this other chap don't pull up in time the first chap get clear away, ought to be a bloody law against it. There is a law against it, out my way.

There! All the luggage in the back of the car tumbled forward over the shoulders of the driver. He wears no safety belt or harness, is utterly smashed, yet he lives and groans, seems to be begging for something—in German?

The ambulance arriving almost at once, men also staring in through the now-public car windows. They ease the man out bit by bit; the lorry-driver and the tractor-driver stand by, masking their helplessness with explanations and repeated phrases. Koninkrijk with his dirty curiosity, recalling it again now obsessively with self-hate, mauls over the blood-gobbed contents of the car after the ambulance men have eased most of the victim clear.

His cold little distorted image of the man-run world held only this driving and crashing, nothing else; everything else led to climactic moments of driving and crashing, the insane technological fulfilment offered by the first flint arrowhead, the schizophrenic fulfilment of man's nature divided against himself since he invented good and bad—to all that, crashung und drivung were the climax. Eating and defecating and the rest were just preparatory processes, getting the body ready for the next leap out to the road. Things other people did were just substitutes for the speed death. The Chinese peasants, grovelling up to their kneecaps in paddy, longing for the day when they, too, could enjoy speed death.

He looked at his eyes in horror. His mind could not keep off the subject. There would be another call today; he must get down to the station, fearing and hoping. The Charteris crusade was invented for his particular philosophy Charteris is rallying take place in absolute darkness. He heard Marta switch the omnivision on as he dried his razor.

The immense cliff of earth loomed even higher above his neat red tiles this morning: chugging things like match boxes laboured up there, black against sky. New clay tumbling among daffodils. It was better in the station of the Speed Police—more like being in a liner,

less like drowning in a sea.

"Good morning, Jan."

"Morning, Erik."

Koninkrijk went up to the tower, where two uniformed men lounged, chatting, smoking cheroots. He could look down through the glass roof of the duty room just below, see the current shift relaxed with their feet up, snuggled in wicker chairs, reading paperbacks and magazines. When the warning sirened, the room would be suddenly untidily empty, the paperbacks curly with open pages rubbed in the floor.

He glanced at the instrument panel, took a reading of traffic states from other stations along the Highway. Building up from Ostend.

Already, the first cars of the crusade were bursting along the Aalter stretch. From the station tower, a fine view; nobody saw it but Koninkrijk, as he read his own keynotes from the vast maimed spread; the remainder of the dutyites rested their minds among galloping tales of big-breasted women, affrays with Nazis in occupied Scandinavia, shoot-ups in Fort Knox, double-crossings in Macao, or the litter of the previous night's activities; two officers going off-duty exchanged dirty stories over a concession-price Stella Artois in the canteen; reality had a poor attendance, and I'm really the only one but even my eye's half ahead to the time when the English messiah Banshee jets past here in the Saddle of the speed death king and half back to the thought of that Maastricht girl maybe with her I would at last find that certain thing O Lord God I know I don't often, but what am I to do about Marta in schizophrenia catching.

What do you think about this government rumpus eh they say it's the food shortage but the Walloons are at the bottom of this you can bet Yeah food shortage they call it a world famine but we know who's at the bottom yeah we know who's at the bottom of it yeah Walloons.

What does she do in there all day long and I'll have to move her at the week-end or they bury the house tombs doleful voices but how will I persuade her Christ O Lord God get out there move man move leave it all behind since her confounded father interfering old.

The warning went and he was down into the front park as the men milled. He climbed into N-Car Five; the slam of his door was echoed by others. News was coming over the car-radio of a multi-vehicle pile-up on the south lane of the Highway two kilometres north of Aalter. Low Point X. Let's go and they roared under the underpass and bucketted out on the feed and from the feed on to the Highway proper, yellow barrier barrels and red-warning lights slicing by the hubs. Yacketter yacketter speedbeaches of the freeworld man-madman intersurface.

The speedometer was his thermometer, creeping up and the familiar dirty excitement creaming in him. For someone the moment of truth had come the shuttling metal death 3-Ding fast before the windscreen and still many marvellous microseconds safely before impact and the rictus of smiling fracture as the latent forces of acceleration actualised. Koninkrijk hated himself for this greedimaginative vampactof his highflown. Already they were barking beyond the ditched town, the PILE WONDER sign, the pasty dungheat at the Voeynants house shuttered, and beyond the road-widening the crash-fences started on either side, cambered outwards and curved at the top to catch escaping metal. Fast shallow breathing.

The accident heralded itself ahead. Bloodstream flowing south faltered, slowed, dribbled. Koninkrijk's vagus nerve fluttered with empathy. Somewhere ahead was the actual thrombus, all but entirely blocking the artery. The police car swung into the nearest emergency lane. Koninkrijk was out before it stopped and unlocking the barrier between lanes, hoiking a walkie-talkie with him. Sun warm on his shoulders grass too long against the chain link got to keep nature out of this the weedicides this bloody war.

It was a typical nose-to-tail job, with ten cars involved, some pig-a-back on others like rough parody of animal embrace. Some still filtering through, all heads craned to see desperately want to know if man still stuffed with red blood.

"Koch, Schachter, Deslormes, proceed to the rear, get the barriers up and signals ten kilometres back so there's no further escalation."

Moving forward as he spoke.

"Mittles and Araméche, you keep a northward lane free for ambulances."

But they knew. They all needed shouting and excitement and the roar of engines.

So like last time and maybe next time. A lumbering Swiss truck with Berne number plates slewed half-off the verge. Into its rear, nose crumped, a red Banshee. Man wrapped round steering wheel, head against shattered screen, piled luggage in back spewed forwards over his body and shoulders, some broken open, passenger door broken open, oparted ancient Wolseley piled into rear of Banshee, then terrible cluster of vehicles, British registration mostly, patterned crazily. One shot free, burning steadily against outside barrier, lying on its side. People running limping crawling still in trampled grass shouting and crowding and curiosity reality loose among the psychos. The police helicopter clattering up overhead, photographing it all, fanning the smoke flat across the wreckage.

Loudspeakers barking farther along the road as Koch got to work.

Ambulances arriving, men at the double with float-stretchers, doing their instant archaeology, digging down through the thin metallic strata to where life had pulsed a few tiny eons ago, surfacing with primitive and unformed artifacts of flesh. Someone saying, "The Banshee was Charteris's car." Time converting entirely into activity as matter converted into energy.

Two hours' work later, Koninkrijk sitting exhausted

jacket off on the muddied verge, listening in a daze to Charteris speaking to the elect.

"You know I half-foretold this would happen as we cavalcaded south. Here's a sort of semi-miracle as more-or-less predicted yesterday or whenever it was when we were at that place. The only places we really need are the in-between places that aren't places for they are trajectories of maximum possibility—you see how forced stoppage in this place here created maximum non-possibility for many of us which we call death, the low point where all avenues end. All our avenues end but we must build what extensions we can. For Burton my agent the avenue is right at a dead breakage. He, Burton, who hailed from the Midland city of Coventry where cars are born stopped me as we drove out of that place and begged to be allowed to ride my chariot. He was unable to give reasons for his desire and for that reason my wife Angelina and I took to his heap while he in triumph rode the Banshee. So it can all be explained away that he had some suicidal wish or that he as a good agent stage-managed it to look like a miracle that I was spared from death as predicted or that if I had driven no pile-up would have occurred, or that either this accident was already pre-performed in any of its guises or that it was in some way willed by me or us all corporately from some messianic drive in our hidden minds. If you all seek dutifully for the certainty of this occasion, each of you will find a different solution more satisfying than others to you, and so that will be regarded by you as the most 'probable' solution, and so like renegade compasses you will each point to a different pole of truth, where on this ribbon all will indicate a personal mean. That I beg you to treasure, relish the uncertainty, shun certainty, search the fuzzy set, for when you find accepted probability, it must merely be a conspiracy not to be free between two or more of you. All this I shall say less certainly in my book Man the Driver, but never more inspiredly than now in this moment by the tyred road where this loss so belts us in."

He pitched forward on his face as Angeline ran forward to break his fall. The uniformed police, the tatty audience, sun-specked, entropised again.

Koninkrijk saw his chance. Running forward to two police, he said lowly, "Get him into my car and let's take him back to H.Q."

HE WAS SITTING up on the hard white bunk picking with a fork at police ham and beans on a hard white police plate in the hard grey migrainey room, with Angeline hard by him, and Koninkrijk respectful standing.

"Another miracle? I'm only a pawn. But I will see your wife, yes, bombardment of images, something in the Belgian aura we must incorporate to compensate for Burton and I intuit she could have a need for me. Or a sort of need for which we could substitute a fulfilment." He half-smiled, sipping at a tumbler of water, sifting the water across his palate, seeing the plastic glass was made in France: Duraplex.

"I think she is schizophrenic, sir. She flushes the what's-it when I come in."

"We all do, most of us. The wish to live more than one life—natural now, as the brain complexifies from generation. The world will soon tolerate only multi-livers. You too? No dream world or semi-realised thing aborting in the mental motorways?"

Slight bricky flush concealed under Koninkrijk's jowls. All the joys and sorrows really aborted into a secret drain-life none shared except for the tired willowy hand stretched over the sports page of a Maastricht paper.

"They do clash sometimes. I'll drive you to the house."

The girl came too. So he did not live entirely inside himself, or else found there echoes from those about him. So he could be a genuine messiah—but what nonsense when he himself claimed but semi-messiahood, and after all, Europe wasn't the Levant, was it? In under a kilometre, small space to burn the gas.

"I'll speak to her alone, Supervisor."

"Very well. You'll find her reserved." Nervous glance at the woman Angeline. "Not pretty. Very thin, I think the spring disagrees with her."

AND FATHER HAD said that she should have a new bicycle
On her birthday at the end of May, as summer
Began; but they had been too poor when her birthday arrived
And he had given her instead a carton of crayons—
The very best Swiss crayons—
But she had never used them just to show her displeasure
Because she had wanted to rove the Ardennes countryside;
And perhaps it was since then that her father had been cold
To her and ceased to show his love. Sometimes it almost seemed
That if she kept rigid still he might appear stern
In one of the other noiseless rooms, dark
And showing his slight and characteristically lop-sided smile,
Saying, Marta, my child, come to your old Papa!
She had arranged the mirrors differently in the rooms,
Stacking them so that she could also observe the landing
Via one of the violet-tinted screens
With a side glance down along
The melancholy perspective
Of the stair-
Case.
Later, she would have to move herself
To clean the house; but she so much preferred the sight of her
Lair in abstraction through mirror and screen

That first she must be permitted
This vigil of watching and listening the morning through.

All her private rooms were unused by other
Persons; nobody was allowed
To come and go in them; their silence was the sanctity
Like even unto the sanctity
Yea of St. Barnabas Church
Yea wherein she had visited, visited every Sunday
As a child with her parents every Sunday stiffly
Dressed in Sabbath clothes;
But this secret silence was of a different quality;
Each room she surveyed possessed individual silences:
One, a more rickety silence,
Another a more rumpled one;
Another a veined silence;
Another like a cross-section through calf's meat,
With a young-patterned texture;
Another with a domineering glassy silence;
These deserted quiets were more balmful and constricting
To her viscera than April's flowers.
A starker shade of silence ruled the stairwell.
Stealthily she moved her attention to it and
Came upon her father standing
There waiting amid the shade.
In his attitude of great attention she knew him.
"Marta!" "Father, I
Am here!" "Don't be alarmed!" "Oh, Father,
You have come at last!" She could not understand but
Delight grew high and flowered in the stalks of her confusion,
Telling itself as always in a burst of penitence
And self-reproach, till her lips grew younger. He
Attempted no answer to her flow, advanced
Towards her through the mirrored rooms, walking
Delicate as if he saw
The ancient barbs she still cultivated sharp
About his path. She flung herself at him, all she had to give
As she gave her self-denigration, closing her eyes, clutching
Him. He half-leaned, half-stood, half-understanding
The scent of trauma in the scene, glancingly taking
In the fetishistic idols of emptiness on the bare walls, seeing
Again the clever duplication of life she had contrived
Imaged in the bottom of his French plastic tumbler: Duraplex:
She has her alternatives. "Live
In both worlds, Marta, come with me!" Father, you give
Me your blessing once again?" "I give
You my new blessing—fuzzy though you may find it, you must
Learn to live by it, you understand? My wish is this,
That you sojourn with nobody who desires to force you to live
On one plane at a time all the time: time must be divisible
And allowed gordian complexities. You must be
At once the erring child as we all are
And the reasoning adult as we all try to be
No strain placed on either
The two together tending towards
The greatly hopeful state we half-call godliness
Is that semi-understood?"
"And Jan, Papa?"
"For a while you come to live with me and Angelina
And let your man go free, for he has been more cut
By your trammels than you. You must learn to bide
Outside
Where constriction binds less and one later spring you may
Come together again to find water flushing in the earth
Closet." "I see father." Now she looked at him and realised
Like a trump turned up
He was not entirely her father, but the revelation had no
Poison: beneath the last moment's hand of mighty truth
Another shuffled: that in truth Marta did not want her father
And would now sprout free of him and his mirroring
Eyes that saw her only with disfavour: so her lips
Growing younger a mask cracked and fluttered
To the carpet unnoticed. "Jan
And I will meet again, Father? After I have duped him so badly
With my hateful secret passion all these over-furnished
Years? There is no final parting?" "Well,
There's really no final meeting.
It's one's own collusions that conspire or not towards
Another person—but you'll see directly. . . . Come along
There's a daffodil or two left outside in the wet and soon
Sweet rocket will flower in your secret garden, Marta." She
Looked at his eyes. They went down the stairs, undusted
That and every following morning, leaving the omnivision working
Still. The cracks rioted on the walls like bindweed, flowering in
peeled distemper; and as they grew more open-lipped, the rumbling town-destroying machines clowned over the roof-tree and clay pouted through the fissures. The mirroring screens showed how the earth soiled in through every whispering room, bringing familiar despoilation; but by then the sweet rocket flowered for Marta.

Jan also, as the reformed crusade turned south, turned east, burning his tyres and singing the song whose words he had forgotten and never knew, towards freer arms whose meaning he had never known, where the Meuse became the Maars.

Custom Painting No. 4 (1965)

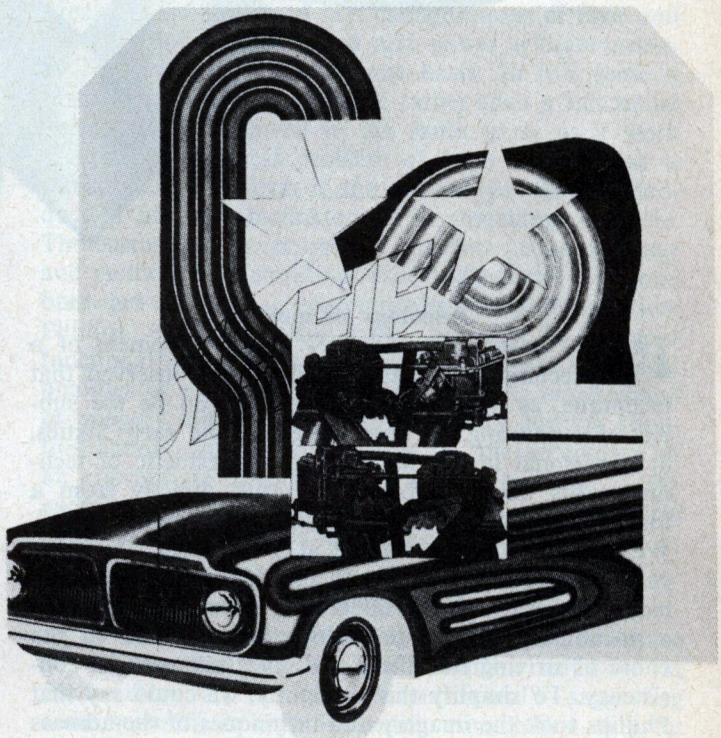
PSYCHOLOGICAL STREAMLINING

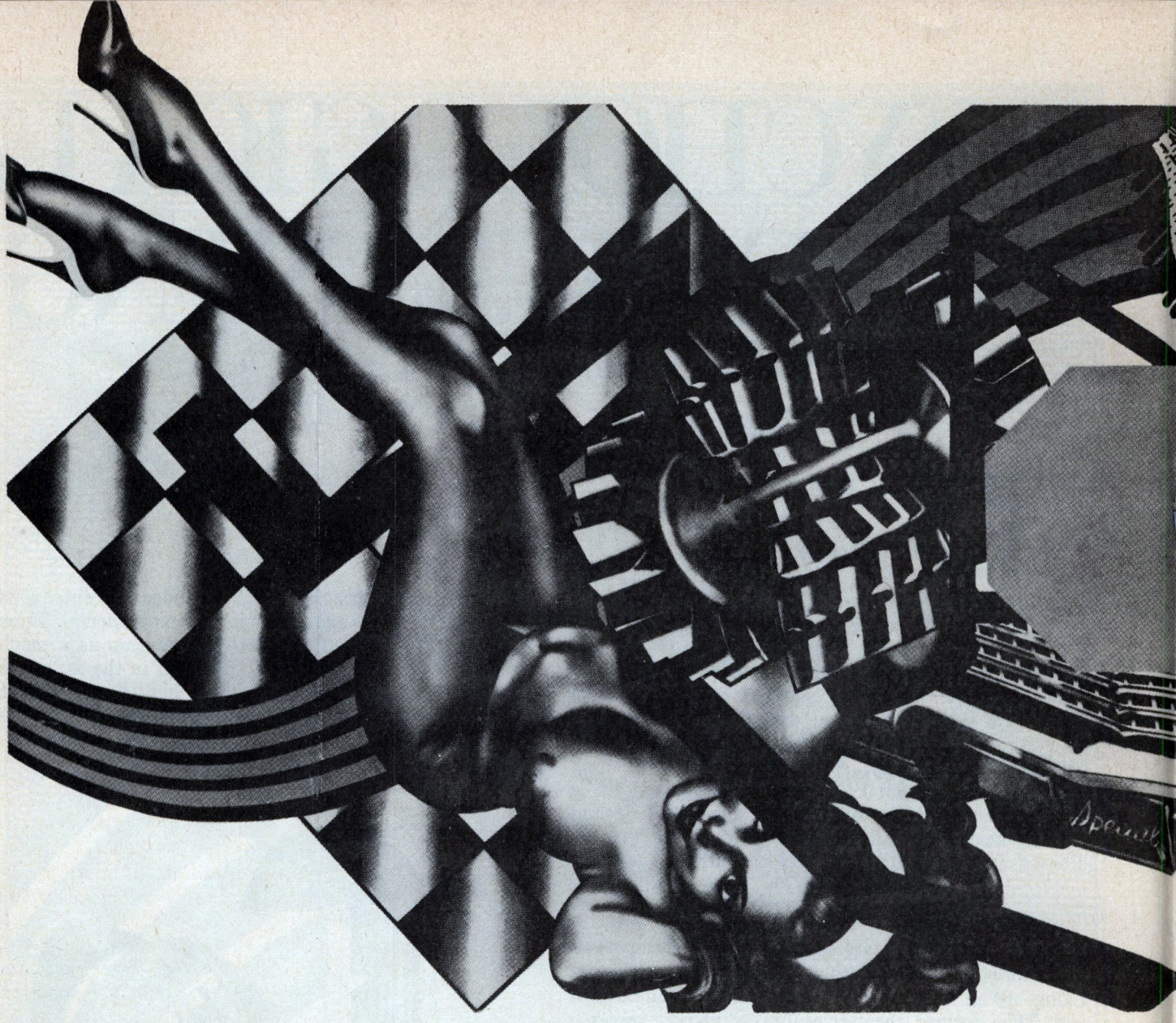
by Christopher Finch

PETER PHILLIPS was born in Birmingham in 1939. He attended the Mosely Road Secondary School of Art —where he was taught technical drawing—and the Birmingham College of Art. In 1959 he moved to London, to the Royal College, and during his three years there became identified with the English branch of Pop Art—a bracketing which describes his work only very inadequately. A Harkness Fellowship took him to the USA from 1964 to 1966. In New York he had a one-man show at the Kornblee Gallery and recently he has been the subject of another major exhibition at Galerie Bischofberger of Zurich.

Hybrid

DURING HIS TWO years in New York, Phillips collaborated with another English artist—Gerald Laing—in an unusual and perhaps unprecedented project. They formed themselves into a market research organisation — Hybrid Enterprises — and prepared elaborate kits containing various materials, colours, optical patterns, plus sample forms such as squares, circles, stars, chevrons. There were statistical sheets and interviewees were also able to make free-hand contributions. These kits were given to a number of critics, dealers and collectors (not artists); the data returned was processed by a computer and an object was built in accordance with the specifications which it furnished. To some extent the results obtained could have been predicted by intelligent guesswork. The materials favoured were polished aluminium and perspex—the glamour substances of the period. The object was three-dimensional yet not strictly sculpture. Its scale was just below the human (though smaller replicas were also built). But, beyond these generalities, the object had particular qualities and a very special character which could only have been arrived at by this impersonal and statistical method. The end product was implicit in the method chosen. It is not easy to establish criteria by which to judge the success of Hybrid. Its scope was consciously experimental. From one point of view the project can be seen as a metaphor for the conditions which pertain in the art world of the Sixties. What interests me here is the way in which the thinking behind Hybrid meshes with the rest of Phillips' art.

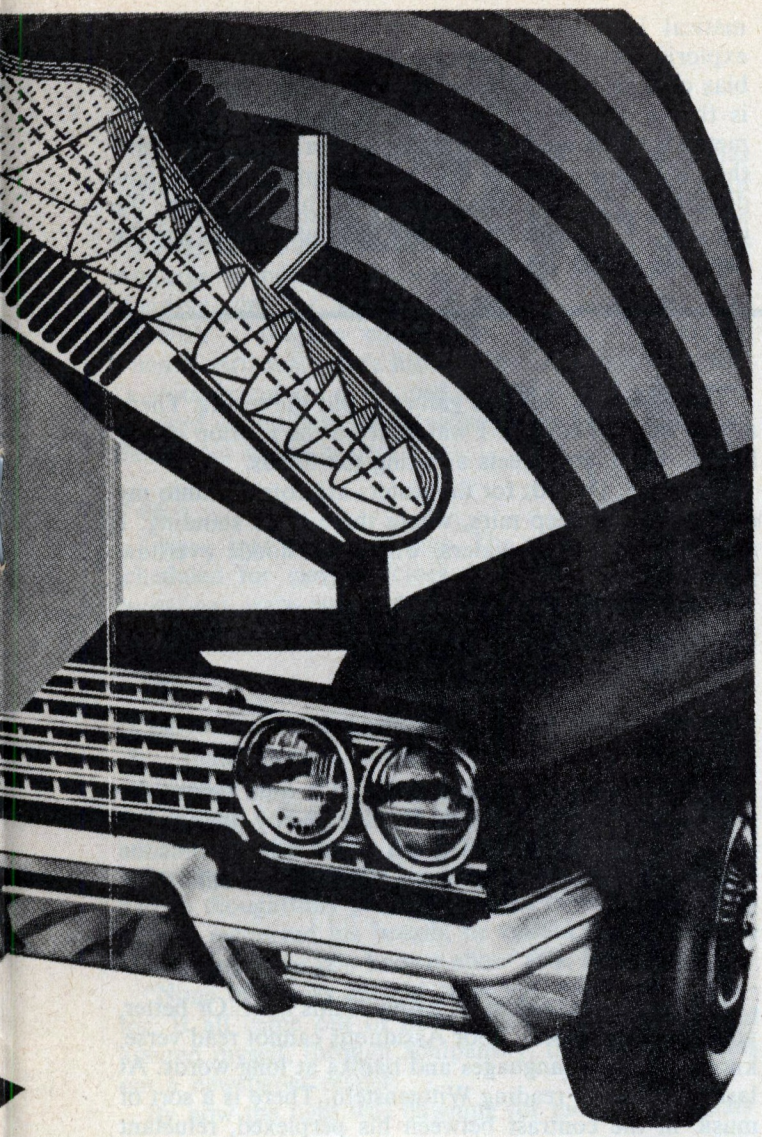




Teleology of method

IMAGERY APART, Pop Art saw the development of a new technical sensibility. Phillips has observed that technique, as much as anything else, can be the subject of a painting. Having arrived, in the early Sixties, at a personal idiom, he pursued an aesthetic of technique; his paintings began to result directly from a logical exploitation of the technical devices involved. We may say that he arrived at a language which became wholly autonomous. In this language image and technique were wholly integrated, providing him with a vocabulary and syntax which relieved him of the chore of striving for effects and gives his work its consistency. To simplify things slightly, we could say that Phillips took the imagery and techniques of the admass world and used them for their own sakes but with the flexible logic of fine art. The autonomous nature of the paintings gives them something of the character of games—a concept which itself integrates well with the whole climate of Phillips' art.

The Harkness Fellowship which took him to New York gave him an economic freedom that enabled him to pursue the logical implications of his work with a still greater rigour. He feels that the paintings done prior to his move to New York were marred by a residue of amateurishness. For some time he had considered using an air brush. Now he acquired one and began to employ it for the major part of his work. Using a machine was a logical, almost inevitable, extension of his earlier painting methods. Perhaps as a direct result of the air brush technique the imagery became bolder and still more direct. Earlier in 1964 he had painted the first of his Custom Paintings; now its promise could be fully realised. Formalised car grilles, coils, machine parts, were organised against patterned grounds into a complex governed by laws of symmetry which were the logical products of the artist's technical preoccupations. This constitutes a kind of teleology of



method in which the realised composition is held in potential by the choice of imagery and technique.

The autonomy of Phillips' paintings is comparable with the Autonomy of Hybrid, but there is one important difference. In Hybrid the artist's choice was *confined to method*—and this was a choice only in so far as it was a cultural gesture; the means of carrying out the survey were determined by purely objective considerations. The choice of substance (I use the word here in preference to content) was made by the interviewees and processed by the computer. In Phillips' paintings a method is rigorously pursued but it springs from a choice of substance made by the artist before the work is commenced.

Equivalents 1

IF WE ACCEPT this notion of a teleology of method we must recognise the importance of the choice of imagery. The Hybrid project highlighted this. Before Hybrid, Phillips had tended to minimalise the importance of subject: "The imagery is not important or significant in itself; it is the way it is painted and used that matters." Now he is inclined to think that he had underestimated his involvement. If we look at the imagery—details of car stylings, diagrammatic representations of industrial processes, synthetic pin-ups—we see that it exists as a metaphorical equivalent for the artist's methods. The imagery is integral with the method (it is difficult to think of Phillips painting in the same way but drawing upon a different range of icons). We are here confronted with an issue relevant to the whole of the Pop Art phenomenon. A figurative artist today who wishes to advance in terms of method must involve himself with a particular range of imagery, otherwise a false note will enter his work—a contradiction in tone. (Admittedly such a contradiction could be exploited.) The use of admass imagery was not a gratuitous gesture but a necessity. The red landscapes and Hellenistic cubism of early modernism could not survive the media revolution.

Customising

A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE of the relationship between method and imagery is Phillips' preoccupation with customising. Many of his recent canvases have been titled Custom Painting, which reflects his interest in this American sub-culture and in a particular approach to the creation of a visual image. Automobile customisers specialise in what might be called psychological streamlining—that is to say, configurations of lines and curves which suggest speed and power without necessarily having any aerodynamic basis. In this sense a customised car is an aesthetic rather than a functional object—it is conceived in the same terms as a work of art. The classical problem of form and content is transcended; the form is the content yet the end product is not an abstraction. It is something concrete. The customised car represents a perfect fusion of image and method. One could not exist without the other and both are tied to a contemporary cultural situation. Phillips employs customising imagery in a non-functional way, just as a customiser employs the visual qualities of aerodynamic streamlining. The employment of imagery drawn from a contemporary cultural situation entails, within the fine arts too, the acceptance of an appropriate method of execution. The result, if the exercise is carried out thoroughly, will be a concrete entity as convincing as Starbird coachwork.

Equivalents 2

ALL THIS HAS important implications for the future development of art. The dominant adjective in 20th-century art has been "experimental"—suggesting some scientific or crypto-scientific connotation. A great deal of art—the abstract wing—is open to comparison with what is invitingly called pure science. The adaptation of art to the needs of publicity and decoration has produced a class of aesthetic technicians. What has

been missing until recently is an equivalent for that vital breed of scientist—cyberneticists and the like—who are responsible for the liaison between the various pure disciplines, a liaison upon which new technologies are built. In aesthetic terms this liaison must reach out beyond the normally accepted limits of painting, since these limits represent only one area of pure research. Just as the originators of cybernetics were specialists in other fields—electronics, for example, and mathematical logic—so it is reasonable to expect painters exploring this new discipline to retain something of the bias of their original specialisation. What seems certain is that it is just the relationship between matter and method which we find in Phillips' work that represents the first step towards the establishment of the new discipline. As the artist concerns himself with the imagery of the present he lays the foundations for the methods of the future.

CAMP CONCENTRATION—continued from page

godlike power. We can blow this little world apart the way we used to explode tomatoes with firecrackers. We only have to make the weapons and give them to our dear governments. They can be counted on to carry the ball from there.

"Say that you'll help us? Say you'll lend us, at least, your *moral* support?

"What—still mute? You're really no fun to talk to, Sacchetti, none at all. I wonder what it was amused you in him, Cheeta. Now, if you're ready. I believe that there *is* some work to do."

57.

They left the room together, followed by the guards, but Skilliman couldn't resist coming back for yet one more Parthian shot. "Don't be downcast, Louis. I was bound to get the better of you. Because, you know, I have the universe on my side."

Schipansky was not there to be made distraught, and I allowed myself a riposte. "That's just what I find so vulgar."

He looked crestfallen, for he had come to rely upon my silence. Suddenly he was not Satan at all, but only a middle-aged balding seedy administrator of not quite the first rate.

58.

What a convenience it is, after all, to pity our enemies. It spares us the larger effort of hate.

Effort. . . . It is too much effort even to say, "It hurts."

59.

I am unrecovered. I reproach myself now for my ineffectualness at the moment of confrontation. Silence, though it has always served God very well, was not, after all, *my* buckler and *my* shield. It hurts.

But what reply might I have made? Skilliman dared say what we all dread may be so, and even Christ, finally, had no better argument for his Tempter than *Go Away*!

Ah, Sacchetti, how you always get back to that. The Imitation of Christ.

60.

I am low, low.

The waters of sickness gather about the levees. There are no more sandbags. I watch, from the rooftop of my house, the empty streets awaiting the floods.

(Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.)

I stare once again, in the infirmary, at a water glass. I'm on pain-pills all the time now.

No one visits me.

61.

Lower.

I can't read more than an hour at a time before the print begins to rape my eyes. Haast came by (because of my lonesome complaint?) and I asked him if someone might be assigned to read to me. He said he would think about it.

62.

Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour. Or better, your three daughters. Poor Assiduous cannot read verse, knows no other languages and baulks at long words. At last I set him to reading Wittgenstein. There is a sort of music in the contrast between his perplexed, reluctant delivery and the sibylline syllables.

My edition comes off Mordecai's shelves and is annotated in his hand. Half the time I don't understand the commentaries.

63.

Am I better or worse? I scarcely know by what signs I am to interpret any more. I'm on my feet again, though still doped. Assiduous, under my direction, is at work constructing the Museum of Facts from my designs.

The equipment from the Magnum Opus was still there in the abandoned theatre. Haast had it removed to another room but insisted on a most scrupulous delicacy in the handling of it. Superstitions sway us, even dead.

64.

An Addendum:

The Reverend Augustus Jacks has had to postpone his visit to the White House due to an unspecified but

acute illness.

65.

A Recent Acquisition:

Lee Harwood, the noted Anglo-American poet, has begun to publish compositions written in a language of his own invention. Linguists who have examined these "neologisms" substantiate Harwood's claim that his language is not, in essence, derived from any other language, oral or written. Harwood is attempting to establish a utopian community on the outskirts of Tucson, Arizona, where his language can be spoken and "a suitable culture developed around it". Already three hundred subscribers from twelve states have committed themselves to the project.

66.

I have sent out invitations. The museum opening is scheduled for eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. The invitations were supererogatory, as Haast had already promised me that everyone will be there.

67.

THE MUSEUM HAS opened and closed. There was more than enough evidence, and my purpose was achieved.

The first one to take a sum from all the assembled addends was Skilliman. He broke into a fit of coughing before the photos of the Vaizey murders that the killer/s had so thoughtfully provided for the newspapers. When he had recovered his breath, he turned on me angrily: "How long have you known about this, Sacchetti?"

"None of it was exactly classified information, Doctor. It all came out of newspapers." Of course I had assured myself, through Schipansky, that Skilliman was not a newspaper reader.

By now the light was dawning for most of the quats. They gathered about us, whispering. Haast, confronted with the handwriting on the wall, was looking about helplessly for an interpreter.

Skilliman visibly moderated his upset, steering for civility. "When is the first of these clippings dated, if I might ask?"

"Adrienne Leverkühn premiered *Spacial Fugues* on August 30. However, her case is one of the more problematical. I allowed it into the exhibit because Aspen is so near-by, and because she is certainly a Lesbian."

"Of course!" he said, giving way again to anger. "What an asshole I've been."

"You, too?" I asked cordially. Which he did not take in a spirit of fun. Had he been on even slightly familiar terms with his own body, I'm sure he would have hit me for that.

"What are you two talking about?" Haast asked, pushing his way through the quats. "What *is* this? Why are you all getting worked up about a bunch of . . . news clippings? That was a terrible murder, I'll admit, but the police are bound to get the murderer soon. Is that it? Have you figured out who he is?"

"You're the murderer, H.H. As I've been trying these many months to explain. George Wagner's murderer, Mordecai's, Meade's and soon enough—mine."

"Nonsense, Louis!" He turned on Skilliman for moral assistance. "He's gone crazy. They all seem to go crazy towards the end."

"In that case the world will soon have caught up with him," Watson, one of the bolder quats, put in. "Because it looks like a sure thing that the whole damned world—the entire country, anyhow—has been infected by your Pallidine."

"Impossible!" Haast declared with still unflawed assurance. "Absolutely impossible. Our security is. . . ." And now it reached even Haast. "Her?"

"Indeed," I said. "Aimée Busk. Yes, beyond a doubt—her."

He laughed nervously. "Not old Siegfried? You're not trying to tell me that someone got *her* cherry? Don't make me laugh!"

"If not her cherry," Skilliman said, "then it would seem that the Siegfried Line has been outflanked and attacked from the rear."

Haast's network of wrinkles tightened into a sieve of bewilderment. Then, with comprehension, came disgust. "But who would have. . . . I *mean*!"

I shrugged. "Any one of us might have, I suppose. We all had private sessions in her offices. I can assure you it wasn't me. Most likely, Mordecai. If you'll recall, the hero of his novella was based on the good doctor. Also, there was just a hint in the story that the heroine, Lucrecia, was being buggered, though I'll admit that that particular suspicion only comes with, as it were, hindsight."

"Why, that son of a bitch! I *trusted* that black-assed bastard like my own son!"

(Concluded next month.)

MASTERSON and the CLERKS

JOHN T. SLADEK

"Whoever is in charge of operations should be designated with real authority to be used in case of an emergency."

A. P. Sloan
My Life with General Motors

PART ONE: CLERKS ALL!

Section 1: The Lutte Agency

Division A: Mr. Gelford

HENRY FOUND that, when he had filled out the orange card listing his education, work experience and hobbies, he was permitted to pass beyond the railing next to the receptionist's desk. The receptionist was a fat, pretty girl whose bare feet would be soft and pink. Being bored in the evenings, especially Sunday evenings, she would draw on black silk stockings and fuck someone in front of a movie camera. Once a famous American executive, watching her in a movie, had had an unusual experience.

Henry moved down the light green hall to a barn-like room where each stall was equipped with a desk and a living soul. The black wooden floor was wavy. Little incandescent bulbs, strung on wires, pumped light into the room, but dark corners drained it away too fast. Henry sat down in the second rank of folding chairs, along with a blind man and a Negro who would someday be a well-known boxer. The blind man's dog looked at Henry, seeing him.

Henry remembered visiting the dentist with just such an orange card in his hand. He was thinking of some way of explaining this to the blind man or the Negro, when far down the barn a tall man stood up and beckoned.

"Henry," he called. Henry and the blind man stood up together.

"Did he say Amory?" asked the blind man.

"No, Henry."

"Eh? Henry?"

"Henry."

"Henry!" called the tall man again, beckoning over the waves. Henry walked towards him, past the desks of Mr. Blair and Mr. Clemens and Mrs. Dudevant and Mr. Beyle and Miss Knye.

Division B: Mr. Nind

Mr. Gelford asked Henry to call him Al. With a special pen, Al initialled the orange card in several places, maintaining the attitude of a dentist marking caries. His eyes, small and dark—like human nipples, they were surrounded with tiny white bumps—looked searchingly at Henry's hair or teeth.

"Henry C. Henry, eh? What does the C. stand for?"

Henry looked at him in silence until Al turned his nipples to a mimeographed list. "Nothing here, I'm afraid, for someone with almost no experience. I'll turn you over to Mr. Nind."

Don kept a telephone receiver well in front of his mouth as he spoke, because the inside of his lip had developed a terrible cold sore he wished to hide. It was, as he already suspected, syphilis.

"I have a really challenging job in a small, friendly engineering company," he said. "No experience necessary, and there is no limit to how far you can work your way up. What do you say, fella?"

Henry leaned forward and laid a hand on Nind's desk calendar. "Fine, Don," he said softly.

Section II: An Interview

In an almost bare room evenly coated with dust, Mr. Masterson toyed with a slide rule, a clipboard, a retractable ballpoint pen and a thin book, *Steam Tables,* by Keynes and Keyes. Henry sat motionless before him. Out of the window he could see a soup line, and in the distance a building was being demolished. A man in uniform walked up the soup line, pulled a man out of it and began hitting him in the face. Perhaps later the victim would go to a movie theatre, buy a ticket, enter the Gents and comb his hair.

"Are you a good, steady worker?" asked Masterson.

"Yes."

Fingers like white slugs curled around the slide rule. Undoubtedly Masterson was puffy and white all over, like a drowned corpse. His unpleasant glasses were hinged in the centre like motorcycle goggles, and folded hard against the colourless bubbles of his eyes. Mr. Masterson contained a great quantity of liquid.

"Do you work good?" he asked.

"Yes."

"If you work good, we'll do good by you." Henry was never to forget this sentence, for he wrote it on a sheet of paper and taped it in the drawer of his desk, where it became a kind of motto.

"You start at fifty." The corner of Mr. Masterson's mouth lifted in a kind of smile, revealing a rotten tooth.

Section III: The Arrangement

The Masterson Engineering Company occupied the third and fourth floors of the building. Henry was to work on the third floor. An old man, whose tie was fastened with a paper clip, whose sleeves were rolled high above his parched elbows, led Henry downstairs into a room full of clerks at oak desks. There were in the room perhaps a dozen, perhaps a hundred men of various sizes and ages.

Gesticulating wildly with his skinny arms, the old man began in a high, clear voice to explain Henry's duties:

See this here form
This here is the system sheet.
You've got to mark it down every time
An assignment bill comes in
You've got to mark it down every time
An assignment bill goes out
And put the tally number here off the spec
Or else the item identification.

See this here list
This here is the transfer list,
Where you put the part number here
From the compiled list of numerical transfers
Where you put the description number here
From the B column of the changeover schedule
And mark it down.

We have always initialled our work
We always will.
Be sure you initial the backlist
When you add a serial number
Be sure you initial the adjustment form
When you check this here.
Fill out the job number;
Fill out the item identification index
(Blue and yellow copies),
Make a note on the margin of the drawing
Or on the margin of the transfer book
If the alphabetical register is stamped
And initialled by the proper authority.

"You'll catch on. . . ." Winking, the old man gave his sketches of arms a final flourish and went away. Henry fingered various piles of clean forms tentatively, murmuring fragments of the old clerk's song; he picked up a coloured pencil and laid it down again. It seems that being a clerk is not all fun!

Henry consulted with himself and decided to learn by observing and imitating the other clerks around him. There were eight clerks around him in the following arrangement:

Clark Markey	Robert Kegel	Harold Kelmscott
Willard Bask	Henry C. Henry	Edward Warner
Karl Henkersmahl	Rodney Klumpf	Edwin Futch

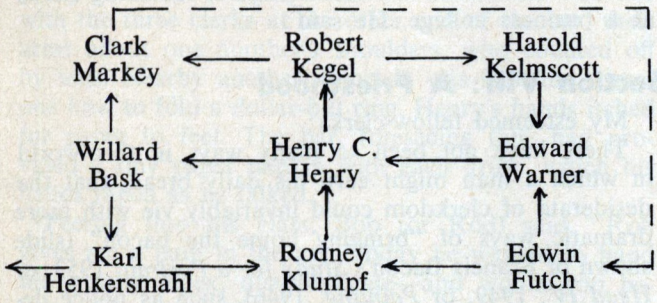
Henry was never to learn the names of any of the sixteen or forty clerks outside this circle of desks, but soon he "caught on", or moved into the general work rhythm. He accepted from Rod or Ed Warner a batch of forms, removed paper clips from some, marked a few of them with numbers and initials, erased the numbers or initials from others, sorted them by his own arrangement, clipped them together, and gave them to either Bob or Willard.

Willard was born and raised in the Southern part of the United States, while Bob's younger sister was sure to become salutatorian of her high school class. Meanwhile Bob or Willard was undoing part or all of Henry's work, then passing the stuff on to Clark or Harold or Karl, who in turn undid part or all of his (Bob's or Willard's) work, then passed the stuff on to Rod or Ed W. or callow Eddie Futch; each man along the chain approaching the work as if no one had gone

before and no one would come after. Numbers would be erased, altered, changed back to their original values. Forms might be sorted by names, then dates, then colour, then in numerical order, alphabetical order and alphanumerical order. Often enough, work came back to Henry from two to three times. This was indeed a vicious circle!

Section IV: The Happy Ending

Happily, sooner or later every form ended up with Karl, the stapler, who might put a staple in it and send it out of the department for good. Work flow was thus:



Thus a kind of progress was achieved, without, however, sacrificing routine. The happy days blended into one another like molten glass.

Section V: The Departures

No one ever saw Mr. Masterson on the third floor. He seemed to send all his orders through the old clerk, who descended every morning with a memorandum to be tacked to the bulletin board.

The speaker of the intercom, fixed in the ceiling, made crackling noises that might have been the voice of Masterson. The shape of a name emerged from the static. A clerk at once rose, squared his shoulders and climbed the stairs. He did not come back.

The room was filled with the anxious murmer of the clerks, discussing his departure. The same thing had happened a dozen times or more, it was said. They never came back.

The discussion stamped everyone. Some clerks stood leaning against their desks, arms akimbo. Some tapped pencils on their blotters, made spitting motions, or leaned back. Others pretended to move their jaws sideways, while still more others sharpened pencils and drank water from paper "cups". Bob Kegel continued to read numbers from a list to Rod Klumpf, who punched the buttons of a small adding machine. Karl picked at his stapler with a preoccupied air. Big Ed Warner, an older man known for his leaky heart and halitosis, was swivelled around to talk to Eddie Futch. Had the bomb (or a Hiroshima-size atomic bomb) gone off at this moment, at 5,000 feet above Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, the shadow of Ed would no doubt have protected the acne-riddled face of Eddie from the direct effects of the blast, or is this just wishful thinking?

Ed told the young man that the departed clerk was dead, and that nothing, no power on earth could bring him back.

"Is that any way to talk? Jesus! Is that any way. . . ."

Eddie ran off to the lavatory to pinch pimples from his hot, raw cheeks. Big Ed considered the word "laughter".

Section VI: Kegel and Klumpf

Bob Kegel and Rod Klumpf were alike. Often Henry tried to envision some mirror arrangement that would allow him to see, in place of the back of Bob's head in front of him, the back of Rod's head behind him. Clearly the virtual image would be the same.

They were tall, slim and polite, with round heads, round shoulders and long, narrow feet. They wore fashionable clothes and reasonable smiles and neat cowlicks, and they read the same consumer magazine, which prompted them to buy many of the same articles: antifreeze, air conditioners, Ascots, attaché cases, beer mugs, berets, blazers, brandy snifters, cameras, carpeting, cars, cats, deodorants, door chimes, filter cigarettes, golf clubs, hats, L.P.s, luggage, movie cameras, movie projectors, shavers, silverware, slide projectors, tape recorders, typewriters, television sets, toothbrushes.

At first Henry supposed that he could tell them apart by Rod's freckles and Bob's half-rimmed glasses. But the sun soon brought out freckles on Bob also, and he proved to be quite vain in regard to his glasses, wearing them less and less. At the same time, Rod purchased and began to wear a similar pair of glasses, and since he kept out of the sun, his own freckles began to fade. Being of a size, the two friends loaned one another clothes. Occasionally, for a joke, they would exchange desks. Both spoke in the same modulated tones, and both moved with the grace of bowlers.

It was always Bob or Rod who got up a football pool, who sent out for coffee, who tacked up humorous signs, who started charity drives, who instituted fines for tardiness and swearing, who collected money for flowers whenever anyone fell ill, died or married. Tirelessly and good naturedly, these clean young men organized the life of the office. The others despised them.

Section VII: The Coffee Break

Division A: The idea of coffee break

COFFEE BREAK was an old tradition at the Masterson Engineering Company, instituted some years before by Mr. Masterson when he had read in a management magazine the following advertisement:

UP PRODUCTION WITH A COFFEE BREAK!
Get more out of your workers by giving them a

short mid-afternoon rest, with *coffee*, the all-purpose stimulant. Coffee perks up flagging minds and bodies the way fuel injection pumps up the power of an engine. *They* will gladly pay for the coffee — while *you* reap the extra productivity!

His frequent memos on the subject claimed that coffee breaks cost him an enormous amount of money, but that he was determined his clerks should be happy at all costs.

Division B: Coffee break praxis

It was during coffee break that Henry began to learn the peculiar vocabulary of the clerk.

First he heard Clark Markey, the non-lawyer, say, "I certainly did finalize that item."

A delighted smile invaded the solemn features of Karl Henkersmahl. "Finalized it, did you? You do not know the meaning of the word *finalize*. Did you expedite it or ameliorate it? Did you even estimate the final expeditures? Or did you merely correlate the old stabilization programs? Ha!"

Harold Kelmscott stirred his coffee with a peculiar new kind of pencil. Laughter hissing in his blue eyes, he said, "Quit it, Karl. We all know what a poor expediter you are yourself, and you're a non-conservative estimator, unless I miss my guess."

Karl nipped off his rimless glasses and polished them in aggravated silence. It was hard for him to acknowledge the presence of a superior will, but he did so with his best grace. His tiny, wide-set eyes, were on the move, looking for a smile he could challenge.

Karl often let his pride and quick temper draw him into an argument on any subject, especially on the subject of Germany, about which he possessed a number of interesting statistics. Claiming to know the exact reason Germany lost the Second World War, he usually won any arguments simply by shouting the same words over and over until his opponent gave up. The only man who ever won the war argument from Karl was Ed Warner, who maintained that Germany had *won* the war.

Division C: False teeth

Karl swallowed his coffee and said, "I estimate that the productionalized operational format will be updated by mid-March at the very earliest."

Harold smiled. "But that's hardly a conservative estimate, is it, Karl?" The smile became an orange balloon, orgulous and threatening. Karl stared at its teeth in disbelief.

Modestly swirling his coffee and studying the rainbow in it, Harold said aloud that he had found two discrepancies today.

Two! A low murmur of approval went around the group. Indian, or "ideal" summer descended on the city, and a new movie came to the Apollo. Hurricane Patty Sue was breaking up. The eyes of Eddie Futch glistened with frank hero-worship, which Harold accepted graciously. Even Bob and Rod paused in their counting of the proceeds of a turkey raffle to make the well-known gesture of "nice going".

Karl alone refused to congratulate Harold. "I hope you itemized them both," he said testily, "before you followed a plan of procedure."

"Of course I itemized them. What did you think I'd do— *standardize* them?" Harold *quipped*. The others *laughed* heartily, as much in glee at Karl's discomfiture as in open admiration of the excellent *bon mot*, or good word, of his inquisitor.

It was hard not to like Harold Kelmscott, for he was a true clerk, descended from a line of clerks that could trace its name back to the twelfth century, to a Benedictine monk who broke his vow of celibacy. Harold once lectured to an orientation class of incoming clerks at a business college. He said:

Section VIII: A Priesthood

My esteemed fellow-clerks:

There have not been so many ways in this world in which a man might earn his daily bread, that the desiderata of clerkdom could invariably vie with more dramatic ways of "bringing home the bacon" (slide shown of Francis Bacon's *Study for a Portrait*, 1953, or *Head IV*, 1949, or *Painting*, 1946), such as police detection work, mass hypnotism, name any sport.

What, then, is it about clerkdom, that draws so many millions of fine young persons of all levels to dedicate their lives, so to speak, to the world of paper and telephones; to join, if I may be permitted a small jest, the pen and pencil set? (Slide shown of comic figure climbing out of inkwell, copyright by Ub Iwerks. Boos and clatter of neolite soles on Armstrong cork floors. Guards take firmer grip on Smith & Wesson .38 calibre police special revolvers, glance inadvertently at tough Yale locks on all doors, but H.K. has it under control.)

What it is, we may very well ask, for it is an unanswered and perhaps unanswerable question. Let us unask it, then, and move on to a history of paper. The first clerks, we know, lived in ancient cities where they wrote on stone, clay slabs, wax tablets. But very quickly, they moved into their true capacity as priests. (Mixed hissing, but a general feeling of well-being pervades the auditorium. Guards relax and even light up Camels and Luckies. Wearing a plain black business suit, Foreman and Clark with vest and extra pair of pants at home, Harold spreads his arms in benediction. He is plump and blond, but even so, serious as a nose. He is all-English, black round-rimmed glasses and an unruly lock of hair his trade mark.) Yes, *priests*, a shocking word but oh so true! *You* shall be priests in the tradition, handlers of the lamb, then the lambskin then paper. Your hands will caress no whiter flank than the margin of form 289-XB-1967M. Your rituals are many and important, and you will dedicate your life to preserving their routine, that endless cyclic round that drives the universe. Whether you work in the death, birth or marriage registration bureau, it is

your work which moves civilisation in its great orbit. God bless you all! (From the front of the hall guards and firemen move in with firehoses, using Townely-Ward 1½″ nozzles and Townely-Ward pumpers to empty the hall and flush it out for the next lecture.)

Section IX: Jax TV Lounge

Division A: Rod

HENRY STOOD at the bar and began a conversation with Rod or Bob. Around them, clerks murmured a kind of plainsong cadence of complaint, and Henry was pleasantly aware of being a clerk himself. He was one with the two clerks in the corner, arguing about the finalization of finalizations. He was one with the boisterous group of tic-tac-toe players in the corner. He was one with the three clerks at the other end of the bar, their arms about one another's shoulders, who counted off by tens. Nearby another comrade was showing someone how to fold a dollar-bill ring. Henry's hands itched for paper to feel. The bar, foreseeing this, had provided a tiny paper napkin with each drink, which his hands raped as he talked.

Peering into his glass, Bob (or Rod) said, "Rob gives me a pain in the ass. Today he wanted to hand me a tally index, quadruplicate—and would you believe it?—the stupid bastard had the blue copy on top!"

"No kidding?"

"No, really. Even little Eddie Futch knows the white copy goes on top, for Christ's sake."

Henry could not help but think of Masterson's childhood:

MEMO: *My childhood.* It has come to the attention of this office that the company personnel in general do not know the details of how I was born and raised. I intend to ameliorate this circumstance.

I was conceived because the contraceptive device my mother was wearing at the moment was not properly fitted. It consisted of a small metal button, to which was attached a long wire coil spring. The end of the coil was to be introduced into the cervix and thence into the womb, and screwed up tight until the button sealed the opening of the cervix. Either due to a malfunction of the device itself or an unwillingness on the part of Mom to undergo the discomfort of a really tight seal, an accidental conception occurred.

I learned of all this only on my twenty-first birthday, from a pretty cousin with whom I dallied, in an after-Sunday-dinner way, in a haymow. My mother I hardly remember, except as a ghostly figure standing silent by the electric kitchen range, almost an aura thrown off by the back burners. She liked to stir things. To my knowledge, she never spoke.

I soon was able to go to college, where, thanks to the leadership of Athelstan Spilhaus, I was persuaded to make my goal the sanctification of mechanical engineering, the elevation of thermodynamics to a sacrament. My studies were interrupted by the birth of a younger sister, or half-sister, whom my impoverished parents could not support. The rest is history.

—Masterson

Bob (or Rod) went on, "Well, to make a long story short, I expedited them, though I had a damned good notion to let them go the way they were. Old Rob is beginning to make too many little discrepancies, if you ask me. Only last week, I caught him *updating a form,* just because it was in short supply!"

"I can't believe it!" cried Henry, clapping his hands to his ears.

"True, though. And he had the itemization slip attached to the bill, and I couldn't find the authorization for that anywhere!"

"Exactly." Henry sensed his meaning. Down the bar, the trio counted:

"One hundred forty!"

"One hundred fifty!"

"One hundred sixty!"

They laughed and pounded on the bar, then drew themselves up to count again.

"Yes," Rod (or Bob) went on in thick accents, "if you ask me, old Rob is about to get the axe. Too many discrepancies, if you see what I mean. One of these days they'll be calling him on the intercom. . . ."

"Do you mean it?" Henry inadvertently genuflected.

"Off the record, you understand, but the trouble with old Rob is—he drinks."

"No!" said Henry, not disputing it. He bought a round, then Bob (or Rod) tried to interest him in tickets for a turkey raffle.

"But it's only March."

"We've already raffled off a ham for Easter. Clark won it, and gave it away to Karl. Then we sold everyone cards for Mother's and Father's Days, flags for Veterans' Day, baby trees for Arbor Day, fireworks for the Fourth and St. Christopher medals for the Labor Day weekend. Thanksgiving is the only thing we had left," explained Bob (or Rod). "I mean, it's a little early for Christmas trees."

"What about treats for Hallowe'en?" suggested a stranger.

"Sure, that's it, teach kids to beg. That's the American way, all right. If kids worked for their pennies the way I had to—Gee, it's nearly seven! I've got to get to class. Sorry I can't buy you a round, Henry." He drank up and lounged quickly towards the door.

Rod (or Bob), less because of the ski-ing instructor with whom he had had a brief flirtation than because of his current interest in Arctic literature, had a well-shaped neck, tapering inward slightly under his small ears, and forming a niche in front, into which was set an *Adam's apple.*

"Wait! What is it you study?" Henry cried, and the answer blew back in a block of November wind:

"IBMs."

Division B: Bob

Bob (or Rod) moved down the bar to talk to Henry as soon as Rod (or Bob) had left. Henry was able at once to confirm that he drank, as the IBM scholar alleged, *for he now had a drink in his hand, and sipped at it.*

"Was that Dob I saw leaving?" he said. "Intelligent kid, Dob is."

"Yes, he tells me he's studying IBMs."

IBM, unknown to either of the speakers, represents not only International Business Machines, but *Yebem,* the seventieth angel quinary of the Zodiac. This angel over the seventieth quinary of the Zodiac. This angel is usually depicted plucking a quill from the wing of its neighbour, 69 or Raah (who hangs head downward like a bat), with which to make, this legend has it, the first "pen".

Like wax, the other's face took a smile. "The real money isn't in IBMs, it's in ICBMs. I study ICBMs." After a moment he added, "Yes, I'm no intellectual like Dob, but I can tell you right now he's getting too smart for his own good. For instance, he thinks the white copy of the tally index quadruplicate form goes on top, in the finalized format. Just for the record, I think old Dob's going to be finalized himself one of these days."

"For the record?"

"The confidential record, of course. Dob makes too many discrepancies, if you know what I mean."

"I know what you mean, all right," said Henry, showing some of his teeth. "He drinks?"

"Golly, yes. In fact, I saw him drinking here, just a few minutes ago."

There was nothing either of them could add to this, so they turned to watch the television. As the picture slowly brightened, it became even more painfully clear that the monkeys were not free-standing on the ponies' backs, but strapped on. A hidden orchestra played "Perpetual Motion". After trying to interest Henry in the first pick of a lot of Norway pines Bob (or Rod) went off to school.

Section X: Ed and Eddie

The unpleasant marsupiality of Ed Warner's eyes was worsened when he smiled. Little sharp shrew-teeth glittered at the ends of big dead-pale gums, and one knew his tongue would also be black.

"There isn't any boss," he murmured to Eddie Futch.

There was no need to say more. The panic ripples spread, leaving little Eddie bobbing on the surface of his own consciousness, a writer might presume. He who follows the conceit far enough might even glimpse something like slime boiling in the depths. . . . "But I *seen* him. He hired me."

" You saw someone who said he was the boss. Or did he even say that?"

Little Eddie looked around for help, his eyes full of tears. "But there just has to be a boss," his shrillness insisted. "If there's no boss, how can there be a company?"

The shrew-teeth bared in a grin.

"Leave the lad alone, Ed," Harold bade. "You'll have him making discrepancies."

"This whole company is a discrepancy, Harry. I'm trying to say something, now, listen. Unrectifiable—"

"That'll do!" Harold leapt to his feet, a sword of ignorance glimmering in his fine eyes. Cackling, Big Ed moved behind his own desk to gulp heart pills.

This was his defence. Everyone was terrified of Ed's tender heart, as much as of his black breath. If he were pressed too hard in an argument, he would simply clutch his chest and slump to the floor, remaining there until the argument was forgotten.

Henry envied him the trick. If only it were possible to imitate it without soiling his shirt. . . .

Section XI: Dirt

Yes, Henry cried out to cleanliness. He bathed morning and evening, and wore clothes scientifically cleaned and packaged in polythene bags. His shirts were first disinfected and boiled at home, then scrubbed to new whiteness by Chinese slaves. He carried about with him toothpaste, carbolic soap, orange sticks, a safety razor, styptic pencil and Kleenex, while the drawer of his desk was crammed with bandaids, new shirts and underwear, depilatory and cotton swabs.

No, cleanliness answered. His was the dirtiest shirt in the office, and the tartar caked up permanently on his teeth. Strange rashes came and went on his coarse-pored, grainy skin, while his fingernails remained in mourning. It was as if another person were determined to keep him foul.

MEMO: *The history of the Masterson Engineering Company.*

The Masterson Engineering Company was started in 1927 by my father. My mother. He began with one draughtsman and a broken T-square, and plenty of guts and sand. In 1931, the company went broke, but by 1950, he was back in business. I took over that year, under his directorship, and soon killed or replaced him. The original name was retained, though the company moved downtown. Wife and child. I am now Mr.

—Masterson

One day Henry tried a daring experiment. After spreading some newspapers on the floor, he clutched his chest and slumped down carefully on them.

No one paid the least attention, even when he groaned and writhed a few times. After several minutes, Henry got up and went back to work, his neck hot against the grey collar of his shirt.

Section XII: Clark

Clark Markey, the non-lawyer, was unpopular because of his political beliefs, though no one was afraid of him.

"I'm no lawyer," he would say, "but it seems to me that twenty-five minutes for lunch is below the legal minimum." He asked each of the others if they would back him in complaining to the Labor Board.

Willard Bask: "Don't want to rock the boat."

Eddie Futch: "Guess it would be all right."

Karl Henkersmahl: "Should think we have no right to complain about anything."

Henry C. Henry: No comment.

Robert Kegel: "I think we need a bowling team."

Harold Kelmscott: "Let us give up lunch of the flesh."

Rodney Klumpf: "Let's organize a bowling team."

Clark Markey: "Will go along with the others."

Ed Warner: "Abolish lunch. Abolish the company . . ."

Section XIII: Clark and Karl and Eddie

Clark was viscerally interested in everyone's problems of justice. When Eddie Futch played loud music on his radio, Clark assured him he was well within his rights. But when Karl complained of the noise, Clark hastened to tell him that he, too, had a legitimate claim.

"I've got a claim, all right. I'm going to smash that goddamned radio," Karl said quietly. "Then I'm going to smash its owner. Ha!"

"Oh, no, you mustn't do that; your right to smash ends where Eddie's radio begins. But you do have a right to insist that he turn it down if it bothers you."

Karl began to shout, his head swelling up out of a thick, Michelin-man neck. "Turn that fucking radio off, before I come over there and smash it!"

Blinking rapidly, little Eddie switched off the music. Clark's eyes filled with tears of compassion. He rushed to comfort the boy. "Nevertheless, you have a right to listen."

"I don't want to listen," Eddie lied. Red flooded the acne-scarred face: a Martian map. "If I did want to listen, I'd listen, all right, no matter what anyone said."

"That's right! You selfish pig!" Karl screamed. "You care nothing for the nerves of others. *You* aren't doing precision work, as I am. All *you* do is shuffle papers around. But I'm a precision stapler. I have to get the staple in exactly the same place each time; I can't bend it over or ruin it, because then I'd have to start all over again. But what do you care? What do any of you care?"

MEMO: *Automation*

There will be no automation at the Masterson Engineering Company.

—Masterson

Section XIV: Clark and Karl

Clark rushed over to placate the hysterical Henkersmahl and offer him a halvah bar.

"What is this supposed to be?"

"Halvah. A kind of candy. Just try it."

Karl bit into it gingerly and chewed, watching Clark to one side. "It tastes good. Jewish product, is it?" He finished the bar in two bearish gulps and began turning his fingers over, sucking crumbs from them. "It tastes damned good."

Clark began to smile, relieved that he had been able to help Karl so easily. Then the Henkersmahl's red jewels of eyes closed with suspicion.

"Damned clever, you Jews. Now I suppose you're going to overcharge me for that candy bar, eh?"

Clark became aware of a problem in communications research. "No, Karl, that was a gift," he said.

"Ha ha, a gift. Very cute little tricks. A gift, eh? A gift? Very cute tricks indeed. A gift with Hebrew strings attached, eh? You've fooled me this time, but I'll remember this. I never get fooled twice, and I always remember anyone who cheats me, Clark." Karl pulled a dollar from his billfold and threw it on Clark's desk.

"Yes, that's the difference between your kind and mine. I may be fooled by your subtleties, but not for long. I pay my debts sportingly, yes, even gladly, when I'm caught in one of your snares. But your kind never pays up, do they? All right, I don't mind being cheated out of mere money. Go on, take it."

As he said this last, Karl snatched back the dollar and put it away again. From that day on, he would never lose an opportunity to tell people of how Clark tried to charge him a whole dollar for a candy bar, which Karl always referred to as a "Bar Mitzvah", or one of those crazy names. It might even have been Jewish dope. I felt funny afterwards. . . ."

Section XV: The Second World War

The real reason Karl disliked Clark was that Jews had undoubtedly cost Germany the Second World War. There could be no other explanation. Germany had what everyone acknowledged the world's finest fighting men. They had the best planes, the best guns, everything. But the army had so dissipated its efforts by hauling around mewling Jews and killing them that its efficiency had suffered, he told Ed. Karl would never forgive the Jews for that.

"It's the real reason Germany lost. Not the second front, but that Jewish fifth column. Not the American bombers, but the sabotage in Germany's bosom."

"I know just what you mean," Willard Bask agreed. "I spent eighteen months in Stuttgart, and believe you and me, there ain't a finer kind of folks anywhere than the Germans. We had some godawful fights in them honkytonks, sure, but I respect a man who fights for what's coming to him. Know what I mean? I mean I respect a man who stands up on his hind legs and comes at you with a broke bottle like a white man, and don't go messing around with Big Knives or razors and stuff."

Ed Warner scratched a mole. "I don't get it," he said. "Didn't Germany *win* the war?"

Not listening, Karl went on. "German logistics were all snarled. Instead of troop trains and supply trains, they had carloads of Jews lolling about the countryside. *Getting a free ride, while the world's finest fighting men had to walk.*"

"Know just what you mean," Willard said, nodding fiercely. "One night this big German and me started out cuttin' each other up with busted bottles, and before the night was over, we was old pals, swapping stories about women. Next night, it was just the other way round. . . ."

"But Germany won the war, Karl. Look at Germany today. One of the top industrial nations in the world. Two continents are overrun every year with German tourists. They have one of the biggest, best-equipped armies in Europe. How can you say they lost?"

Karl cocked his head and frowned, realising something had gone wrong. He had to make Ed understand the truth. Smiling, he began his explanation once again. The light reflected off the octagonal shapes of his lenses, blanking out the eyes.

Section XVI: Cesspools

When Harold Kelmscott looked at Clark Markey, what did he see?

He saw the ancestor of Clark Markey performing ritual sacrifice of Christian children. He saw the ancestor of Clark Markey breeding money from money: usury: a sin. He saw the ancestor of Clark Markey cursing Christ as He bore His cross, and telling Him to go faster up Calvary. He saw Christ turn to look at that ancestor, saying, "I go, but thou shalt wait till my return." He saw the ancestor of Clark Markey buying and selling Christian kings.

What were the five sources of the hatred Harold bore the Jew before him?

Old half-remembered stories from childhood; his parents' anti-Semitism; popular slogans recalled unconsciously; the intense dislike of Karl for Clark, as reflected in his glasses; bitterness because Clark had not offered Harold a candy bar.

From what two-fold reason springs this last bitterness?

From Harold's abstention from candy during Lent: first, he would naturally have taken pleasure in refusing a temptation of Satan; secondly, he would have enjoyed refusing the candy on religious grounds, implying that Clark was cruelly intolerant to offer it, and thus wounding him.

When Clark's name was called over the intercom, he went meekly and quietly upstairs. As soon as he was gone, Harold drew and fired a histrionic sigh. "Good riddance, good riddance," he clucked. "I never could stand Jews, not even when they were my best friends. Do you know why?"

"Because they cheat you?" Karl prompted, hoping for an anecdote.

"No, because, during the Middle Ages, the Jews used to slit open the throats of Christian babies and throw them into cesspools."

Henry thought about the cesspools. He was becoming compulsively clean in habit if not in fact, and only barely restrained himself from wiping off door knobs and answering the phone with a Kleenex.

"Cesspools, eh?" Karl looked disappointed. "Well, you've got to expect it. Anyone mean enough to charge a dollar for a candy bar would stoop to just about anything."

"*Anything*. Their name comes from *Judas*, you know —their secret leader (you recall he killed Christ)."

"That's right. For money, wasn't it?" As he spoke, Karl stared hard at the back of Willard Bask's neck.

MEMO: *Power*

We are fighting for, and we expect to win, a return of power to the hands of the white, Anglo-Saxon, God-fearing, Protestant, not overly-intellectualized citizens of American descent, especially in our Southern states, men of integrity who have kept the old values.

—Masterson

Section XVII: Old Values

WILLARD BASK was about six feet tall, slender, with a fine square-featured face that showed only a trace of weakness around the jaw. His clear eyes were the blue-grey of distance, and the necessary impression of fanaticism they produced was softened by his serious grin. Willard spent his summers on the beach, and used lamps to keep his tan dark all winter. Against it, his teeth seemed even and almost sound. His sculptured hair glistened like the whorls of thumb prints in grease. Like the grin, the nose of Willard twisted slightly to one side; he seemed always about to share a private joke with some invisible audience to his right.

Willard opinioned that it might not be all the fault of the Jews, things were all screwed up in the papers and they slanted things. He was sure things could be fixed up again, if the Southern coloured stopped listening to agitators and tended their knitting.

"Let folks be, that's what I always say," he said often.

MEMO: *Dwelling patterns of the Allendar and Bask families: Patrilocal or matrilocal?* At first the kinship arrangements of the Allendar and Bask families may seem complex and even arbitrary, but a closer inspection reveals many basic formations common to Southern United States tribes. At the heart of this scheme we find, of course, the familiar automobile, usually an older Ford or Mercury equipped with phallic aerials(s), with mammary steering knob (see formation of the form "guffer's knob" in Frazer, "Courtship in the Merc") and certainly with twin anal "tailpipes". The greater mobility provided by these vehicles has not led, as expected, to a breakup of the old matrilocal dwelling patterns, but only extended the range of such patterns from village to county, up to 150 miles.

The seven children of Faron Bask and Maypearl Allendar Bask are a case in point: Selma and Wilma settled in the same village with their spouses, while Travis, Truman, Orman, Willard and J.B. moved on to a city at too great a distance to maintain easy con-

tact. Willard's wife, Nelline Parker, bore him four children between her 13th and 17th years. They were then divorced and he moved back into the county of his birth at his mother's death. He left home again, the following year abandoning Etta Leich, his second wife, shortly before her miscarriage. His younger brother, J.B., followed an exactly similar pattern, while Wilma and Selma followed its opposite, e.g., *leaving* the village at the death of their mother. Travis died, and Orman and Truman had not yet married. The Merc belonging to Travis had fender skirts; but when Truman inherited it, these were removed and a sunshade added. The pattern is self-evident.

—Masterson

Section XVIII: Patterns

"IT'S THEM communists, if you'll excuse the expression," he said earnestly. "They come down and stir up the coloured. I can't blame the poor coloured. They see all this white pussy around, agitatin', telling them they're as good. . . . Well, you can see what that'll lead to, but what can I do? Live and let live, that's my middle name. But you've got to admit the coloured and white used to get along just fine, just fine, without no outside interference. Well, I'm not going to complain. I know God didn't intend coloured and white to mix any more than a washer woman means to mix up coloured and white clothes—it's the white ones get ruint. But who am I to make trouble?"

He glanced around accusingly. A bitter, nagging note came into his voice. "I'm not complaining. To each their own, that's my motto. I think birds of a feather *ought* to flock together. Why, when I used to pump gas. . . ."

Section XIX: Going out of style

"THE SOUTHERN coloured are just different, and if I sat around here explaining till Doomsday, you wouldn't understand what I meant unless you lived down there. I mean *different*. Like they don't know the value of a dollar. Soon as they get a nickel in their jeans, they just *got* to spend it, like it was burning a hole in their pocket."

Lazily, he unstraddled a chair to fish a five-dollar bill out of his watch pocket with two fingers. Willard was buying coffee for everyone. The deliveryman set down the box of lukewarm covered containers and reached for his change, but Willard waved it away. Before he could taste his own coffee, however, his name was called on the intercom.

Section XX: Gone, but not forgot

"DID YOU EVER notice how Willard just throws money away?" asked Karl when he had left. "Anyone who does that must have a bit tucked away. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that his background is—Biblical, if you get my meaning."

"I had the same thought," said Harold. He took a reflective sip of the coffee Willard had bought him—black, for it was Advent—and asked, "What sort of name is Willard, anyway? Surely not a *Christian* name."

Ed Warner finished his own coffee and started on Willard's untouched cup. "Well, he's gone now. No use talking about the dead," he said firmly.

"He's not—!"

Section XXI: Irregularities

"HE'S NOT!" Karl screamed, his Michelin-tyre head inflating dangerously.

Harold's long celluloid teeth clicked on his paper cup. "Of course not. He's been fired, I'm sure." He looked warningly at Ed. "Caught, I suppose, with his hand in the till."

"What till?" Ed's yellow cheeks turned the colour of pleasure.

"HE'S NOT DEAD!"

"Prove it."

Karl seemed about to collapse, but Harold shook his head. "You should know better than that, Ed. It's up to you to prove that what's-his-name is dead."

For answer, Ed clutched his chest and crumpled to the floor.

Section XXII: Fake

KARL CROWED. "He's faking! Knows he lost!"

The old man's lips turned blue.

"He's dying!" Eddie snatched up the phone and dialled an emergency number. The number was printed in red ink on a card stuck to one corner of the bulletin board. Any user of the telephone confronted the bulletin board and read its notices without realizing it.

"Join a bowling team now!" "THIMK", "THINK", "We don't make much money but then we don't have ulcers, either." "Give generously to Univac." "Join and contribute now: AMERICANS FOR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE." "We are asking for flowers for Willard Bask, departed this afternoon. Please *sign* name and write amount *clearly*." "Good books for starving Asia."

"Forget it," said Karl, pressing down the phone cradle. "Do you want to get us all in trouble with the authorities? I told you, he's faking. He's not really turning blue."

Eddie flushed, and his chin, raw with fresh pustules, began to tremble. Shoving Karl aside, he began to dial again. At that moment, the intercom sputtered:

"Edwin EEEEEEEEEEEEEP! Futch."

He dropped the receiver and threw both hands to his face.

"Go on, kid," said Karl gently. "If it will make you feel any better, *I'll* call the hospital for Ed. All right? Now go on." He spanked Eddie lightly, starting him towards the door that led to the stairs. With a zombie stride, the youth marched out.

Karl replaced the telephone receiver and lit a cigarette.

"Ed's just faking," he announced. "Let's get back to

work and just ignore him."

Harold licked his lips and glanced towards the door. "Too bad about young Eddie, though. So young—to go like *that*."

"Yes, death is a natural thing," Karl said, blowing a smoke ring. "We must learn to accept it and live with it. There must be nothing frightening or shameful about dying—it is as natural as pee-pee and poop."

"Yes, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, as the saying goes."

The figure on the floor coughed, one sudden explosive noise, then lay still. Using his dirty grey handkerchief, Henry picked up the phone and dialled an emergency number.

Section XXIII: Real

"ALL RIGHT, Ed, keep it up, right to the last minute," Karl yelled down the hall to the covered basket the ambulance men were removing. "Keep on faking! You're only fooling yourself!"

His voice was shrill with fury. It excited the professional interest of the intern, who had stayed behind to fill out the death certificate.

"Why don't you sit down for a moment?" he invited. "I know it's hard to believe in the death of someone close." He pressed Karl into a chair and asked Henry his name.

"Karl Henkersmahl. He's a stapler."

"I see. Oh, Mr. Henkersmahl? Karl? Would you mind putting a few staples in this form for me? It's the death certificate of Mr. Warner."

Karl moved slowly and reluctantly, but with a great deal of ceremony (*Feierlichkeit*) and precision beautiful to behold. He placed one staple neatly in each corner of the form.

"Say, he really is dead, isn't he?" he murmured then, scratching his head. "I thought he was just faking."

"It's too late for that," said the intern, with a mysterious smile. Though he wore a white uniform, he was a black man.

Section XXIX: The End of All Clerks

ONE BY ONE, they were all called. Henry thought of quitting first. He even went so far as to interview with another firm, one specializing in famous information. But that night he dreamed that he was brushing his teeth when the toothbrush began ramming wooden splinters up his gums. It was a warning, perhaps.

In the spring, Bob and Rod left, smiling, asking that no flowers be sent after them, that they be cremated by a reliable firm recommended by a leading consumer magazine, and that their ashes be mingled.

At midsummer, Harold left, crossing himself and making signs to ward off the evil eye.

"Nothing to be afraid of," Karl assured him with a serene smile. "It's as natural as wee-wee and grunt."

But when Karl's own name was called he behaved in a strange, unnatural manner. The sound made him jerk erect, spoiling a staple. He carefully replaced it, tidied his desk, and with a private, one-sided smile lifted from the bottom drawer a heavy object encased in leather. This he carried into the lavatory and shut the door. A shot rang out. Before Henry, who was the only one left, could try the door, his own name was called on the intercom.

PART TWO: MASTERSON

Section I: The Figure at the Head of the Stairs

MASTERSON, or a bulging, obnoxious, enigmatic person like Masterson, stood at the head of the stairs. Henry saw he would have to squeeze past him to gain the fourth floor. The eyes in their lenses were quiet and horrible as glass, watching him ascend. In his hand, Henry carried the sheet of paper with his motto: "If you work good, we'll do good by you." It was folded in neat thirds, and he held it up before him, like a shielding dental chart.

Who was this Masterson if this were indeed he? Was he truly the author of all memos, or a figurehead? Had he killed the real Masterson and assumed his place? The figure above, beetling over Henry, seemed almost like a great cancer that had once totally absorbed a man; now its vague memory of his lineaments served it to spew forth an idea of death upon the rest of the world.

As Henry moved closer, however, the cancer cleared its throat and stepped back to let him pass. As it did so, he saw the light had been wrong. This was the face of a fat, weary, self-pitying man, nothing more.

Section II: The Fourth Floor

Masterson explained to Henry that he was closing the third floor department and moving all clerks into the draughting room on this, the fourth, floor.

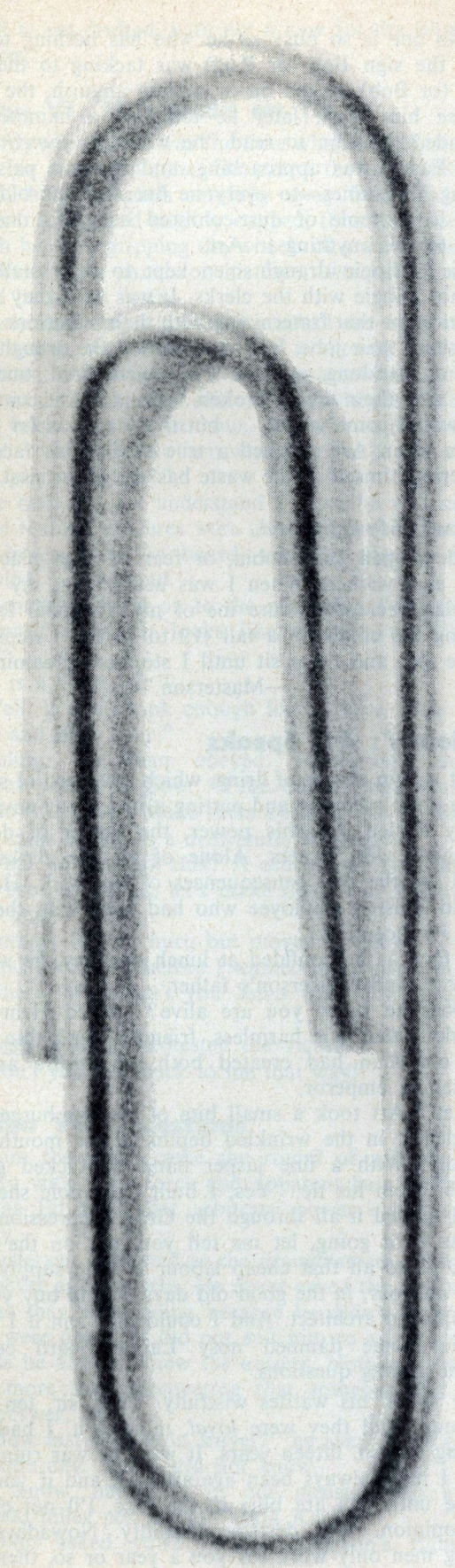
The old clerk with skin like parchment appeared once more and led Henry into a large room he'd never known existed, where a dozen draughtsmen hunched low over their boards. As he passed them, he saw that each man was working on an entirely different project.

The first draughtsman was drawing large circles and small circles, and dividing them into quadrants. Mandalas, wheels, gunsights? Henry wanted to ask him what he drew, but he seemed preoccupied.

The second was drawing a long, continuous curve on a roll of paper. He might have explained that this represented infinity, but Henry did not pause to hear.

The third drew a histogram showing apparently the sales or consumption of oxen and earthen jars. It seemed too self-evident to enquire about, but was it?

The fourth copied, from the cover of a book of matches, the picture of a girl, labelled DRAW ME, but he was copying it upside down and reversed. Intrigued, Henry asked him why, but the draughtsman was, alas, stone deaf.



The fifth copied stylized arrowheads, from a pattern book. Henry was too frightened to ask him what his intention was.

The sixth was beginning a schematic diagram called MOODY'S LATEST SERMONS. He asked Henry to get out of his light.

The seventh had outlined a set of regular polygons, and was now beginning to black them in. "If you like them," he said to Henry, "you might pay. Otherwise please move on and give another a chance to see them."

The eighth drew a bird's wing, "Detail 43B." Henry was struck speechless by the beauty of it.

The ninth drew a "valve" in "cross-section". "It means," he explained, "that 'My life has for several years been a theatre of calamity.' " Henry did not understand.

The tenth made, or had made, a map of possibly the human brain. But he was not at his drawing board, and Henry was able neither to decipher it alone or await his return.

The eleventh covered his drawing so that Henry could not see it. It was very likely either a blank sheet or a smeary example of the kind of erotic thing he had been dismissed from another job for sketching:

> Two breastlike hills are covered with little figures, archers, shooting crossbows at the sky, or rather at certain objects in the sky. These are dozens of large, vicious-looking sickle shapes, apparently descending to attack the archers or breasts. In the background is a walled city, possibly Nürnberg. It is filth like this that makes me, as a father, wish I could administer the death penalty instead of this five-year sentence.
>
> (from notes of District Judge Ruking.)

The twelfth and last draughtsman seemed only to be doing meaningless doodles. This man later left the Masterson Engineering Company and took a job elsewhere lettering placards. He committed suicide in his room by plunging a French knife (bought for the occasion) into his heart. Impaled on the blade near the hilt the police found a large placard serving as a suicide note. It read:

ACCIDENT

Section III: Lips whiter than teeth

Past them, at the front corner of the room, were familiar faces in a group. Eddie Futch was eating chocolate noisily. Bob and Rod were tacking up signs saying ACCURASY and SUPPORT IBM. Willard Bask was discussing slavery with Clark Markey. Harold Kelmscott, cowled in an old grey sweater, had turned his back on the others. Only Ed Warner looked up to greet Henry.

"About time," he said. "We thought you'd died down there."

Henry was reminded of the possibly violent death of Karl, which he had forgotten, though it had happened only a few minutes before. Should he report it? he wondered, and if so, to whom? Mr. Masterson was inaccessible in his office. The placard on the door, hand-

lettered by the last draughtsman, read "No Personal Conversations. This Means You."

Karl himself had been against making unnecessary trouble by reporting Ed's death. If Karl was dead, then, the sensible thing to do would be to say nothing. Henry had a great respect for the wishes of the dead.

He began to convince himself that the "shot" was a truck backfiring in the street, and the "gun" nothing but an electric shaver or electric toothbrush. Karl had always, when alive, enjoyed electrical cleanliness. *And to what end*? thought Henry C. Henry.

He had begun to rejoice in his own teeth, covered as they were with a thick, resinous deposit like the gum on old furniture. As he remarked to Willard, who was interested in anything like old furniture, "What if I went around brushing my teeth twice a day all my life, then got them knocked out of my head by some punk in some alley?"

"Hot damn!" said Willard. "I know just what you mean. Very same thing happened to me once, in 'Frisco. I sure was peeved, I'll tell the world. Makes a fella want to go back home and open an antique store. Fill it with good old solid traditional things. Whew! Fella'd give his left nut for a chance like that."

Willard wanted to get into a discussion of the draughting tables and the draughtsmen, some of whom were, or seemed to be, Negroes.

Ed Warner kept asking everyone if they knew why he was declared officially dead. No one knew or wanted to know, least of all Karl, when he showed up freshly shaved some days later. Though for some reason he and Ed were not speaking, Karl said loudly for Ed's benefit: "If he was declared officially dead, he wouldn't be here, and that's that. They don't make mistakes like that, right, Clark?"

"That's right." The little non-lawyer had grown a foot taller and vaguely hairy. "They have no right to hire a dead man all over again, when there are so many living unemployed."

Masterson was not being a pine cone about it. He hired men of all races and nationalities as draughtsmen, because they could be virtually enslaved, and he especially liked to hire Negroes and South American immigrants.

"They all carry big, mean-lookin' knives," Willard insisted.

"I can't believe that," said Clark. "They wouldn't be allowed to carry knives longer than three inches. It's illegal. Besides, I've never seen one of them with such a knife."

"You better pray you never do see one," Willard said. "They only get them out to use them. I know what I'm talkin' about, now. I could tell you about one street fight I had in Leningrad. Whewee! Them big bucks come at me with knives like. . . ."

To defend himself, Willard began to carry a switchblade.

Section IV: Disappearances

"No one is so busy as he who has nothing to do," read the sign Bob (or Rod) was tacking to the wall. Rod (or Bob) looked on in smiling anguish, the better to see him with; later he took up a hammer and amended the sign to read "he who has *something* to do". Easter was approaching, and the two pals were selling Valentines—to everyone but Art, the old clerk with his aureole of dust-coloured hair. No one ever tried to sell anything to Art.

The chthonic draughtsmen kept to their stalls and did not mingle with the clerks. It was as if they feared infection, or that fraternizing with their superiors would cost them their jobs. For some reason the draughtsmen did not last long anyhow. They were fired, one at a time, and their tables broken up and burnt, until the day would come when . . . but that day was far in the future when Art revealed a true side to his face, unlimbering himself of the waste baskets of the past.

MEMO: *My childhood.*

I developed acrophobia, or fear of high places, as soon as I walked. When I was nearly two, my father one day decided to cure me of my irrational fear by making me climb up a tall (12 to 14 foot) stepladder to the top, and there sit until I stopped screaming.

—Masterson

Section V: Art Speaks

Art was in charge of firing, which consisted of simply filling out a pink slip and putting it into a pay envelope. Henry envied Art this power, the power of dealing effectively with papers. Alone of all the clerks, Art could see the real consequences of his work. He was an old, trusted employee who had been with the firm since its inception.

In fact, as he confided at lunch one day, he was its inceptor, and Masterson's father.

"Does he know you are alive?" asked Henry, incredulous that this harmless, friendly, frail, thin, likeable old man had created both an empire and its frightening emperor.

"Yes." Art took a small bite of his hamburger and mangled it in the wrinkled depths of his mouth contentedly. With a fine jasper hand he flicked greasy crumbs from his tie. "Yes, I built the whole shebang, and I nursed it all through the Great Depression, too. It was hard going, let me tell you, but on the other hand, I had all that cheap labour in *long* supply. Ten cents an hour, in the good old days, would buy you an unemployed architect. And I could hit them if I liked, without some damned nosy Labor Board coming around asking questions."

He shook his wattles wistfully. "Yes, sir, ten cents an hour. And they were *loyal*, mind you. I had men staying on ten, fifteen years. It was the war ruined all that. I have always been against war, and if you talk at me until you are blue in the face, I'll not change my opinion. War destroys stability. Nowadays, the young men only work for you a year or so, then they

run off to get drafted, with not a care for the future of the firm."

Section VI: Masterson on Tour

Shortly after lunch was the time when Mr. Masterson made his afternoon tour. He paced the aisle, holding his fat, hairless hands carefully away from his sides, fingers together and slightly cupped, thumbs braced, as though he were gripping the wheels of a wheelchair. In the watery glass panels on his face, two pale creatures darted back and forth.

Masterson's finger suddenly stabbed the table of one draughtsman with a sound like a thrown knife. He screamed, "Arrowheads! I said no arrowheads! Take them out! I distinctly said no arrowheads! When I come back here in an hour, I don't want to see a single arrowhead! No arrowheads! Can't you understand plain English?"

The man did not understand a word he was saying, but he realized erasures were in order, and nodded. He bent lower over his board, and the electric eraser trembled in his hand.

Masterson passed on to the next man. "What's *that* number?" Stab. "It looks like a three, for Christ's sake."

"It is a three, sir."

"Well, it don't look enough like a three, then. Take it out and do it over."

Smiling, the man obeyed. Masterson's doughy features began to glow. "Take out *all* your numbers and do them over. Make them all look like threes."

He came at last to a deaf-mute, Hrothgar.

"What do you call this? A centreline? And this? If these are centrelines, let's make them look like centrelines, huh?"

Hrothgar looked hurt, but moved to obey.

"And I told you before I wanted more space in there and there. Why don't you *listen* when I'm talking to you?"

"Nggyah-ngg!" protested the victim.

"Don't you talk back to me that way!"

Section VII: Questions

From the office came the sound of a knife being thrown with great force and apparent hate. Perhaps it was as Ed said, that arbitrary power corrupts arbitrarily.

Masterson screamed at the draughtsmen continually, but never at the clerks. He never asked the clerks what it was they were doing because he didn't know what they were doing. It did not suit him to ask a question unless he already knew the answer. Nothing infuriated him more than discovering that someone else knew the answer, too.

"How fast does light travel?" he asked Henry casually one day. Henry did not know.

"I know, naturally. In our measurement system, 186,000 miles per second," said Karl.

"Who asked you?" said Masterson's right eye. Somewhere inside Karl another eye was closed forever by a foot squashing it; it spewed forth a grapey eyeseed.

The unpleasant marsupiality of Karl's eyes was worsened when he smiled. Little sharp shrew-teeth glittered at the ends of big dead-pale gums, and one knew his tongue would also be black. He looked like someone Henry had met before, somewhere, and Karl had changed. He was a spoiled bear, a bear gone finicky—yet how had he got those teeth?

Section VIII: More Questions

Masterson slapped Harold on the shoulder and asked if he could borrow ten till payday. "I'm a little short, heh heh." Assuming the boss was joking, Harold began to chuckle.

"No, I'm serious. Had a big weekend with a doll in Boston. I'm flat broke. You know how it is. I could always pay myself my own salary early, but I hate to screw up the book-keeping, see?" Reluctantly Harold saw. He loaned the ten.

"You'll never see that again," whispered Big Ed, his face a complete blank. Harold pretended to be unaware of the old man's existence.

Henry noticed how blank Ed was actually becoming, as if someone were slowly erasing him. He was not just blurry, like Clark (who was growing a great mouth-devouring beard), but less definitely there at all.

On the following payday when Art passed around the pay envelopes, Harold did not get his ten. He tried to catch the flickering eye of Masterson when he stalked through the room, but the boss pretended to be unaware of Harold's existence.

"In the good old days," Art said to Henry, "I never had to take crap from anybody. Good feeling, being your own boss.

"Why, I used to walk down that aisle and I never even looked at what was on their boards. I just stared real hard at the back of each draughtsman's neck, stared until he thought he was going to get hit. If he flinched, my rule was, I got to hit him twenty times on the arm. Hee hee, they nearly always flinched."

The two men sat in the warm diner speaking to one another through pale yellow clouds of steam from the french fryer: mists of the distant present. On the previous day, window cleaners had appeared at the office and wiped away the winter's grime. An hour after they had left, a dirty rain began.

"I notice everyone smokes around the office," Art said. "Not in my day. I never let anyone smoke, and I'd walk around the office all day puffing fifty-cent cigars and blowing the smoke at them. Drove 'em crazy, especially when I'd dump hot ashes on their drawings. Yes, sir, I ran a tight office in those days.

"If anyone ever sneaked off to the can for a smoke, I'd lock him in there for the rest of the day, then fire him. 'Enjoy your smoke,' I'd say as I turned the key. 'You got all day, bright boy.'

"Whee, one time a new kid ran in there for a smoke

at about nine in the morning. I locked him in till six. Hee hee, the rest of them didn't like that, I can tell you, working all day without a biff.

"Well, came six o'clock and I opened to let him out, and what do you think that young bastard had done? Hanged himself! Yep, he had that old chain right around his neck and he was stone cold, and the toilet running gallons and gallons. You should have seen my water bill that month."

His eyes crinkled with amusement. "Yes, sir, that's the only time anyone ever put anything over on old Art. Hee hee." He hugged his new coat around him gleefully, while some of his coffee dribbled off the point of his chin.

Section IX: The Theological Virtues

Division A: Faith

IT SOON became apparent to all that Harold was going to get the shitty end of the stick.

"Did you even ask him for the money?" asked Ed.

"Well—no. How can I? He'll think I don't trust him."

"Do you trust him?"

"Of course I do. Heck, he's the *boss*. Our lives are in his keeping, so to speak. Our names are in his book. He gives us each payday our wages. How can we turn against him? The pen is mightier than the sword."

"But if you trust him, what have you got to gripe about?"

Harold, descended of a flawed monk, pondered this point of faith. "It isn't the money, you understand. Heck, I don't care if I never see that ten again."

"What is it then?"

"It's just that I trust him, and now he's going to betray that trust. He's going to welsh on me."

"Maybe he just forgot," Karl purred, showing his little nasty teeth.

"Oh sure. He forgets, and I never see my money again. You can be sure *he* wouldn't forget it if *I* owed *him* ten dollars."

Clark made a diplomatic suggestion. "Look, just ask him if you can borrow ten from him. If he's forgotten about the loan, it'll remind him of it, and if he's planned on welshing, he'll be caught out ashamed. Besides, this way he'll know you need the money right away."

Division B: Hope

Harold accosted Mr. Masterson. "Sir, could I borrow ten from you till payday? Heh, heh, I'm a little short, at the moment."

The bulging figure turned slowly with the dignity of a wagon train, and faced him. For over a minute, Masterson subjected Harold to an intense stare of scorn and disbelief. Then he sighed and pulled out his billfold. Harold sighed, too.

"I wish you'd learn to live within your means, Kelmscott. I'm not a loan company. Now I'm going to loan you this, but it's the last time, understand?" The hinged glasses beetled over him.

"But I do live within my means, sir," Harold stammered. "It's not me who has weekends in Boston with a girl."

The pale eyes did not register anything. Masterston sighed again, heaving his big, flabby shoulders. "I'm not interested in nasty details of your personal life, Kelmscott. If you can't live on what I pay you, maybe you'd better look elsewhere for a job." With a snort of disgust, he peeled a ten from his thick bundle of large bills and slapped it on Harold's desk. Then he stalked off to his office to throw, presumably, knives.

Division C: Charity

Every time an object hit the wall, Willard jumped. "Oh God," he moaned. "I just know he's got some big, mean-lookin' knives in there."

From time to time, Willard got out his own knife and tested the action. It was never fast enough to suit him.

At lunch, Henry asked Art about the pink slips. Did he ever warn anyone they were about to be fired?

The old man stopped masticating. "Sir, watch your tongue. The job of firing is a sacred trust. My son, Mr. Masterson, has entrusted me with the care of and disbursement of those pink slips, and of the persons they represent. Do you think I could let him down? My own son?"

Drawing himself up, Art for the moment resembled a famous general, and his thin chest seemed even to fill out the folds of his new coat.

"Besides," he added with a wheeze. "I like to watch a man's face when he opens his envelope. Boy, he sees those streets, those employment offices, even soup lines, hee hee hee. . . ." His laughter turned to a fit of dry coughing.

Section X: A High Office

That afternoon, Mr. Masterson called Henry into his office. None of the clerks but Art had ever been there before, and Art had forgotten what it was like. Rod and Bob looked envious of Henry, but Karl smirkingly assumed he was being *given the axe*.

"If you want my opinion," he said, "I think you're going to be quietly *axed* to leave. Ha!"

Willard drew him aside and said, "Play it cool, boy. If he pulls a knife, just you give me a holler."

Henry pushed open the door with the placard and entered a plain, drab room. On one wall was a peculiar dart board, and on the floor beneath it a huge pile of darts with plastic fins. Near the opposite wall was a long desk behind which was visible the upper half of Mr. Masterson. In his hands was a dart with green plastic fins. Nothing else in the room was describable.

The boss half-rose, turned and hurled the dart; it hit a spot near the baseboard with a sound like a thrown knife, hung for an instant, then fell to the heap.

"So it goes," sighed Masterson, or maybe, "How would you like a raise?"

"Fine, sir."

"Here's the set-up. We may have a new contract or

two. Already we have a new contact or two. It's the big chance. All the candy companies on the coast are changing over to dynamometers. They'll need a lot of records and stuff switched over, too, and that's where we come in. If we can handle the changeover for one company, we can do good. Then all the other companies will want us to do good for them, too. Get it? Then later on, when the armed forces change from telephones to radios, we'll be set, see?

"But we'll need some extra help, and I'll need your help. You could be my right hand, and it'll mean a lot of extra money for the company, o.k.?"

Section XI: The Mysterious Motto

Henry remembered his motto, the words spoken to him by the boss the day he'd hired him. As they had occurred to him, Henry had added interpretations, until now the sheet was covered; but which had the boss actually said?

If you work good, we'll do good by you.
If few work good, we'll do good by you.
If you were good, we'll do good by you.
If few were good, we'll do good by you.
If you work good weal, do good by you.
If few work good weal, do good by you.
If you were good weal, do good by you.
If few were good weal, do good by you.

In addition to these, there were the 24 combinations possible by replacing "good by you" by "good buy you", "goodbye, you", and finally "good bayou". Though it was unlikely that he said "If few were good weal, do good bayou," that possibility could not be overlooked, Henry thought as he shook hands and prepared to leave.

"One thing, though," said Masterson, counting that thing on his forefinger. "Of course you'll make a lot of dough eventually, after our contacts become contracts, but you'll have to take a little pay cut for now, o.k.?"

They shook hands once more, and Henry started to leave. The boss held up two fingers. "Secondly, now that you're a boss, you'll have to do a little informing on your pals. Remember, a boss has no real pals, and the great are always lonely.

"So I want you to tell me who hates me and who likes me. Let me know everything they say about me, understand?" He brought out another dart and threw it at the strange dart board.

"When the time comes—" the dart stuck weakly in the edge of the board and drooped. "You'll get your reward." The dart fell quietly to the floor.

"Especially I want to know what my father says about me. You eat with him, don't you?"

"How did you know?"

Masterson wagged his fat forefinger. "I have my spies, I have my spies," he said archly. "But tell me, does he talk about me a lot?"

"No."

"Don't you lie to me! I know he talks about me all the time. All right, get out of here, then, and forget about that swell job."

Henry waited for a pink slip, but it never came. Indeed, he seemed to receive the promotion after all, for he took a pay cut.

Section XII: A Hazard of New Fortunes

All that week they worked on the bid. Masterson never left the aisle, but stamped, screamed, pounded on tables, and chewed to pieces dozens of dart-fins. He directed his father to hand out pink slips to anyone who got in his way, or to anyone who sneaked around behind him.

MEMO: *Is there life on other planets*?

This question is of the utmost importance to all of us, whether or not we are actually located in the aerospace industries, for it is a restatement of another, all-inclusive question: *Are we alone in the universe*? And if not, *who else is there*? These questions pose problems as yet unanswered; we can only wonder and hope and pray. But whether or not we ever find life on other planets, I feel confident that each and every one of us will want to give this question our full and careful consideration.

—Masterson

The first real crisis was paper. Masterson decided that ordinary tracing vellum was too expensive, and substituted newsprint. This rough, absorbent stuff made spiderwebs of ink lines and spiders of lettering. Masterson began to scream at the draughtsmen, sometimes with eloquence, sometimes wordlessly.

"Why can't you make neat, black lines and letters?" he demanded, and held up a newspaper. Pointing to a story about Hurricane Patty Sue, he said: "Take a look at this. *They* don't have any trouble making neat lines and letters. Just look at this neat work."

They tried again, again complaining of the paper, until Masterson, with a martyred smile, said, "All right, all right. I'll get you some fancy, expensive paper. But *then*—"

He left, and returned an hour later with what appeared to be a roll of wide, slick toilet paper. Along one border ran the tiny green words: "Deutsches Bundesbahn".

In Austria, a fat Mercedes-Benz rolled on fat tyres into a filling station. The attendant saluted and began to fill the tank, while from behind the wheel a fat man rolled out, hitched up his belt and moved towards the toilet like a file of elephants going to the river. The sunlight gleamed on him, on his damp hair and his white shirt of miracle fibres. In one pocket of it was a leather liner containing a matching ballpoint pen and mechanical pencil and a steel scale, marked off both in centimetres and inches. In the other pocket was package of Roth Handel cigarettes and a roll of hard candy liqueurs. The man stood a moment in the sun,

gazing at four brown cows in the field nearby; in this town lived the engineer who designed the ovens at Dachau; the traveller thought of all this and then went in to shit. He, too, was an engineer. Once he had written to an American magazine, asking for the names of engineering firms, of the particular type which included the Masterson Engineering Company. Due to an oversight, however, the engineer did not receive that name.

The draughtsmen tried again and again, but still their work did not satisfy Masterson. Finally, the eyes swelling behind his huge lenses, he screamed, "Stop! I want you to stop. Erase everything. I want you to erase everything."

For an hour, the only sound was the hum of electric erasers. One or two people erased holes in the fragile paper; they were given pink slips at once. Finally Masterson collected the twenty blank sheets, touched them up with an artgum eraser, wrapped them carefully and sent them out.

"We've got the contract sewed up," he joyfully confided to the clerks. "No one else could turn out work as neat as that, ever. Not one single mistake!"

Yet the next day, even while Rod and Bob were collecting money to buy flowers for the departed package, it came back. His thick hands fumbled at the bale of tattered tissue; Masterson read the accompanying letter aloud, and sobs hung quivering from his voice like drops of water from a tap.

"Dear Sirs:

Re yours of the thirteenth inst., we have no specific need for railroad station toilet tissue at present.

Thank you for keeping us in mind."

Section XIII: All's Well in the End

Masterson removed his glasses and began cleaning them on a scrap of the tissue. He turned his back modestly so that no one could glimpse his naked eyes. As he settled the frames once more on his cheeks, he cleared his throat with an oddly familiar sound. Henry leaned over and asked Ed, "Will you tell me why you were declared officially dead?"

Ed pretended not to hear, and gazed steadily at the boss, who moved now on ponderous tiptoes to Art's desk. "Give yourself a pink slip," he sighed, and ran away to his office. The little old man nodded eagerly and began filling out a pink slip at once.

The next day was payday, and all watched Art closely as he passed out the envelopes. Smirking as usual, he sat down to open his own. The money he'd sealed into it and the pink slip he'd signed slid out together, and Art's face seemed to fold in thirds, like a business letter.

Clark Markey, always the barometer of another's mood, began to weep for him. Art himself merely sat there, staring at the slip lying flat on his desk.

"Noo," he said in a small voice. "They can't do this to me. Not to old Art." He said it like a speech of condolence.

"It isn't fair," said Clark with feeling. "They can't make a man fire himself."

Art walked slowly to the office, pounded on the placard, waited. The sound of darts within ceased.

"Let me in," he cried. "You've got to talk to me, Mr. Masterson."

"Go away, Dad," said a muffled voice. Art trudged to the coat rack, slipped on his old, worn coat, and left.

A moment or two later, the dart game resumed.

PART THREE: THE DISMANTLING

MEMO: *My childhood.*

My father was a large cheque drawn on First National City Bank, and my mother was very tired.

—Masterson

Section I: Improvements

Things were looking up. Business seemed much improved, for everyone took enormous pay cuts. Karl was promoted to Art's old job. In addition to precision stapling, he now made out pink slips and took charge of office supplies. He began to detect and eliminate sources of waste.

Bob and Rod were promoted to informers. They blamed Masterson's father for everything, so their pay was not cut.

Clark Markey had begun to study law. Too many questions of justice now tormented him. How could a dead man be rehired? How could a man be forced to fire himself? At lunch hour he sat hunched over a large volume of labour laws, dropping crumbs (larger than whole words of the fine print) from his cream cheese sandwich. He was not a lawyer, and many of the long paragraphs were unintelligible to him. He began to suspect that in these lay the very answers he was seeking.

Masterson began looking fresh and fit. His death-colour skin took on a pink tinge, as if he daily gorged on blood. He bulged less, and began to walk around the office on new ripple-soled shoes, smacking his fist in his palm and saying, "Now that the dead wood is cleared away, we can really *move*." He made a progress chart.

Karl moved to eliminate the shocking waste of forms around the office. "Look," he explained to the group. "We always have old, used forms around. Why don't we just eradicate the ink from them and re-use them?"

Section II: A Fast

After Christmas, Harold Kelmscott began a fast. It was, he said, in protest of his not being repaid the ten dollars the boss had borrowed; it was a form of sitting in dharna. Karl, who handled the pay envelopes, knew better. Masterson had garnisheed all of Harold's wages against the twenty he claimed Harold owed him.

"You can have your pay," Karl explained, "when

the boss gets his twenty back."

"Twenty! But I only borrowed ten, and that he had already borrowed from me."

"If he borrowed it from you, how come you had to borrow it back? Come on, Harold, don't be a welsher. You're too nice a guy. Pay him his twenty, will you?"

"How can I, as long as I'm not getting paid myself? This is worse than debtor's prison, isn't it, Clark?" Harold looked to the non-lawyer for sympathy.

"What? Who knows? I'd have to check with English Civil Law," said Clark testily, not looking up from his perusal of the New York Code.

Karl wagged his close-cropped head. "Harold, you're a case, the worst I've ever seen. You know very well the boss isn't trying to cheat you. In fact, I begged him—I *begged* him to fire you and haul you into court. God knows you deserve it.

"But no, he said he wouldn't even stop the money out of your wages. He said if you didn't want to pay him, that was between you and your conscience. 'I'm worried about Harold,' he said to me. 'I think I'll just garnishee his wages until he pays me back.'

"You see, he knows you've got this shack-job in Boston, and he figures it ain't doing your character any good. But by the time you get squared away on your debt, she'll have forgotten all about you. Not only that, but you'll get all your pay at once, a real pile."

"I'm starving," Harold announced humbly. "To death."

Karl continued counting paper clips. "You're a real case," he muttered.

Section III: Further Progress

Having devised a method for rebending and re-using old paper clips, Karl saw a further short cut. Rather than eradicate the ink from old forms, he encouraged the others to use disappearing ink in the first place.

Willard kept his knife in his hand at all times, now, and feared everyone who moved suddenly or talked loudly. He took up whittling, to give himself an excuse for holding a knife. One day Masterson, jogging by, asked him if he could make a table, since he was so clever with his hands.

One week later, Willard presented him with a perfect matchbox-size Louis Quinze table, painted and gilded. Lifting it from his calloused palm, Willard set it carefully in the centre of the boss's desk.

"Idiot!" Masterson screamed, and brought his fist down on it. "I meant a *real* table. A table of our progress."

"Wait," said Karl. "If he can do this, Willard here can make big tables for all the clerks. Then we could sell off all the desks."

Masterson had taken down and discarded the dart board, and now his walls were covered with charts. He and Karl planned many new charts and tables, and Harold executed them.

There was a chart of business volume compared to paper-clip expenditure, one of volume of work versus man-hours, one of level of water in the water cooler versus work output and one of Mr. Masterson's weight versus the strength of his grip. They were inversely proportional, so that, had his weight been zero, his grip would have been a thousand pounds.

Three times a day he lifted weights in his office, rising on the toes and exploding breath through clenched teeth. At lunch hour, he ran three laps around the block, showered and gulped quantities of natural foods. Most mornings he came in with skinned knuckles and stories of brawls that frightened Willard. Masterson was no longer a shapeless bulgy man of indeterminate age, but a handsome, powerful man of about twenty-five.

"He's getting in shape to die," Ed "opined."

Masterson had Harold post charts of his progress. There were graphs of his biceps and triceps, and a phrenological chart of his head. The boss began to talk about what great shape the company was in, squeezing grip developers as he talked.

"As soon as we trim off a little fat here and there, as soon as we fire the draughtsmen, we'll be in great shape." He fired the draughtsmen next day, *en masse*, owing them three weeks' wages, and Henry complained to Clark about it.

Clark was getting jowly and near-sighted from cream cheese and law, and his temper was noticeably shorter. "What am I supposed to do?" he said. "*Caveat emptor*. Why come to me with your problems? All I want is to be left alone with Law."

Henry scooped up some dirty, tattered forms from the floor and began filling them out, in invisible ink. For several weeks, no work had left the office. Messengers who called to pick up work were sent out to get more natural foods for Mr. Masterson. Karl sent them on errands for invisible carbon paper, or to sell the desks that were slowly being replaced by Willard's tables.

Great bales of papers piled up, collecting dust. They grew greasy and black from handling, and Henry grew greasy and black from handling them. He washed and brushed his teeth often, but one cannot hold in the heart what is not bred in the bone: he stank.

Bob and Rod organised a clean-up campaign. They collected all the dirty forms in the office and laundered them. Karl was so pleased with their efforts that he even permitted them to sew patches on worn-out forms, though common practice did not permit this. Even so, after the windows came out, they could not keep up with the dirt.

No one but Henry and Ed and Eddie were working full-time on clerical duties. Clark was reading law full-time now, and Masterson had come to approve this. "You never can tell when you'll need a good mouthpiece," he said, and began calling Clark "the mouthpiece". The mouthpiece never spoke to anyone.

Harold was making charts of the company and of Mr. Masterson full time. They overflowed the walls of

his office and began to cover the corridor.

There was a chart showing the chain of command and another showing the flow of work. There was a chart showing weight of forms handled per clerk per day; a chart showing all the muscles of Mr. Masterson's body (with the Latin labels lettered by Harold in half-uncials); a chart of company work-output vs. world population, and a fishing map of Northern Minnesota, which Mr. Masterson planned to visit some day. There was a graph showing the monthly number of accidents, fatal, and accidents, non-fatal, per clerk.

Karl's job included researching the data for all of these. He counted paper clips, measured the level of water in the cooler, taped Mr. Masterson's biceps, weighed forms, and estimated the world population. His estimates, Harold chuckled, were not conservative enough.

But Masterson pointed out how efficient Karl was. Who else would have realized the wasteful duplication in using both pink and blue copies of the same form? Karl had purchased a new single form printed on litmus paper, which was either blue or pink, depending on the weather. Ed seemed to grow a beard, which had the appearance of frightening Masterson. Clark wore rimless glasses.

The janitor service was cut off because the rent had not been paid. Karl had estimated the company could survive one year without it, saving several thousand dollars.

On the stage of a nearby theatre, two girls, one dressed as a man, were singing a song about making little gifts. One of the girls was sincere, but it was never clear which. Bob and Rod explained to the boss his father had sabotaged the janitor service.

"He sees what a good thing the company is getting to be," one of them said. "He wants to muscle in on you."

"Well, I'm ready for him," said Masterson. "Let him try something." Grinning, he flexed his forearm and watched the sinew lumps move in it as characters move about on a stage. Rod and Bob, or as they preferred being called, Dob and Rob, began doing janitor work around the office. They refused service to anyone who would not contribute to their list of charities: CORE, CARE, KKK, CCC, the Better Business Bureau, AAA and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company. Only Harold did not give.

They cornered him one day. "What's the matter? Don't you care that millions of Asians are starving while you sit here well-fed and complacent?" Harold did not deign to reply, or perhaps had not the strength. His skeletal face showed odd emotions, but he did not look up from his chart. Steadying a hunger-quaking hand, he went on with his beautiful, flowing uncials.

Living on the scraps of other clerks' lunches, and on the crumbs of cream cheese in Clark's law books, Harold was under a hundred pounds. He gulped water from the cooler, until Karl stopped him, saying that it ruined the line on the water-consumption estimates.

Once Harold fainted, and Mr. Masterson revived him with a little natural soya meal. Harold gulped it down until Karl, alarmed at the way the expensive stuff was disappearing, grabbed the canister away. "Easy does it, now," he said. "Not good to take too much at once."

Willard made tables to replace all desks, but more tables were required. The volume of business, as Karl explained it, was steadily increasing. Consulting a table of Willard's table-making progress, he was not satisfied. "Why don't you make tables out of the doors? It might be faster."

"Or make coffins," whispered Ed.

Willard converted all the doors into tables. When still more were needed, he unputtied window-panes and began using them for table-tops. The windows were grimy, and nearly everyone appreciated the increase in light.

Clark's sight was failing. Eddie Futch now read Law to him. Clark's sedentary life had made him gouty, and he began to walk about with a stick. From time to time, he would take a turn about the room, flicking with his stick at the dead forms that lay everywhere like leaves, like history. He would mutter legal phrases to himself through gritted teeth.

It was spring again, and a chill, dirty wind whipped through the office, whirling drawings and forms in a constant flux. To keep some of them in place, Henry borrowed weights from Mr. Masterson's office.

The boss was rarely there these days. He worked out at a gym most of the week, and only bounced in occasionally to assure them that the company was recouping its losses at a truly fantastic rate. The litter of dirty forms was now ankle deep.

MEMO: *Dreams*

I dreamed of finding pieces of hate.

I dreamed an obscure dream: part of it was talking with a psychiatrist who looked something like Hemingway and something like Jung, and showing him my written-down dreams. It seems that I had never remembered the important parts. I forget the rest.

I dreamed of loving the princess of the glass house, Geopatra, full of mirrors and swimming pools.

—Masterson

No one talked, except Eddie Futch, droning periods of Law. Whenever the youngster stumbled, Clark caned him across the back, screaming epithets. Once the non-lawyer grew so excited that he had to take a turn around the room, limping and muttering, ". . . ergo sum . . . ignoratio elenchi . . . petitio principii . . . non compos mentis . . . mons veneris . . ."

"Ed" nudged Henry, pointed to the ponderous figure and laughed. "They're fattening him up for the kill," he said.

"Who is?" Henry's ass felt a chill.

"Who knows? Maybe no one. Maybe 'they' is just a

figure of speech . . . but then maybe, you know, maybe *we're* just figures of speech, eh?"

MEMO: *Park conditions today*

Thick pink balloons were drifting over the park from some unknown source. They reminded the boy and the girl of giant drops of rosy sperm. Flowers seemed to be exploding at their feet as the boy took out his gold-filled ballpoint pen and wrote, in an unpretentious, sturdy, masculine hand, a love poem.

The poem spoke of fire-trucks and other excitements, of televisable passions, of a love nest made of food, wherein they settle:

No car honks madly;
The mayor gives the death penalty for honking tonight;
And cars have nightingales in place of horns.

The girl placed a drop of perfume on the pulse of her throat, and began to curve the soft inner part of her arm about the boy's writing hand. Inside every pink balloon was a hundred-dollar bill. A passing policeman thrust his nightstick at the polka-dot sky and laughed out of pure joy. The flowers made a noise like distant target practice. The boy leaped and the girl laughed. The policeman's gun belt shook with laughter, while overhead the opalescences bumped one another silently.

—Masterson

"You want to know why I was declared officially dead?" Ed asked. Henry shook his head and pointed to a sign affixed to his table: "No Personal Conversations. This Means You."

"I was declared officially dead because Karl put four staples in my death certificate." The water was cut off. Henry seized Ed by the throat and tried to strangle him, as one might strangle an empty faucet, not to choke it off, but to make it flow again.

"Art's cut off the water, now," Rob and Dob reported to Art's son.

"Oh, trying to starve us out, is he?" His heavy handsome jaw took a stern set. "We'll just see about that."

Harold showed him his latest, indeed his last effort, a chart of the basic natural foods and their constituents, arranged in a segmented circle. Heavy with gold-and-red illumination, the chart was called: "THE WHEEL OF LIFE".

"Very nice indeed, Harold," said the boss, reaching for it. A ripple of muscle was visible through his specially-tailored suit. "But you seem to be losing weight. Why is that? Dieting to improve the strength of your grip? I tried that, and it worked wonders."

"By the way, I hate to ask you for it, Harold, but when are you going to pay me that twenty you owe me? I really need it—got a big week-end in Boston coming up. You know what I mean." He winked, and winked again at Clark.

"Well, now, mouthpiece, say something legal," boomed the boss. A voice croaked from the tangled depths of Clark's beard. Holding his cane to the sky, he said, *"Mens sana in—"* he belched painfully, *"—in corpore sano."*

"Fine, fine," said Masterson, not hearing him. His powerful calves waded through the knee-deep debris effortlessly and carried him to his office.

MEMO: *On Communication*

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—Jqw534w9h

From the office came the clink and chunk of weights, and breath hissing through clenched teeth. Suddenly, as he lettered the words "The Form Divine", Harold collapsed. Henry reached him first and held up his head. Harold cast a rueful look on his unfinished work, murmured, "I go . . . I go to the Death Registration Office," and died.

"Now where," said Karl, "did I put that fatal accidents chart?"

There came a deep reverberation, not Masterson. He came bounding from his office in sweatpants, his chest gleaming with perspiration. "What the hell is going on?" he demanded. "Is someone else lifting weights around here? He's fucking up my timing."

The crew made its way down the stairs after him, to see the other weightlifter. Eddie led Clark down last, a step at a time. Naturally Ed and Harold remained behind.

The offices all the way down were empty. When they reached the sidewalk, the clerks found a derrick smashing at their building with a steel ball.

Masterson walked over to have a word with the foreman, who held up the destruction for the moment.

"We're tearing it down."

"Why?"

"Abandoned."

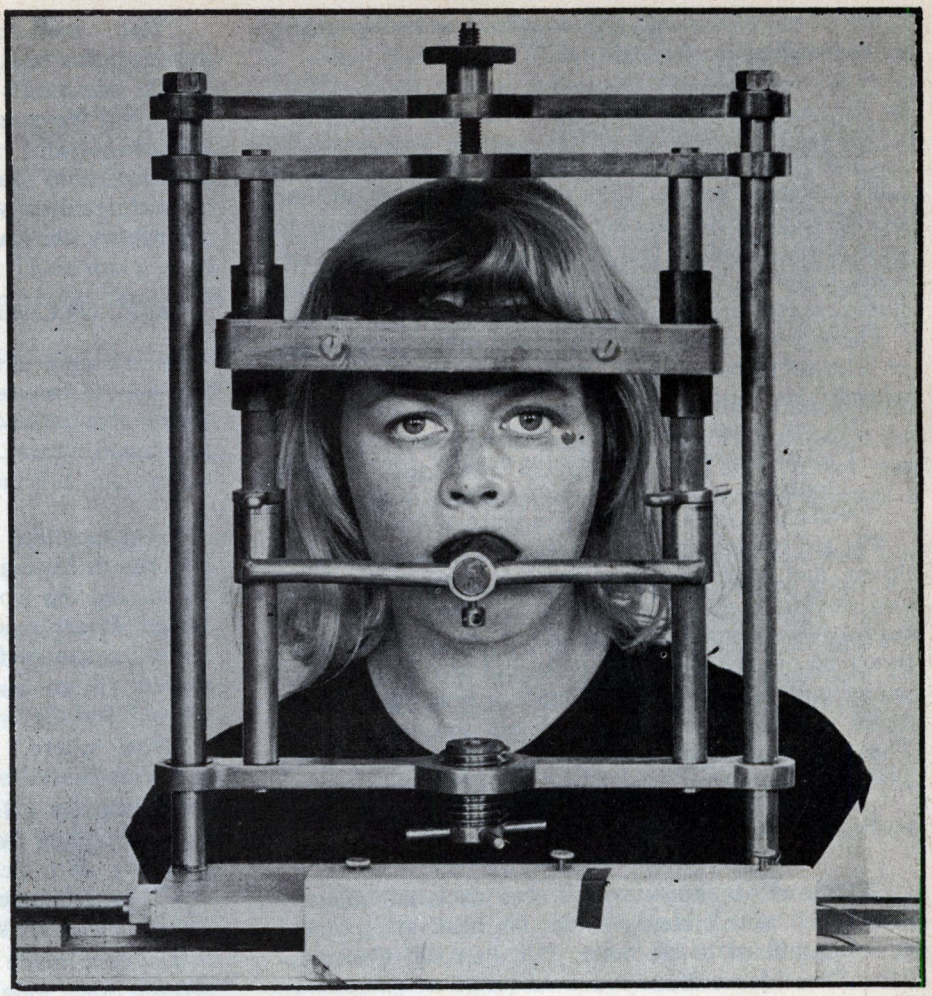
". . . some mistake, or . . ."

"But nobody works there."

Masterson said something else as the foreman gave a signal and the derrick engine roared. The tall tower turned awkwardly, like a hand puppet, setting the ball into motion.

The man shook his pink helmet. "I don't know nothing about no father," he shouted. "All I know is, we got *work* to do." He signalled the derrick operator, who swung the moving ball far back, then towards the wall.

Mr. Masterson ran headlong towards it, springing with the grace of a dancer on his ripple soles. For a moment, it looked as if the steel ball would bounce harmlessly off his great chest.



AT THE TOP of our bodies, cased in a nut of bone, suspended in a warm bath of nutritive fluid and looking something like a compressed pickled cauliflower, lies the brain. It serves two signal, and in some ways dissimilar, functions—to control the multiple subsystems within the body, and to serve as the source of learning, memory, perception, consciousness, and thus of personality. In the course of 500 million years or so the brain has developed in size and complexity, becoming more and more ambitious, opening windows and doors in the skull and investing in fantastically efficient devices for registering events at considerable distances from base. (There is nothing *purposive* about all this, of course; the development of the brain, and any other complex living systems for that matter, is the result only of the smashing onslaught of the Universe on its own contents. *Any* Universe that contained atoms of more than one kind in substantial numbers, would at some stage in its history have a few brains around here and there.) It is the distance receptors which detect radiation which we know as visible light that we shall deal with in this article, for it is in the exploration of the mechanisms of vision that some really interesting developments have taken place. Until quite recently disappointingly little was known about the basic perceptual process (the brain's interpretation of the sensory material fed in through the eyes), though the microstructure of the eye was surprisingly well understood. Much of this article will be very personal, for I shall be talking often about my own work and am going to allow some latitude for speculation. I will, however, try to give a picture of a broad piece of scientific or psychological research *actually in the making,* and apologise for its incompleteness in advance.

FIRST LET'S START with one or two facts of the "Ain't science marvellous?" variety. Number one is that the eye, as a receiver of light in its own selective wavelengths, is about as good as it could possibly be. A single cone, the basic unit of light detection, is so sensitive that it will respond to the impact of one single photon—the basic unit of light. You can't have half a photon, so in this way the cone is the perfect detector. The amount of energy required to produce a response in one cone is 2 x 10 to the minus 10 ergs — a

A NEW LOOK AT VISION

DR. CHRISTOPHER EVANS

ludicrously small amount which can be understood if we say that the energy required to raise a pea *one inch* would, if translated into photopic energy, be enough to give a single sensation of light to *every person who has ever lived on earth.* Ain't science marvellous? Having said this we now complicate matters by remarking that in certain respects the eye appears to be doing even better than its physical equipment allows. The difficulty is that retinal receptors, in common with all neurones in the body, can transmit one kind of signal only—i.e. either they fire, or they don't fire. Degrees of intensity in sensory input are conveyed by greater or lesser numbers of neurones firing together. It is also a fact that the eye can detect the difference between very fine lines of different thicknesses (kite strings at 400 feet, etc.) even though their angle when projected on the retina is considerably less than that of the smallest single receptor. Fig. 1 will help to state this paradox.

In 1942, with one of those splendid bursts of insight which distinguishes the outstanding scientist from the average, two Americans, W. K. Marshall and S. K. Talbot, suggested a way out. If (they postulated) the eye were equipped with an ultra-fine, ultra-rapid tremor this would serve to *scan* the image of whatever was being looked at across a large number of cells. Fig. 2 should help to make this clear. This scanning tremor was, of course, just hypothetical, for it would need to be too small and too rapid to be detected by simply gazing into someone's eyes. About 10 years later, however, someone had the bright idea of using contact lenses to allow accurate motion pictures to be made of the eye's movements. At that time contact lenses were being tried out gingerly by the very brave or the very vain, and far from being the sexy little things we know today, they were bulky domes of glass which had to be tucked under the eyelids. The principle was neat—a mirror was worked into the outer surface of the lens, a spot of light bounced off the mirror and a movie made of the spot's excursions. Needless to say, to the delight of Dr. M. and Dr. T., their hypothesised tremor was discovered, and it looked very much as if this was the basis of fine patterned vision. Of course, as some characters argued, the tremor was not under voluntary control, and *could* be just "noise" or vibration in the system. This could be settled best by stop-

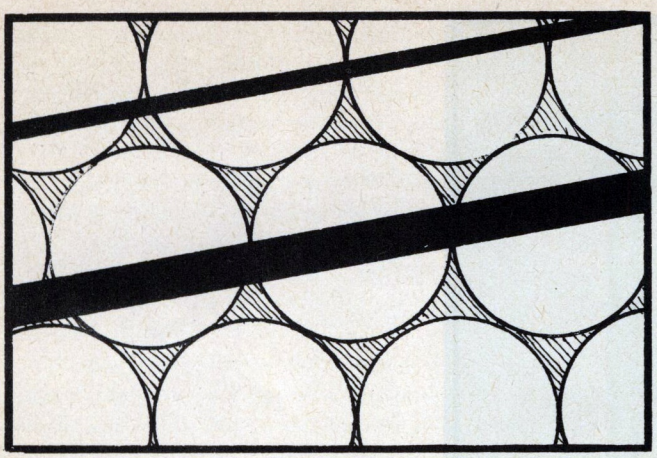


Figure 1

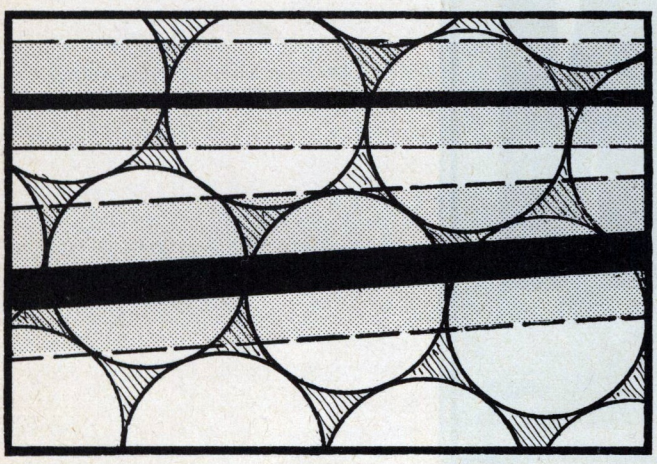


Figure 2

ping the tremor in some way, and seeing whether vision was thereby affected.

NOW, STOPPING THE body's automatic devices, whether large or small, is generally very difficult. They tend to pound on regardless. There are some good paralysing drugs around, of course; the notorious South American poison, *curare*, for example, which the locals use to stop their enemies in mid-leap. Curare would kill eye movements all right, but unfortunately it stops other muscles as well, and the dedicated trio of American psychiatrists who tried it out had to be on artificial respiration for the period of the experiment, which rather cramped their style. In addition, something they had rather stupidly forgotten was that their vocal chords were also paralysed, so that they could only grunt when asked to describe the visual phenomena which accompanied the paralysed eye muscles. Clearly this was not the best of experimental set-ups, and attention shifted from drugs to other methods of

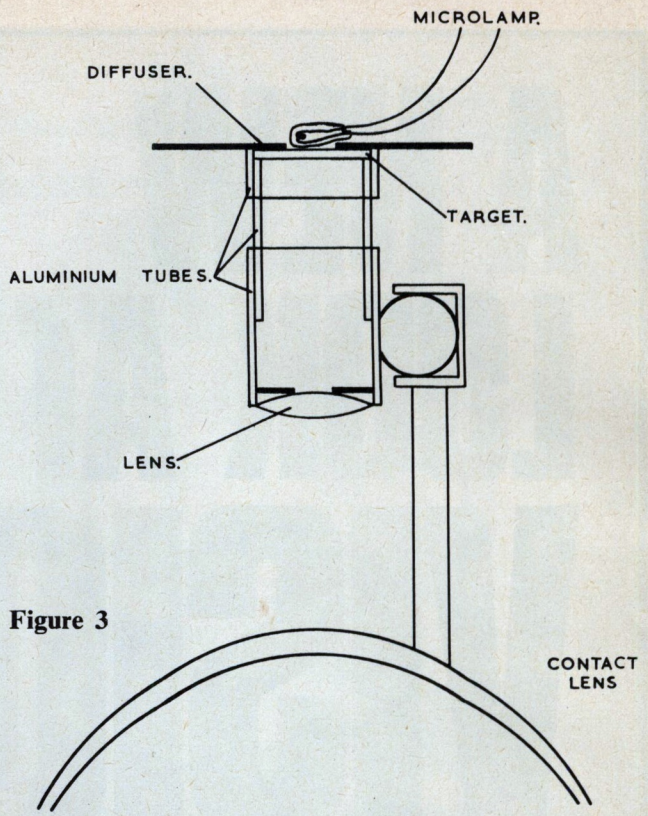


Figure 3

tackling the problem. The breakthrough was achieved by the British physicist R. W. Ditchburn, who realised that it was not necessary actually to stop the eyes, but merely to *hold the image in one position on the retina* so that the effect of eye movements was negated. Fig. 3 shows how he did it.

NORMALLY WHEN THE eye moves, the image of whatever is being looked at shifts to and fro on the retinal cells at the back of the eye. Even when the eyes are held as still as is humanly possible, the fine tremor still operates, causing the image to oscillate on the retina. Ditchburn's idea was to mount a stalk on to the front of a contact lens, and then fix something on to the end of the stalk. Now, as the eye moves, so the contact lens moves with it, so the stalk and target move too, and the image remains in one position on the retina. It is exactly as if one was unable to look away from something, because no matter what one did with one's eyes, the object precisely mimicked their movements.

Well, having built these weird devices, the pioneers stuck them in their eyes and looked to see what happened. Being men who by their nature were hoping for unusual things to happen, they were delighted with the results. Firstly, the picture or patterns looked at in this system gradually began to fade and finally vanished from view! In other words, eye movements (or shifts of the image across the retina) were *essential to vision*. This, perhaps, did not surprise them too unduly, for to check this fact had been the whole point of the exercise, but what did come with a bit of a jolt

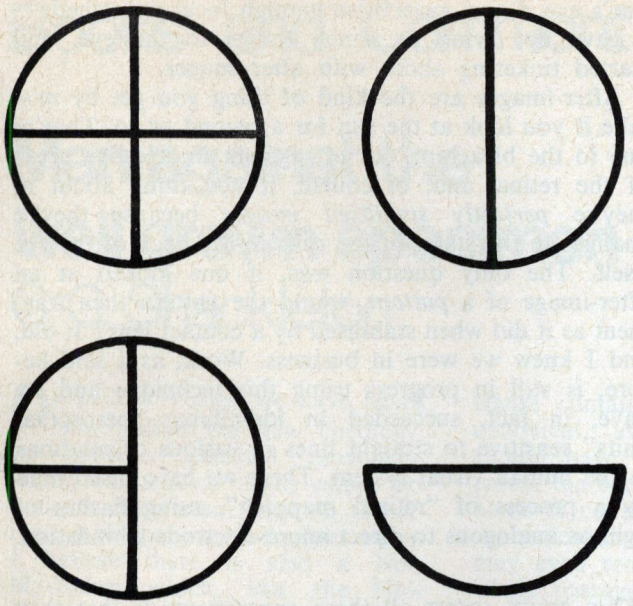


Figure 4: some samples of test patterns

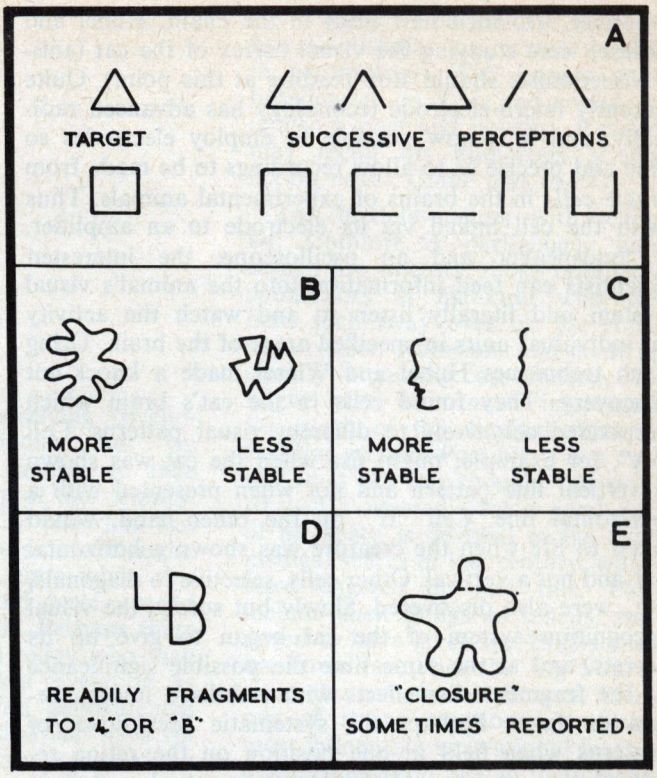


Figure 5: Examples of image fragmentation

was the really queer nature of the disappearance when it did take place. Complex patterns, such as the circle with the inscribed cross at the top left of Fig. 4, disintegrated *in part*, the fragmentations consisting generally of neat "structured" segments of the original pattern. Furthermore, once a segment had gone, it had seldom gone for good; often it would reappear, perhaps in company with some other part, perhaps on its own. In fact, the total visual effect was remarkable, patterns shifting and changing steadily, a kind of cerebral kaleidoscope with a rather limited number of permutations. Researchers all over the world took up the topic with enthusiasm, using a number of different patterns and shapes. Some of the odd results achieved by a group in Montreal are depicted in Fig. 5. Psychologists and physiologists interested in vision went into a restrained tizzy. It looked as if in this "stabilised image" condition, perception was breaking down according to a set of rules—rules which if properly defined ought to tell one something about the basic mechanism of normal vision.

THAT PERCEPTION OF pattern, colour and form was based on some rigid rules either acquired or perhaps "built-in" to the brain had been obvious for quite some time. Their identification, however, was quite another matter. Had the studies of fragmentation with stabilised vision come entirely on their own it is possible that their theoretical significance might have been less easily noticed. Some interesting and quite revolutionary experiments being performed at Harvard by the physiologists David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel,

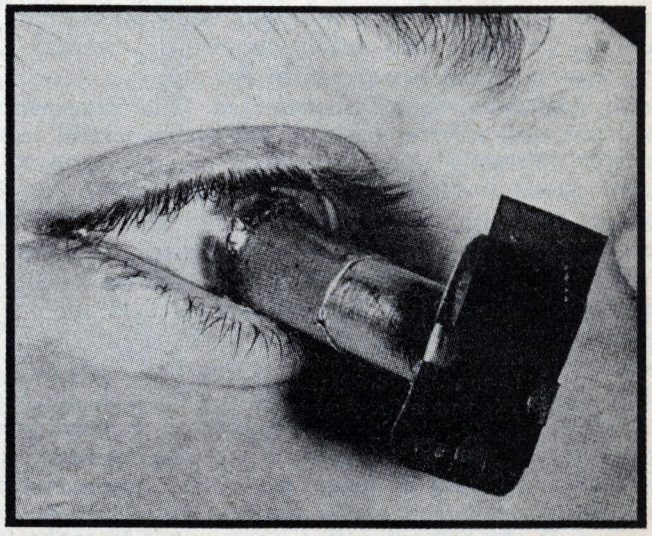


Figure 6

however, provided new links in the chain. Hubel and Wiesel were studying the visual cortex of the cat (anti-vivisectionists should stop reading at this point). Quite recently micro-electrode technology has advanced radically, and it is now possible to employ electrodes so fine and precise as to allow recordings to be made from *single cells* in the brains of experimental animals. Thus with the cell linked via its electrode to an amplifier, a loudspeaker and an oscilloscope, the interested scientists can feed information into the animal's visual system and literally listen to and watch the activity of individual units in specified areas of the brain. Using such techniques Hubel and Wiesel made a knock-out discovery. They found cells in the cat's brain which responded selectively to different visual patterns. Cell "A", for example, might fire when the cat was shown a vertical line pattern and not when presented with a horizontal line. Cell "B", on the other hand, would burst to life when the creature was shown a horizontal bar and not a vertical. Other cells, selective to diagonals, etc., were also discovered. Slowly but surely, the visual recognition system of the cat began to give up its secrets, and at the same time the possible significance of the fragmentation effects with stabilised images began to dawn. Perhaps the systematic breakdown of patterns when held in one position on the retina revealed the presence of similar "perceptual units" in the human visual cortex?

UNFORTUNATELY, RAPID progress in this exciting area of research was handicapped by the sheer difficulty of experimenting with humans. Nobody but anti-vivisectionists, for example, thinks it proper to stick electrodes into human brains, and the contact lens systems, as a glance at Fig. 6 will remind one, are not the sort of things it's easy to persuade huge throngs of people to wear. By 1963 I had been working with contact lenses for two years, using myself and a few close friends (who are still, surprisingly, on speaking terms with me) as subjects. In this time one or two really interesting facts had emerged. The principal one was that different patterns and shapes tended to behave differently when "stabilised"—e.g. some patterns *fragmented more readily or more often than others*. There isn't the space to go into this in detail but, in general, the more complex the pattern, the more readily it fragmented. And of all the patterns tested, the one least likely to disintegrate was the plain, simple circle. To me this suggested that aesthetic principles were at work in some unexplained way, and I am still thinking along those lines. The rate at which data came out of the experimental mill, however, was horribly slow, and the conviction grew on me that before any real advance could be made, some other method of stabilising the image would have to be achieved—some method which allowed one to use large numbers of subjects with the minimum amount of fuss. After a number of false starts—including experiments with a nightmare floppy rubber "lens", which would fit anyone's eye if you gave them enough local anaesthetic—I gave up trying to attach things to the eye, and started tinkering about with after-images.

After-images are the kind of thing you get by mistake if you look at the sun for a second or so. They're due to the bleaching out of pigment in selective areas of the retina, and, of course, if you think about it, they're *perfectly stabilised images* because they're changes in the states of the cells in the back of the eye itself. The only question was, if one looked at an after-image of a *pattern*, would the pattern then fragment as it did when stabilised by a contact lens? It did, and I knew we were in business. Work, as I said before, is still in progress using this technique and we have, in fact, succeeded in identifying "perceptual units" sensitive to straight lines in various orientations in the human visual system. These we have discovered by a process of "retinal mapping", using flashes of light as analogous to direct micro-electrode stimulation.

THE POINT ABOUT all these experiments is that they are really cunning tricks to allow us to look at our own brains *in operation*. The problems of studying one's own cerebral processes are enormously self-defeating—as anyone who has tried to analyse even his own *motives* will realise. To get at the raw data of such topics as perception one has to dive through the great sea of linguistics and logical semantics which dominate our thinking and our communication channels. In the case of visual perception, the process by which our brain classifies the external world is far, far too rapid and complex for us ever to be aware of its stages in normal circumstances; one might just as well hope to examine at leisure the single frames of a movie while it is being run through. The technique of stabilising the image can be thought of (in its effects) as being analogous to stop-action or perhaps slow motion—allowing the individual to study the "frame-by-frame" build-up of the visual image.

What can one do with the kind of data uncovered by such experiments? The first and immediate answer is that only by such studies can one ultimately hope to understand the basic mechanisms of the brain; here, of course, we are simply dealing with the nature of perceptual coding and classification — the building blocks of perception, if you like. At another, more practical level, it seems very possible that an understanding of how the brain chooses to classify patterns (you can be sure it will be the best possible method) will enable us to build really superior pattern recognition machines—devices that will read and understand printed letters and numerals, and perhaps even human handwriting! Machines which will read, along with machines which will understand speech, are likely to be with us before too long, and these developments will probably draw a good deal from our growing understanding of how the human brain works. Psychologists, you see, are beginning to find their true rôle at last—helping computers to help themselves!

Books and Comment

Man against the well grown specimen

C. C. Shackleton

OF RECENT YEARS, we have heard much about the New Theology, an agnostic - oriented movement within Christianity itself, whose exponents often seem bent on throwing out the baby with the font water. I believe there is also a New Mysticism which, like the New Theology, takes note of advances in science yet builds a faith which is not bounded by materialism; though the New Mysticism is against organised religion. One of its chief tenets is that an unseen world, deducible by its effects, emanates from human beings—and is susceptible of rational understanding: with the rider, perhaps, that to arrive at such an understanding is supremely important.

One might expect that the writings of New Mysticism would contain such passages of reasoning as this: "Doctors are perpetually in touch with anxieties, for many symptoms are an abortive form of communication: their possessor is 'trying to tell us something' — the transference can take place from one mind to the other, and the message be received and understood, quite without the intervention of conscious intention, so that the patient who has fantasy wishes to be castrated, cut open like a shaman in his dream-initiation, punished or threatened as a baby, may in fact get exactly what he is asking, wholly without insight on his part or his doctor's. Like the prostitute, but less consciously, the doctor may act out his patient's fantasy."

In fact, this paragraph comes from Dr. Alex Comfort's new book*. We relish its perceptions while taking them in our stride; but almost every clause contains underlying psychoanalytical assumptions that we should have been unable to take before the beginning of this century. Some of us, painfully reared in less sophisticated schools of thought, may even recall a time when this whole passage would have opened up new vistas for us. Perhaps there are still adolescents today who may find this entire book a revelation, as the author deals with ambivalences of the unseen world which have replaced the gross certainties of an earlier age.

We may ask ourselves how far the assumptions of such a passage are true. Aren't symptoms just the symptoms they seem to be? (Could cancer really be psychosomatic?) Can people really have fantasy wishes to be castrated? (Isn't war always desired?) Is it possible that a doctor would act out a patient's hidden wishes? (Were your adenoids removed?) Perhaps we should not ask ourselves if all is true, so much as do we believe it to be true? This reviewer does believe it to be true, does believe that the more archaic levels of the mind confuse will with deed, does believe that illness and health have still to be understood, and accordingly his quarrels with Dr. Comfort can only be minor ones.

THE PARAGRAPH QUOTED is central to the whole theme of the author's book, the sub-title of which is "Some Curious Preoccupations of the Medical Profession". It is, incidentally, the first of a new Nelson series entitled The Natural History of Society, of which some twenty books have been commissioned; a hopeful sign of the times for the New Mystic. General editor of the series is Dr. Comfort. At present he is Director of the Medical Research Council Group on Ageing at University College, London. He was the first Englishman to receive a D.Sc. in gerontology. Well known as a broadcaster on T.V. and sound, he is also a poet and novelist. Readers may recall his humorous science fiction novel, *Come Out to Play*.

The anxiety-makers with whom Dr. Comfort is particularly concerned are doctors, those unreliable counsellors of mankind who still hold such sway over us. He could have chosen politicians and made an equally interesting case. Indeed, that might have been more interesting, for much of the medical arena is familiar ground. Possibly it is a case of "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed", for a good deal of his space is devoted to the chief medical scares of last century, which have lingered on into this. They include such things as tonsils, supposed to have given the Englishman his horse face; but the Big Four—since the sexual-cloacal area, being one of strong emotions, is always most vulnerable to irrational fears—are masturbation, sexual intercourse, birth control and constipation.

These four horsemen are of the nineteenth-century apocalypse. The very term "masturbation" did not appear until the eighteenth century when, in 1710, an anonymous clergyman published a treatise entitled "Onania, or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution". The clergyman was uttering his scare, not in the name of morality, but in order to promote a restorative for over-indulgence. By 1853, another elixir, The Cordial Balm of Syriacum, was on the market and the tone hotted up. "Nothing, perhaps, weakens the intellect so much." Phantom diseases were in the air: Masturbatory Insanity, Spermatorrhoel Ophthalmia . . .

IN A FEW YEARS, the terrible William Acton was fulminating activity, while onanist-spotting had become the great medical and pedagogical recreation of the age. Prayer, circumcision, violent exercise, Dr. Dio Lewis's chastity cards, and dipping the genitalia in icy water—these were some of the uncertain bulwarks against this well-publicised secret vice. The pendulum had come full swing from the sixteenth century, when Fallopius advised parents to "take every pain in

* *The Anxiety Makers* by Alex Comfort. Illustrated. Thomas Nelson, 30s.

infancy to enlarge the privy member of boys (by massage and the application of stimulants) since a well-grown specimen never comes amiss."

Some of the battery of objects ranged against possible stirrings of the well-grown specimen are illustrated in Dr. Comfort's book. They include a strait jacket and a "masturbation appliance", as advertised in a surgical instruments catalogue of 1930, as well as toothed penile rings and "electric alarums" which buzzed like a fairground bell at the hint of any tightening in the pyjamas.

The second horseman, sexual intercourse, was an even trickier matter. Guidance on masturbation could be summed up in one word: Don't. But even the greatest Victorians were forced to admit that there were occasions when one, however reluctantly, had to undergo the regrettable act with some unfortunate woman. Either you kept sex at the subsistence level or it kept you at the subsistence level; because sex was somehow connected with class and was, even more than drink (also connected), the curse of the working classes.

William Acton's *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs, etc.* (1857) embodies all the legends: that intercourse is somehow unmanly, the bed being a poor substitute for the gymnasium (although *climbing* might exercise the wrong muscles); that simple continence is not enough—one must also worry over it; that irregular unions with women are even worse than self-relief or thinking sexual thoughts; that intercourse outside marriage leads almost invariably to venereal disease; that such girls who submit are of inferior station and will try to drag the young man into marriage —which would lead automatically to social ostracism; that no decent woman has sexual feelings in any case.

FOR THE UNFORTUNATE Victorian youth running this gauntlet of snares, marriage must have seemed the only refuge. Acton squashed that idea. Too frequent emission of the life-giving fluid was most destructive. Women caught uterine diseases from breeding too rapidly, and then all that could be recommended was separate beds, abstinence and, of course, more exercise. Even if the wife submitted to her duty, each permitted discharge had its perils. "So serious, indeed, is the paroxysm of the nervous system produced by the sexual spasm, that its immediate effect is not always unattended with danger, and men with weak hearts have died in the act." No better way to go, as they used to say in the army.

So the list of nonsenses extends. Birth control was regarded as "defrauding nature". The more primitive methods were labelled "conjugal onanism". Couples who preferred infertile intercourse, or oral and manual activities, to the real thing complete with an annual pregnancy, were threatened with nymphomania, cancer, prolapse, impotence, insanity, blindness and the old demon, backache.

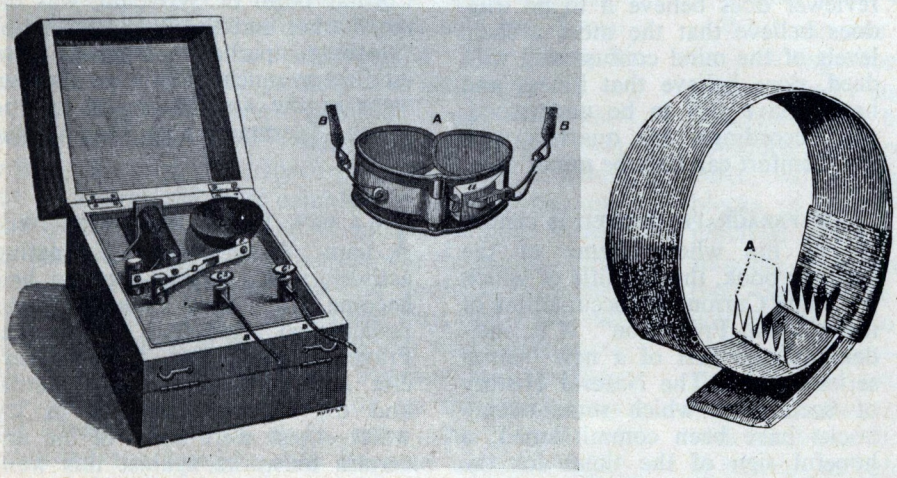
As for "rubber goods", they were twice-damned. Not only did they prevent pregnancy; they provided some defence against venereal disease, and venereal disease was the moraliser's strongest weapon. As Dr. Comfort puts it, Christian moralists of the old school could not have hoped for a bigger bonanza than the pandemic spread of syphilis, short of making the unmarried vagina radioactive. An excellent book on the battle over birth control is Peter Fryer's *The Birth Controllers* (1965). Nowadays, this battle still rages over the question of the Pill.

THE CONSTIPATION-JAG follows what is by now a familiar fever chart. Like the other obsessions, it is noticeably middle-class in tone. A Dr. Burne of Westminster Hospital, writing in 1840, claims that the costive run a risk of suffering from malaria, nocturnal emissions and excessive sexual indulgence. These hardships might be avoided by vigorous exercise and, once more, cold baths.

The earth-closet was invented in 1860, the water-closet in 1870; they helped make daily evacuation pleasanter. This was also the age when Londoners were discovering just how vile their subterranean sewers were; the last outbreak of cholera was 1866, and not until the 1870s was the great Sir Joseph Bazalgette's new drainage system opened under London. This great subterranean worry is almost like an inorganic replica of the congested Victorian bowel, with Sir Arbuthnot Lane, a fervent colectomist who excised some thousand intestines, as Bazalgette's above-ground equivalent.

After this neurotic bout of nineteenth-century anxiety-making, it is small wonder that many doctors today spend their time trying to allay the fears their predecessors raised and to cure the physical symptoms by which those fears communicate themselves.

It is difficult to understand why these sexual-cloacal anxieties went suddenly on the rampage, or how what had been the concern of *savoir-faire* became a matter of life and



The "Electric Alarum" together with a toothed penile ring, as illustrated in J. C. Milton's "Pathology and Treatment of Spermattorhea" (1887).

death. Dr. Comfort says that "it is as if the time clock, the factory whistle and the sanitary parade had somehow entered into the popular soul". Nor are these anxieties by any means dead, although they often take slightly more sophisticated forms. There is still a feeling that Modern Youth ("teenagers", in contemporary idiom) is getting more than its fair share of sexual enjoyment; the celebates of the Roman Catholic church still do battle on the birth control front, abortion laws are unrealistic, the T.V. commercials warn us that only All-Bran and Andrews Liver Salts can keep us regular and swinging.

OUR OWN AGE has bred many new anxieties that are taken as seriously as the Victorians took their sexual anxieties. While our sexual anxieties have a looser grip —though there is the general obsessive desire to be "normal" which Archie Rice parodied and which, one might have thought, Kinsey destroyed—we have many political ones; Senator McCarthy played on some of them, the C.N.D. marchers on others. The concept of Brinkmanship is a tussle between the anxieties of anti-Communist capitalists and anti-capitalist Communists. Anxiety-making itself has moved forward, for whereas the Victorian sexual fears were based on amazingly little evidence, we do have proof that the Soviets would do us harm if we weakened, that secret agents (a few) infiltrate some levels of our society, that it is probably fatal to be within several miles of an exploding nuclear bomb, that death from exposure to radioactive particles is painful, and so on.

What we have to remember is that underlying obsessional fears gravitate to such matters, magnifying them to such an extent that they cannot be solved unemotionally—just as xenophobic fears do not allow problems of colour and race to be dealt with rationally.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of Dr. Comfort's book to explain why our culture has incorporated strong tabus into itself, why it has fostered anxieties; for an excellent discussion of such matters, reference might be made to Steven Marcus's recent work**, in which he shows how the Victorian middle-classes had to gird themselves in fear and continence; only in this way could they separate themselves from the careless and profligate lower orders and accumulate property and security, thus reinforcing the ancient equation between money and faeces, wealth and semen.

After Marcus, who also takes William Acton as one of his prime examples, Dr. Comfort inevitably seems a little repetitive; but he has many redeeming *aperçus*. He points out that the typical anxiety-maker fears what attracts him, and that Picasso's reaction to Guernica and the destructive drives in his own work, and Aldous Huxley's ambivalence towards his Brave New Worlders, are artistic instances of this. He could have mentioned Huxley's last novel, the polemical Island, an extremely interesting if neglected utopian work that in fact contains all the elements of Brave New World, drugs, free love, non-familial education and the rest, but treats them as good- rather than ill-producing; the complete reversal of Huxley's earlier feelings.

Dr. Comfort might also have mentioned science fiction in this context. It is one of the minor anxiety-makers of our times, surely, reinforcing the vague feeling that something awful is about to happen which is fostered by almost all political parties (except possibly the rulers of Communist China, who, by adding a pinch of xenophobia to their promise of a rosy future, provide a fresh anxiety-focus for the rest of the world). In SF circles, a long-standing joke-cliché is "rockets are just phallic symbols"; but the truth masks truth, and the massive armoured phalluses towed through Red Square every May Day or Fifth Avenue every Labour Day have a direct relationship with the unconscious aggression our recent ancestors visited on the innocent and well-grown specimen.

At the close of his last chapter, Dr. Comfort casually mentions a connection between anxiety and technology. Here is a subject for another book in this Natural History of Society series. Technology is to some extent the distance man has placed between himself and his natural state. While it is probable that every inventor, researcher and discoverer is more or less anxiety-motivated, it could almost be argued that technology is the anxiety-state of science and a depraved middle-class version of the philosopher's search for truth.

IN THEMSELVES, the consequences of science are not alarming. Their paranoid uses are alarming. Their paranoid developments are alarming. On the whole, increasing applications of science, particularly in human departments, help to free us from the ties of superstition. Reckoning a generation at twenty-five years, we are only one hundred and fifty generations from flint-chipping ancestors whose lives were nasty, brutish and short; our minds must still be filled with the terrors that possessed them by an even longer darker inheritance. The human race is now, presumably, struggling through its painful adolescence, when we can hardly distinguish form from symbol; science is our way of distinguishing. Science is our way of growing adult. The New Mysticism must harmonise with science.

As our command over nature becomes less frail, we increasingly have to exercise choice: birth control, for instance, is a question of choice. Choice is one of the burdens of maturity, as Dr. Comfort makes clear, and as yet we are hardly mature enough to make rational choices.

Only last year we had a tonic ration of non-comfort from this eminent biologist, in a book called *Nature and Human Nature. The Anxiety-Makers* is just as sane and unsoothing, if a less substantial work. We could do worse than keep in mind his sober thoughts on one aspect of this question of present-day tensions: "We are pitched headlong into choice, whether we like it or not. Very many of us do not like it—it is the calamity of adulthood which dogmatic religion was programmed to avoid. We are one of the first civilisations whose members have been forced to be psychologically adult, with minimal support from the emotional technologies of simpler cultures, long neglected by us in favour of a dogmatic, fact-stating religion. Now that this is increasingly displaced by science, we are left with virtually no means of

** *The Other Victorians* by Steven Marcus. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966, 45s.

handling feelings and the social choices arising from them. One could anxiety-make about that, and it is a strong temptation to do so."

WOGS BEGIN AT LUNA

REGULAR READERS OF Keith Laumer's stories will be aware that the Universe is populated almost entirely by uncouth caricatures of humanity. Beings unfortunate enough to be born on worlds other than Earth may be larger, or stronger, or have more arms, but when the chips are down they lack that fine old homicidal streak that makes a man a Man. Ugly and cowardly as they are, it is natural that they should arouse the viciousness latent in all true Terrans, to their own discomfiture. Mr. Laumer has peddled this notion for some time now and shows no signs of wearying. Fortunately . . . because at its best, his fiction is colourful thick-ear stuff, fast-paced and easy to read. In a literature which ranges from great grey tracts concerning super-super-highways to word-games demonstrating that the author is familiar with every four-letter combination except P—L—O—T, this is no small virtue.

Penguin science fiction, with *A Plague of Demons* (3s. 6d), have picked a novel well calculated to appeal to Laumer fans and the general public. Longer than the version which appeared in IF, it begins running almost from page one and scarcely pauses for breath until the final punch-up, a super-Alamein of armoured colossi on a nameless moon. Carrying the ball is American officer John Bravais, recalled to duty to investigate the unaccountable disappearance of large numbers of troops on active service. Warfare in this not-too-distant future is a small-scale business, strictly supervised by U.N. monitors who resent any meddling by agents of the major powers. Bravais, however, quickly discovers that he is up against more than human opposition. Soon, transformed by advanced medical science into a semi-robot of monstrous strength, he is whaling the ichor out of one of the grisliest crews of aliens since Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland*. These early encounters have the punch and clarity of good cinema. It is in the second half of the book that Laumer appears to lose his grip somewhat and allow Bravais, now whittled down to a brain encased in a mobile fortress, to become a virtual superman. A tiger in an alien tank, he leads a force of similarly imprisoned Earth-brains against the motley horde of extra-terrestrials who have preyed upon humanity down the centuries. There are other faults: the scientific "underground" organised to combat the aliens is never really accounted for; the enemy are a faceless mass with only their uniform unpleasantness to engage the reader's emotions. But it moves along briskly, achieves some neat lines of hardboiled humour and is, above all, entertainment. The cover art is out of this world. So is Purgatory.

Which leads, by no sort of coincidence, to the subject of religion and Robert Silverberg's *To Open the Sky* (Ballantine SF, 75c.) Five connected stories span the years from 2077 to 2164 A.D., chronicling the rise of the Vorsters and the scheming of their incredibly ancient leader, Noel Vorst. The happy hereafter has little appeal for the swarming millions crowding the world of the twenty-first century. Vorsterism, with its programme of scientific research, offers immortality in the here-and-now, and the stars for those adventurous enough to reach for them. The lure draws a variety of people—Reynolds Kirby, high U.N. official looking for a psychological anchor; Christopher Mondschein, who simply wants to live for ever; Nicholas Martell, true believer and fervent missionary. Behind them all is Vorst, kept alive by "spare-parts" surgery, weaving together the destinies of three planets to realise his century-long dream of interstellar travel.

J. Cawthorn

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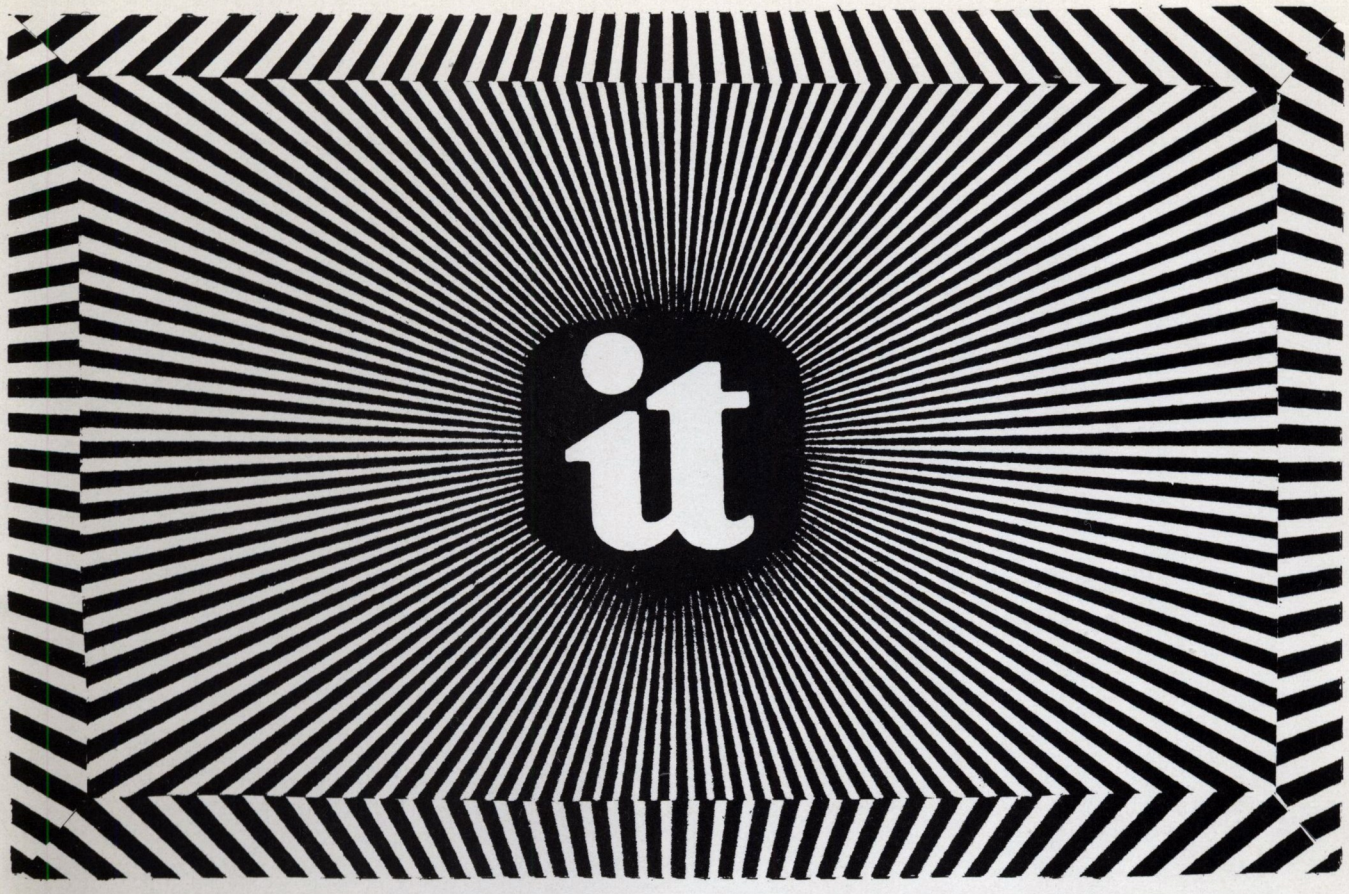

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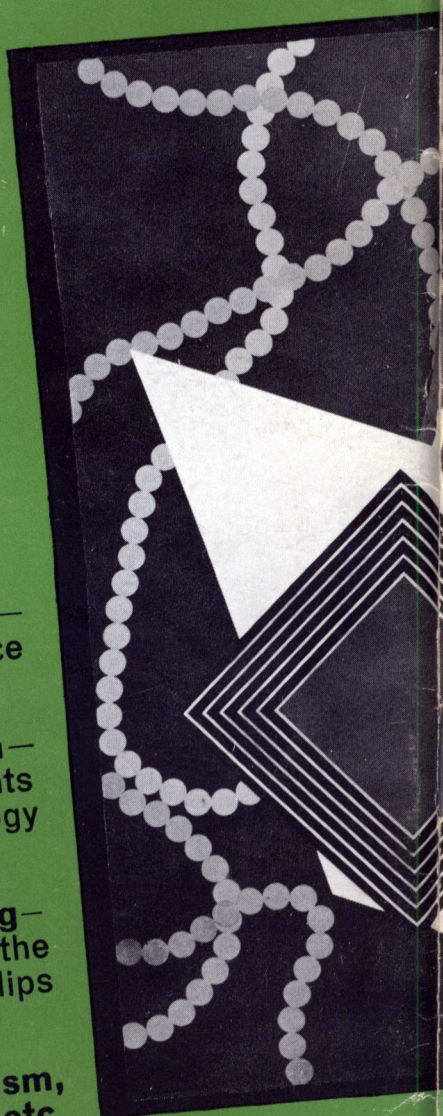

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