

THE CRAZY OIK
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Michael O'Connor's tribute to **PKF Robinson** first appeared on the **Philosophy Now** website

Beats, Bums and Bohemians by Jim Burns first appeared on the Northern Review of Books section of the **Penniless Press** website and will be published in his forthcoming collection of essays by Penniless Press Publications 2013

The Award Winning Poem I'm Sure and **Intellectual Intercourse a la Rock Ferry** are from Tanner's collection **The Ism Prison** – Penniless Press Publications 2012

Pure Poetry is from S. Kadison's short story collection **God's Laboratory** to be published by Penniless Press Publications in 2012

Peter Street's **Moss Bank Way** is from his collection **Listening to the Dark** – Penniless Press Publications 2012

Front Cover – Diego Rivera – *Detroit Industry Fresco – North Wall*
Engine and transmission production of 1932 Ford 8



Diego Rivera – 1886 – 1957

If Manchester can be considered the trail blazer of 19th century industrial capitalism then surely in the 20th the baton was passed to Detroit. Henry Ford's production line changed the world. And oddly, each location attracted the attention of a commie saint. Manchester was firmly nailed as a monstrous, meat-grinding shithole in Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in England 1844* while Detroit got memorialised by the greatest muralist of his time, Diego Rivera.

Rivera was fascinated by American technology and knew enough about engineering and science to create convincing images of the 1932 Ford 8 production line. The art establishment was shocked by this invasion of the museum by rude mechanicals. They were wary of Rivera's political agenda and seemed set to have the massive frescoes destroyed until Edsel Ford himself stepped in to save them. Rivera was right to consider these murals his greatest achievement. His next production – a series on the new society – included a portrait of Lenin to which his patron, Rockefeller, took exception. Rivera refused to remove it and those murals were destroyed.

His kind of didactic, social realism became unfashionable with the rise of cubism (remember that?) but maybe we're in for a revival. The art publisher Taschen has produced a monumental book on these works – more a coffee table than a coffee table book, it just needs legs. *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals* a 674 page hardback measuring 18" x 12" x 3.5" thick. At a mere £135 it's probably cheaper than a flight to Detroit.

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EDITORIAL

The Crazy Oik likes to dabble in philosophy but essentially we feel like Edwards in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* who, on Friday 17 April 1778, remarked: "You are a philosopher Dr Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." Exactly our own problem. Most thinkers, from Heraclitus to Kierkegaard were monstrously miserable. The Anglo-American analytical school seems to avoid this pitfall but remains risible more by accident than design. In this regard it was quite a find to come across Michael O'Connor's obituary for PKF Robinson. We must thank US Oik subscriber Fred Whitehead for this – he found it on the *Philosophy Now* website. I got in touch with Michael who was glad to have it in the Oik. He works at the University of Toronto but is a Brit, once taught philosophy at UMIST (Wittgenstein's old college) and has fond memories of Manchester – especially the Hacienda club. Robinson isn't in my Encyclopedia of Phil – no doubt an oversight soon to be rectified now he's passed on.

Families get another drubbing from Tom Kilcourse and Alexis Lykiard while Dave Birtwistle continues with his Waldenesque epic *Inland Beach Hut*. Three squibs from Allen Edgar Poole describe odd goings on in some rural backwater – just where remains a secret. S. Kadison satirises aspirant poets in *Pure Poetry* and this is followed by another depth charge from scouse poet Tanner – bullseyes both. Jim Burns takes us back to the Bohemian underground of fifties Britain as depicted in a series by New London Editions. Eclectic or what? Poems, reviews, reports, translations - what more could you ask? Recipes? Readers' Letters? An Agony Aunt? Racing tips? Well to remind readers of our mission statement - to give space to the unknown - we also introduce two new writers – Paul Jones and Andy Smith.

The Oik extends its international reach with another story from India by Jeff Tiraki and an account of the Egyptian revolution by Youssef Rakha. We must thank Nigel Ford's Worldscribe for the latter. They now have an agent in Cairo. Youssef has written more on this topic.

Finally a question: where would you find an English version of any of Proust's great pastiches? Answer, nowhere – up to now that is. Oik cultural correspondent Ron Horsefield has had a crack at one and the Oik can now claim to be the first in the field. Ron may do more. Was that a rumbling in Père Lachaise? But then Proust wasn't above having a go at translating too (Ruskin) with the help of his Manc pal Marie Nordlinger. Ron says his mate Neville Rawlinson (now dead) met her once – hence he can say he's shaken the hand that's shaken the hand that's shaken the hand of Proust. Yis Ron – quite daft – so what?. My best shot is to have shaken the hand that's shaken the hand of Mao Tse Tung; but the Little Red Book has already been translated, and no, there won't be extracts in a future Oik.

Ken Clay October 2012

P.K.F. ROBINSON (1908-2012)

Michael O'Connor

A report on the Diagonalist English philosopher sadly crushed to death by his 'Philosophical House'.

The distinguished English philosopher P.K.F. Robinson died on April 1st at the age of 103, when his 'Diagonalist' philosophical house collapsed, crushing him to death. Robinson burst onto the philosophical scene at the age of twenty-one with his book *A Concept in My Mind* (1929). A year earlier he had been cycling into the quad of his Oxford college at speed. A malfunction of the bicycle's chain propelled him forwards like a rocket, and he hit the college wall face first and fell into a coma. This had profound consequences for philosophy. As Robinson tells us in his *Autobiography* (1986): "On the seventh day of the coma I awoke with a new philosophical insight grounded in rational intuition and known with the epistemic certainty of the self-evident: *I was a concept in my own mind*. I knew this indubitably, and it formed the metaphysical foundation of the system of thought I expounded in *A Concept in My Mind*." (p.837)

Robinson was a concept in his own mind! This fundamental insight laid the foundations for a new era in British and then Western philosophy. It blew existing conceptual frameworks apart, exposing the history of Western philosophy as a series of errors based on a conceptual mistake. At this time Robinson was regarded by many as the greatest thinker of his generation, and it seemed that at last philosophy had made real progress.

Six years later, during a darts match with the Logical Positivist A.J. Ayer, a remark of Ayer's caused Robinson to lie down for three weeks. "I remained in the mode of horizontality, abjuring consciousness, thought and language, and especially apostrophes," he later wrote. When he woke, he immediately started writing three articles in analytical philosophy: 'The meaning of And', 'The logic of But', and 'The definition of If'. He never spoke of his 'concept in my mind' theory again. Seminal books on 'But', 'If' and 'And' followed during the 1930s, alongside his positivistic *The Obliquity of Metaphysics*.

A noise made by Wittgenstein in 1949 over cheese led Robinson to

spend the rest of the year horizontal in bed, reflecting. On January 1st 1950, he leapt from his bed, and by the end of the year he had published his book *No More Ifs, Ands, or Buts: The Impossibility of Defining These Terms or Any Others I Have Heard Of*. During this time, Balliol College residents often had their sleep disturbed in the middle of the night by the sound of Robinson screaming “The word ‘And’ is just too hard to understand. I can’t bear it! Leave me alone!”

In 1953, while cycling backwards to Balliol in a fume at J.L. Austin (whose work influenced his newly-published book *How To Do Nasty Things To People With Words*), a collision with an Oxford omnibus led to the loss of Robinson’s left leg. This inspired him to spend ten weeks in a vertical position, occasionally hopping. Little was heard from him until 1960, which saw the publication of groundbreaking articles in the new field of Applied Philosophy: ‘Ethics For Unipedes’, ‘The Phenomenology of Quadrupeds’, and the controversial and much misunderstood ‘The Metaphysical Sexuality of the Centipede’.

By 1969, new thinking about the meaning of ‘But’ led him to publish his nine-volume magnum opus, *Notes towards a Prolegomena for an Introduction to a Preliminary Enquiry into the Grounds of the Possibility of Defining ‘But’*. This work was the inspiration for the Bulgarian ‘Preliminarist’ movement of the 1970s, whose mass suicide in 1987 unnerved many.

In the late 1970s Robinson immersed himself in continental philosophy, especially Heidegger. Robinson’s startling work in existentialist ontology, *Man Is Always Facing Forward* (1984), argued that:

“*Dasein* [Man] is always facing forwards. He exists in the ontological modes of Being Awake (Being as Openness) or Being Asleep (Being as non-Being, as Closedness). Man the Awake is sometimes Being-on-his-feet in the existential mode of standing up, sometimes Being-in-a-chair (sitting down, either as Being Awake or Being Asleep), and sometimes existing in the mode of horizontality (lying down, either as Being Asleep or Having-a-rest). In the *ekstasis* of wine or spirit inebriation there is a turn (‘*Kehre*’) from ontological verticality to horizontality, from standing up to Being-on-the-ground, and Man’s fallenness (‘*Pisht*’) is revealed. But if there is no Earth, Man falls through nothingness and is groundless, neither standing, sitting, nor lying down. Nonetheless, he is still facing forward, but

without *esse, percipi*, Being-in-the-world, transcendental rationality, or a cup of tea.” (p.2562.)

Reading Heidegger led Robinson to study Dilthey’s theory that historical events are unrepeatable. Robinson attempted to integrate this view with existentialist principles in his book *Vuja De: The Feeling That This Has Never Happened Before* (1988).

In his later years, in an effort to overcome the vertical/horizontal dichotomy, Robinson spent months living diagonally, leaning against buildings on street corners so as to experience ‘Being’ more authentically. His arrest for vagrancy led him to originate the philosophical school of ‘Architectural *Dasein*’. He built a ‘Diagonalist’ house near Lewes with walls at 45 degree angles, and published *The Metaphysics of Obliquity*. In his garden he created a Platonic Cave with a fire inside, and watched the play of appearances and shadows on the wall. He would often suddenly turn and hop out of the cave in a frantic search for Platonic Forms, occasionally shouting “Gotcha!”

Since his death, colleagues have been celebrating P.K.F Robinson’s life and his contribution to philosophy. Professor Peregrine Proclivity of Maudlin College, Oxford, said, “An avid but incompetent geometer as a youth, he was as delightful on one leg as on two. His academic career spanned the twentieth century and embodied most of its philosophical currents. At his peak he was the fastest philosopher in Oxford, except when Bernard Williams was visiting.”



Illustrated 1942

NOT A FAMILY MAN 2

Tom Kilcourse

3 War Games

Today's daily newspapers frequently carry horror stories about gangs in our major cities, and if those tales are to be believed every youth in Britain over the age of ten carries a knife or gun for his self protection. How true the picture painted is I cannot say, but I am able to compare that image with the group of kids that I called 'our gang'. Indeed, the term 'gang' conjures up such negative images that I hesitate to use the word when describing my childhood. We constituted a gang in the sense that we were always together, but I cannot remember anyone habitually carrying a knife, let alone a gun. Parental control within a fairly tight community prevented that. Upon reflection however, there are other similarities with the gangs of today. We did claim certain streets to be our territory, and felt some hostility to other gangs in the neighbourhood. That rarely led to armed conflict, but 'war' did break out occasionally. If you are engaged in 'elf and safety' in any way, read no further: I would not wish to be responsible for your seizure.

Our territorial boundary was well defined on one side by the Rochdale Canal, the opposite bank of the waterway being considered the territory of the Failsworth gang, a group that perhaps existed only in our imagination. Whether that 'gang' actually formed a cohesive group is doubtful, though I do recall one pitched battle with a bunch of kids who appeared on the other side of the canal. What began with name calling degenerated quickly into stone throwing. Miraculously, nobody was injured and the 'enemy' never appeared again, so we congratulated ourselves on having driven them off. If the other side of the canal was really enemy territory we certainly didn't respect it as such. The Grand Cinema, the Failsworth flea pit, was one of the places we visited for Saturday matinees, and no gang was going to prevent us from seeing Roy Rogers or Hopalong Cassidy. We crossed the canal by the Tanyard Bridge on many weekends without fear of attack.

The other side of our patch was less well defined, but there was a group centred on Albert Street that we called the 'Croft Gang', there

being a croft between that street and Richmond Street, in which Geoff, Tommy Hines and I lived. After the war that croft disappeared under an estate of prefabricated houses. The fierceness of the Croft Gang was the stuff of legend, and I remember always being wary when sent by grandma to buy fish and chips from Wardle's chip shop in Albert Street. Indeed, Fred Wardle, a son of the owner, was a member of the Croft Gang. Fierce or not, we never actually clashed and Fred was to become a personal friend in my teen years.

The only battle, apart from the trans-canal stone lobbing incident, took place between elements of our own gang, with auxiliaries. We went through a phase together in which we all made bows and arrows, using a big cane and string for the bow, and smaller canes sharpened at one end and notched at the other as arrows. As nobody appeared to be interested in invading our territory we fell to exercising our martial arts on each other, dividing into two groups and repairing to a field where we fired our arrows in the general direction of the 'foe'. Looking back as an adult I blanch at the thought of what injuries, lost eyes and so on, might have been inflicted, but there were none and the 'battle' petered out when it started to rain.

As we matured, if that is the appropriate description, we came to see bows and arrows as tame stuff and began to experiment with more lethal weaponry, based on readily available fireworks. At a time before bonfire night became an event organised by the local authority, or some other responsible body, it was common to see several bonfires in an area, each organised by the people in the immediate neighbourhood. Kids would gather the wood for weeks before the fifth of November, and adults would supervise the event and provide the potatoes for baking. Occasionally, youngsters from one bonfire would raid that of someone else, suddenly appearing from nowhere, lobbing a few bangers and disappearing into the night. Such action led to irritation among the adults and retaliation from the youngsters. Sadly, these raids did sometimes lead to injuries, though rarely serious.

'Irritation' hardly describes the adult reaction to results of our experiments when we became dissatisfied with simply lobbing a

banger towards a group and running for it. I can remember two incidents in which the adults would possibly have committed murder had they been able to catch us. The first of these took place by the Rochdale canal, when a group of anglers had lined up on the opposite bank for an afternoon's peaceful fishing. Unfortunately for them, we had developed a weapon that would cause these placid, peace loving adults to become screaming, hate filled would-be assassins. That weapon was a depth-charge that we had used earlier on our own fishing expeditions. With the single exception of Ron, we lacked the skill and patience to catch fish one at a time with a rod and line. Instead, we weighted jam jars with stones, popped a lighted banger into the jar, quickly screwed on the lid and tossed it into the water. There would follow a significant underwater explosion leading to stunned fish flapping on the surface. The anglers gathered on the opposite bank that Sunday afternoon clearly did not appreciate the superiority of our technique. They ran towards the locks where they could cross to our side. We legged it.

The second incident resulted in adult bemusement as much as anger. We developed a gun, a muzzle loader made of a piece of iron piping sealed at one end and wired to the wooden butt of an old toy gun. The sealed end was engineered by Pete's older brother David who had learned how to weld metal. The gun did not have a trigger, but was fired by simply popping a lighted banger into the tube, followed by a ball bearing, then pointing towards a target. The first test firing took place behind some timber garages placed on a small croft. The gun was aimed at the back of the most rickety of these constructions. To our surprise, the ball bearing went straight through the back of the garage, leaving a small, neat hole in the flimsy timber. Unfortunately, Mr. Wood's car was in the garage at the time and we heard later that he could not understand how his windscreen had been shattered within its shelter. We did not feel obliged to enlighten him, or any other adult.

A little later some of the gang graduated to owning air guns, mostly weak air pistols which, given the standard of our marksmanship, held no fear for the widest of barn doors. I never owned one, but some of the kids who did would let me have a go with theirs. Most memorable of these shooters was a powerful air rifle belonging to a boy called Peter Peacock. Peter lived in Albert Street so, strictly

speaking, was a member of the croft gang. However, by the time he became the proud owner of his rifle such tribalism between us was a thing of the past. I was with Peter one day walking across some fields when we heard the distinctive whine of a slug passing close by. Some boys had fired an air rifle from what they thought was the safety of a back garden that edged onto the field. In the best Western tradition we fell flat on the ground and began to fire back, Pete letting me have the odd shot. Clearly, his rifle was much more powerful than theirs and we aimed deliberately at the windows of the boys' house. Not many minutes passed before an angry woman emerged from the house and we had the great pleasure of watching the 'enemy' getting clouted by their mother.

Dangerous and damaging though some of these antics undoubtedly were, they were performed with a complete lack of malice. There never was any intention to injure people. Our aim was to have fun, pursued with a staggering lack of awareness and deep insensitivity to others' feelings. Seeing adults get upset, from a safe distance, was a laugh, the relationship between adults and children being entirely different from that of today. We had no pretensions to maturity, and adults had not exchanged authority for egalitarian chumminess with kids. This was an age in which schoolchildren stood when the teacher entered the classroom.

There was no blurring of the line between adults and children, each title carried distinct status and expectations. Adults did not pretend to youth, and children were expected to be 'seen, but not heard'. Any adult felt free to chide us for misbehaviour, their disapproving words being listened to with bowed heads. There was no answering back, at least to adults who knew us, and no parent would dream of questioning the critic's right to comment. Should a neighbour complain to a parent about some incident, the consequences for the miscreant could be painful, as the parent felt the family's reputation in the neighbourhood had been damaged. Whatever we did within the vicinity of our homes was subject to scrutiny from many critical eyes. Neighbours accepted a collective responsibility for our behaviour and safety, feeling free to criticise things of which they disapproved, but obliged to help a child under threat. I remember one time when a group of us were playing hopscotch in an alleyway and one of the kids spotted a man watching us furtively. A neighbour

who had no children of her own did not hesitate to chase the man away.

The lack of malice faded to some degree in the early fifties as we entered our teens. Then, the conflict between some gangs came to be conducted with serious intent. This was the beginning of the 'teddy boy' era, when vain youths paraded with duck's-arse haircuts, drainpipe trousers, long jackets with velvet collars, and crepe-soled shoes. I managed to acquire some drainpipe jeans and the shoes, but the price of a jacket was beyond my means, even when I started to earn a wage at fifteen. In our household, that wage was not regarded as my spending money, but as a contribution to the family income.

The pretend wars of childhood with mythical opponents gave way for some to real antipathy between groups from different parts of the area. I recall an incident at Broadway Baths where dances were held every Saturday evening. The majority of youths attending these events were peaceful enough, interested in meeting girls or getting drunk at the pub across the road, or both. Sadly, there was a minority element that was not content with such pleasures and appeared addicted to violence. These people needed little excuse. I had danced with a girl only to find myself surrounded when the music stopped by four or five youths. The aggression was unmistakable, but they were mistaken in thinking that I was alone. Seeing what was happening a number of my friends surrounded the threatening group whose members suddenly became most affable. The sharp faced individual who had accused me of 'pinching his girl' recognised what a charming chap I was and we parted as best of friends. One weekend, when we were thankfully absent, the aggression spurred a full scale riot in which band leader Harry Pook was hit over the head with his own trumpet. He refused ever to play at that venue again.

Though the press of the time tended to exaggerate the problem of youth violence, as it probably does today, the threat was always there in a place like Newton Heath during that period. Those who grew up in that atmosphere developed a second sense, an involuntary safety mechanism that managed the reflexes: brows did not lift in surprise, nor eyes betray fear or interest. Most of those who liked to flex their macho image were far from heroic when faced with an uncertain response. The best defence against their attention was to make

unwavering eye contact and maintain an expression of implacability. It became habitual and, in my case, stayed with me into my adult years. I recall one colleague in the eighties confessing that he found me ‘intimidating’, and another some years earlier announcing ‘I’m not afraid of you, you know’. It hadn’t occurred to me that he was, and I was not consciously trying to make him so.

Nevertheless, to return to the early fifties, the relationship between youngsters and adults had not degenerated entirely. It was unknown in our district to hear of an elderly person, or someone with a disability, being attacked. I recall seeing a confrontation between two groups of youths outside a Newton Heath dance-hall. An elderly couple came along the pavement and unhesitatingly walked through the crowd, which parted to let them pass. Sadly, most elderly people would probably be afraid to pass such a group today, even on the other side of the street.

ALEXIS LYKIARD

THE CASHBAGLIS
(A North London soap opera)

Squabbles of siblings,
quarrels and quibblings,
egocentricity and futile greed —
tribal alliances are feigned in times of need.
Fairweather friends! Though relatives, they're foes,
whose rivalries run deeper than one might suppose.
They enjoy jealous fits and histrionics, like all those
who have inherited rather too much
of privilege and money: it's quite clear that such
must be the tribulations of the leisured life,
dishonesty and folly breeding 'family' strife.

...

[i.m. Maria Casdagli (1910-63) who didn't share their values]

**AYE, LAD - THERE'S
NO INCOME TAX
TO PAY ON THEM**



My missus and I have already got £30 in National Savings Certificates. They will be worth £41 in ten years' time and we don't have to pay a penny piece Income Tax on the increase. You don't wonder we're going on buying them.

I could go off-shore like the toffs and rich gits but what wit' Channel islands being occupied and even t' Caribbean looking dodgy I thought it best to go NS. Then there's the contempt of me fellow oiks should I be found out avoiding tax. I couldn't show me face in 't pub if the lads knew I had a hundred quid in a foreign bank although, the way things are goin', I reckon the Reichsmark is the currency to be getting into.

**NATIONAL
SAVINGS
CERTIFICATES**

The "Tax Free" Investment

Illustrated 1942

INLAND BEACH HUT 2

David Birtwistle

As he watched the shed go up he studied the workmen and the way they moved, with care and attention. First the farmer and his lad laid out the floor, bolted on the four side sections and slid the two roof pieces into place with the strength of a weightlifter and the dexterity of a matador. Then the roofer and his lad unfurled the rolls of felt and melted the bitumen into the wood with a blowlamp. They brushed and caressed it like a couturier stroking silk. By the time Harry's youngest had installed the stove and welded up the flue-pipe he was dying to have a go at something himself. As he slapped on the olive-green wood preserver he started to get high. As he carefully drew pencil line stripes on the front door he felt like an artist. When he finally began to paint the inside with red cedar preserver he was totally blissful.

He was up the stepladder breathing in the scent of pine when Harry opened the door with a tray of cups and biscuits.

"Hey up! There's a sack with logs and kindling on the step." For the first time since he was a lad himself Jim assembled a fire with paper and sticks. The shape and chunkiness of the pot-bellied stove was the best piece of sculpture he'd seen since he'd stood under the bow of the SS Great Britain in dry-dock at Bristol. The two of them sat there in camp chairs savouring the steaming tea. Harry passed him another log and the stove began to glow.

Two days later the front of the shed had classic beach hut pink, lime-green and orange vertical candy-stripes precisely painted from top to toe and Harry had made a neat sign for the door. It read '*Saburrae tugurium terrae*' Jim thought this was a real touch of class. Most people's houses in Sandbanks had '*Done Roaming*' or '*Mon Repos*' on their wrought-iron security gates. This was the nearest Harry's friend the retired school teacher could get to 'Inland Beach Hut' in Latin. After all, his subjects had been Geography and PE. Jim thought Harry had come up with it himself and Harry had gone up in his esteem from lifestyle coach to philosopher, guru and now academic. The day after that the Inland Beach Hut was fully kitted out. He'd not only slept in it he'd had Harry round for hot pot and red cabbage. It was a good sign. Harry had eaten seconds and a bowl of Ambrosia creamed rice with extra Carnation milk.

He was on a roll. He felt a surge of energy. He laid more pathways, ‘hard standing’ as Harry called them, so he could access all areas even when the land was boggy and he set about making raised beds for vegetables. Harry had introduced him to some new big ideas – ‘*self-sufficiency*’, ‘*eco system*’ and ‘*micro-climate*’ and Jim was revelling in trying to create something that lived up to these challenging ideas. “God!” he thought when he took a break. “This beats weekends at neighbours talking stocks and shares and holidays with property developers and footballers and loan sharks or playing golf with thick celebs or staying in watching ‘Britain’s Got Talent’ or ‘Strictly’ and upgrading my phone every five minutes.” He was coming to realise that these wealthy, so called ‘movers and shakers’ were empty vessels who in truth really did very little when all was said and done. He understood that his sense of dissatisfaction was him knowing this all along but not quite being able to put it into words. When he looked back their conversations had bored him to death. And now, he could afford the poshest log cabin and a whole hill full of woodland with electric fences, guards and dogs but for the first time he understood what ostentation was. The nature of wealth and elaborate security drew attention to itself and became an end in itself. Now he felt that here was where it was at. Here no-one would ever find him. Harry had told him it was possible for him to become like Great Harwood Hughes – a famous secluse! A secluse with a lightness of heart!

With cold air in his lungs and a pale winter sun on his back he barrowed manure into the first raised beds he’d made. As the light increased through the mist and cloud, ‘Miss Haversham’s ghostly veil’ as Harry called it, he began to feel the uniqueness of the atmosphere here, to somehow understand the peculiar identity of this moorland habitat. ‘The rooftop of England’ were Harry’s own words. The harder he worked and the more care and attention he put into it the more feeling he had for it. He felt he was rising to the challenge Harry had talked about. He had read the book he’d borrowed twice – ‘Gardening Tips of a Lifetime’ by Fred Loads. It was already well-worn when Harry had lent it to him. Being in touch with the land felt like a shot in the arm; being up here among the clouds and the dry stone walls was beyond any experience he’d had on the southern coast or on any holiday he’d ever taken.

Another unusual change which had come about was that he felt like he was a part of an unfolding drama with a setting that was both huge and intimate at the same time. “The moors are a stage for the performance of heaven!” At the time Harry had said this he wasn’t quite sure what it meant. But he was now. Harry’s words were magnificent. Harry was a poet as well as a sage and a Latin scholar. Just then a dark shape flitted across the light at the edge of his vision. By the time he had re-focussed the shape had melted into the milky, pearl grey mist. A sudden coldness descended as he realised the shadow was that of a human being.

Back in his IBH, his Inland Beach Hut, potatoes were chitting in egg boxes on his desk and packets of seeds and a list were slotted into a wooden toast-rack. On the wall above was a barometer and a thermometer which read 62°. The beach hut was not just a shelter and a refuge it was a weather station, a holiday home and an office. It was dry, solid, warm and inviting. It was also minimal, stripped down to providing just life’s essentials. What made it all these things was that first and foremost it had become a sanctuary. Blankets and sleeping bag hung in a fisherman’s net from the roof beams and a small cooker and gas bottle stood to one side. The kettle was on the stove and Harry was in ‘his’ chair warming his feet.

“That’d be Silas Scroggins you saw. Owns most of the land hereabouts. Nasty piece of work. Steer clear.”

Out on the plot, even though it was still late winter there were things he could do. He was adding extra goodness to each bed. Harry had given him some volcanic lava dust and a special mixture of fertilisers which he sprinkled on and then covered with a black plastic sheet with stones on top to fix it in place and keep the warmth in. Up to his right was a small stream on what was now his land. It seemed to rise on the high moor, cut across farmland, descend through his field and go down to the cattle trough by the farm track. It was simply bubbling magic and he loved to listen to the water flow. He went up and widened the gate-space so that Beetroot Bob, the JCB driver could get his machine in. He wanted a driveway that followed the contours down and around, past the beach hut to a point wide enough to turn round.

Silas Scroggins the farmer appeared out of the rolling grey the day after the JCB left. He saw the figure moving up by the well lifting stones. He forgot all about Harry’s advice and marched up to him

through the wet knee-high grass.

“Hey! What’s the score?”

“Just checking stream.”

“This is my land. Nothing to do with you.” He realised how possessive he’d suddenly become. The farmer knelt, looking at him whilst feeling the stone. Jim knelt too. Silas’s eyes were black and deep and his mouth looked like a blown fuse box with three or four gnarled browned teeth. He looked like the Devil incarnate, Satan himself, and his chin came straight from one of Brueghel’s peasants from hell.

“What do you want?” he asked him quietly.

“Just checking flow.”

“Well next time you want to check flow ask me first.” The black eyes seemed fathomless and bored into his insides. At that moment he felt Times Winged Chariot close on his heels and he sensed the Grim Reaper himself with his rusty scythe over his right shoulder. He had never felt sensed mortality so strongly before. He swayed with vertigo.

He came round and remembered staring down at the glittering silver star shapes in the sphagnum moss and then looking up again and the farmer, the devil, had gone. Three days later he realised it wasn’t his own mortality that was in the air. Harry had passed away in the night. His eldest took charge and the doctor said it had been peaceful. Jim went about his tasks in a trance. The next four beds went in, the paths continued, a polytunnel was ordered and he planted 200 whips in the steep gulch. He called it ‘Harry’s Clough’. At times the temptation to pull out was great. He was alone. No mentor, no companion, nothing to give him strength or direction until he sat down and it dawned on him that the will to go on was now ingrained. He pulled himself up by the bootstraps and realised his previous life held nothing for him.

The week after Harry’s funeral he had created twelve vegetable beds, all finished, two big compost bins and he now had a polytunnel. Sitting in it in the middle of winter was like sitting inside a warm cloud. The doors closed, the light flowing in, his jacket off, he was challenging the elements by creating this miraculous micro-climate and challenging anyone who thought this barren, acidic land could

not be productive. He'd do this for Harry and he'd do it for himself. After all it had started as a joint venture. And he ought to make a living memorial for his dead wife. Out of the blue he received a text from an old acquaintance on holiday in the Caribbean. He was in a secure hotel, everything included, cordon bleu chef, poolside waiters, free drinks, air conditioning, no need to leave the compound!! Jim sent a short reply: *'Hiding out, chillaxing. Weather is here. Wish you were beautiful'*

The IBH, his shed, was now warm as toast inside especially when the temperature dropped outside. He relished the sense of being snug in a survivor's bolt-hole. Closing the door behind him and he was in the cosiest roost he could imagine. He developed a rhythm. Once a week he went out for the logs and coal and food and called in for fish and chips. Every day he did something on the land. The paths meandered following the rise and fall, more beds went in and were tucked in and covered up. He discovered calcified seaweed, chicken pellets and foliar feed. The potatoes were sprouting as they had to before they were ready to go in. Harry's eldest gave him the urn with his dad's ashes and they scattered them together in Harry's Clough. The young trees had started to produce small buds.

By mid February the light had increased and he was planting his first seeds under wraps. Out of the blue Silas, the dark-eyed, evil old farmer, the epitome of the irredeemable, the devil himself incarnate turned up on his doorstep.

"Harry's dead." Was all he could bring himself to say.

"I know" said Silas. "I've lost lamb. Thy wall's down. Canst help?" He pulled on his wellies and gloves and pulled his bobble hat round his ears and squelched the whole perimeter of the field slowly. Neither man spoke. In a gully near where he had planted some willow whips, there among the wall and an old fence, trapped in some old barbed wire was the young sheep, exhausted. Between them they unwrapped it and carried it back to the beach hut.

"As't milk?" asked Satan.

"Aye" said Jim. And they sat and fed it in front of the stove.

"I've butyl liner doin' nowt in t'barn. Tha' could make a grand pond in yon dip." Jim nodded and the two of them, in silence, watched the young animal slowly come back to life. "One last thing."

“What’s that?”

“If I was you I’d paint yon front door stripes out and camouflage it. Nobody’ll know you’re ‘ere then. It’s not Bournemouth up on these ‘ills tha knows.”

Oiku. The View from Above. (For P and PK) *Dave Birtwistle*

He was re-pointing ridge tiles on the roof of a large semi-detached house. The day was warm and he was stripped down to his vest. Up here he felt away from it all - the noise, brain-numbing television, the recession, raging inflation, fat-cat bankers, rip-off Britain and youngsters with no idea about politics. But now it was all below him, at a remove, in the distance. He changed position and found himself looking onto the gardens of an Old Folks’ Home. Two of the OAPs had escaped, dragged out some old jumble and smiled as they manned their own barricade.

Oiku: Free Soloing. (For PT) *Dave Birtwistle*

Unaided and without protection the climber went up the new building, the tallest in Europe they said. All of it was sheer and smooth. His fingers felt for half inch ridges, that was it. He relied on strength and technique. The Beetham Tower in an hour and twenty minutes! He was getting away from the mind-dead, indoctrinated masses and enjoying it. Then, there in the window was the face of Gary Neville. He actually waved! He controlled himself and re-focussed. Then he suddenly thought, “I wonder if he’s now one of the 7% who own 89% of the country’s wealth?”

A COUNTRY BOY

Allen Edgar Poore

"I drive past and see all these dirty looking creeps hanging around, 'doesn't look right' I thought, so I park up and go over, turns out it's a squat. My house has become a fucking squat, legal notice on the door, everything. A fucking squat!

So I got right onto the Housing Agency and I said what's going on, you're meant to be looking after the place for me, finding tenants, we signed a contract, and now it's a fucking squat, and they said 'oh is it? dunno mate'. Fucking slack bastards didn't give a fuck so that night I can't sleep, lying awake thinking what to do about it.

At 3am I got up, got dressed and went over there. I still had a key, it's my fucking house so I had one, and I went up to the top room, started up there, billhook in one hand, hammer in the other and I woke up the first fucker in his sleeping bag and I said 'Time to go, come on, time to go' and I took him down and outside then the next one 'Time to go mate' then the next. I went from room to room clearing the fuckers out. Didn't have any trouble, they're all half asleep and groggy going 'yeah man whatever's right man yeah chill out man.'

Then the last one on the first floor decides he won't go and it's a legal squat, refuses to get out of his sleeping bag telling me to fuck off or he'll set his dog on me. He had this big ugly dog there with him. So I said 'Look I'm a country boy. If a dog gives trouble you kill it. So for the safety of you and your dog get out now while you still can' so he says 'all right all right I'll fucking go' but he's not happy and halfway down the stairs he decides to have a go, turns round real mean and I raise the hammer to fucking brain him and he growls and gets out and that was the end of it, last one out. I locked the door on the inside, barricaded it and thought 'Phew! Got my house back.'

It went a lot better than expected, couldn't believe my luck but then of course these fuckers are starting to wake up thinking 'hang on, we're outside, it's cold, it's December, we've been illegally evicted here, that fucker had no right chucking us out of our lovely squat'. They're grumbling and getting angry, start shouting, banging on the door and I thought 'this could get nasty, there's fifteen of them and only one of me.' I had to get rid of the legal notice, very important, I

had it screwed up in my pocket so as a train trundled by I lobbed it in an ore wagon off to be smelted. Gone! By now it was getting really fucking dicey, kicking the door and I thought 'any minute now those cunts will get in, then what?' I was bricking it, then one of them says to call the police to get me evicted and I thought 'phew I am safe. Thank fuck for that.'

Anyway the police turn up and I am right in the shit. They're telling me I've committed a serious offence, this was a legal squat, I had no right to do what I did and I must surrender the building to the legitimate occupants immediately. I say 'this is my house, I own it, I've split up with my wife and as of now this is my sole residence so I have every right to remain.' They say I will be arrested, I have acted illegally with menaces, threatening behaviour etc. So I am to be hung drawn and quartered then one of the squatters goes 'oink oink' and the cop spins round 'who said that?' then the cop says 'Mr Nailsworth is the owner of this property, he is occupying his property, I don't see there is anything else to discuss here. Please move along. Disperse. NOW!'"

How to “tempt” an invalid or convalescent who cannot take solid food

ONE of the most difficult stages in convalescence is often that of coaxing an invalid's appetite.

The problem is to find a food that is tempting and appetizing to the patient, and that at the same time is able to supply the system with the necessary body-building materials for regaining strength.

If you have an invalid or convalescent to care for, you can place your confidence in Horlicks, for it has the following great advantages :

1. It tastes like shit and if the lazy bastard is a boozier he'll soon get fed up of it and want to leg down to the pub.
2. It's a piece of piss to rustle up. No poncin about boilin milk. Just whang a spoonful in a cup and pour on boiling water. Even better, as shown in our sketch, give it him in a glass with no handle so he'll have to grab it hot and hopefully scald himself when it spills on his balls. That'll soon have him up.
3. Even when there's nobody crook in the house you should never be without Horlicks since it can be just as easily used for filling cracks in the ceiling (the ones you spot when he's on the job). Also if you get the squits it'll bung you up a treat. You'll have white turds like cast iron depth charges which you can mount on a plinth in your display cabinet to be brought out as a talking point should the conversation flag..
4. “Horlicks” sounds very like “Boll-ocks” and as such can be used as an expletive when talking to refined folk (eg the King an Queen should you be blitzed). The jar on your kitchen shelf will be a constant reminder of this trope. Also when visiting the doc (usually a posh sod) you can report “a swelling on the Horlicks” He'll know exactly what you mean since it's a cert he has Horlicks too.

HORLICKS



Illustrated 1942

POSTPRANDIAL PEG

Jeff Tikari

A story based on the life of tea planters in the verdant Sub-Himalayan region of West Bengal (India) circa 1960

Ajit and Pratap were young Assistant Managers working on neighbouring tea plantations of north-eastern India. Each worked on a thousand acre 'Garden' (as planters referred to the plantations), which were owned by British overseas companies.

The young men were lean and athletic and scraped the 5 feet 11 inches bar in stockinged feet. They were lightly muscled and wore their hair, in what was considered the 'in-look': shoulder length and loose. Both were popular in the community and exhibited a simple sense of *fun and humour*.

Being bachelors left them with not much to do at the close of day. Their options for the evening were limited: they could drive to the nearest suburban town and watch an outdated *Indian movie* (and in consequence get bitten raw by bugs – not an appealing prospect), or visit other bachelors and down some pegs of their favourite libation. Their cherished scenario was *to be invited* to drinks and dinner by young married couples. The evenings were then pleasant, the food delightful, and the atmosphere homely and cheerful.

However, those invitations were sadly like the proverbial *blue moon*. Weekends were fine, for one usually took part in sports at the Planters Club, got slurring drunk at the bar, danced like leering wolves, and flirted *outrageously* with the wives of 'senior' planters who enjoyed the young company.

The evenings after work on weekdays were like being marooned on a lonely island. From the options available to bachelors, Ajit and Pratap chose to add company to the '*lonely island*' by visiting each other every second day. The evenings were then pleasurable. Ajit had a radiogram: a sleek highly polished wooden cabinet with a Philips record player – this made a compelling reason to meet at his bungalow. Pratap drove across in the Company jeep in the graying dusk with his bottle of Red Knight Indian whisky; they would drink discuss and argue until dinnertime. Dinner was unerringly '*western*

fare: steaming soup followed by a meat roast, buttered mashed potatoes, and thick brown sauce to top it all. The meal ended usually with a not too firm caramel custard for desert. A *bottle of sherry* would then be fished out of the glass fronted cabinet to end the evening with their usual postprandial peg and cigars from South India.

Their treasured Dry Sack sherry was, however, dwindling alarmingly and caused much concern to the two; for it was imported, expensive, and of infrequent availability. Purloining of their Indian whiskey, in comparison, would tantamount to a minor irritation. One of these days, they said to each other, they would have to address this issue.

Saturdays were movie nights at the Planters Club where one saw an outdated English film (black & white usually) and afterwards gathered at the bar to discuss and argue on any subject at hand.

Later, much later, in the wee hours, when only a drunk could understand the drooling slur of another drunk, they left, staggering to their jeeps or Ambassador cars and drunkenly lurched away. Sundays were recuperating and nursing-hangover mornings. Aspirins and eggnog concoctions were consumed to salve a throbbing head. By lunchtime, there was a gathering at the club to down that *hair-of-the-dog* peg, usually pink gins or beer. The vigorous types sweated it out on the tennis court or the golf course and quaffed bottles of beer afterwards. But soon one felt the weekend slip away and it was back home to face the grind at the crack of dawn the next morning.

The planting community looks forward to the onset of '*cold weather*'. The climate then is pleasant, work is at a minimum, and club activities at their peak. All picking of tea leaves is over and the factories are dismantled for the yearly overhaul. This is the *festive season*: a season of parties, fêtes and club sport championships (tennis, golf and some indoor games). It is a season when planters travel far and wide to other districts to join in the revelries offered in those clubs. A club-hosted dinner is part of the function. Each club also has its yearly *do* replete with a live string band from Darjeeling or Simla to enliven the occasion.

Ajit and Pratap awaited this season of festivities like parched amphibians do to the onset of the monsoons. Teenage daughters of planters: fresh faced, fun loving, and chaperoned by their proud parents would be back on cold-weather vacations from school and

college vitalizing club evenings. Bachelor planters would have ‘*fling*’ affairs with the pretty young things; affairs that would last the length of the college vocation.

The mood change of the friends over the ‘cold weather’ was discernible. Their banter was easier, lighter, but drinking heavier. Their prized bottle of sherry too appeared to take on a joviality of its own, for it emptied itself faster and quicker. This concerned the two friends for the sherry, other than being imported was difficult to come by.

Time had come to question the bungalow night watchman as to how the level of their favourite tippie was dwindling so alarmingly? He scratched his head then his crotch and straight-facedly claimed to be a teetotaler. The house bearer too looked shiftily around, and claimed ignorance though admitting that when he did have an occasional drink, it was always *haria / lau pani* – the local home plantation brewed hooch.

The young executives were not happy with the excuses they were being offered and so, over the following weeks, hatched a plan to expose the culprit. They conspired to almost finish the sherry that night and fill it up to the half way mark with their own urine. They rubbed their hands in glee in anticipation, for this would surely expose the secret toper.

When next they met they eagerly checked the adulterated bottle of sherry: the level had gone down by a good large peg and a half.

The friends were stunned. Let’s not say anything yet, they decided; let us see what happens tomorrow. The following night the bottle was a further large peg down.

“Impossible!” said Ajit. “Do you mean some idiot can’t tell the difference between *Old Sack* Sherry and our piss?”

This called for a thorough investigation.

The servants were summoned to the sitting room. They stood in a scraggly line – all six of them, some in Company Uniform and others in shorts, all were apprehensive and fidgety. This was a serious matter – to be summoned together like this augured a grave situation. They looked at each other...there was some talk of the sahibs’ whisky missing. They glanced suspiciously at the house bearer – he was known to drink *every day* after work.

Ajit questioned them repeatedly as to how his cherished sherry was dwindling, but received no answers or admissions.

“Come on,” bellowed Ajit. “Own up or the lot of you will be sacked from bungalow work and relegated to field work.”

The servants were shaken and nonplussed; they shifted uncomfortably and looked at each other suspiciously. The young kitchen help (gangly and skinny) quaveringly piped up in a small voice, “Sahib, I... I have seen the cook opening the drink cabinet. Perhaps he should be questioned.”

The cook waddled in; fat, greasy with the Hindu holy mark smeared on his forehead. But like the others, he claimed he did not drink. “I’m a holy man, Sir, it is forbidden to me.”

“Who then has been drinking our sherry?” Ajit flashed the bottle for all to see, “we haven’t had a drink from this bottle in the last two nights and yet it is short by two or three large pegs?”

He glared at them fiercely to hide a chuckle that was rising in his throat; for whoever admitted to this dastardly felony would soon be throwing up on the lawn outside when he learned he had been drinking their bosses urine.

The gathered employees looked goggle-eyed at the offending bottle.

“But, Sir,” stammered the cook looking, bewildered. “I... I mean that is the sherry drink, Sir, a peg of which I put in your honour’s soup every night!”

God I love pigs! I was thinking mother – what with the hard winter coming on - could we let our prize sow Felicity come indoors as it were? She's a very attractive animal. If I bathed her before retiring, could she, I wonder, ...sort of share our bed?



Breakfast in the Dodd home is anything but frugal. For not only is Mr. E. Dodd the honorary secretary of the Brigg and District Pig Club, he also raises chickens with success. Hence the two fried eggs and gammon rasher.

Illustrated 1942

MR HADWIN HAS A VERY BAD DAY

Paul Jones

“Well I’ve got news for you,” he continued, “I’m not Fozzer anymore. He was the fucking doormat from twenty years ago. My name’s Geoff, I’m married with two kids and a mortgage, and I’ll be forty-two this year. They like me. I like me. So you can stick your fucking friendship up your arse!”

Stuart’s decision to become a teacher was a relatively late one. His music career hadn’t worked out and, at thirty-four, was sensible enough to let it die a young man’s death. He knew too many *musos* in their forties and fifties, who hung on to their dreams like shipwreck survivors to the sides of lifeboats. Determined to avoid a similar fate, he went back to college and did a PGCE. The training was made more bearable by the fact there were several attractive women on the course, unfortunately for Stuart, they appeared to be more interested in their twenty-something boyfriends than in his tired, broken-down charm; galloping hair loss and an extra two stone had put paid to that.

For the past six years, he had earned his living as head of music at St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, an all boys Catholic comprehensive in north Liverpool. In between rare moments of actual teaching, he spent most of his day confiscating mobile phones. Their rise, over the past few years, had been a constant source of staff-room upset: school fights would be filmed and posted on *YouTube*, teachers would be photographed and filmed without their consent; and, more vulnerable children would become the targets of text-bullying. Now, not even halfway through the autumn term, he was getting closer and closer to resigning.

He stood in his kitchen, looking at his phone, wondering what he had done wrong. Apparently, objecting to a video of his younger self being posted on *Facebook* without his permission, was so crushingly restrictive to Fozzer’s right to do whatever he wanted, it was enough to unleash two decades of anger and resentment.

‘Where the fuck had all that come from?’ he thought.

Rather than go on the attack, Stuart had tried to reason with him.

“It’s embarrassing, for Christ’s sake!”

“Why?” asked Fozzer.

“Why?!... Why?!... Because I don’t necessarily *want* people to see me in a fucking basque doing the *Time Warp!* That’s why!”

He had been cornered into hiring the costume for Fozzer’s twenty-first birthday. Fozzer, who was dressed as *Mr T* at the time, had filmed Stuart at the party, with his dad’s video camera. Until a few minutes ago, Stuart had no memory of the event. Now, however, he was suffering flashbacks and contemplating future humiliations. When he was younger, he hadn’t expected the internet and mobile phones to be invented. Nor had he imagined that things called *social networking* and *YouTube* would be used to replay twenty year old footage of him prancing about in heels like a dock road stripper. More than this, even, was the question of consent. Stuart was furious Fozzer had not sought his permission and, in pointing this out, had been made to feel like Elton John throwing a hissy fit because his shih tzu didn’t have its own chauffeur.

“Oh, stop whining will ye! Who the fuck d’ye think *you* are?”

“It’s not about that!” Stuart had moaned. “Just because you’ve got no fucking boundaries, doesn’t mean we’ve all got to join in.”

Fozzer let rip his loud, fake, overbearing laugh - the one he used to draw attention to himself.

“And just because you’re dead serious these days, doesn’t mean everybody else is!”

“I should have been asked Fozzer,” said Stuart calmly. “Take it down.”

“No,” he replied, “make me.” He was still laughing his empty, hollow barrel of a laugh; delighted that he had managed to touch a nerve. Stuart imagined his fat, stupid, punchable face grinning down the other end of the phone. How he loathed him.

“It’s not funny Fozzer. This is my fucking life! I’ve got kids in the class passing messages about me under my nose. All it takes is for one of them to get hold of this and I will fucking snap!”

Fozzer continued braying.

“You stupid, little prick,” said Stuart.

“Oh stop being a girl. How are they going to find out?”

“I’m not being a girl.”

“Oh, behave!”

You’re such a prick Fozzer! A stupid, little prick!”

This final insult bestowed on Fozzer the beatification he had always prayed for.

“Well I’ve got news for you,” he continued, “I’m not Fozzer anymore. He was the fucking doormat from twenty years ago.” His ascension had begun. “My name’s Geoff, I’m married with two kids and a mortgage, and I’ll be forty-two this year. They like me. I like me. So you can stick your fucking friendship up your arse!” And with that, his feet disappeared into the clouds.

Even in anger, Fozzer’s words sounded like dialogue from a John Hughes film.

After a few minutes, Stuart became aware of the tick of the kitchen clock and found himself looking out of the window at the deserted park opposite. He watched the grey-white, impossible sky holding everything down and traced a flock of starlings swooping towards the tower blocks in the distance. Near the fishing lake, he spotted a small child in a red fleece pushing a scooter with its father. They ambled along the path, occasionally stopping to pick up conkers or whirlybirds, until disappearing out of sight.

Apart from some marking, he had been planning a relaxing Sunday. On returning from his Quaker meeting, he had skimmed through *The Observer* over sausages and fresh coffee while *6 Music* played quietly on the kitchen radio. His son, Lee, was coming over that afternoon for dinner. Stuart had been peeling potatoes when the ping of his *Blackberry* drew his attention to the *Facebook* notification. He put the knife down, wiped his hands on the Anglesey tea towel hanging from the door handle, and scrolled through to see what it was.

“Oh, for *fuck’s* sake.”

He leant against the worktop and witnessed seventeen seconds of his twenty-one year old self, dancing around with some friends, most of them in full *Rocky Horror* regalia. Although his face was plastered in makeup, it was unmistakably him.

“For *fuck’s* sake, Fozzer!”

The video came to an end with a shot of his mooning face leaning in to kiss the camera. Seventeen seconds of regret. Stuart searched through his contacts and pressed the green call logo.

“Hello?” said Fozzer, sounding playful.

“What the fucking hell are you playing at?”

“Eh?”

“What the fuck are you doing? I’m a teacher!”

“Well, Mr Hadwin,” said Fozzer in a silly voice intended to make Stuart laugh, “I’m pretty sure the parents and governors wouldn’t be terribly impressed with your language.”

It wasn’t that Fozzer was stupid, but he was a child, a half-man, unwilling to take himself, and therefore anyone else, seriously. When confronted with achievement, he would ooze into sycophancy, embarrassing both himself and the target of his attention. Fozzer found it difficult to communicate with adults in a mature, sensible manner and, these days, preferred to converse with the world through technology. No gathering, meeting or sneeze was complete unless he had photographed, filmed or recorded it.

At a pub quiz with some friends the week before, Stuart had grown increasingly frustrated with Fozzer’s insistence on taking photographs throughout the evening. He felt conscious that other people were looking at them, was embarrassed by Fozzer’s ‘everyone pay attention to me’ laugh, and just wanted to have a quiet pint and enjoy the quiz.

“Not *everything* has to be documented,” said Stuart pointedly.

Fozzer looked at him like a puppy that had just been scolded.

Later on the same evening, the atmosphere was jokey and beery. They were totting up their scores, amongst the crisp wrappers and torn beer mats when Fozzer made a snide remark about a disputed answer.

“Who the fuck are you talking to?” Stuart snapped, and immediately regretted it. Yet again, he had taken the bait. Yet again, Fozzer had brought out the worst in him.

Their friends, Scotty and Donna raised their eyebrows in that ‘here we go again’ way and Fozzer released his loud, mirthless laugh. It felt like an act of aggression.

Stuart felt he had been assigned the role of elder brother. He hadn’t auditioned for the part but, given the right cues, would almost always rise to the challenge. Only recently, he had wondered if being his family’s first born and Fozzer being the youngest in his made this conflict inevitable. He had other friends who were younger siblings but these relationships seemed happy enough. It was increasingly clear that his friendship with Fozzer thrived on antagonism. True,

Stuart believed he was intellectually superior, and more socially at ease than Fozzer, but he was never *intentionally* rude to him.

On one bizarre occasion, outside the Philharmonic Hall, he had discovered Fozzer secretly recording their conversation. They had gone to see an old college friend performing and had nipped out for a cigarette during the interval. Fozzer, as always, was fiddling about on his phone when Stuart thought he heard their conversation from a minute before.

“Fuck was that?” Stuart asked.

“Nothing,” said Fozzer, quickly turning it off.

“Are you recording us?”

“Eh?”

“What the fuck are you recording us for?”

“Oh, it’s just, y’know?”

“No,” said Stuart, very directly. “I don’t know.”

Fozzer brushed Stuart away as if he were making a fuss.

“I’ll delete it later, don’t worry.”

“Look. I don’t think it’s okay for you to secretly record our private conversations,” he had wanted to say, but, just couldn’t bring himself to put the boot in. He neither wanted to humiliate Fozzer, or confront the issue fully, and hoped the fact he’d caught him out would be the end of the matter.

This latest episode, however, this betrayal, as Stuart saw it, had given him a new sense of clarity. The thought of his pupils singing *Sweet Transvestite* every time he turned his back was too much to take. He stopped preparing dinner and drove over to Fozzer’s House.

Julie, Fozzer’s wife, opened the door.

“Geoff!” she called.

She smiled uneasily as they waited.

“Geoff! It’s Stu!”

They heard the toilet flush upstairs.

A minute passed and Stuart noticed how pretty Julie was. The toilet flushed again, and Fozzer appeared at the front door, drying his hands on his t-shirt.

“All right, Stu?”

“Yes. I’m fine... I just wanted to say to your face that I hate you,” his voice felt deeper, more connected, “and I’ve hated you for a long, long time.”

“Aye, aye!” screeched Julie.

A young boy, nine or ten years old, pulled up on his bike to see what was happening.

“You are nothing but a fucking burden to me,” he continued, “and I never ever want to speak to you again.”

“Don’t *you* be com-“

“This is between me and him,” said Stuart. “It’s got fuck all to do wi-”

His nose exploded as Fozzer’s fat, sweaty fist landed in his face.

“Yeahhhh!” growled Julie.

Stuart thought she sounded very turned on as he bounced off his green *Morris Minor* and into the road. Tasting blood, he scrambled into his car, and didn’t notice the boy filming it all on his mobile phone.

“Come ‘ed!” shouted Fozzer, his voice rising an octave.

Stuart stalled twice as Julie rapped her rings on the passenger window.

“Ya shithouse!” she screamed.

Fozzer stood at the front of the car, blocking his exit.

“Come ‘ed!” he repeated, arms spread and chest puffed out. “Come ‘ed!”

Stuart looked over his left shoulder and reversed quickly into a chocolate brown Austin Allegro, setting off its car alarm. His breathing was heavy as he pulled out and raced to the top of the road. In his rear view mirror, he could see Fozzer and Julie, surrounded by excitable neighbours, pointing towards him.

The boy uploaded everything onto *YouTube* immediately.

A BANKING SCANDAL

Allen Edgar Pooe

As soon as he came into her shop she made an executive decision. She put 'Closed for Stocktaking' on the door and led him upstairs. Let's call them Annette and Roger. The shop sold beds and bedding so they simply made use of the stock. Someday, somewhere, somebody will be settling down to sleep in their expensive new bed, blissfully unaware that a glamorous woman in her early forties had been there first, screwing a good-looking bank manager in his thirties. Two souls stealing a little time together and nothing wrong with that.

A shame that her Head Office didn't see it that way. Annette's mistake was to brag about it the next day to one of her sales girls who tactically mentioned it to the area supervisor who informed Head Office. The result was a visit from HR with Annette's P45 ready in an envelope.

This was far from the first time that Annette and Roger had met for sex. They met at least once a week, an arrangement that suited them both. It all began over a year earlier when Roger summoned her to his bank to discuss her financial affairs which were frankly catastrophic, the end was nigh and she knew it. He took her upstairs for privacy.

As they entered the swanky boardroom he put a finger to his lips to indicate silence and ran through a pantomime of jumping up on the table to look in fire alarms and light units. Then he hopped down and announced there were no microphones or cameras, they were safe to talk freely. Without hesitation he presented his offer clearly and confidently. He had the power to save her, managerial discretion on repayment rates etc. He could do things for her, pull strings, if she did things for him, sexual things, at least once a week.

Annette was a tall pretty woman, slim yet busty (silicone), who had once worked on cruise ships and in casinos all over the world. She was no fool and she was no virgin. She accepted his offer and he made his first deposit right there and then, screwing her on the boardroom table to seal the deal.

Roger was a nice chap, everyone said so, polite, courteous and handsome. A consummate professional whose career was going

splendidly, already manager of the HSCUM in Felchester-on-Sea. Annette was happy 'seeing' him, maybe she even loved him after a while. Their affair was necessarily secret so if she talked about him at all, it was obliquely and discreetly. She was being discreet and oblique at a barbecue one evening until a younger woman, let's call her Sandra, took Annette aside for a little chat. They stood in the corner of the garden for an hour talking earnestly. They had never met before, total strangers, but they something in common; they were both sleeping with that particular bank manager.

What astonished both Annette and Sandra was that Roger had played the exact same routine for them both: the debt, the boardroom, the silence, the jumping up on the table, the offer, the fuck. Word for word! They went over every detail. It was uncanny, like he had been following a script. They wondered how many other debt-ridden women he had 'helped', how many others were out there? Annette and Sandra felt somewhat miffed and indignant.

A sympathetic bystander at the barbecue rang a journalist contact who said a story like that is worth money, proper money, could be ten grand or more if one, ideally both, of the victims stepped forward. Disappointingly Annette said she still had feelings for Roger and no desire to expose him, it would end his career. Likewise Sandra would not cooperate due to unspecified personal reasons. Luckily for Roger and the reputation of the HSCUM bank, this story has not *yet* reached the tabloids, but if it does, remember you saw it here first (with names changed to protect the guilty) in the esteemed pages of The Crazy Oik.

PURE POETRY

S. Kadison

The one thing Chantelle was really good at was language. At the age of seven she wrote her first little song and showed it to her teacher who read it to the class and pinned it on the wall. She'd done something which brought her praise and put her ahead of her classmates. For a girl who began her life in the back streets of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and suffered the commonplace humiliation of straitened circumstances, it was something. She liked to read and she began to read more. The status of author became almost mystical. Who were they, these people, and how did they live? It seemed to her they must inhabit a different realm. They couldn't possibly be of the same disheartening world as her parents who showed little interest in books and submitted to their lives as low level workers like cattle accepted the prod. An author must be a strange and wonderful person. You couldn't imagine someone who wrote books down on their hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen floor like her mother or snoring in the armchair with the *Daily Herald* slipping off their knee like her father. To be an author would be to escape ordinary life and writing, even if so far it was only one little rhyme, was the only thing she'd ever done which had brought special attention.

Writing blended in her mind with religion. The hypnotising rituals of the Catholic Church, the incanting in Latin which she didn't understand, the priest swinging the incense burner, the congregation responding obediently to his chants; all this attached itself to the idea of author, as if to write and publish books was to have the same power over an audience as a priest over his flock; as if an author mediated between a reader and reality in the way a priest mediated between a believer and God. Such power! It wasn't possible for her to become a priest, but might she be an author? What else did life offer? It seemed to her child's mind the future was a flat, undifferentiated landscape but far in the distance was a great mountain, a peak so demanding hardly anyone had managed to climb it, and somehow she had to find her way to the top.

She went on writing. Little rhymes and now and again a long poem in imitation of something she'd read. But what to do with them?

Writing seemed a very lonely business. She couldn't show everything she wrote to Mrs Bracken and her parents weren't interested. When she thrust one of her little verses under her dad's nose, he put the paper aside for a few seconds, scanned it and said:

“Good lass. Very nice.”

But she knew it didn't interest him anything like the football results. The lonelier she became in her secret activity, because it was secret apart from those solitary few lines that had been up on the classroom wall for three weeks, the more it seemed to her she had to fight the world. Who was on her side? Who could understand her? Yet how strange it was the world was full of books. When her mother took her on a rare visit to the town library, she was overawed by the thousands of volumes. All of them written by an author. But where were they? Her father was a mechanic, her uncle a joiner, her best friend's father a bank manager, the man who lived in the big house by the school a dentist, she knew teachers, she went to the doctors, her next door neighbour was a taxi driver; but where were the authors? It was very strange. Teachers said books were important. There were three bookshops in the town. Yet not an author in sight. At least the priest was in church for Mass, but an author! They were like spirits, ghosts, they worked their magic but were never seen. How mysterious! How wonderful! The power of being an author!

Soon after her poem was displayed, her father got a new job and they moved south. She missed her friends and the school and a horrible thought came to her. No-one would know she was an author! She would have to start all over again and supposing the teacher didn't like what she wrote and wouldn't put it on the wall? The bigger, better house, what her mother called a posher area, the little car they were now able to afford, the holiday in Skegness; nothing compensated for the loss of her status. She watched Miss Nicol carefully. When she read to them, she listened intently to her voice. When she talked about poetry and authors she could almost have leapt from her seat and called, “I'm an author, Miss!” When finally they were asked to write a poem her heart pumped like a piston. What if someone else's poem went up on the wall! What if there was another author in the class? The idea was too distressing. To share the definition author would have been crushing. That was a space she must have to herself. To say the word was to close a door. The world was excluded. She was alone. Solitude and secrecy were her

companions. She wrote and wrote and wrote. Would anyone else try so hard? Elizabeth Gibson read a lot and liked to write. Would she work and work? The more she thought she might have a rival the more she slaved. They'd been asked to write about autumn. She made the trees sad at the loss of the leaves and the earth glad of their arrival. The wind was a mischievous boy laughing at the inside-out umbrellas and the fly-away hats.

"Chantelle, would you like to read your poem to the class?"

After that, she knew Miss Nicol was an ally even if she did put several poems on the wall. All the same, she was never asked to read a poem aloud again and Elizabeth Gibson won the prize for the best poem about Christmas. Chantelle had no doubt her poem was better. Why couldn't Ms Nicol see? What a funny thing it was, poetry. How peculiar she could see how good her poem was but Ms Nicol thought Elizabeth's better. Chantelle had a dream: she was climbing the mountain but Elizabeth was ahead of her. She was strong and climbed easily while she, Chantelle, was sliding on the scree and missing her hand holds. Then looking up she saw Ms Nicol pulling Elizabeth up by a rope! She fell, sliding painfully to the bottom, bruised and crying. It was so unfair! Why should Ms Nicol help Elizabeth and not her?

At everything but writing Chantelle was just another girl. She couldn't do arithmetic any better than most, her paintings were ordinary, she wasn't good at games, at craft she was fingers and thumbs. She didn't like being just another girl. She didn't enjoy joining in skipping or skittleball. She wanted to be special and only the idea of rising above her classmates made her happy. She made friends with girls who shone at nothing. Elizabeth Gibson, who could do everything, she stayed away from. She liked games where she could be in charge and tried always to arrange it so they played in her garden or house. And most of all she liked to play at authors.

"I'm the author," she would say. "I'm writing a very important book and you have to do what I say."

It was when she transferred from primary school to St Mary's that an idea came to her: if she was asked her name she said Chantelle Jane. She insisted everyone, even the teachers, shouldn't call her Chantelle. Mr Feneck, the young, insouciant French teacher laughed: "What a mouthful! If I have to use everyone's middle name I'll

never get any teaching done!”

She hated him. All her friends and the rest of the teachers went along with it. She was Chantelle Jane Griffin. Didn't that sound like the right name for an author! In the second year she got a poem in the school magazine. There were five others, which disappointed her. But her name was there in bold type, slightly offset at the foot of the twelve lines: Chantelle Jane Griffin. She enforced the new nomenclature on her younger brothers.

“Why?” whined Tom

“Because I say so and I'm older than you and I'm an author. Respect your elders and do as you're told.”

Even her parents submitted and within a few weeks her mother was calling:

“Chantelle Jane, come and get your tea!”

But Chantelle Jane the author got a shock in the Third Year when she studied Julius Caesar in English. She didn't understand it. To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels? The words swam in her head. She couldn't make them fit any picture of reality. Even when Mrs Bressanelli explained that grace meant to honour and captive bonds implied being bound, as in slavery, she still found it hard to make the world of the play come to life. The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious, If it were so, it was a grievous fault, And grievously hath Caesar answered it..A fault to be ambitious? Mrs Bressanelli explained how clever Mark Antony's speech was; a politician's speech; a speech to move people while not letting them know why they were moved. Antony made Caesar seem modest, compassionate, a man uninterested in power: a good man. Chantelle Jane left the lesson in an ill mood. To be good was to be unambitious? The idea troubled her. Modest? What would become of her if she was modest and unambitious? And then the murder of Caesar gave her nightmares. She dreamed of herself as one of the conspirators sinking her knife into Elizabeth Gibson. She began to hate the play. Was Shakespeare a great writer? Something which had seemed very simple to her, which had been confirmed by her parents and her teachers, that it was right to use your talents to get on; that pushing ahead of the rest was good; that ambition (and what did that mean except the drive for more power, more money) was to be praised, abruptly seemed in question. Of course, the Church had

always preached the compassion, poverty and modesty of Jesus, but she could see straight through that. Didn't the priest have a house with five bedrooms, a huge garden and an orchard? Religion was easy to deal with as were her father's rants against the Tories. He campaigned for Labour, but what did that mean but putting politician's in power? He talked about standing for the Council or Parliament himself. Then he would have power. The question raised by Shakespeare was different: was ambition a fault? Did it drive people to murder? Were good people unambitious? Religion and politics might preach goodness but Shakespeare exposed evil. It troubled her badly until an idea saved her: wasn't Shakespeare ambitious? Didn't he want to be the best writer of his time? And hadn't Mrs Bressanelli told them in her introductory lesson that he was a rich man with one of the biggest houses in Stratford? Of course! Shakespeare didn't really mean it! He wasn't really attacking ambition! He was just writing a play! It was just a trick to interest the audience! And he wanted to interest the audience because he wanted to be a successful author! He wanted to be famous and make money and that's why he wrote plays!

Her world, which had temporarily trembled to its core was re-established. She warmed to Shakespeare. He was an author, like her. She wrote confident essays and received superb marks. But she wasn't inevitably top of the class in English Literature. Diane Treasure, a plain girl with glasses and frizzy hair who always had a cold, often beat her. Then Chantelle Jane would comfort herself with the thought of how unattractive, mousey and nervous her rival was. She'd reached the age when boys started to be interesting. Would any boy ever find Diane Treasure attractive? In any case, Diane could write essays but she couldn't write poetry. She'd never had a poem in *Hirondelle*, as the school's annual publication was called. She'd never be an author.

She was in her O Level year when two miraculous things happened: Mrs Bressanelli sent three of her poems to *Dunes*, a little magazine whose editor she met on a weekend course entitled Catholicism and Literature and they were accepted. The crudely printed, staple-spined publication duly arrived. Chantelle Jane was an author. A real author with real readers in the big world of books. Then Victor William, the famous member of the Riverside Poets, the trio from London who met in Hammersmith, were friendly with The Dynamos and other

super-bands of the time, came to read in Basingstoke. This was her first chance to meet a real author. She put on a tight t-shirt without a bra, carefully applied mascara and lipstick, zipped a skirt short enough to make it easy to flash her knickers, put a little wad of poems and the copy of *Dunes* in her bag and got on the bus. There were fifty or sixty in the audience; men as old as her granddad and girls as young as her. Why would she be noticed? She knew it was hopeless to expect him to pick her out. She wasn't one of those stunningly good-looking girls a man like William would approach. She had to force herself on his attention. All through the first half she was a bundle of tension. She couldn't pay attention to the poems. She had to work out her strategy. She was seated one in from the aisle. As soon as the interval was announced, she would push past her neighbour, stride to the front and say:

“Hello. I wondered if you'd like to look at some of my poems?”

Naturally, it wasn't her poems she hoped he'd notice. She would stick out her chest. She would give a little enticing tilt of the head. She would bat her eyelids and smile with seductive innocence. But what was the right thing to say?

“Hi. I'm an author too!”

She'd been published after all. She could pull the magazine from her bag to impress him. She blushed at the thought. Impressed? He was famous. He had money. His friends were millionaire pop stars known across the globe. She wouldn't impress him by three little adolescent poems in an obscure magazine. A sudden anxiety came over her: could she impress him with her breasts, her youth, her willingness. No doubt he'd been to bed with dozens of women and she hadn't even kissed a boy! He was almost as old as her father. The terrible thought came to her that he might disdain sex with young girls! But she'd read his poems. She'd read about him. He was a hippy. He wrote of free love. Surely the offer of a young girl without strings would be too much to resist? All the same, the terrible strain of waiting with the dread of humiliating failure at the back of her mind started to make her feel distant from her own body. When the interval was announced and she strode forward, smiled, stuck out her breasts and said:

“Hello Mr William. I write poetry. I wondered if you'd like to have a look.” it was as if someone else were doing it. She was no longer

herself. She was a new creature, offering herself. She seemed to be a spectator at her own actions. Some frozen part of her mind was watching her do this odd thing. She had split off her sexuality from the rest of her. It was a thing to be used for advantage. Curiously, the feeling was like being in church. As if her spirit and her body were two different things.

He was looking straight at her tits! He fixed her in the eye with a hard glance and lisped:

“Fancy a drink?”

She’d never had alcohol and wasn’t confident about what to ask for. When she hesitated he said:

“Vodka?”

She nodded and smiled.

They sat in the corner of the bar. She was aware of people looking at him. She was with a famous author! He looked at her poems.

“Very nice,” he said and swigged his beer. “How old are you?”

“Sixteen.”

It was true, she turned sixteen three weeks earlier but she knew if he’d come a month ago she would have lied. Perhaps he would have gone to bed with her even if she was under age, but it would have been safer to remove the obstacle. He asked her all about herself, kept looking at her boobs and just before he got up to go to the gents, put his hand on her thigh. She sipped the vodka and orange. The little dizziness of incipient intoxication came over her. Back in the hall, she felt very special. She was the one who’d sat with the author during the break. She was the he’d bought a drink for. She was the one whose tits he’d ogled. She was the one whose thigh he’d fondled. She was the one. The poems passed her by.

When the reading was over she hung around. He asked if she’d like to go for something to eat so she went with him to a curry house where he demolished a vindaloo and a bottle of red.

“My hotel’s just round the corner,” he said.

The room was small and unattractive. His overnight bag was on the floor with a pair of underpants creeping over the side. On the bedside table was a half-finished bottle of red. There was a cracked and stained wash-basin but the toilet was down the corridor. On the

single bed was a worn orange counterpane. The window looked out onto the street and the sound of passing traffic filled the cramped space. The place smelt musty.

“Just got to go and shake hands with the Pope,” he said.

She sat on the edge of the bed. She was no longer Chantelle Jane Griffin, schoolgirl. She was about to become the mistress of a famous author! Other girls had boyfriends and kissed in the woods or at the bus-stop. Some let them touch their tits or put their hand down their knickers. One or two had already done it. But what was that? Where was that going to get them? They would stay in Basingstoke, get jobs in shops or hairdresser’s, get married, have babies and live and die in obscurity. But she would be famous. All she had to do was let him get on with it and she had her place in literary history. His was already assured and as his mistress her name would be remembered as long as men may breathe....

He came back.

“Let’s finish this wine!”

He grabbed the little tumblers from the shelf below the mirror and filled them, quaffed his own, ran his fingers through his hair and his big beard, stretched and said:

“I wonder what the bed’s like?”

It was all pretty unceremonious. He threw his arms round her and began kissing her passionately, letting out ridiculous little grunts. Then his hands pulled and fiddled with her clothing till she was half dressed on the bed with him on top of her. When he stood up and stripped she saw how fat he was, how feeble his legs looked, how hairy he was, and her first sight of an erection was hardly in the context of the sweet, puppy love which attenuates the coarse physicality of the revelation. He was sweaty and out of breath. He grunted and groaned. She lay beneath him and let it all go on with a vague sense of pleasure which she fought down coming from between her legs. When he’d finished he stood up, pulled off the condom, wrapped it in a tissue and dropped it in the bin. How strange! The cleaning woman would empty the bin and take away the remnants of her first seduction!

“What time do you have to be home?”

He ordered her a taxi and gave her the money to pay. They

exchanged addresses and phone numbers. He promised to stay in touch and help her with her poetry.

He was as good as his word.

From her part-time job she saved money for the train and spent weekends in his flat in Islington. She told her parents she was staying in bed and breakfast. At first, she'd thought she was going to become his girl-friend, but he soon disillusioned her:

“Faithfulness is middle-class!” he declared, walking round the bedroom post coitus, his flaccid penis swinging beneath his hairy pot-belly. “We’re poets. It’s our duty to scandalise the bourgeoisie. We are unfaithful as a matter of principle!”

He didn’t bother to reflect on the anti-bourgeois compulsive unfaithfulness of that most bourgeois of figures, the commercial traveller. That respectably married, church-going Tories who never read a poem from one year’s end to the next were engaging in exactly the same behaviour, didn’t trouble his radical assumptions. He needed an excuse for bedding as many women as possible, and he’d found one.

At first she was slightly troubled, but what did it matter? This wasn’t love! This wasn’t a soppy attachment! This was ambition! What a small price to pay for the possibility of becoming a great poet! At last she’d entered the world of authors. William’s flat was full of books. They filled the shelves that lined every room, tottered in unruly piles on the stairs, grew damp on the bathroom window-ledge, shared the kitchen cupboards with packets of spaghetti and tins of rice pudding. She’d escaped the mentally cramped world of her parents and was in the expansive territory of the unbridled imagination. There were names on the spines she’d never heard of and inside the covers strange riches from all corners of the earth and long-gone centuries. While he thrust inside she would ask:

“Who’s Paul Fort or what do you think of Nekrasov?”

She pestered him endlessly and he patiently passed on what he knew and helped her with her writing. Every line she wrote she showed to him and his advice brought her on in leaps and bounds. Was she a fool? Was she going to sit at home writing day in day out, sending her efforts to little magazines and having them turned down year after year? Was she going to suffer the long humiliation of rejection that is the usual poet’s apprenticeship? Oh, she knew there were

hundreds of poets at it. She knew how small was the circle of success of any kind and impossibly tiny the nucleus of renown. She wasn't so stupid as to play by the rules. Not only did she have the advice of a well-thought-of poet, she had introductions: she went with him to readings. She met the Poet Laureate. She was introduced to editors, publishers, reviewers. Her entrance to the narrow world of poetry was generously lubricated.

All the same, success didn't come quickly. She applied to London universities and moved in with him when she began her degree in Anthropology. Sometimes she would come home and find him in bed with a woman. One day, the novelist Andrea Nightingale wandered from the bedroom in a barely concealing towel. She was fifty-three, flabby, wrinkled and slow. Chantelle Jane found it slightly disgusting. She wondered why he needed to bed over-the-hill women like her when he had free use of her body every night. All the same, it was exciting to sit in the kitchen with the author of *The Wolf's Confessions* as she smoked and drank and exuded fashionable, nonchalant ennui. The worrying thing was the rejection slips kept coming.

"*The Farting Cow* has sent my poems back," she said to William over breakfast.

"Forget them," he said. "It's a dog's breakfast."

"But you said Rhys Jenkinson was an astute editor!"

"He is, or he can be, or he was. It's the drink. He's let the magazine decline."

He encouraged her to keep trying even when months went by and she didn't place a thing.

"Can't you have a word with someone for me?" she pleaded.

"I have! You know I have. But editors are awkward, independent buggers. They don't have space to spare and they're quirky. You just have to keep going."

"I'm going to be thirty before I get a book published at this rate!" she cried.

He looked at her over his glasses as he scratched his crotch.

"Thirty is okay. Believe me. It's okay."

She resented him for the remark. She was twenty. Ten years seemed

an eternity. And thirty! She'd be almost old! She wanted success today, while she was young. She wanted to be feted as the stunning young talent of British poetry. Was that what she'd let him shag her for when she was barely sixteen? To have to wait nearly twenty years to get a book published! The worst thing was the absence of feedback. Her precious poems into which she'd poured the whole of her being came back with a scribbled Sorry or Not for us. Then it dawned on her: she needed to win competitions. She gathered the entry forms. She made William pore over the poems. She sent to every competition she could. Dozens and dozens produced nothing. Then at last, after nearly three years of effort, she won third prize in the South Lincolnshire Poetry Competition and was invited to read at the awards ceremony. William went with her. Everyone wanted to talk to him. He told people she was "a real talent in the making". To her amazement, when she submitted poems along with a covering letter telling of her success, she started to place them. Little by little she was getting known. She kept close track of her work. In a tiny notebook she would write: 22nd October 1978, *Green Apples*, *My Father's Flat Cap* and *The Nest In The Hedge* sent to *Annulus*. She made a neat list of her acceptances. Sixteen poems. Seventeen. Soon she would have enough published pieces for a volume!

She twigged that the knack of winning prizes was to find out who the judges were, to study their work, to look at the previous winners and to subtly mould a poem which flattered the judges' practice and judgement. She was proven right when her poem *Fat Man With A Hairy Belly* won the National Poetry Competition.

William had never done that.

Soon afterwards, Duncan Heron, editor of *Entresol* asked her for some poems. She began to sense she no longer needed William but she hung onto him for the time being. A curious idea came to her: she was making her way along with Mrs Thatcher. The world was changing for women and it was changing per se. She thought of herself as a socialist, but the new culture was vicious. She recalled what her father had said about the elections of 1974 and Labour's commitment to a fundamental shift of wealth and power to working people and their families: "If they do it, Britain will be a new society." But she knew that was old hat. What was coming was a free for all. Henceforth, helping your neighbour was weakness, thinking of others delusion. Secretly, she knew she shared something with

Mrs Thatcher: you had to get on any way you could. That was the first rule of life. Mrs Thatcher had made things easy for herself by marrying a rich man. A wise move. She had done the same by having sex with William. He'd been kind enough, after all, and helped her enormously. But once she was really successful, what would be the point of staying with him? That was where she differed from Thatcher: she was a new woman, a feminist. And then a lovely thought came to her: she could be free not only of William but of the ugly rigmarole of sex with men altogether. She could become a lesbian!

She was twenty-nine when her first collection *The Ventriloquist's Dummy* appeared. It was well-received. She began to get invitations to read. She was asked to judge competitions. She was offered a residency and moved out of William's flat unceremoniously. She knew she was writing with the mood of the times. There was no point pushing water uphill. The world was corrupt, that was for sure, and innocence got you nowhere. There was still a long way to go, but she'd made a good beginning and she knew how to push on. She started a relationship with a young female novelist. But what about children, or at least a child? She didn't want to miss out on motherhood. She began to weigh up the men she knew. Who would do her the favour? And who stick around to be a part-time father?

There was much to think about. Much to be done. And up ahead, who could say? Poet Laureate? The Nobel Prize?

TANNER

THE AWARD WINNING POEM, I'M SURE

Lo, Ignorant Reader
 See how I space my poems out
In such interesting ways,
That any actual meaning is unnecessary
I begin all of my sentences with capitals
 Because every line is so painfully vital,
I do not mention concrete, jobs or unemployment
 All that is irrelevant,
All that is beneath me
And beneath poetry,
For the planet I live on
 Is a Garden
With lots of
 Time
Yes, I spell Time with a capital T
Because it is
 Precious, like me
And I have an endless supply of it
To stare into the
 Precious flowers
And enlighten
 Little old you
With the subsequent
 Precious thoughts,
Which are far more worthy
 Of a Blessed Poem
 Than anything you go through in life.

This is
 Poetry
Look how
 Poetic
This Poem Is
It looks like a
 Real Poem and everything
If I keep this up
I'll be
 Famous in 3 years.

BEATS, BUMS AND BOHEMIANS

Jim Burns

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ADRIFT IN SOHO by Colin Wilson
New London Editions. 214 pages. £8.99. ISBN 978-1-907869-13-6

These three novels were first published in 1961 and they all deal with lives lived on the fringes of society in the 1950s. The title of the series they appear in — "Beats, Bums and Bohemians" - sums up the kind of people they focus on, though their links to an older Soho bohemianism might incline the pedantic to wonder if "Beats" really applies in a couple of cases. There were Beats around in the late-1950s, and the word itself was often a substitute for bohemians, but colourful and/or oddball characters didn't just arrive in Soho after Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg became well-known. Roland Camberton's *Scamp*, an earlier title from New London Editions, can be mentioned as throwing light on the subject in fictional form, and *The World is a Wedding*, an autobiography by Bernard Kops, tells in part about his induction into the community of misfits in Soho: "The regulars included the would-be poets, the sad girls from Scotland, the artists without studio or canvas." And he refers to Iron Foot Jack, the "King of the Bohemians," and Iris Orton, "A strange girl with a cloak, who was a beautiful poet." I remember seeing some of her poems in *Jazz & Blues* around forty years ago when I was writing for the magazine, so she was obviously still around then, but like so many poets she's since been forgotten. *Jazz & Blues* was edited by Albert McCarthy, himself an old Soho bohemian with roots going back into the 1940s.

I've mentioned *Jazz & Blues* because Terry Taylor's *Baron's Court*, *All Change*, the book that might have some sort of Beat linkage, has a fair amount of jazz content and points to the importance of the music as a kind of escape from the routines of working and lower middle-class lives and the dull and dispiriting nature of the jobs available to intelligent, but not academically qualified young people.

John, the hero of the novel, has an interest in spiritualism, though it becomes clear that it too is a means of finding something that doesn't tie in with the conformity of the wider society. It's at one of the spiritualist meetings that he encounters Bunty, an older woman, who is also there because it offers an alternative to conventional involvements. As she says: "There's a hundred different paths to travel that have nothing to do with crying babies, football pools, watching the tele, and Saturday night at the local." Bunty introduces John to abstract art, alcohol, and some tentative sexual adventures, but at the same time his jazz interests take him into the world of cannabis, or "charge" as those in the know called it. Several other names are also used and I suppose it's inevitable that, as well as its virtues as a novel, *Baron's Court, All Change* has a great deal of sociological interest. There were never all that many books, either fact or fiction, that talked about the kind of people who frequented jazz clubs where modern jazz was played in the 1950s, which is one reason that I read Terry Taylor immediately his book was published in 1961. It referred to experiences when listening to the music that I could identify with. John says that his introduction to bebop came through hearing *Bebop Spoken Here*, track recorded by Tito Burns in 1949. It was around 1950, when I was fourteen, that I first heard this record, and though I suspect that more-aware enthusiasts may have considered it a commercialised version of the real sounds it seemed to me to sum up an attitude of wanting to stand apart from the square world.

John is soon a committed user of cannabis and is drawn into selling as well as using it. He and a friend are soon supplying many of the musicians they admire, but John objects when the friend wants to expand their business into dealing in heroin. A couple of junkies are described in the novel and their dependency is shown as contrasting with the benign influence that cannabis supposedly has. The partners have been using the home of an acquaintance, Miss Roach, to hide their supply of drugs, though she's not aware of this fact. When the police raid her flat she's left to take the blame because she has a previous conviction for possession of cannabis. John seems to be having a crisis of conscience as the novel ends, but it's not clear if he'll tell the police that Miss Roach is innocent. He has been portrayed as behaving responsibly in other circumstances, particularly with regard to his sister, so the reader is left guessing about what will happen.

As I said earlier, *Baron's Court, All Change* has documentary value, and jazz historians may find it of interest. A few names of real people are mentioned, such as Phil Seamen, a legendary British drummer and notorious junkie, Kenny Graham, Sonny Stitt, and Charlie Parker, and Miss Roach has a cat she calls Wardell Gray. Other musicians have fictitious names, though it may be possible to identify the real people behind them, if that's what you like to do. For me, it's enough that Terry Taylor evokes the period and the atmosphere so well. True, some of the slang now sounds so dated that it's almost cute, but most slang is like that.

At one point in Terry Taylor's novel his hero is in a Soho coffee-bar and describes it as a place "where the strangest mixture of human beings gathered to fix up deals that never materialise, to talk about their painting and writing and a whole gang of other things, but I'm afraid they talk more than they create." It's a description almost echoed in Laura Del-Rivo's *The Furnished Room* when the central character, Beckett, goes into a Soho cafe and reflects on the kind of people he'd fallen in with when he moved to London: "He had found writers who did not write, painters who did not paint, petty thieves who were so unsuccessful that they were always scrounging the price of a cup of tea, and pretty girls who turned out to be art-school tarts with dirty faces."

Taylor's hero has ambitions, if only to break away from suburban existence, and his activities as a drug dealer might point to an attempt to establish a role for himself in the circles he'd chosen to move in. But Beckett is a drifter, a man without any real aim in life. He works as a clerk but hates it and hasn't the energy or motivation to move on to something more interesting or challenging. He's not necessarily a bad person and helps an old man who is being harassed by some Teddy Boys. He also has some regard for his mother. But an encounter with a disgraced ex-officer leads to him considering whether or not to get involved in a plot to murder an old lady for her money. Beckett, with his mixture of Catholic guilt and existentialist doubt, needs to do something that will force him to face up to reality. He wants to feel something beyond doubt and disbelief because, as he says at one point, "disbelief is the opposite of freedom, because it paralyses action at the root."

The Furnished Room, like *Baron's Court, All Change*, is full of small details that create the atmosphere of the 1950s. It's a world of brown

ales and pubs that close at 3pm. When Beckett invites a girl back to his bedsit he has to ask her to talk quietly because he's not supposed to have visitors after 10.30pm. And he says: "I want to find a place without a landlady on the premises. I detest the whole race. The constant pettiness and prying, the complaining notes pushed under the door." After Beckett walks out of his job he drifts around, has desultory affairs with a couple of women, and eventually agrees to kill the old lady.

The kind of quasi-philosophical discussions that Beckett has with the old man he helped and with the slightly sinister ex-officer are the sort of thing that Harry in Colin Wilson's *Adrift in Soho* likes to engage in. It's perhaps not surprising that Laura Del-Rivo was, in the 1950s, a member of a group that clustered around Wilson. I would guess, though I could be wrong, that he had some influence on her writing. Wilson's own novel is about yet another unsettled young man who samples the Soho scene. The difference is that Harry has no desire to become a king-pin around the jazz scene, nor is he as depressed and aimless as Beckett.

It's true that, like John and Beckett, he's at odds with the world of humdrum jobs and conventional people, but he's determined to become a writer and is far more intellectually inclined than the others. Harry understands from the beginning that the bohemian life he encounters in Soho may have its charms, and can be entertaining, but it's not likely to lead to producing anything of great value. His immersion in it is just a short episode on a longer journey. It was Arsene Houssaye, the 19th Century French writer, who said that he was suspicious of literary bohemians because he saw them as only passing through and looking for material to write about. And it isn't to Colin Wilson's discredit if I say that his book often gives that impression. It's an intellectual exercise, albeit one with a light touch and some humour. John and Beckett are contemptuous of the non-productive bohemians they encounter, whereas Harry is amused by them.

The world of literature and learning is a constant throughout *Adrift in Soho* and names like T.S. Eliot, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche soon crop up. There are also references to Count Basie, Stanford White, Sir Thomas Beecham, and Charles Boyer. Harry is an autodidact and likes to immerse himself in a world of culture where one thing leads to another. When he finds his way to bohemian dives in Soho he

encounters a self-proclaimed anarchist, Robert De Bruyn who sells him a book by Lautréamont, and is introduced to Iron Foot Jack and other characters. I'm sure that many of them would be easily recognisable to anyone who frequented Soho in the 1950s, or who knows something of the literature of the period. The people Harry talks to are not the types found in *Baron's Court*, *All Change*, nor in *The Furnished Room*. They often seem to be from an older category of bohemians.

I was reminded of John Gawsworth, at one time a poet with at least a minor reputation but who declined into drink and a shambling existence around Soho and elsewhere. I doubt that many people know his poetry, and I've only read it in a couple of anthologies, but he had been rated enough in his day for a *Collected Poems* to be published by Sidgwick & Jackson in 1949. He also edited *Poetry Review* for a time and was said to be knowledgeable about the literature of the 1890s. Gawsworth (his real name was Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong) also wrote fantasy and horror stories and knew M.P. Shiel, who bequeathed him an island in the Caribbean that he supposedly owned. Gawsworth liked to see himself as the King of Redonda and was given to bestowing titles on friends and acquaintances, especially those who plied him with liquor. There's an entertaining, though perhaps also sad account of a visit that Gawsworth paid to the St Ives poet Arthur Caddick in the Winter 1972 issue of *The Cornish Review*. Caddick was not averse to a drink himself but he struggled to cope with Gawsworth's alcoholic eccentricities. Interestingly, there is some useful information about him in *All Souls*, a novel by the Spanish writer, Javier Marias.

Have I digressed too far from considering *Adrift in Soho*? Not really, because I wanted to mention Gawsworth as an example of the sort of bohemians around Soho when Wilson got there in the pre-Beat days. His book is full of characters like Gawsworth. Harry meets a man who describes himself as a "Babouvian," which he explains is a follower of Gracchus Babeuf, "one of the earliest and greatest of the socialist thinkers." Later, there's a reference to "two drunken homosexual painters," who, when mentioned a second time, are described as "Welsh." But it doesn't take much imagination to guess that they're based on the two Scottish Roberts - Colquhoun and MacBryde - who were well-known around Soho in the 1940s and 1950s.

Harry has a dream of establishing a "community of artists" who would pool their resources and support each other. But he lodges in a tumbledown Notting Hill house where a variety of would-be poets and writers live, and soon realises that their main aim is to avoid having to work. He comes to the conclusion that "avoiding work costs more energy than a straightforward job." While sampling the bohemian scene he's met an out-of-work actor who has explained his philosophy of bohemianism, and though Harry has been interested by what he's seen and heard he knows he can't possibly remain in that situation: "I could never live according to James's 'philosophy of freedom.' For better or for worse, I am a bourgeois." Harry has realised the truth in what Tambimuttu, another Soho regular of the post-war years, told Julian Maclaren-Ross: "If you get Sohoitis, you will stay there always day and night and get no work done ever."

Adrift in Soho ends on a more-positive note than the other two books under review. Harry helps an artist, Ricky, who is the one talented person in the Notting Hill house, to construct a barrier to his studio so that the shiftless bohemians hanging around in the rest of the property will not keep invading his space and stopping him working. Harry feels a sense of satisfaction at the thought that Ricky has accepted him as understanding why it's sometimes necessary to go to extreme lengths to assert one's needs for privacy and time to work.

I can't end this review without referring to the context in which the three books were first published. 1961 was very much a time when books and articles by and about bohemians, Beats, and other outsiders seemed to abound. The Beat explosion of the late-1950s was partly responsible, but I'd guess that rising affluence and the loosening of the social restrictions that shaped life in the 1950s also helped. The 1960s didn't really start until 1963 or so, and the kind of "underground" scene often dominated by pop music was not much in evidence before that. But something was stirring. I've had a quick look along my bookshelves and there are books, all published around 1961, that point to the interest in the bohemian lives of artists and writers. To name a few of them, Robert Baldick's *The First Bohemian: The Life of Henry Murger*; Allen Churchill's *The Improper Bohemians*; Ned Calmer's *All the Summer Days*; Louis Vaczek's *The Troubador*; Lawrence Levine's *The Great Alphonse*. I'm sure I could find more if I looked hard enough. Bohemianism was in the air, and Soho, St Ives, Montparnasse, and Greenwich

Village, not to mention North Beach in San Francisco were the places to head for.

And the writers now? Taylor, Del-Rivo and Wilson are all still alive. A note tells us that Wilson lives quietly in Cornwall with his 30,000 books. He's written over 100 himself on a variety of subjects. Laura Del-Rivo also carried on writing but supported herself with a market-stall in Portobello Road. Terry Taylor never published anything after his first book, though there was a "lost" novel and another that remains unpublished. He had a somewhat colourful life, being at one time the lover of the photographer Ida Kar. An exhibition of her work at the National Portrait Gallery in 2011 included photographs of Taylor and Laura Del-Rivo. I was delighted to read that, in more recent years, he ran a sandwich shop in Rhyl.



Illustrated 1942

INTELLECTUAL INTERCOURSE, A LA ROCK FERRY

Tanner

We were bored again.

‘Aven’t you got tha old chest a drawers just lyin round in the shed?’ I asked ... So more useless furniture gets doused and cremated, there in the yard with The Floyd bleeding out the ghetto-blaster, as the handicapped kid next door stares dribbling through the holes of the soggy fence panel ...

‘What am I gonna do?’ I ask, over the rum farts we fart, squatted at the fire. ‘How can I reject society COMPLETELY? I’ve bin conditioned, even bog-standard sanitation is necessary to me sanity ... I like toilets an coffee.’

‘Offer still stands ter come be wood folk with me, scotchy,’ he decants something purple into the vase before me, he decants like a bastard, ‘if you ever get over yer shitty slicker squeamishness like.’

‘But even in the wilderness I’d still be feelin manipulated. Mmm ...’ I tip the vase into my mouth and swallow, ‘Hymph!’ I flinch, ‘Ahh!’ I stick my tongue out, airing it out in the ashy wind ... and then swallow more nonetheless. ‘Ooh ... cos is THA not a reaction to society, fleein it? I’d only start eekin a space shuttle out of a tree, wantin to transcend the planet an all tha.’

‘Yeah, ok, I think I get tha.’

‘I’d be backed into a corner by the fuckers, like I am NOW, accept there’s no previous occupant’s mattress in the woods ...’

‘Also no fuckin Facebook ...’

‘But is a mattress necessary? Does it actually hinder the long overdue evolution I feel we’re missin out on? Like maybe, right, the uncomfortable shitty twig ground is ok, an after a while our vertebrae’s gonna weave itself round it, an we can grow like plants tha way? I mean, it’s EVOLUTION, yer know? Fuck, the point is, it could go anyway it needs to, could it not?’

‘I believe so. I think.’ He shakes his head slowly.

‘But that’d take too long squire, an life expectancy’s on the low ... I wouldn’t live ter see it an couldn’t be sure it all werked out ... plus I’d rather spit in the bastard’s eyes, truth be told! I’ve GOTTA have MY say NOW! An I know, I know, that’s the quick-fix, fast-food modelled tendency of me modern brain talkin ere, the precise reason

WHY the expectancy a life's doin the limbo ... moanin tha some righteous bugga out there's gotta make the first move in the right direction, long as it ain't me ... mind you, if THA took root, pardon me pun, if a FOLLOWIN starts where everyone sods off ter the woods, that'd be another breed of FASCISM in itself, manipulatin the manipulated manipulatin People, an if I was around ter see us all turnin inter plants, just cos some bark-skinned wizard said it was the gospel, than me natural rebel reaction to that would be ter build me a Starbucks in contrast, see?' I drag the stereo over by it's plug wire ... 'Come ere, yer rich hippies!' I chuck The Floyd on the fire. Ssss it sizzles a bubbly rainbow melt. 'Cava?' I jam the Pistols into the thing. 'Comprende?' I hit the play button. 'Geddit?' The wind in this yard, it says the future dream is a shopping scheme ... 'Kapeesh?'

'Urgh!' he puts down his purple stuff. 'Yer sendin me west ere!'

'Yer always half in love with the thing yer rebellin against, cos it's in-built shittiness validates yer rebel status. I'm aware a this. Don't get me started on ow cripplingly AWARE I am, dream brother!'

'A wasn't.' He leans over, squints gagging – spits just a small morsel of vomit into the fire, blackening the central flames for a second.

'So yeah, fuck it!' I get up, stumble, splatter against the fence, making the special kid do a yelp ... The brown semis abound around, the fire is sliding up and down some invisible ramp ... punk blood has sucker-punched my brain. 'I'll jump back on their social roundabout, ter keep meself clothed an fed, but by god I'll make a song an dance about it!'

'Ok, hurp,' he hiccups.

'I'll BITE THE HAND THA FEEDS ME!' ... hell yes ... 'Cos long as I'm employed, I'M the one feedin IT in the first place!' ... you know it, kids ... 'It's the only way ter PHYSICALLY SURVIVE whilst remainin SPIRITUALLY INTACT! That's the balance, ter be a hypocrite!' ... amen and halle fuckin lujah ... I slump back down '... an I'll just ave ter live with the guilt tha I had too much of a pressin ego to ever start the Evolutionary Plant Step,' I shrug. 'But that's alright, cos you'll be plantin the seeds fer tha, won't yer, so ter speak?'

'Hurp.' Jack looks at me with tightly shut eyes. '... an in meantime, looks like you'll be stayin put in society then, dunnit laddie?'

‘True, my child.’ I do a solemn nod. ‘But am avin me say, at least.’ Soon I will need food. I will have to get it together and join them, generating and paying tax ... but I shall write my soul out to prove my soul was here, and preserve The Self. I manage to stand again ... bad move ... the solar system is a whirlpool in my stomach. I cradle it.

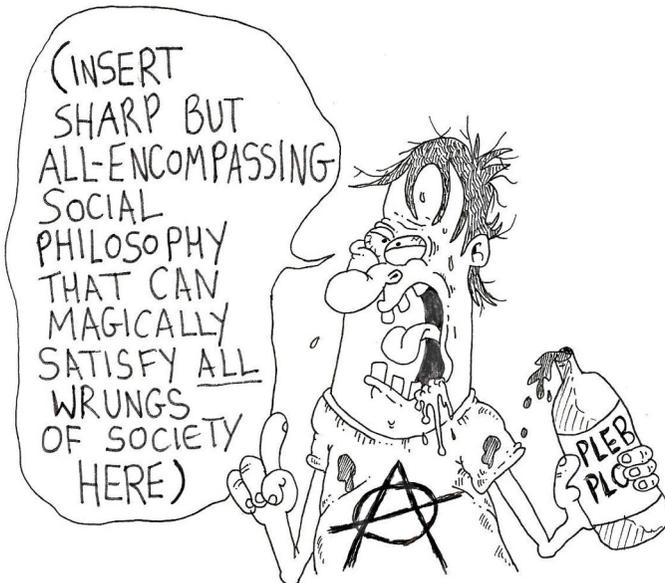
‘Remind me ter write a poem called “Never Be Recruited” termorra, will yer?’

But Jack’s deaf, he rolls onto his side. ‘Hurp ...’ let’s his left cheek rest on a randomly strewn brick.

‘Yer unconsciousness looks jolly cosy,’ I resolve, swaying ... and, as it all fades ... as my neck folds under the weight of my head, as my eye lids become drawbridges, as my legs buckle ... as I plummet, the concrete gets closer and a socket to the cosmos opens up in my brain ... I hear it, as it all goes blank, I hear that voice kicking my soul up it’s arse:

YOU AIN’T GONNA GET A JOB SMELLIN LIKE THA.

... Thud.



PETER STREET

MOSS BANK WAY

for Fred Thompson

1920

breaking his arm on
a Durham farm where
he was born and bred

his dad sort of fixed it
on the kitchen table with
herbs and half a dozen

gobs of home made cider
knocking Fred out while his
arm was guessed back into place

boasting never cried once
even though he could never
straighten it again

1972

Heading home
after four days of laying
field drains a cow

in trauma feet away
from cars and people
no second thoughts

Fred fumbled his dentures

into a used handkerchief
stripped down half naked
he handed me the calves feet

in my own world
waiting for his nod

I held tight to those

few inches of life.

He was pushing mum
back up into a birthing position
“Get your shirt off man
and pull you lazy bugger

pull slide your hands inside”
we balanced somewhere
between life and death
my hands and brain lost

while Fred digging his heels
deeper into blood and manure
rhythmed “Heave one – two – three

heave pull you lazy bastard pull”
We lost both calf and mother
flaking black twist he filled

tamped his pipe tears streamed
a face you could strop a razor on.

BÊTE NOIRE

Ken Champion

‘I told the wife I’d come into some money. I said she could buy anything, do anything, the world was hers. She said she wanted to go somewhere she’d never been before. I said, ‘Try the kitchen.’

He continued. ‘What did the inflatable teacher in the inflatable school say to the inflatable schoolboy the day after he’d given him a pin? ‘You’ve let me down, you’ve let the school down, and above all... ‘

He’d been doing this for as long as he’d been in treatment: the jokes, the one-liners, the quick, corner-of-the-mouth ripostes.

‘This bloke goes into a psychiatrist and says, ‘I feel I don’t exist.’ The quack says, ‘Next, please.’

As ancient as it was, James Kent had to smile at this one. It interested him how the ideas, terminology, the bits and pieces of psychiatry, the theories of its founding father, had become known, had entered into common parlance and been generally accepted - except for the occasional, frightened squeals of ‘psycho babble.’

He grudgingly agreed with Kit, a Marxist acquaintance of long ago, that the reason why apprentice plumbers, Mexican peons, rhubarb growers and sagger makers bottom knockers had all heard of Freud was that, assisted by the media and its control and dissemination of ideas, ‘those who own the means of material production control the means of mental production,’ the ruling class had thrown its weight behind his theories to further its own interests. In short, if the world perceives its troubles, its violence, its pathology as a result of the unconscious, attention is then taken away from a critique of its major capitalist institutions.

It was obvious whose side Kit was on in the two theorists contrasting models of human nature: Freud’s being that man was lazy, hedonistic, self seeking and competitive, and Karl’s that he was naturally co-operative and born ‘good,’ but made ‘bad’ by contemporary society. One, arguably, used by all authority to justify itself, the other like Rousseau’s ‘noble savage’ with his unlimited potential for altruism and virtue. Kit had demonstrated his bias by causing as much legal, and, sometimes, illegal disruption to the political status quo as he could. Perhaps he still was.

But these musings weren't helping James' patient, weren't aiding him in breaking the defences that manifested themselves in his relentless repertoire of gags and wisecracks. He left James, as ever, on a high - though not as a result of anything his therapist had contributed - chortling his way down the path, through the gate, past the hedge and off home. By the time he'd reached the station the part of him that he wasn't facing had grown more virulent for its neglect. Next time the intensity of the humour would be ratcheted up that little bit more, the gags delivered that little bit faster. James needed to think harder, try a different way to get to him.

He went up stairs to his study thinking of his ex-colleague again. When they'd first met, Kit had been lecturing for several years in social science at the same London college where James had arrived to do an abortive one term teaching placement. After his evening class of plastering apprentices had decided that this was, as their self-appointed leader told him, 'the unacceptable face of education,' and had walked out early and straight into the long, large arms of the patrolling Principal, who'd told James sternly that he wanted his domain to be 'ship-shape and Bristol fashion,' he'd bumped into Kit. Noting his dispirited expression he asked James what was troubling him. He told him. Kit laughed.

'You gotta be 'ard sometimes. They're victims. You gotta 'elp them get through their course. Exploited labour though they are, they need to mek a livin'. They can't live outside o' society.'

James hadn't noticed before how strong his Durham accent was. He came to know it, be aware of how he exaggerated it, used it to his advantage. In union meetings if he criticised the college's management or the political and economic system in general, it would deepen, become harsher, as if confirming his working class credentials.

He once asked James about his own occupational background. James told him some of the things he'd done. He mentioned time spent as a decorator, then a commercial artist. Kit frowned as if James had betrayed his class.

'Yer canna be wearkin' cluss and an uttist, mun, yer canna.'

The first words he ever said to James were,

'You coomin' to the office, then?'

This was a reference to the college bar, a log cabin type building in the middle of the grassy quad where he'd take students in warm

weather to form a circle round him while he sat there talking politics, then saunter in with a few of them to have a drink.

He was, initially, a distant figure to James, one who had a little mystery about him. He'd gone to Ruskin College, courtesy of trade union membership, became a teacher, and went on innumerable demos against the state, the 'system.'

One Monday he came into the staff room with plasters on head and cheeks and visibly cut hands he'd suffered from the 'filth's' batons in an alley off Trafalgar Square. For him, the primary function of the police was to protect the property class's interests from attacks by the property-less masses.

Other lecturers seemed to defer to him, mainly because of the forceful expression of his political narratives.

'Where do unions come from?' he'd ask rhetorically, not just at union meetings, but occasionally in the classroom or the refectory, 'from t' guilds who were more concerned wi' maintaining differential incomes an' status between skilled artisans an' labourers than any unified opposition to the status quo. They're essentially conservative; strikes are just institutionalised agreements between owners an' workers.'

In answer to James' question of why then he was so active in the union, he shrugged and said that they were just an accepted step to his hoped-for anarchism.

'I grew oop in t' north, you in t' south; yer very name, James, is respectable wearkin' class, mun. I'm from rough, an' as a kid I saw inequality all around me, people 'ardly getting' by, mun. I've stolen, 'ad to at times. I used to think, even as a kid, why? Why do some have so little and others so much? Does it have to be? I were so angry abou' it.'

James understood this, but felt that there was a more personalised anger within Kit. There was. Its source, it seemed, was Reginald Thomas-heading.

Reg was a Sierra Leonean teacher on the staff who Kit didn't speak to and obviously disliked intensely, partly because his own teaching timetable of many years had been decimated by him. Reg had a lot of teaching in a faculty where he wasn't wanted .by its lecturers because of complaints about him by their students. Though too scared of his anticipated cries of 'racist' to do anything about it, they let it be known covertly. This was quietly acted upon, and he

suddenly got more work in his own faculty teaching Kit's subject, the latter, less, having to take over Reg's previous classes.

Reg's teaching style, whatever the subject, was to get his pupils to read and then copy from a text book, though this didn't stop him striding into the staff room after a class, metal tipped heels clacking as if to confirm a delusory sense of importance and, rubbing his hands together as if to celebrate a job well done, say, in a smug, self-congratulatory tone,

'Well, that was a good old discussion there, got the old debates going.'

Reg didn't have a degree in the social sciences and it was doubted whether he was a graduate at all. He was short, broad, inarticulate, and a club bouncer in his spare time. Students, as well as some of the more predominantly middle class lecturers felt a latent physical intimidation in his presence, compounded by the liberalist ethos of the college creating a fear of showing any hint of bias against an ethnic staff member. Reg was aware of this situation and would use it blatantly, once getting a representative from union HQ to visit the college to inquire into his perceived discrimination, though no-one seemed to know what it actually meant or what would have counted as evidence.

There was another episode where he was accused of hitting a student in the library. Kit had hung around outside the Hearing in case he was asked to speak a few words on behalf of Reg, which, because of his political principles, he was willing to do, but wasn't called.

'Ter think ah were sut there ready to say soomit good abou' 'im., Ah di'nt know 'im then. Ah were an idiot.'

Nothing had been proven - a pupil's word against his, the library virtually empty at the time - but he'd been suspended on full pay for six months.

'It were in local paper, and wi' a picture of his smug, round-eyed innocence. It said summat like, I dunno, 'Lecturer Claims Suspension Racist.' Aye, and 'e got money for doin' nought.'

Kit enjoyed teaching, especially mature students, particularly Africans. He would tell them in his introductory lesson that god was either a well-intentioned deity who was obviously not omnipotent, or *was* all powerful and therefore a bastard or, a third alternative, was both weak *and* a bastard, and anyway, he didn't create us, we

created him. This was met with either open hostility, shock or a disbelieving shaking of heads - though at the end of the ninety minutes, half the women passing his desk on the way out would squeeze his shoulder and say

‘We’ll pray for you, Kit.’

He did, apparently, have extra-curricular relationships with several of his students, though it was difficult to pinpoint his attraction. He was average height, thick-set, with cropped sandy hair, wide, pugilistic nose and made very little concession to matters sartorial. James once overheard one of his students say of him that he looked like ‘a lorry driver with brains.’ He once mentioned to James that he was attracted to a Ghanaian girl in one of his classes. Sitting in the refectory with James one lunch time, wanting to know some things about her course, she asked him if he knew much about Reg. Before he could answer she said,

‘Who does he think he is? ‘He asked me to go to that YMCA place in the high street with him and get a room. I’ve hardly spoken to him. It’s because I’m black. What an insult.’

He asked her if she’d told Kit. She had.

He thought of Kit’s remark when he first began to talk to him of Reg

‘I canna imagine ‘im, yer know... smoothin’ a woman’s ‘air... runnin’ his ‘ands gently through it, spreadin’ it out wi’ ‘is fingers, like.’ his own splayed digits mirroring his words.

James wondered if Reg, maybe, represented the infant Kit’s father. If this was so, and the latter hadn’t got through his oedipal phase, it would, partly, explain his need to have relationships with students: they were the mothers he was *allowed* to have, free of dad, of Reg. He tried to imagine what the child in him had felt when hearing of Reg’s propositioning of his Ghanaian student - dad coming after mum again, not letting him have his *own* love object, *his* possession. It seemed obvious that his dislike had, or would, become hatred.

Aware that he was playing around with what he’d learnt from his psychology degree completed a few months before he’d decided, half-heartedly, to see if he was capable of teaching for a living, James could see that he was, with intellectual naivety, perhaps using Kit as someone who ‘fitted’ a theory, or theories.

Between classes James had been spending some time with Kit indulging in coffee, specious bits of intellectualism, quasi-humorous hyperbole and discussing James' decision not to carry on teaching, though intending to finish his placement. On the last afternoon of the Spring term, Kit came into the refectory late. He sat slowly down opposite James.

'Fookin' 'ell, me wife's just rung. She wants me to clear out, wants me ter leave. 'er friend's movin' in.'

He stared down at James' empty coffee cup. He looked up.

'It's not a mun, it's 'er friend, Vera. I 'ad me suspicions, but she's gonna move in, or she 'as moved in, and I've gotta get out. Viv and Vera; like an old Workers Playtime double act '

He looked down again, wrung his hands a little.

'I reckon they'll laugh at me won't they, 'avin' a lesbian wife. I'm glad I've no kids, aye.'

He looked around him and back at James again.

'We 'aven't been gettin' on wi' each other fer a while, but I wasn't...she should have told me at 'ome, not rung me. I'll 'ave to get a flat. I don't wanna live 'round 'ere. Fook it.'

He put his head in his hands. He stood up. 'I'm off. I'll cancel the class, canna be 'elped. I'm goin' 'ome.' He stopped moving for a second. 'back,' he corrected himself. 'Get me stuff together.' He loped quickly out the door.

The first day back after the short break, Kit told him that he'd moved out and found himself a couple of rooms locally.

'It'll do for now. If I'm not wanted there's no point in stayin'.'

James didn't ask him how he was feeling, though there were certainly the foundations to build a sustainable wall of anger and bitterness on that would take a long time to crumble. But he did ask him what would happen to his ex-council house in Bloomsbury which he'd bought cheaply as a sitting tenant some years before.

'Dunno, mun. She can 'ave it, anyway. I canna be bothered,' he said, flicking his hand away from him.

He stopped coming down for their little chats then and, when James saw him in the staffroom or a corridor, he looked grimly busy. No more did he walk into James' classroom, stand in front of

the students and say, with almost total conviction and ignoring James' initial annoyance,

'e dunno what 'e's talking abou', take no notice, he's a right wing fascist,' and shaking his head with mock sadness would wheel around towards the door, punch the air and shout, 'oop the revolution.'

James had to return to his training college before the end of term, but didn't say goodbye to Kit because the latter was involved in teaching observations at various places around the borough, rarely returning to the main site. Rather lazily, James hadn't bothered to find out his contact number.

A month or so after leaving the college James was on his way home at the end of the first week of a psychotherapy course in East London, when he saw a lecturer who he'd spoken to a few times when with Kit. He was at a bus stop. James crossed the road to him. Almost immediately he was asked if he'd heard about Kit, what had happened to him or rather, what he'd done. James had neither seen nor spoken to him since they'd stood by the staffroom's photocopier two weeks before he'd left, Kit tensely silent, not answering questions. Assuming ignorance from James' expression, he began the story. It seemed obvious he'd been told it in detail.

Kit was finishing moving to his newly rented flat - a matter mostly of taking his books, clothes and bric-a-brac on buses, trains and the occasional taxi, for he didn't drive - and was carrying a backpack and case along the high street one evening He'd stopped for a few drinks at a pub and soon after leaving had passed a night club, its beating noise hammering the air around him.

He saw Reg standing outside. He wore a dark suit and tie and was looking around him, legs wide apart, with a patently contrived look of menace, closing and unclosing his fists hanging at his sides.

He looked at Kit from ten feet away, the latter unsure what his expression meant, but went across to him anyway. He pushed his face into this ridiculous bouncer and began yelling at him; apparently not remembering what it was that he'd shouted. Reg tried to push him away.

Kit bent down, grabbed his case and swung it against Reg's head, knocking him against the smoked glass window of the club and cracking it. The case had come open; sock, vests, exercise books

and framed photos scattered over the pavement. He began picking them up, turning his head and shouting staccato obscenities at Reg, then kneeling down and repeatedly and relentlessly beating his fists on a kerbstone, until a club employee had helped him up and led him inside.

It seemed he remembered little of what had happened immediately after that, though he did recall, apparently with some pride, that he'd stood over a horizontal Reg, head limply resting against the damaged window, and said to him,

'You're every thin' I'm not, and nuthin' I am.'

So far he hadn't returned to work. James asked about Reg. He'd been paid off by the college with no public reason given, though the purveyor of this information thought its origins lay in the library incident; its denouement, complaints from students.

James' ex-colleague got his bus, turned towards him, gave a noncommittal shrug and went on his way.

Walking home, James tried to think of Kit and this event with an ice-chip of detachment - something he knew he would have to acquire if he was going to pursue a career in psychotherapy which, he realised, had been a desire long forming. He had to try to see it all as clearly and as analytically as he could. If Reg represented an infantile Kit's father - though he'd told James that, as an adult, he'd liked him - what did his wife and her lover symbolise?

He remembered as a child the reaction he had to household visits from female neighbours or one of his aunts, and his mother's animation and laughter. He disliked their talking, their cackling, their 'oohs' and 'ahs,' their 'so she said'...'so I said,' and the continual nodding in sympathetic circularity to each other, and realised, though not then, that it was jealousy. He wanted mum to himself, not sharing her with these lipstick'd, henna'd hair women. If Kit's ego was frailer than it appeared, both to others and himself, then maybe the figure of Reg *was* an intensified complication to an oedipal situation.

And there was another cause for his frustration. James had noticed it when taking him to a poetry venue he'd hosted in Spitalfields. He'd looked uncomfortable and left before it had finished. The following day, he'd explained that he didn't like 'those sort of people.' He meant that they were 'posh' and that he was from 'wearkin' class.'

James was becoming aware that, from soon after he had met Kit,

he'd been using him as a sort of crude case study and that, perhaps, he'd been overanalysing it all. But this was retrospection, and as such, teleological; the effect preceding the cause. There were, though, some intuitive elements; some flashes of a kind of pleasing warmth and, as insignificant an addition to the symbolic universe of psychiatry as they were, these moments seemed to have been part of the slowly evolving impetus that had led him to his present work.

His neurotic, gag-telling patient, now coming twice a week, was with him again, sitting on his couch: the rictus smile, the tense restlessness, the readiness to stand, hunch his shoulders and, offering his palms to him, begin yet another joke. He was effectively paying James as an audience of one for a fifty minute comedy gig.

James asked him to talk about his favourite game as a child, about his home, his mother. He stood.

'Two guys in a bar. One says to the other, 'I made a terrible Freudian slip last night. I was having a meal at my mother's and meant to say, 'Would you pass the butter, please.' But it came out as, 'You fuckin' bitch, you fuckin' ruined my fuckin' life.''

Perhaps they were getting somewhere now, thought James.



This dusky A.F.S. dispatch rider knows no fear. When the enemy blitzed Merseyside night after night for more than a week, Paul Thomas, seventeen, was commended for the way he carried vital messages. Duskiness is, of course, a great attribute which enables Phil to merge into the background, invisible to enemy bombers. He is warned not to grin however, since this could be seen for miles - perhaps even in Berlin.

Illustrated 1942

NIGEL FORD

QUITE MAD

It's nice to be me
she wonders
when you do not know
what the time is
at any shade of day.

When the dreams
bring down
the leaves of scorn
blown by the bluster
of those
that know what they do.

It is so nice to be me
on my own
to walk the trails of private gardening.

I rustle round the grass
like a whisper.

In the blue forget-me-nots
that flutter in my company

Who needs people?
if you have sown
the pretty pinks
to keep the head warm and cosy
in its bed of confidence.

I am so special I know
there are places to fly
to say the crazy things I say.

SKULLS

Allen Edgar Poore

"Phil, we've a tricky situation on site."

Phil Anderson looked up from his desk without speaking. As Director of Archaeology he was used to sorting out dramas at the dig.

"Seems some thefts have occurred over the weekend."

"Oh yes. What's been taken? Tools again? How many this time? Portacabin damaged?"

"Portacabin's fine, no tools missing. It's a bit more controversial actually Phil. Skulls have gone walkies. Extra awkward with the press due any minute for their photo opportunity."

"How many skulls? What a nuisance! Okay, so just show the press whatever's left. It's not the end of the world, Gilbert."

"Well that's it. Nothing is left. All the skulls have gone."

"What do you mean? Nonsense! It's probably just local kids, they'd only take one or two each. Go take a better look, there must be plenty. Fake it up if you have to, this is a big story for us, it's vital they get a good main picture, could be front page stuff. This is important Gilbert, we need this."

"Phil, believe me, every skull has gone, every single one, they've even taken thigh bones, there's just ribs and crap left."

"What? But there were dozens of skulls, dozens! Please tell me you're joking. Oh fucking hell! How has this been allowed to happen? Oh for fucksake! . Weeks of excavation, days just to clean them up, all wasted? Who was in charge?... Ah yes... Bugger. Well okay, all is not lost, luckily we have our own photographic record to fall back on. There, sorted, we let the paper choose a few of our pics, a bit technical for what they'd want but hey.

Gilbert, I need you to talk nicely to the journos, tell them something, gone for analysis, anything, then offer free access to our archives okay. Do it now. Has Lenny printed them up yet? God how embarrassing. This needs careful handling Gilbert, I am relying on you."

"Um well Lenny hadn't actually taken any pictures yet so we can't..."

"What? Rubbish! He did it on Friday. I spoke to him myself as he left for site. He had the cameras with him, we talked about it. Of course he took the pictures. Go talk to Lenny."

"By the time everything was cleaned up and ready, the light was going so he decided to leave it, make a fresh start on Monday. It was a lot of skulls Phil, a lot of pictures to take, a big project..."

"Don't tell me it's a big project. I know it's a big fucking project for fucksake. Have you any idea how precarious our position is? We survive by the skin of our teeth here. Bad publicity like this and the Council will axe our funding, we'll be out on our arses. This is a fucking disaster, do not underestimate it. Jesus H Christ it could not be worse."

The unexpected good news was that he had hugely overestimated the intelligence and investigative zeal of the local journalists who were hilariously easy to fob off. The theft of the skulls was effortlessly concealed, no embarrassing or compromising stories appeared in the paper, merely the usual tribute to local history unearthed. Council funding was not cut and in the days that followed, Phil Anderson was even seen smiling and a rumour circulated that someone had heard laughter from his office.

Then came another visit from site.

"Gilbert, hi, come in. How's it going down at the dig? I'm hearing good things. Any of those pesky skulls turn up yet?"

"Well that's what I wanted to talk to you about actually Phil."

"I'm all ears, fire away."

"JJ was in the pub the other night and there was a biker, a Hell's Angel, selling a skull. Looked like one of ours."

"Oh... Which pub was it?"

"The Mug and Merkin up on Clenchall Street, but which pub is immaterial, Jane saw the same thing going on in the Duke of Fellchester right in the city centre."

"Same guy? This Hell's Angel? How can you be sure?"

"No, lots of different guys but always Hell's Angels, been happening in other pubs too all over the place. £70 a skull, more with a jawbone. Sometimes a free femur thrown in."

"Ah fuck, this is really bad. If the press get hold of this... that local rag will sell the story to the nationals. Fuck..."

"It gets better. I had a quiet word with Fergal Fredrickson about contagion risks. The skulls all came from that mass grave infilling the city ditch, he reckons they could be harbouring Bubonic Plague! The bacteria survive in soil a long time, a very long time."

"Pah! Hundreds of years ago. Impossible! No risk whatsoever."

"Actually I've checked it all out and it's true. There have been incidents, outbreaks in this day and age, from disturbing contaminated graves. Look at the scenario here, Hell's Angels dispersing skulls straight from a plague pit to anybody to take home for their kids to play with. Are these skulls full of earth? Have they even been washed? We have no idea, no control. We could be facing a full blown epidemic of Bubonic Plague. Deaths! My God this could wipe out Fellchester and beyond. This is a major public health incident. What do we do?"

After careful consideration Phil Anderson made his decision. He elected to do precisely nothing. He stayed in his office with the door closed. His telephone was heard ringing unanswered. He was seen at his desk, sitting on his hands, rocking to and fro, preoccupied, waiting.

Oiku: Workers..... (For BW) *Dave Birtwistle*

After another fruitless day he wanted a bit of peace and quiet. He wandered down past the old industrial estate. The tall chimneys had been demolished and most of the factories were closed down. Some of them were boarded up. He'd been redundant now for six months and his son was twenty five, educated and lucky to find a job washing up in a restaurant. Then he heard a familiar sound. The screaming wrench of metal being torn and hammered. There, through the iron gates, the last surviving members of the proletariat still in work were making their own chains.

ANDY SMITH

Profession

The plumber has leaking taps
the roofer has a rotten roof
the mechanic has a car that just makes it
the painter has peeling walls
the chef doesn't cook at home
the brain surgeon is tired of thinking
the coalman has no coal
the woodsman tramps through the forest without
seeing the trees
the lawyer makes a bearing far away from truth
the writer doesn't write
the seamstress has given up stitching
the drunk can't drink
the family man has no family
the piano player has lost the key
the composer has lost his head
the fly has no buzz it walks around with no legs
the river doesn't know which way is up
the wet earth wants to be dry
the last breath is gasping for one more
the boxer hangs his gloves up
a new deal is still an old deal dressed up
the grave digger marks his plot
the hunter comes home empty
the photographer looks through the eye
of the artist that can't paint the picture
the monk has lost his chant
the red one is green and the green one red
freedom is exposed for what it isn't
Nova Scotia is New Scotland playing the same bagpipe
The bridge can't walk across the water
and the brain doesn't make it's mind up.

THE BODY CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT THE MIND

Youseff Rakha

I am asked to write about the recent events in Egypt, and my account will be personal whatever else it is. I saw people die, I saw their killers, I saw commentators – some of them close acquaintances or colleagues – lie about it through their teeth. Inevitably, it will be a tiny portion of what I believe will be the main epic of the Egyptian people for decades to come.

As a journalist I have worked for the most powerful pro-government press establishment in Egypt for nearly 12 years. The position has provided a level of social protection against abuses constantly witnessed on the streets; it has acted as a financial and political buffer, replacing citizenship in a society where citizenship grants few if any rights. By restricting my contribution to cultural and intellectual topics and working in English, at the same time, I have managed to avoid direct involvement in the wholesale distortion, misinformation and sheer incompetence that has made up so much of what went for balance and objectivity on the pages of publications printed by this institution, especially since a new team of chief editors were summarily appointed by the Shura Council in the summer of 2005.

Like many Egyptians, until I saw thousands upon thousands of demonstrators gathered in Maidan at-Tahrir on 25 January – saw that they were neither Islamists nor negligible – and totally identified with them – I was largely sceptical about Egypt having much capacity for true dissent. It is something of a media cliché by now to point out that the opposition was already half oppressed, half co-opted, powerless against the airtight alliance of cannibalistic capitalism and corrupt governance. Even the “banned” Muslim Brothers, of whom I am no supporter, were criminally ousted from parliament during the last elections and had since considered taking to the streets in protest.

Then again, no one suspected that the People’s Assembly was ever a representative body anyway (the same is true of the Press Syndicate, membership of which requires an official position at a government-approved institution by law, and provides little beyond instalment plans for the purchase of cars and apartments or reduced-

price vacations). Among writers – and in the last six years I have been as much a writer in Arabic as a journalist in English – there remained a sense of relief that (since the people failed repeatedly to show revolutionary oomph) the government, if it did nothing else, could at least keep “the Islamist threat” at bay. As much as western regimes, the traditional intelligentsia was for the longest time duped by fear of theocracy; and to this day protesters and their supporters are emphatically rejecting Khamenei’s blessings.

NDP thugs were known to exist long before they attempted to disband protesters on donkey- and camel-back last Wednesday (2 Feb) – the night on which allegedly sincere and peaceful supporters of Mubarak managed somehow to bombard protesters with tear gas (as well as stones and Molotov cocktails), while snipers stationed on the roofs of the highest buildings waited for the cover of darkness to commit murder in cold blood – but few outside the Muslim Brotherhood felt they had enough of a stake in the electoral process to object to the thugs’ presence. People knew they had the protection of the police, and no one dreamed they could ever be deployed against peaceful protesters on such a scale – partly because no one dreamed there would ever be peaceful protesters on such a scale. Since 25 January other threats have been held up to Tahrir as well: the threat of chaos, the criminal threat, the constitutional-emptiness threat, the foreign-agenda threat. BS! I have not lost touch with the protests since 25 January and I am grateful that I have lived to witness them.

Egypt’s security apparatus is among the largest and best funded institutions of terror in the world today. It has practised torture, extortion and murder systematically for as long as anyone remembers; and I am grateful that I have lived to see it defeated, humiliated and exposed – and to have contributed, however little, to that glory.

Tuesday, 25 Jan. Maidan, the Egyptian word for “square” or “circle” – as opposed to the Syrian-Lebanese word saha, for example – originally means arena or battle front; and during the last week of January many of those to whom Maidan at-Tahrir becomes a home or a second home, partly inspired by the lyrics to a well-known song from the 1970s by the oppositional composer-singer Sheikh Imam Eissa, will start referring to the principal hub of modern Cairo simply as the Maidan: “The brave man is brave, the

coward is cowardly/Come on, brave man, let us go into the arena.” In the space of a fortnight the spot at which thousands of younger Egyptians have gathered, contrary to all expectations, will have turned irrevocably into a place of memory, a historical site. Passing the square or hearing about it, people start to wonder whether “this is real”; they are already joining in. Faces and voices are incredulous, but it is true: for once at a political event the number of demonstrators is actually greater than the number of Central Security troops restricting their movement and ready to subdue them by force; for once a political event is taking place in the open, in a central space, lasting all day and well into the night. Of course, by Saturday 29 Jan, Tahrir will have turned into a maïdan in every sense possible.

Central Security is a branch of the military placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Interior for purposes roughly equivalent to those of the riot police. Best known for their unthinking violence, they tend to be army conscripts from working-class provincial backgrounds (less legally, army conscripts in the form of guards are also routinely employed in the service of police officer’s families, buying groceries for the madam and using the state-owned police vans popularly known as el box to transport the children to school); directed by loyal commanders, Central Security do what they are told; and along with legal complications regarding the right to peaceful protest, emergency law (which in practise allows any member of the police to arrest and indefinitely detain any member of the public), and possible intervention from the notorious (plainclothes, highly skilled and practically autonomous) State Security, they have been a sufficient disincentive up to this point. Yet none of it stops people, thousands and tens of thousands, from flocking to Tahrir now – all of it in response to a seemingly stray Internet call for solidarity and anger?

The initial demonstration was announced on the popular Facebook Page called “We Are All Khalid Said” (a reference to one young man who died in the process of being brutalised by a low-rank policeman on the streets of Alexandria, without charge, on 6 June 2010). It was started by a young man “of good family”, to translate the classist Egyptian expression *ibn nass*, well-off and internationally connected, a product of the global economy and the kind of sheltered upbringing that produces conscientious and well-meaning geeks. Born in 1980, Wael Ghoneim is Google’s Middle East marketing manager. (On Sunday he will be kidnapped by State

Security and held, blindfolded, in secret confinement until the next Monday, when he made a powerful appearance on Egyptian satellite television.) For months the Page worked loosely in liaison with four online movements – April 6, Youth for Justice and Freedom, Hshd and the Popular Front for Freedom – as well as the ElBaradei Campaign, the Muslim Brothers (who will keep an admirably low profile despite playing a very significant role in the survival of the Tahrir community) and the Democratic Front Party.

The demonstration was planned, with truly poetic irony, to coincide with Police Day, a national holiday commemorating a major act of heroism by Egyptian police troops besieged by British forces in Ismailia on the eve of the coup d'état-turned-revolution of 1952. I am among the majority who think 25 January will come to nothing, but by evening I too have trouble holding back tears. There are clear signs of life in the long dead body of my true constituency – political participation by sheer force of right – and it is not driven by any (inevitably suspect) political programme. It is sincere, it is civilised, it is tidy, it is – and this too has mattered to me throughout – cool.

That evening I leave Tahrir around 11.30 pm. People are singing, bearing signs, lying in circles on the asphalt. They are predominantly young and secular. Even Central Security guards, with smiles on their faces, are humming the most popular slogan, adopted from the revolution in Tunisia: ash-sha'b yureed isqaat an-nidham (the people want to bring down the regime). A group of protesters surround one young man in what appears to be a standoff; they prevail on him to remove stones from his pockets. "Whoever throws a stone belongs with them," I hear one of them say, referring to the security forces stationed at one entryway near by, "not us."

Outside Tahrir the traffic proceeds normally; there is a sense of danger and excitement, the area surrounding the square is sealed off, but traffic proceeds more or less normally. I have barely arrived home when I find out that, desperate to disband protesters intent on spending the night in Tahrir, Central Security has attacked the demonstrators with tear gas, rubber and live pellets, canes and armoured trucks. A friend of mine ends up with 63 pellets lodged in his body; at least five friends of mine – two of them award-winning writers – are mercilessly beaten; in the next two days there will be numerous, more or less brief arrests, notably outside the Supreme Court near the Press and Lawyers syndicates. By 1 a.m. the Maidan

is more or less empty, and despite continuing demonstrations in the area and news of extremely violent confrontations in Suez – led by Alexandria and Cairo, the entire country is rising up – things appear to have quietened somewhat for the next two days. They are not over.

Tuesday 1 Feb, when a million people under protection of the army establish the virtually independent City of Tahrir – a fully functional and demographically varied community whose population at the time of writing has not dropped below 30,000 for a minute since Saturday 29 Jan – is still a long way off. At the time of writing pro-Mubarak demonstrations, announced repeatedly since then, have fizzled out to nothing after it transpired that they were invariably penetrated by criminal elements and police, directed not by popular will but by official and business interests. In times of need a decades-old dictatorship relies on the poverty, dependency and ignorance it has spent so much on cultivating – but lies can only go so far once the barrier of fear is broken. Already on Tuesday people who have been to the Maidan believe they are inhaling cleaner air, to the point where some of them are wondering whether it is because the numbers of vehicles in the area have significantly dropped.

Friday, 28 Jan. Of the many different fumes potent enough to induce a significant state change that I have experienced in my own body, I now have an additional one to give me flashbacks: tear gas. For someone who has never tried it, where a sufficient amount is inhaled, the effect is fiercely disorienting. Stinging sensations all over the face are accompanied by a temporary inability to breathe, and eyes – already clouding over – seem to reflect the death throes of the victim. Soda on the eyes and onion or vinegar soaked fabric on the nose: from that day I can count at least 30 young men crying out, standing or lying prone on their backs, wondering whether they were about to die. Solidarity among the demonstrators was instant and absolute; among the most touching remarks I heard exchanged in the entryways of residential buildings was, “Don’t panic, just don’t panic. It only lasts five minutes.”

It was on Friday 28 January, with both internet connections and mobile phone lines completely cut off all across the country, that I set out to the site of the oldest mosque in Egypt in Misr Al-Qadima,

Jami' 'Amr, where one of many demonstrations planned for this, Angry Friday (I would personally call it Liberation Friday, but that is not the point), was to set off after the weekly group prayers. There were four of us on the Metro, all writers. Before we arrived at Mar Girgis, the two women put on headscarves and separated from my friend and me. At the entrance we asked a young man where the women's section was. "I don't know," he said, with a strange look in his eyes. "This is my first time here."

That look, the desperate determination it expressed, the all but suicidal readiness to effect change it communicated silently across classes, cultural backgrounds, even political orientations, will no doubt remain among the most defining experiences of my life.

For close on half an hour we endured a Friday sermon in which we were prevailed on to avoid sedition and, where our just demands were not met on earth, wait for the reward in the hereafter. The ameen that follows each request at the end was all but inaudible when the imam mentioned the name of Mubarak. It was not clear whether calls for protest would be met in sufficient numbers here of all places, particularly in the absence of the ability to confirm them. I am secular, not a practising Muslim, but I performed my prayers devoutly and did all I could to reach out to God. No sooner had the prayers ended than the cheering sound of hundreds chanting in unison emerged from the deepest point in the mosque, with people elsewhere rushing to join the fast forming block of people that would exit the premises as one: Islamists, human rights activists, conscientious geeks. By the time we reached the main street we had lost our female companions, and Central Security were already firing peremptory tear gas. My friend and I ended up in isolation from intellectuals and activists; until we departed Misr Al-Qadima, we were among everyday working-class people for the most part, chanting the slogans adopted all across Egypt, avoiding Central Security violence and occasionally attempting to stay violent responses to it, sharing carbonated beverages with which we splashed our eyes to reduce the effect of the tear gas, sharing water, scarves, what food there was, and cigarettes, as well as helping the injured off the ground calling on the demonstrators not to scatter.

In Misr Al-Qadima I saw uneducated 15-year-old girls brave enough to face Central Security head on, shouting "Down with Mubarak"; I saw a mechanic nudge his friend: "Are you from South Africa, man? Why aren't you joining in!" I saw elderly women

patting the backs of demonstrators and muttering, “God grant you victory.” Then my friend and I, having stopped at a cafe where Al Jazeera was broadcasting reassuring news from all over the city, set out towards downtown. It was 2 pm.

The idea was to walk, through Ain Al-Seerah and Majra Al-‘Uyoun, to Qasr Al-‘Aini Street and whence to Tahrir, where we realised the main battle had already started and where State Security were deploying fire hoses in addition to everything else. Little did we know that the very simple business of traversing this thoroughfare on foot would take up the rest of the day and night. I will cite only two moments from that period of the day: the arrival at the Majra Al-‘Uyoun end of Qasr Al-‘Aini – where we converged with thousands arriving from Maadi – and the point at which, sitting next to me on the steps of one residential building, his face soaked, one little boy who could not have been older than five or six from the near-by neighbourhood of Sayeda Zainab said, “I want to go home.” Replaced by others, people would take refuge in the side streets and the buildings, but they always came back out.

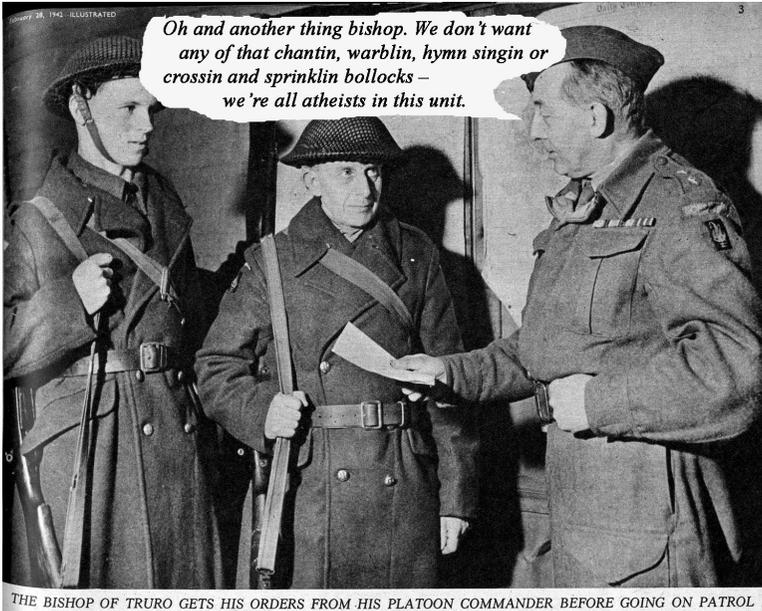
Hours and hours. Slogans, attempts to win over Central Security, squabbles with the neighbours. The sight of thousands of unarmed young men taking over the streets together, their heads raised, chanting to the balconies as they passed Enzell, enzell (“Come down, come down!”) and of people throwing apples and bottles of mineral water to them, of other young men taking off their pyjamas and rushing inside to join them: I will die proud of having been part of that sight.

By evening, while still firing pellets and tear gas, Central Security will have fled; some of them returned individually to hunt down stone-throwing protesters on the streets of Garden City one by one, their guns loaded with live ammunition. Violence had broken out after a white car with diplomatic plates ran down some 12 people while it drove past at 120 km per hour, reportedly killing four. Thankfully, before I took refuge in a friend’s house in Garden City, I managed to phone my mother to tell her I was alive and well; I did not tell her that people were being shot point blank while President Mubarak gave his first, vastly disappointing speech, speaking of “the safety and the security of Egypt’s youth”, the very people who were being killed in order for him to stay in power.

Later, not so much later, we will find out about the inexplicable and absolute disappearance of the police; most of us will take it as a sign

of our victory in a battle we joined without arms. Friends were hosed down while praying on Qasr Al-Nil Bridge, beaten to death, run down by armoured cars. But in the end the Maidan had been completely occupied by the people – for the first time since 1952 there is a truly public space in Cairo, a space with a voice and a will. Equally importantly, the police were humiliatingly defeated. I believe I will always remember the cowardice and brutality of State Security, the hysteria and determination of my fellow Egyptians.

As a writer, as a journalist, Friday 28 January has given me back my public voice. It has confirmed to me the existence of a homeland and a people of which I am part. All I ask of the security apparatus at this point is that, if they are going to bomb us with tear-gas, they should at least use tear-gas that is not older than the expiry date inscribed on the canisters.



THE BISHOP OF TRURO GETS HIS ORDERS FROM HIS PLATOON COMMANDER BEFORE GOING ON PATROL

Illustrated 1942

THE LEMOINE AFFAIRE BY GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Marcel Proust

(Trs Ron Horsefield)

INTRODUCTION

It may seem a doomed enterprise to translate a pastiche of one great French writer by another, and maybe that's why it's never been done, but Proust's pisstakes are both funny and acute. It's a mystery why they've never appeared in English up to now. So a first for the Crazy Oik! Well why not? Even readers of Flaubert in English will recognise many of the author's characteristic images and similes – the stifling boredom of provincial life, the vacuous pomposity of the law, the crazy daydreams of unfulfilled romanticism, the clichéd, wrong-headed maxims of bourgeois common sense. In addition to the parrot on the hat and the famous “they would come to know” Proust chucks in a joke of his own when he describes newly rich oiks installing a cork lined room to keep down noise from the neighbours. His strategy for escaping a literary influence wasn't to avoid it but to soak yourself in it – to figure out exactly how it worked and to reproduce it as best you could.

Flaubert's rolling, conveyor belt prose replete with suffocating detail is perfectly caught. That Proust was a hoot may come as a surprise to readers of his vast novel who, unlike the narrator, have no trouble falling asleep on page two. The pastiches were no mere journalistic squibs even though they first appeared in *Le Figaro*. He wrote quite a few, on the Goncourts, Balzac, de Regnier, Michelet, Renan and Saint Simon. There's even a pastiche of the critic Sainte Beuve reviewing this pastiched account by Flaubert. Proust went to some trouble to get them collected and published in book form. They first appeared in 1918 as *Pastiches et mélanges* and are most recently collected in the Pléiade volume *Contre Sainte Beuve*.

Proust's vehicle was the famous court case of 1908 in which the scammer Lemoine, an electrical engineer, was prosecuted for extorting £64,000 from Sir Julius Wernher the president of De Beers. Lemoine convinced Sir Julius that he could make diamonds. Proust, who had shares in De Beers, was at first alarmed but later saw the funny side and described the proceedings in spoof versions by classic authors.

THE LEMOINE AFFAIRE BY GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

The heat became suffocating, a bell sounded, turtledoves took flight and since the windows had been closed on the president's orders, a musty smell filled the room. He was old, with the face of a clown, a robe too tight, and a head full of fancy ideas. His tobacco stained sideburns created a look both decorative and vulgar. As the adjournment dragged on the audience, for the sake of something to say, began to gossip. The moaners began to complain loudly about the lack of air, and, when someone said they recognized a man leaving as the Minister of the Interior, an old Tory sighed: "Poor France!"

Taking an orange out of his pocket a negro, found himself attracting attention, and, enjoying the popularity, offered segments to his neighbours apologizing for making use of a newspaper: first to a priest who remarked: "I have never eaten anything so good, it's excellent, quite refreshing" but a dowager put on an offended air, telling her daughters not to accept anything "from someone they didn't know". The others, not knowing if the newspaper would get as far as them, put a brave face on it. Some took out their watches, a lady removed her hat. It had a parrot on top of. Two astonished youngsters wondered if it was a keepsake or a mark of eccentricity. Already jokers were beginning to chat from one row to the next, and the women, looking at their husbands, stifled their laughter with a handkerchief. When a silence fell the president appeared looking as though he was about to fall asleep. Werner's lawyer stated his case. He began emphatically, spoke for two hours, seemed enraged, and each time he said "Monsieur le President" became so grovelling that one would have thought him a young girl meeting a king or a priest before the altar.

It was terrible for Lemoine but the elegance of the hackneyed phrases softened the bitterness of the prosecution's summing up. And things carried on without interruption like a waterfall, like a ribbon unwinding. Occasionally the monotony of his voice was such that it could no longer be distinguish from the background silence, like the persistent vibration of a bell or a fading echo. In conclusion he referred to the portraits of presidents Grevy and Carnot placed above the court. Everyone looked up to confirm that, in this grubby, stuffy smelling room these trophies had gone

mouldy. A large space in the middle separated the rows of seats as far as the end of the courtroom. The parquet floor was dusty, there were spiders in the corners of the ceiling and a rat in every hole. It had to be ventilated frequently because of the stove which stank.

Lemoine's lawyer replied briefly. He had a southern accent, asked for sympathy and understanding, each time raising his monocle. On hearing this Nathalie felt agitated, a sweetness invaded her and her heart was uplifted, the fabric of her dress throbbed like grass at the edge of a fountain, gently flowing like the feathers of a pigeon making ready to fly. Finally the president made a sign, a murmuring rose up, two umbrellas fell down: they were about to hear again from the accused. Suddenly there were signs of rage from the officials. Why hadn't he told the truth and revealed how to make a diamond? Everyone, even the poorest, would have known how to get rich. They wept, imagining the lost millions with a pang. When the discovery was announced many began to daydream they'd made their fortune; then they discovered the scam.

Some thought they'd give up work, stay at a hotel in the avenue du Bois, have influence at the Academy and even buy a yacht which would take them in summer to cooler countries, not the north pole though, which is interesting but has oily food and twenty four hour daylight which would make sleeping difficult. And then there are the polar bears. For some, millions wouldn't be enough. Straight off they'd be playing the stockmarket. Buying cheap the day before stocks rose – a friend has re-assured them – you could make a hundred times your capital in a few hours. Rich as Carnegie they wouldn't be taken in by utopian ideas. (What good would that be? A billion shared out among the whole country wouldn't make anyone rich – as someone has calculated).

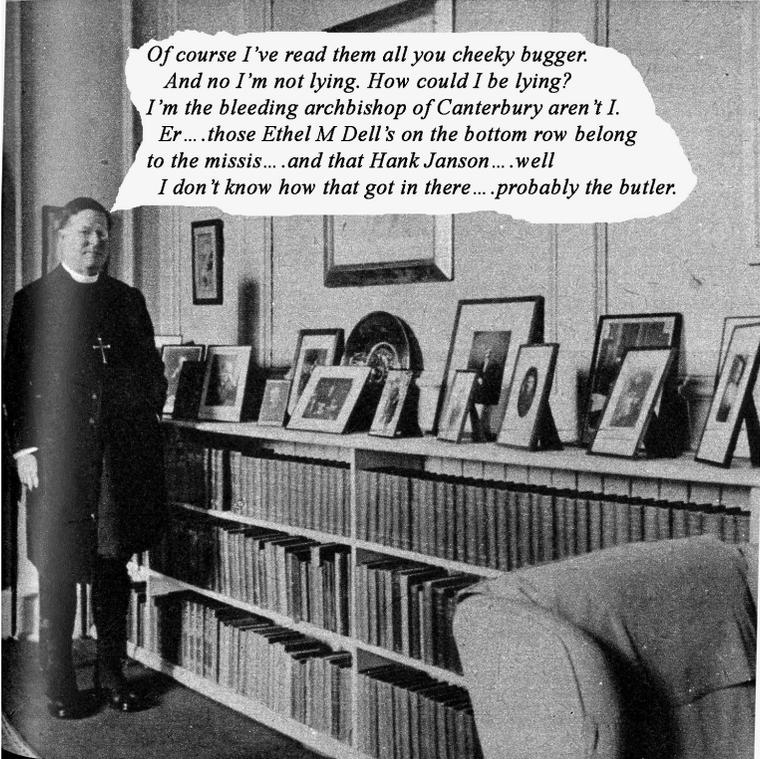
Leaving luxury to the stuck-up toffs they would seek only comfort and influence, to be elected president of the Republic, ambassador to Constantinople, to have a cork-lined room to keep the noise from the neighbours down. They wouldn't join the Jockey Club considering the aristocracy worthless. A title from the Pope would be advantageous. Perhaps one could get it without paying. But then what good are such millions to the church? It would swell the coffers of St Peter and bring the institution into contempt. What

would the Pope do with five million lace vestments; how many country curates are dying of hunger?

But some, dreaming they were going to be rich, felt on the brink of failure; they would have given it all to a woman who had scorned them up to now and would at last give up the secret of her kisses and the pleasures of her flesh. They imagined themselves with her, in the countryside, until the end of their days in a wooden chalet, on the melancholy banks of a large stream.

They would come to know the cry of the petrel, the arrival of the fogs, the rocking of boats, the formation of storm clouds, and would stay for hours on their knees, to watch the rising tide and the bobbing hawsers, from their terrace, in a wicker armchair under an awning striped with blue between metal balls. And they would finish up seeing no more than two bunches of violets, going down as far as the rushing water which they almost touched in the light of an overcast afternoon along a crumbling, reddish wall. These agonies softened their curses against the accused; but everyone detested him deciding he'd ruined their chances of debauch, honour, celebrity, genius and even the vague hopes, profound and sweet, which they'd kept secret since their silly childhood dreams.

Everywhere in the home of Dr. Temple are books, many of them on philosophy, for he is himself a learned philosopher. His statements show thought; his proposals, judgment.



*Of course I've read them all you cheeky bugger.
And no I'm not lying. How could I be lying?
I'm the bleeding archbishop of Canterbury aren't I.
Er... those Ethel M Dell's on the bottom row belong
to the missis... and that Hank Janson... well
I don't know how that got in there... probably the butler.*

Illustrated 1942

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Alexis Lykiard is a poet, novelist and critic. His latest collection *Getting On* is published by Shoestring Press. A complete listing of his many publications is on his website www.alexislykiard.com

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