

David Lodge

Changing Places

A Tale of Two Campuses



Penguin Books



David Lodge

Changing Places

A Tale of Two Campuses

Penguin Books

i. Flying

High, high above the North Pole, on the first day of 1969, Although some of the locations and public two professors of English Literature approached each other events portrayed in this novel bear a certain at a combined velocity of 1200 miles per hour. They were resemblance to actual locations and events, the protected from the thin, cold air by the pressurized cabins of characters, considered either as individuals or as two Boeing 707s, and from the risk of collision by the prudent members of institutions, are entirely imaginary.

arrangement of the international air corridors. Although Rummidge and Euphoria are places on the map they had never met, the two men were known to each other of a comic world which resembles the one we are by name. They were, in fact, in process of exchanging posts standing on without corresponding exactly to it, for the next six months, and in an age of more leisurely and which is peopled by figments of the transportation the intersection of their respective routes imagination.

might have been marked by some interesting human gesture: had they waved, for example, from the decks of two ocean liners crossing in mid-Atlantic, each man simultaneously focusing a telescope, by chance, on the other, with his free hand; or, more plausibly, a little mime of mutual appraisal might have been played out through the windows of two railway compartments halted side by side at the same station somewhere in Hampshire or the Mid-West, the more self-conscious party relieved to feel himself, at last, moving off, only to discover that it is the other man's train that is moving first. . . However, it was not to be. Since the two men were in airplanes, and one was bored and the other frightened of looking out of the window - since, in any case, the planes were too distant from each other to be mutually visible with the naked eye, the crossing of their paths at the still point of the turning world passed unremarked by anyone other than the narrator of this duplex chronicle.

'Duplex', as well as having the general meaning of 'two-fold', applies in the jargon of electrical telegraphy to

'systems in which messages are sent simultaneously in

opposite directions' (*OED*). Imagine, if you will, that each to air travel; while to Morris Zapp, slouched in the seat of his of these two professors of English Literature (both, as it eastbound aircraft, chewing a dead cigar (a hostess has happens, aged forty) is connected to his native land, place of made him extinguish it) and glowering at the meagre employment and domestic hearth by an infinitely elastic portion of ice dissolving in his plastic tumbler of bourbon, umbilical cord of emotions, attitudes and values - a cord the experience of long-distance air travel is tediously which stretches and stretches almost to the point of in-familiar.

visibility, but never quite to breaking-point, as he hurtles through the air at 600 miles per hour. Imagine further that, Philip Swallow has, in fact, flown before; but so seldom, as they pass each other above the polar ice-cap, the pilots of and at such long intervals, that on each occasion he suffers their respective Boeings, in defiance of regulations and the same trauma, an alternating current of fear and re-technical feasibility, begin to execute a series of playful assurance that charges and relaxes his system in a persistent aerobatics - criss-crossing, diving, soaring and looping, like and exhausting rhythm. While he is on the ground, prea pair of mating bluebirds, so as thoroughly to entangle the paring for his journey, he thinks of flying with exhilaration -

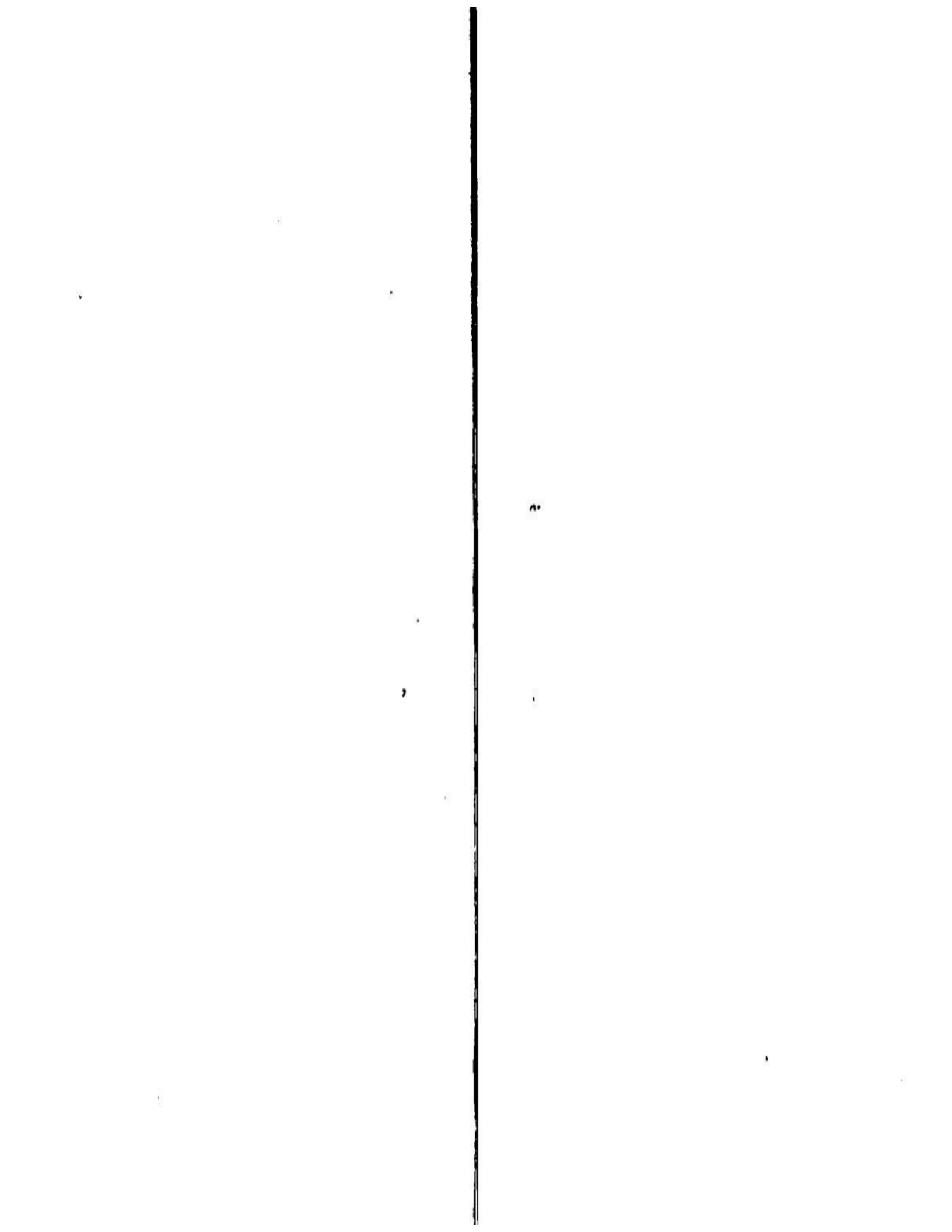
aforesaid umbilical cords, before proceeding soberly on their soaring up, up and away into the blue empyrean, cradled in way in the approved manner. It follows that when-the two aircraft that seem, from a distance, effortlessly at home in men alight in each other's territory, and go about their that element, as though sculpted from the sky itself. This business and pleasure, whatever vibrations are passed back confidence begins to fade a little when he arrives at the by one to his native habitat will be felt by the other, and airport and winces at the shrill screaming of jet engines. In vice versa, and thus return to the transmitter subtly modified the sky the planes look very small. On the runways they look by the response of the other party - may, indeed, return to very big. Therefore close Up they should look even bigger -

him along the other party's cord of communication, which but in fact they don't. His own plane, for instance, just is, after all, anchored in the place where he has just arrived; outside the window of the assembly lounge, doesn't look so that before long the whole system is twanging with quite big enough for all the people who are going to get into vibrations travelling backwards and forwards between Prof it. This impression is confirmed when he passes through the A and Prof B, now along this line, now along that, some-tunnel into the cabin of the aircraft, a cramped tube full of times beginning on one line and terminating on another. It writhing limbs. But when he, and the other passengers, are would not be surprising, in other words, if two men changing seated, well-being returns. The seats are so remarkably places for six months should exert a reciprocal influence on comfortable that one feels quite content to stay put, but it is each other's destinies, and actually mirror each other's reassuring that the aisle is free should one wish to walk up it.

experience in certain respects, notwithstanding all the There is soothing music playing. The lighting is restful. A differences that exist between the two environments, and stewardess offers him the morning paper. His baggage is between the characters of the two men and their respective safely stowed away in the plane somewhere, or if it is not, attitudes towards the whole enterprise.

that isn't his fault, which is the main thing. Flying is, after One of these differences we can take in at a glance from all, the only way to travel.

our privileged narrative altitude (higher than that of any But as the plane taxis to the runway, he makes the mistake jet). It is obvious, from his stiff, upright posture, and fulsome of looking out of the window at the wings bouncing gently up gratitude to the stewardess serving him a glass of orange and down. The panels and rivets are almost painfully juice, that Philip Swallow, flying westward, is unaccustomed visible, the painted markings weathered, there are streaks of **8**



soot on the engine cowlings. It is borne in upon him that he hiring retired kamikaze pilots to destroy each other's hard-is, after all, entrusting his life to a machine, the work of ware in the sky, TWA's Boeings ramming Pan Ana's, human hands, fallible and subject to decay. And so it goes American Airlines' D G 8s busting United's right out of their on, even after the plane has climbed safely into the sky: Friendly Skies (hah!), rival shuttle services colliding head-periods of confidence and pleasure punctuated by spasms of on, the clouds raining down wings, fuselages, engines, pas-panic and emptiness.

sengers, chemical toilets, hostesses, menu cards and plastic The sang-froid of his fellow passengers is a constant source cutlery (Morris Zapp had an apocalyptic imagination on of wonderment to him, and he observes their deportment occasion, as who has not in America these days?) in a carefully. Flying for Philip Swallow is essentially a dramatic definitive act of industrial pollution.

performance, and he approaches it like a game amateur actor By taking the non-stop polar flight to London, in pre-determined to hold his own in the company of word-perfect ference to the two-stage journey via New York, Zapp professionals. To speak the truth, he approaches most of reckons that he has reduced his chances of being caught in life's challenges in the same spirit. He is a mimetic man: such an Armageddon by fifty per cent. But weighing against unconfident, eager to please, infinitely suggestible.

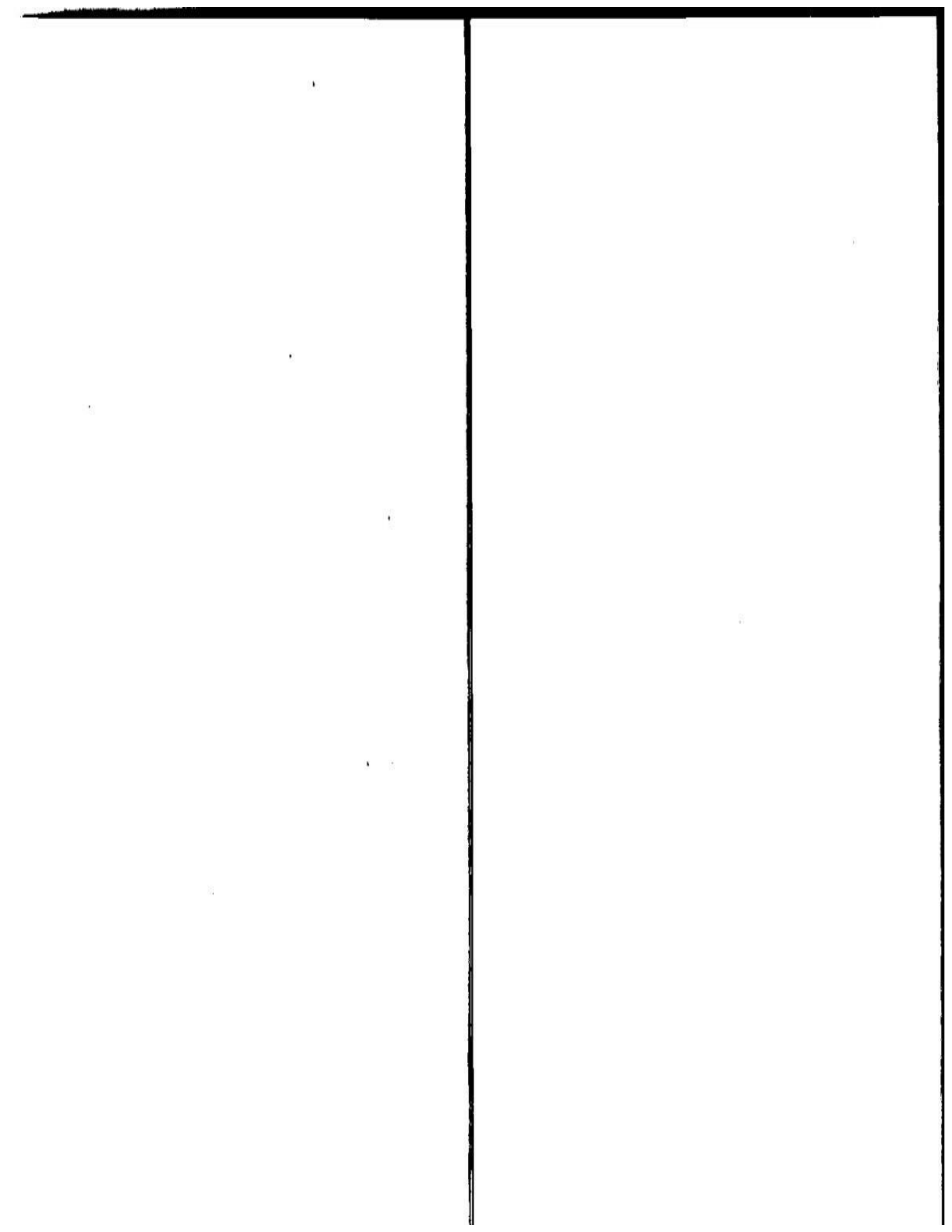
this comforting thought is the fact that he is travelling on a charter flight, and chartered aircraft (he has also read) are It would be natural, but incorrect, to assume that Morris several times more likely to crash than planes on scheduled Zapp has suffered no such qualms on his flight. A seasoned nights, being, he infers, machines long past their prime, veteran of the domestic airways, having flown over most of bought as scrap from the big airlines by cheapjack operators the states in the Union in his time, bound for conferences, and sold again and again to even cheaper jacks (this plane, lecture dates and assignments, it has not escaped his notice for instance, belonged to a company called Orbis; the that airplanes occasionally crash. Being innately mistrustful phoney Latin name inspired no confidence and he wouldn't of the universe and its guiding spirit, which he sometimes mind betting that an ultra-violet photograph would reveal refers to as Improvidence (' How can you attribute *that** he a palimpsest of fourteen different airline insignia under its will ask, gesturing at the star-spangled night sky over the fresh paint) flown by pilots long gone over the hill, alcoholics Pacific, 'to something called Providence? Just look at the and schizoids, shaky-fingered victims of emergency landings, *wasteV*), he seldom enters an aircraft without wondering ice-storms and hijackings by crazy Arabs and homesick with one part of his busy brain whether he is about to Cubans wielding sticks of dynamite and dime-store pistols.

feature in Air Disaster of the Week on the nation's TV

Furthermore, this is his first flight over water (yes, Morris networks. Normally such morbid thoughts visit him only at Zapp has never before left the protection of the North the beginning and end of a flight, for he has read somewhere American landmass, a proud record unique among the that eighty per cent of all aircraft accidents occur at either faculty of his university) and he cannot swim. The un-take-off or landing — a statistic that did not surprise him, familiar ritual of instruction, at the commencement of the having been stacked on many occasions for an hour or flight, in the use of inflatable lifejackets, unsettled him. That more over Esseph airport, fifty planes circling in the air,

canvas and rubber contraption was a fetishist's dream, but fifty more taking off at ninety-second intervals, the whole he had as much chance of getting into it in an emergency as juggling act controlled by a computer, so that it only needed into the girdle of the hostess giving the demonstration.

a fuse to blow and the sky would look like airline competi- Furthermore, exploratory gropings failed to locate a life-tion had finally broken out into open war, the companies jacket where it was supposed to be, under his seat. Only his **to**



reluctance to strike an undignified pose before a blonde with there has long existed a scheme for the exchange of visiting outside spectacles in the next seat had dissuaded him from teachers in the second half of each academic year. How two getting down on hands and knees to make a thorough universities so different in character and so widely separated check. He contented himself with allowing his long, gorilla-in space should be linked in this way is simply explained. It like arms to hang loosely over the edge of his seat, fingers happened that the architects of both campuses independent-brushing the underside unobtrusively in the style used for ly hit upon the same idea for the chief feature of their designs, parking gum or nosepickings. Once, at full stretch, he found namely, a replica of the leaning Tower of Pisa, built of something that felt promising, but it proved to be one of his white stone and twice the original size at Euphoric State and neighbour's legs, and was indignantly withdrawn. He of red brick and to scale at Rummidge, but restored to the turned towards her, not to apologize (Morris Zapp never perpendicular in both instances. The exchange scheme was apologized) but to give her the famous Zapp Stare, set up to mark this coincidence.

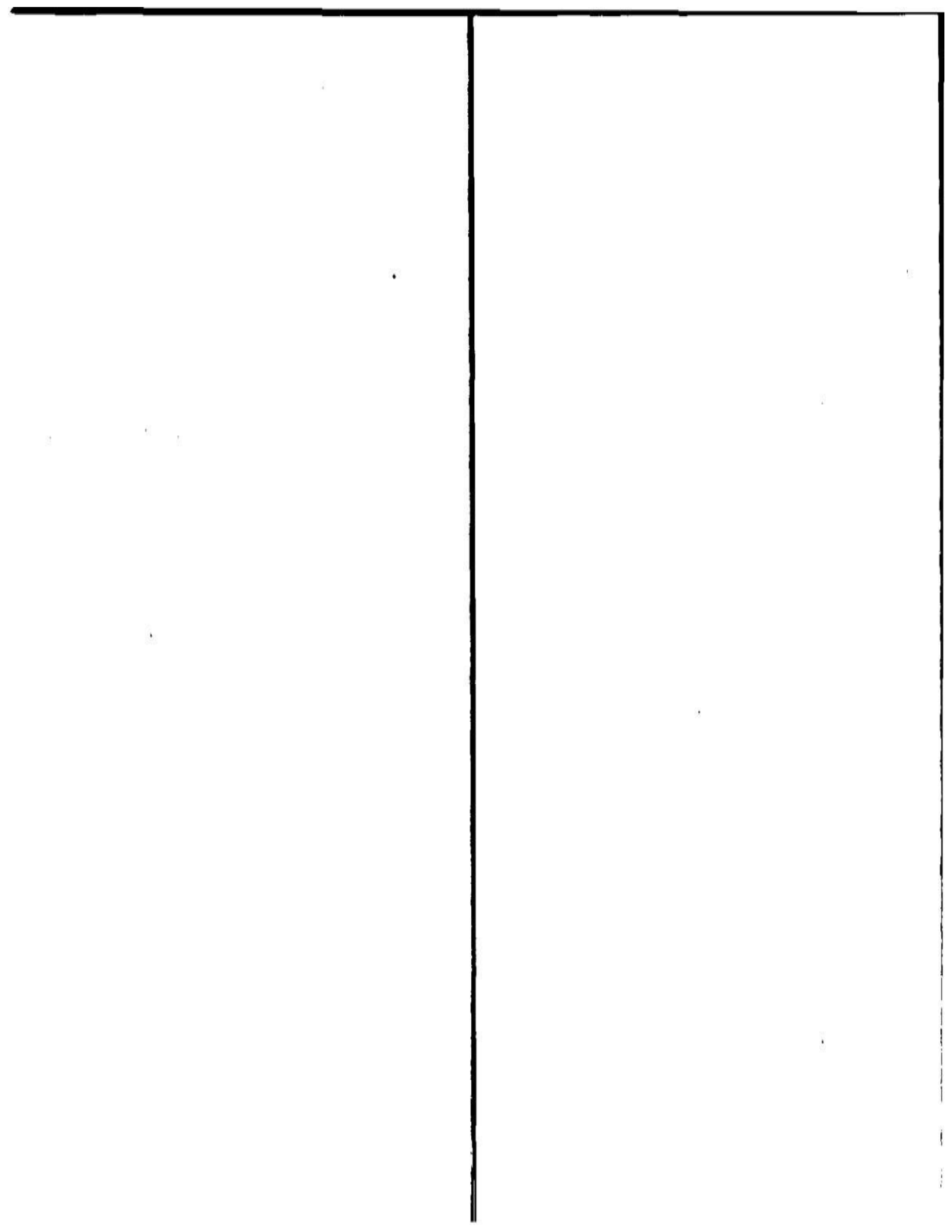
guaranteed to stop any human creature, from University Under the original agreement, each visitor drew the Presidents to Black Panthers, dead in his tracks at a range of salary to which he was entitled by rank and seniority on the twenty yards, only to be confronted with an impenetrable scale of the host institution, but as no American could curtain of blonde hair.

survive for more than a few days on the monthly stipend paid Eventually he abandons the quest for the lifejacket, by Rummidge, Euphoric State made up the difference for reflecting that the sea under his ass at the moment is frozen its own faculty, while paying its British visitors a salary solid anyway, not that that is a reassuring thought. No, this beyond their wildest dreams and bestowing upon them is not the happiest of flights for Morris J. Zapp ('Jehovah', indiscriminately the title of Visiting Professor. It was not he would murmur out of the side of his mouth to girls who only in these terms that the arrangement tended to favour inquired about his middle name, it never failed; all women the British participants. Euphoria, that small but populous longed to be screwed by a god, it was the source of all state on the Western seaboard of America, situated between religion - 'Just look at the myths, Leda and the Swan, Isis Northern and Southern California, with its mountains, lakes and Osiris, Mary and the Holy Ghost* - thus spake Zapp in and rivers, its redwood forests, its blond beaches and its his graduate seminar, pinning a brace of restive nuns to incomparable Bay, across which the State University at their seats with the Stare). There is something funny, he Plotinus faces the glittering, glamorous city of Esseph -

tells himself, about this plane - not just the implausible Euphoria is considered by many cosmopolitan experts to be Latin name of the airline, the missing lifejacket, the billions one of the most agreeable environments in the world. Not of tons of ice underneath him and the minuscule cube even its City Fathers would claim as much for Rummidge, a melting in the bourbon before him - something else there is, large, graceless industrial city sprawled over the English something he hasn't figured out yet. While Morris Zapp is Midlands at the intersection of three motorways, twenty-six working on this problem, we shall take time out to explain railway lines and half-a-dozen stagnant canals.

something of the circumstances that have brought him and Then again, Euphoric State had, by a ruthless exploita-Philip Swallow into the polar skies at the same indeterminate tion of its wealth, built itself up into one of America's major (for everybody's watch is wrong by now) hour.

universities, buying the most distinguished scholars it could find and retaining their loyalty by the lavish provision of Between the State University of Euphoria (colloquially laboratories, libraries, research grants and handsome, long-known as Euphoric State) and the University of Rummidge, legged secretaries. By this year of 1969, Euphoric State had iz



perhaps reached its peak as a centre of learning, and was The exchange of Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, how-already in the process of decline - due partly to the ac-ever, constituted a reversal of the usual pattern. Zapp was celerating tempo of disruption by student militants, and distinguished, and Swallow was not. Zapp was the man who partly to the counter-pressures exerted by the right-wing had published articles in *PMLA* while still in graduate Governor of the State, Ronald Duck, a former movie-actor.

school; who, enviably offered his first job by Euphoric But such was the quality of the university's senior staff, and State, had stuck out for twice the going salary, and got it; the magnitude of its accumulated resources, that it would be who had published five fiendishly clever books (four of them many years before its standing was seriously undermined.

on Jane Austen) by the time he was thirty and achieved the Euphoric State, in short, was still a name to conjure with in rank of full professor at the same precocious age. Swallow Jie senior common rooms of the world. Rummidge, on the was a man scarcely known outside his own Department, other hand, had never been an institution of more than who had published nothing except a handful of essays and middling size and reputation, and it had lately suffered the reviews, who had risen slowly up the salary scale of Lecturer mortifying fate of most English universities of its type (civic by standard annual increments and was now halted at the redbrick): having competed strenuously for fifty years with top with slender prospects of promotion. Not that Philip two universities chiefly valued for being old, it was, at the Swallow was lacking in intelligence or ability; but he lacked moment of drawing level, rudely overtaken in popularity will and ambition, the professional killer instinct which and prestige by a batch of universities chiefly valued for Zapp abundantly possessed.

being new. Its mood was therefore disgruntled and disIn this respect both men were characteristic of the edu-couraged, rather as would be the mood of the middle class in cational systems they had passed through. In America, it is a iociety that had never had a bourgeois revolution, but had not too difficult to obtain a bachelor's degree. The student passed directly from aristocratic to proletarian control.

is left very much to his own devices, he accumulates the For these and other reasons the most highly-qualified and necessary credits at his leisure, cheating is easy, and there is senior members of staff competed eagerly for the honour of not much suspense or anxiety about the eventual outcome.

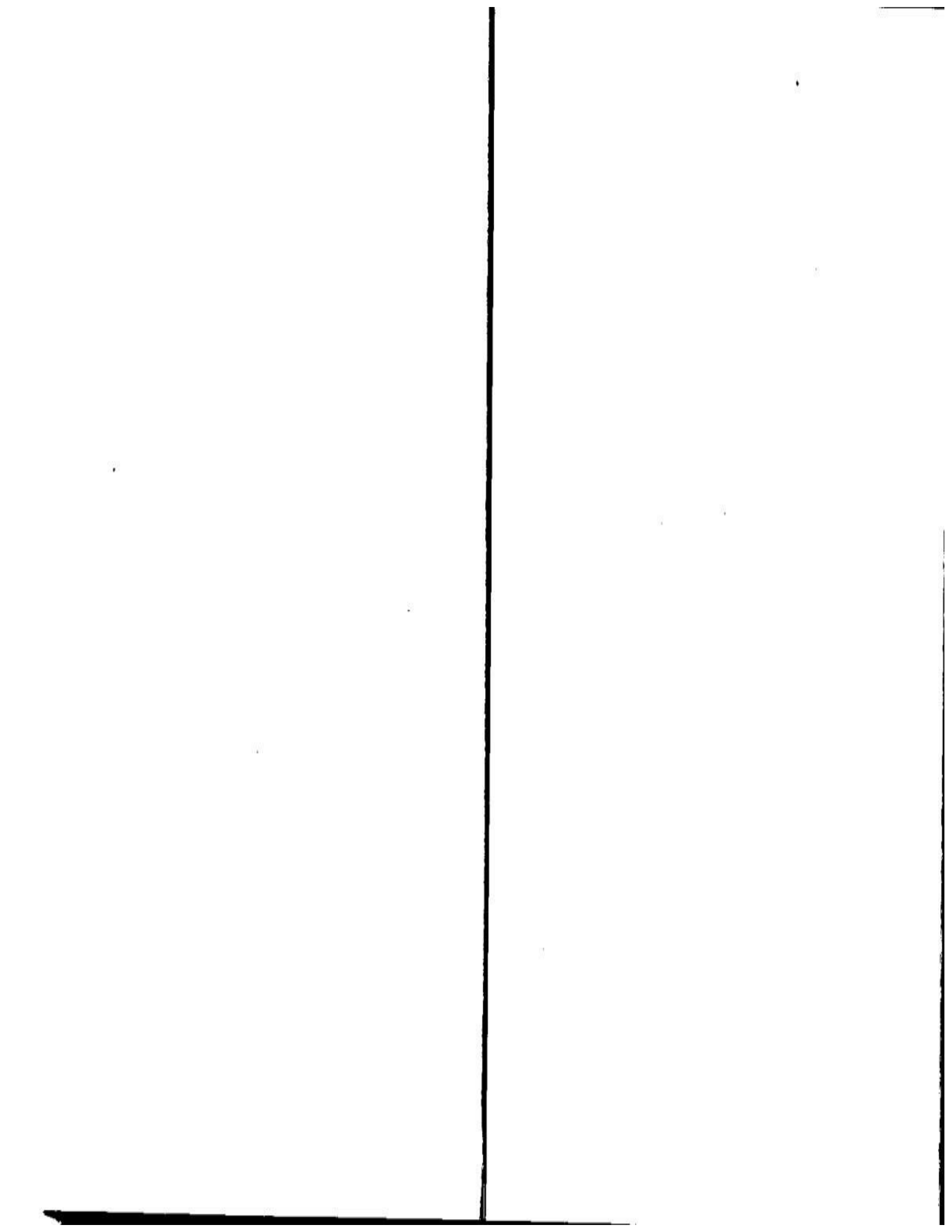
representing Rummidge at Euphoric State: while Euphoric He (or she) is therefore free to give full attention to the State, if the truth were told, had sometimes encountered normal interests of late adolescence — sport, alcohol, enter-difficulty in persuading any of its faculty to go to Rummidge.

tainment and the opposite sex. It is at the postgraduate level The members of that 6lite body, the Euphoric State faculty, that the pressure really begins, when the student is bur-who picked up grants and fellowships as other men pick up nished and tempered in a series of gruelling courses and hats, did not aim to teach when they came to Europe, and rigorous assessments until he is deemed worthy to receive the certainly not to teach at Rummidge, which few of them had accolade of the PhD. By now he has invested so much time even heard of. Hence the American visitors to Rummidge and money in the process that any career other than an tended to be young and/or undistinguished, determined academic one has become unthinkable, and anything less Anglophiles who could find no

other way of getting to than success in it unbearable. He is well primed, in short, to England or, very rarely, specialists in one of the esoteric enter a profession as steeped in the spirit of free enterprise as disciplines in which Rummidge, through the support of local Wall Street, in which each scholar-teacher makes an in-industry, had established an unchallenged supremacy: individual contract with his employer, and is free to sell his domestic appliance technology, tyre sciences and the bio-services to the highest bidder.

chemistry of the cocoa bean.

Under the British system, competition begins and ends 14



much earlier. Four times, under our educational rules, the human pack is shuffled and cut - at eleven-plus, sixteen-ledge, so that it tended to leak away as fast as he acquired it.

plus, eighteen-plus and twenty-plus - and happy is he who comes top of the deck on each occasion, but especially the Philip Swallow was a man with a genuine love of litera-last. This is called Finals, the very name of which implies ture in all its diverse forms. He was a* happy with Beowulf as that nothing of importance can happen after it. The British with Virginia Woolf, with *Waiting/or Godot* as with *Gammer* postgraduate student is a lonely, forlorn soul, uncertain of *Gurton's Needle*, and in odd moments when nobler examples what he is doing or whom he is trying to please - you may of the written word were not to hand he read attentively the recognize him in the tea-shops around the Bodleian and the backs of cornflakes packets, the small print on railway tickets British Museum by the glazed look in his eyes, the vacant and the advertising matter in books of stamps. This un-stare of the shell-shocked veteran for whom nothing has been discriminating enthusiasm, however, prevented him from real since the Big Push. As long as he manages to land his settling en a 'field' to cultivate as his own. He had done his fint job, this is no great handicap in the short run, since initial research on Jane Austen, but since then had turned tenure is virtually automatic in British universities, and his attention to topics as various as medieval sermons, everyone is paid on the same scale. But at a certain age, the Elizabethan sonnet sequences, Restoration heroic tragedy, age at which promotions and Chairs begin to occupy a eighteenth-century broadsides, the novels of William God-man's thoughts, he may look back with wistful nostalgia to win, the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and premo-the days when his wits ran fresh and clear, directed to a nitions of the Theatre of the Absurd in the plays of George single, positive goal.

Bernard Shaw. None of these projects had bten completed.

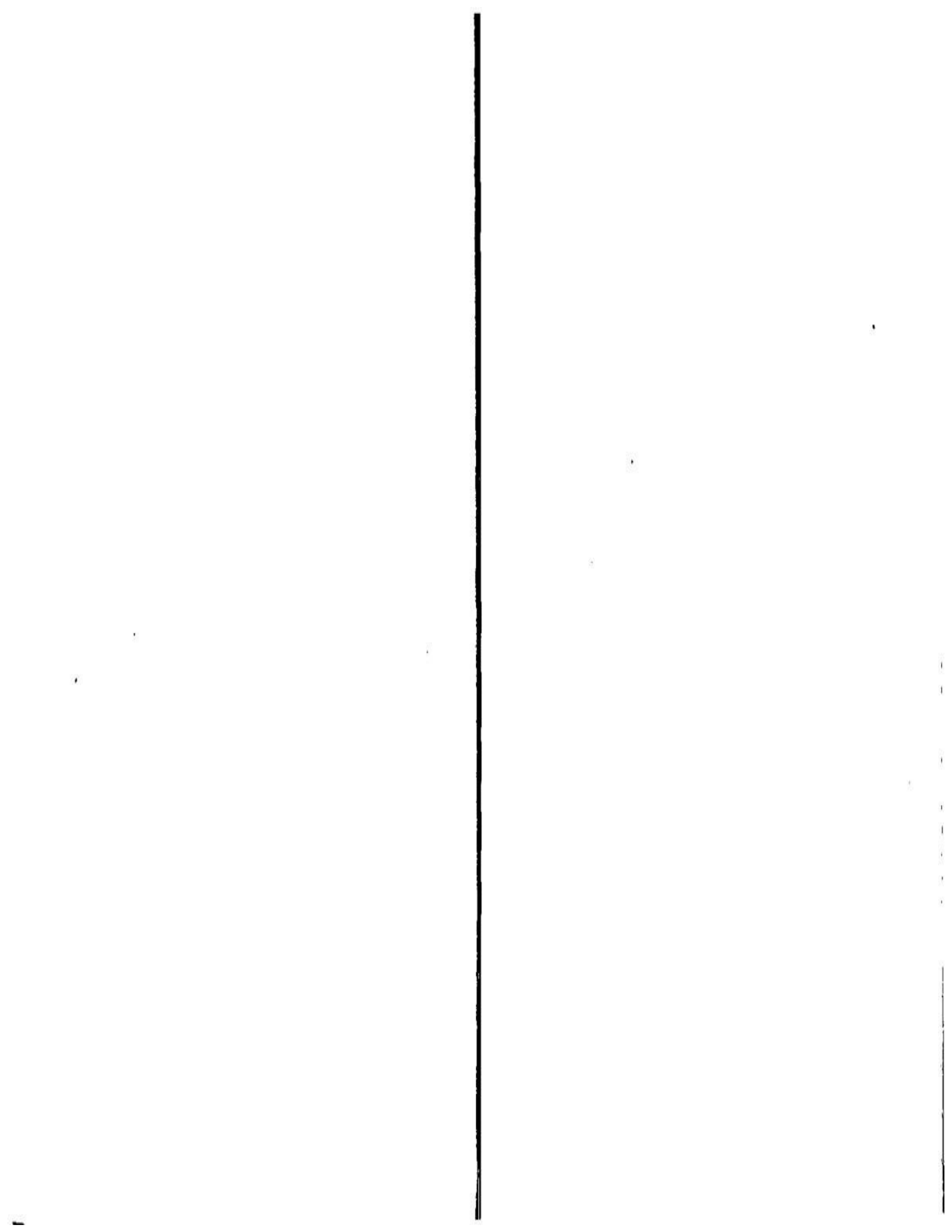
Philip Swallow had been made and unmade by the system Seldom, indeed, had he drawn up a preliminary bibliogra-in precisely this way. He liked examinations, always did well phy before his attention was distracted by some new or in them. Finals had been, in many ways, the supreme revived interest in something entirely different. He ran moment of his life. He frequently dreamed that he was taking hither and thither between the shelves of Eng. Lit. like a the examinations again, and these were happy dreams.

child in a toyshop - so reluctant to choose one item to the Awake, he could without difficulty remember the questions exclusion of others that he ended up empty-handed.

he had elected to answer on every paper that hot, distant There was one respect alone in which Philip was recog-June. In the preceding months he had prepared himself nized as a man of distinction, though only within the con-with meticulous care, filling his mind with distilled know-fines of his own Department. He was a superlative examiner ledge, drop by drop, until, on the eve of the first paper of undergraduates: scrupulous, painstaking, stern yet just.

(Old English Set Texts) it was almost brimming over. Each No one could award a delicate mark like B + / B + ?+ with morning for the next ten days he bore this precious vessel to such confident aim, or justify it with such cogency and the examination halls and poured a measured quantity of conviction. In the Department meetings that discussed the contents on to pages of ruled quarto. Day by day the level draft question papers he was much feared by his colleagues fell, until on the tenth day the vessel

was empty, the cup was because of his keen eye for the ambiguous rubric, the drained, the cupboard was bare. In the years that followed repetition of questions from previous years' papers, the he set about replenishing his mind, but it was never quite careless oversight that would allow candidates to duplicate the same. The sense of purpose was lacking - there was no material in two answers. His own papers were works of art great Reckoning against which he could hoard his know-on which he laboured with loving care for many hours, tinkering and polishing, weighing every word, deftly **16**



manipulating *eithers* and *ors*, judiciously balancing difficult idle moment for a Fellowship to America and for an questions on popular authors with easy questions on Assistant Lectureship at the University of Rummidge. To obscure ones, inviting candidates to consider, illustrate, his great surprise he was offered both (that First again) and comment on, analyse, respond to, make discriminating Rummidge generously offered to defer his appointment for a assessments of or (last resort) discuss brilliant epigrams of his year so that he would not have to choose between them. He own invention disguised as quotations from anonymous didn't really want to go to America by this time because he critics.

had become sentimentally attached to a postgraduate stu-A colleague had once declared that Philip ought to pub-dent called Hilary Broome who was working on Augustan lish his examination papers. The suggestion had been in-pastoral poetry, but he formed the impression that the Fel-tended as a sneer, but Philip had been rather taken with the lowship was not an opportunity that could be lightly refused.

idea - seeing in it, for a few dizzy hours, a heaven-sent So he went to Harvard and was extremely miserable for solution to his professional barrenness. He visualized a criti-several months. Because he was working on his own, trying cal work of totally revolutionary form, a concise, compre-to finish his thesis, he made few friends; because he had no hensive survey of English literature consisting entirely of car, and couldn't drive anyway, he found it difficult to questions, elegantly printed with acres of white paper be-move around freely. Cowardice, and a dim, undefined tween them, questions that would be miracles of conden-loyalty to Hilary Broome, prevented him from dating the sation, eloquence and thoughtfulness, questions to read and intimidating Radcliffe girls. He formed the habit of taking re-read, questions to brood over, as pregnant and enigmatic long solitary walks through the streets of Cambridge and as *haikus*, as memorable as proverbs; questions that would, environs, tailed by police cars whose occupants regarded so to speak, contain within themselves the ghostly, subtly gratuitous walking as inherently suspicious. The fillings he suggested embryos of their own answers. *Collected Literary* had prudently taken care to have put in his teeth before *Questions*, by Philip Swallow. A book to be compared with leaving the embrace of the National Health Service all fell Pascal's *Pensies* or Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investiga-out and he was informed by a contemptuous Boston dentist tions ...*

that he needed a thousand dollars' worth of dental work But the project had advanced no further than his more immediately. As this sum was nearly a third of his total orthodox ones, and meanwhile Rummidge students had stipend, Philip thought he had found the perfect excuse for begun agitating for the abolition of conventional examina-throwing up his fellowship and returning to England with tions, so that his one special skill was in danger of becoming honour. The Fellowship Fund, however, promptly offered redundant. There had been times, lately, when he had be-to meet the entire cost from its bottomless funds, so instead gun to wonder whether he was entirely suited to the career he wrote to Hilary Broome asking her to marry him. Hilary, on which he had been launched some fifteen years earlier, who was growing bored with Augustan pastoral poetry, not so much by personal choice as by the mere impetus of returned her books to the library, bought a wedding dress off his remarkable First.

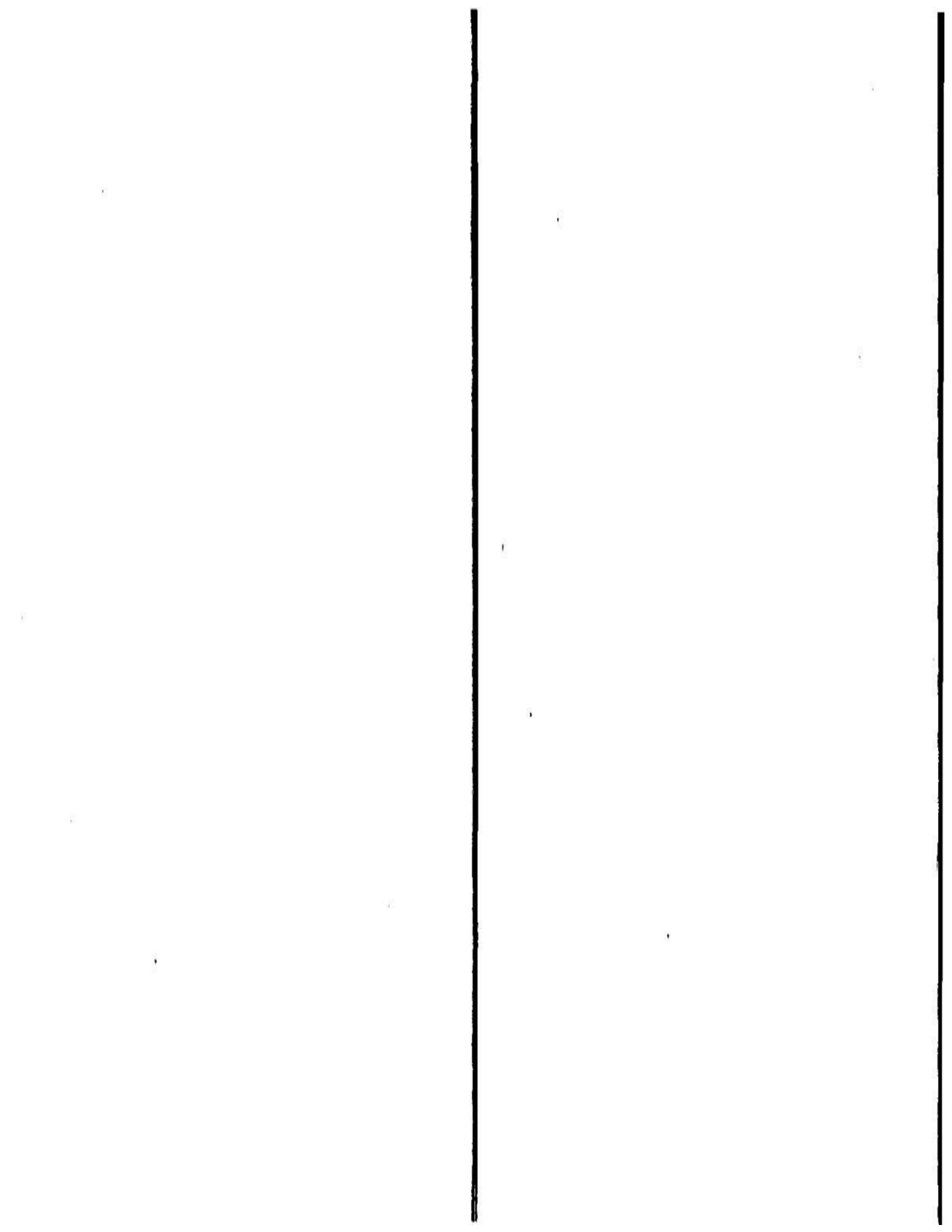
the peg at C&A, and flew out to join him on the first available plane. They were married by an

Episcopalian minister He had been awarded a postgraduate studentship auto-in Boston just three weeks after Philip had proposed.

matically and had accepted his Professor's suggestion that he write an MA thesis on the juvenilia of Jane Austen. After One of the conditions of the Fellowship was that reci-nearly two years his work was still far from completion and, pients should travel widely in the United States, and Fellows thinking that a change of scene might help, he applied in an were generously provided with a rented car for the purpose.

18

19



By way of a honeymoon, and to escape the severity of the was small. Life was riddled with petty privation. So were New England winter, the young couple decided to start the lives of most people like the Swallows at this time, and their tour immediately. With Hilary at the wheel of a gi-he would not perhaps have repined had he not tasted a gantic brand-new Chevrolet Impala, they headed south to richer existence. Sometimes he came across snapshots of Florida, sometimes pulling off the highway to make fervent himself and Hilary in Euphoria, tanned and confident and love on the amazingly wide back seat. From Florida they gleeful, and, running a hand through his thinning hair, crossed the southern States in very easy stages until they he would gaze at the figures in envious wonder, as if they reached Euphoria and settled for the summer in an attic were rich, distant relatives whom he had never seen in the apartment on the top of a hill in the city of Esseph. From flesh.

their double bed they looked straight across the Bay at the That is why there is a gleam in Philip Swallow's eye as he verdant slopes of Plotinus, location of the Euphoric State sits now in the B O A C Boeing, sipping his orange juice; why, campus.

despite the fact that the plane is shuddering and lurching in This long honeymoon was the key that unlocked the the most terrifying manner due to what the captain has American experience for Philip Swallow. He discovered in just described soothingly over the public address system as himself an unsuspected, long repressed appetite for sensual

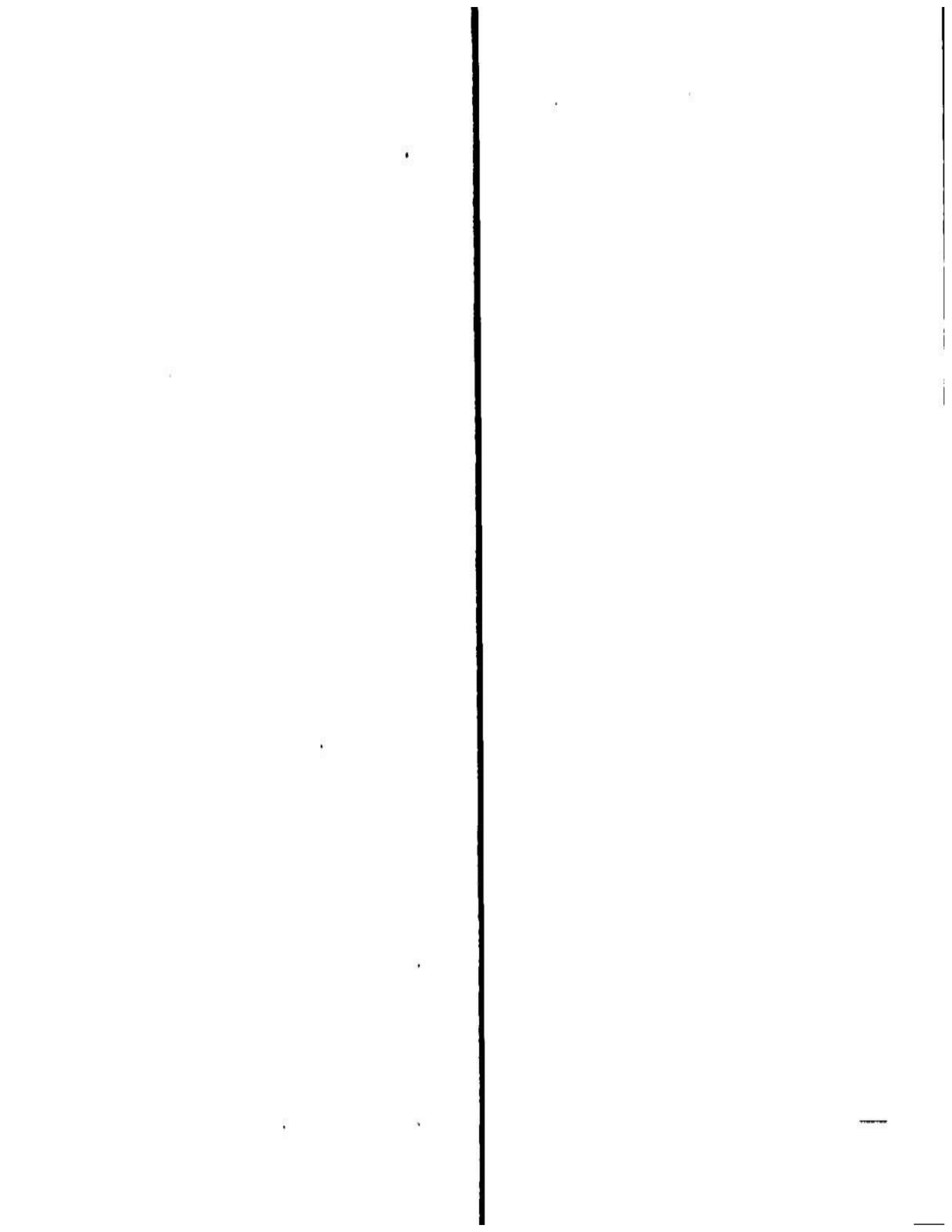
'a spot of moderate turbulence', he would not be anywhere pleasure which he assuaged, not only in the double bed with else for the world. Though he has followed the recent history Hilary, but also with simple amenities of the American way of the United States in the newspapers, though he is well of life, such as showers and cold beer and supermarkets and aware, cognitively, that it has become more than ever a heated open-air swimming pools and multi-flavoured ice-violent and melodramatic land, riven by deep divisions of cream. The sun shone. Philip was relaxed, confident, happy.

race and ideology, traumatized by political assassinations, He learned to drive, and flung the majestic Impala up and the campuses in revolt, the cities seizing up, the countryside down the roller-coaster hills of Esseph with native panache, poisoned and devastated - emotionally it is still for him a the radio playing at full volume. He haunted the cellars and kind of Paradise, the place where he was once happy and satirical night-clubs of South Strand, where the Beats, in free and may be so once again. He looks forward with those days, were giving their jazz-and-poetry recitals, and simple, childlike pleasure to the sunshine, ice in his drinks, felt himself thrillingly connected to the *Zeitgeist*. He even *drinks*, parties, cheap tobacco and infinite varieties of ice-finished his MA thesis, almost effortlessly. It was the last cream; to being called 'Professor', to being complimented major project he ever finished.

on his accent by anonymous telephonists, to being an object Hilary was four months pregnant when they sailed back of interest simply by virtue of being British; and to exercis-to England in September. It was raining hard the morning ing again his command of American idiom, grown a little they docked at Southampton, and Philip caught a cold rusty over the years from disuse.

which lasted for approximately a year. They rented a damp On Philip's return from his Fellowship, newly acquired and draughty furnished flat in Rummidge for six months, Americanisms had quickly withered on his lips under the and after the baby had arrived they moved to a small, damp

uncomprehending or disapproving stares of Rummidge and draughty terraced house, from which, three years later, students and colleagues. A decade later, and a dash of with a second child and another on the way, they moved to a American usage (both learned and vulgar) had become large, damp and draughty Victorian villa. The children acceptable - indeed fashionable - in British academic circles, made it impossible for Hilary to work, and Philip's salary but (it was the story of his life) it was then too late for him to so



change his style, the style of a thoroughly conventional cigarettes. Nothing else happens. He is not required to **cut** English don, keeping English up. American idiom still, up anyone else's chicken, or to guarantee the edibility of however, retained for him a secret, subtle enchantment.

smoked salmon; no neighbouring trays spring suddenly into Was it the legacy of a war-time boyhood - Hollywood films the air or slide resonantly to the floor; his coffee-cup is not and tattered copies of the *Saturday Evening Post* having estab-dashed from his lips, to deposit its scalding contents in his lished in those crucial years a deep psychic link between crotch; his suit collects no souvenirs of the meal by way of American English and the goodies of which he was de-buttered biscuit crumbs, smears of peach parfait and dribbles prived by rationing? Perhaps, but there was also a purely of mayonnaise. This, he reflects, must be what weight-aesthetic appeal, more difficult to analyse, a subtle music of lessness is like in space, or the lowered gravity of moon-displaced accents, cute contractions, quaint redundancies walks - an unwonted sensation of buoyancy and freedom, a and vivid tropes, which he revives now as the shores of sudden reduction of the effort customarily required by Britain recede and those of America rush to meet him. As a ordinary physical tasks. And it is not just for today, but for virgin spinster who, legatee of some large and unexpected six whole months, that it will last. He hugs the thought to bequest, heads immediately for Paris and points south and, himself with guilty glee. Guilty, because he cannot entirely leaning forward in a compartment of the Golden Arrow, absolve himself of the charge of having deserted Hilary, eagerly practises the French phrases she can remember from perhaps even at this moment presiding grimly over the school-lessons, restaurant menus and distant day-trips to rugged table-manners of the three young Swallows.

Boulogne; so Philip Swallow, strapped (because of the It is a consoling thought, in the circumstances, that the turbulence) into the seat of his Boeing, lips perceptibly desertion was not of his own seeking.

moving but all sound muffled by the hum of the jet Philip Swallow had never actually applied **for** the engines, tries out on his tongue certain half-forgotten intona-Rummidge-Euphoria exchange scheme, partly out of a well-tions and phrases: 'cigarettes . . . primarily . . . Swiss on Rye founded modesty as to his claims, and partly because he had to go . . . have it checked o u t . . . that's the way the cookie long come to think of himself as too trammelled and shackled crumbles...'

by domestic responsibilities to contemplate such adventures.

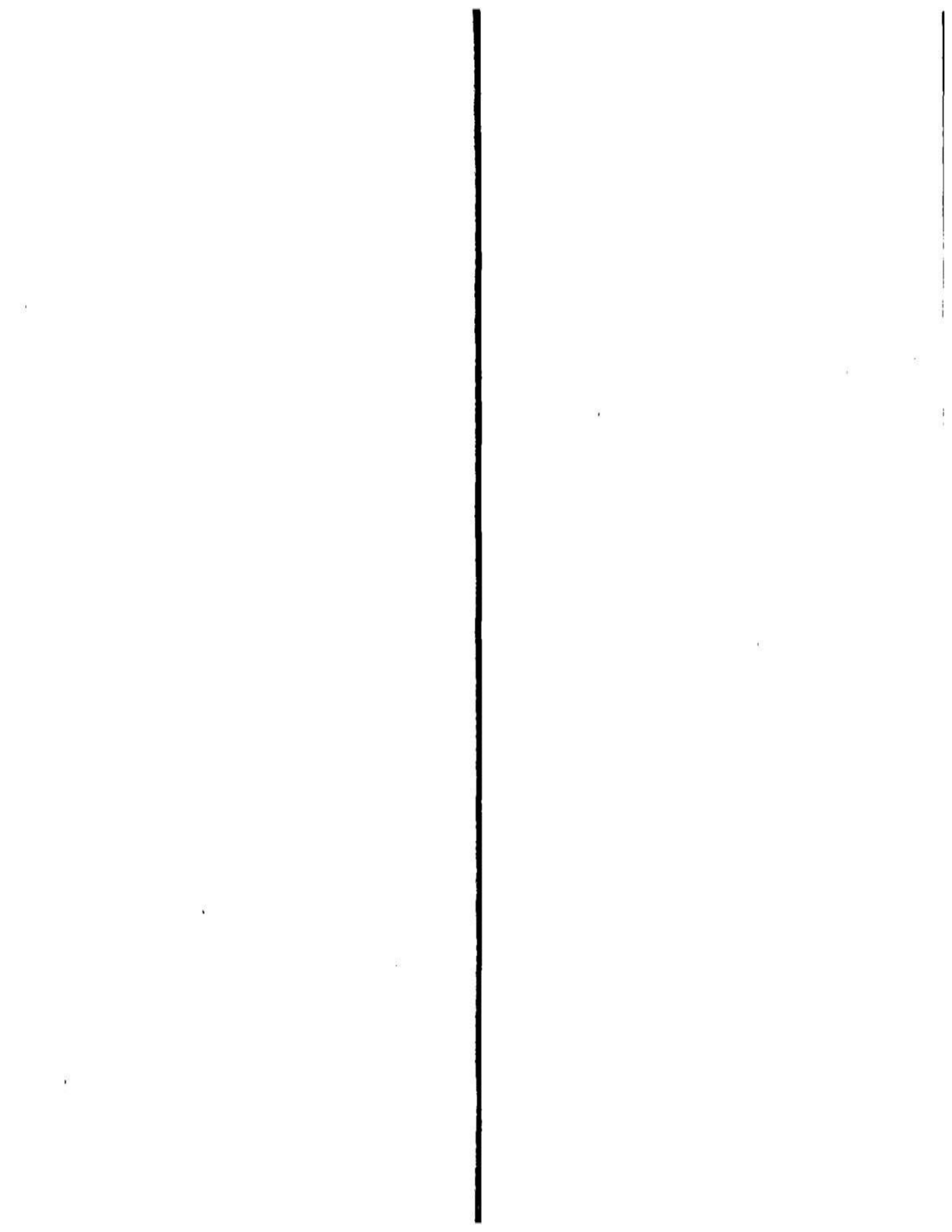
No virgin spinster, Philip Swallow, a father of three and As he had said to Gordon Masters, the Head of his Depart-husband of one, but on this occasion he journeys alone. And ment, when the latter asked him whether he'd ever thought a rare treat it is, this absence of dependents - one which, of applying for the Euphoria exchange:

though he is ashamed to admit it, would make him light-

' Not really, Gordon. It wouldn't be fair, you know, to dis-some were his destination Outer Mongolia. Now, for turb the children's education at this stage - Robert's taking example, the stewardess lays before him a meal of am-the eleven-plus next year, and it won't be long before biguous designation (could be lunch, could be dinner, who Amanda's in the thick of' O " Levels.'

knows or cares four miles above the turning globe) but

'Mrmmmmner your own?' Masters replied. This habit tempting: smoked salmon, chicken and rice, peach parfait, of swallowing the first part of his sentences made communi-all neatly compartmentalized on a plastic tray, cheese and cation with him a stressful proceeding, as did his way of biscuits wrapped in cellophane, disposable cutlery, personal closing one eye when he looked at you as though taking aim salt cellar and pepperpot in dolls'-house scale. He eats along the barrel of a gun. He was in fact a keen sportsman, everything slowly and with appreciation, accepts a second and the walls of his room bore plentiful evidence of his cup of coffee and opens a pack of opulently long duty-free marksmanship in the form of silently snarling stuffed anirryQs.



The strangled commencements of his sentences, Philip

'I must admit,' said Philip, freshening the washing-up supposed, derived from his service in the Army, where in water and stirring the suds with gusto, 'that if I did go on many utterances only the final word of command is signi-my own I could probably save quite a lot of money. Enough ficant. From long practice Philip was able to follow his drift to pay for the central heating, I should think.'

pretty well, and therefore answered confidently: The installation of central heating in their cold, damp,

'Oh, no, I couldn't leave Hilary behind to cope on her multi-roomed house had long been an impossible dream of own. Not for six months.'

the Swallows. 'You go, darling,' said Hilary, with a plucky

'Mmmmmmmnerpose not,' Masters muttered, con-smile. 'You mustn't miss the opportunity. Gordon might not veying a certain disappointment or frustration by the way he be Chairman of this committee again.'

shifted his weight restlessly from one foot to another.

'Jolly decent of him to think of me, I must say.'

'MmmminmnTminnunmniimnmmnnertunity, though.'

'You always complain that he doesn't appreciate you.'

Straining every mental nerve, Philip gradually pieced

' I know. I feel I've done him rather an injustice.'

together the information that the year's nominee for the Actually, Gordon Masters had decided to back Philip for Exchange scheme had withdrawn at the last moment be-the Euphoria Exchange because he wanted to give a Senior cause he had been offered a Chair in Australia. It appeared Lectureship to a considerably younger member of the that the Committee concerned was looking rather urgently Department, a very prolific linguistcian who was being for a replacement and that Masters (who was Chairman) tempted by offers from the new universities, and it would be was prepared to work it for Philip if he was interested.

less embarrassing to do so while Philip was absent. Philip

'Mmmmmmmnnnerink about it,' he concluded.

was not to know this of course, though a less innocent poli-Philip did think about it. All day. With studied casualness tician might have suspected it.

he mentioned it to Hilary while they were washing up after

'You're sure you don't mind?' he asked Hilary, and was dinner.

to ask at least once a day until his departure. He was still at

'You ought to take it,' she said, after a moment's reflection when she saw him off at Rummidge station. 'You're tired. You need a break, a change. You're getting stale *quite* sure you don't mind ?'

here.'

'Darling, how many more times? Of course we shall all Philip couldn't deny it. 'What about the children, miss you . . . And you'll miss us, I hope?' she teased him though? What about Robert's eleven-plus?' he said, mildly.

holding a dripping plate like hope in his hands.

'Oh, yes, of course.'

Hilary took a longer pause for thought. 'You go on your But that was the source of his guilt. He didn't honestly own,' she said at last. 'I'll stay here with the children.'

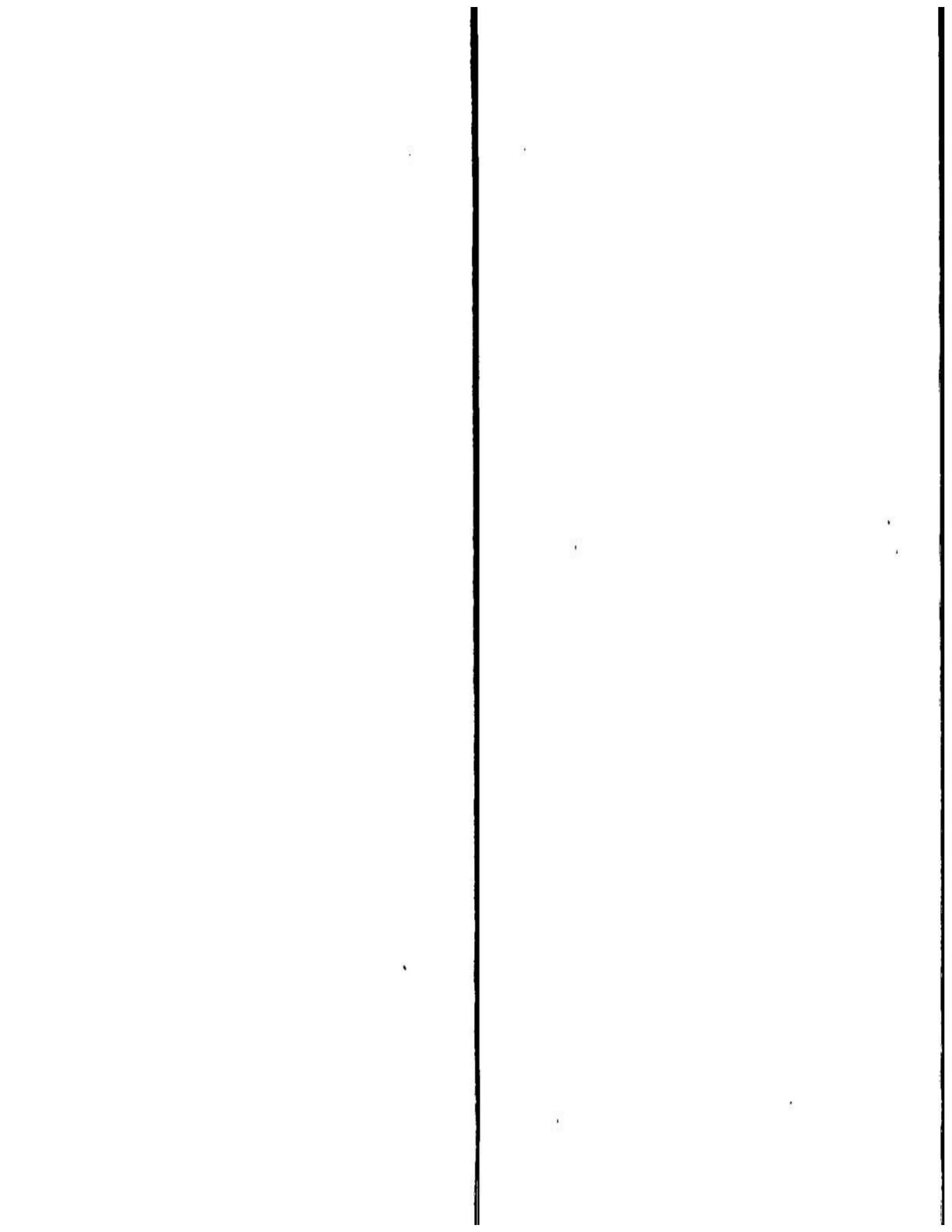
think he *would* miss them. He bore his children no ill-will, but

'No, it wouldn't be fair,' he protested. 'I wouldn't dream he thought he could manage quite nicely without them, thank you, for six months. And as for Hilary, well, he found of it.'

it difficult after all these years to think of her as ontologically

'I'll manage,' she said, taking the plate. 'Anyway, it's distinct from her offspring. She existed, in his field of vision, quite out of the question for us all to go at such short notice.

mainly as a transmitter of information, warnings, requests What would we do about the house, for one thing? You and obligations with regard to Amanda, Robert and can't leave this place empty in the winter. And there's the Matthew. If *she* had been going to America, and himself fares...'



left at home minding the children, he would have missed her his shoulder. Films and television conveyed the same all right. But if there were no children in the picture he message: that other people were having sex more often and couldn't readily put his finger on any reason why he should more variously than he was.

be in need of a wife.

Or were they? There had always been, notoriously, more There was sex, of course, but in recent years this had adulteries in fiction than in fact, and no doubt the same played a steadily diminishing role in the Swallow marriage.

applied to orgasms. Looking around at the faces of his It had never been quite the same (had anything?) after colleagues in the Senior Common Room he felt reassured: their extended American honeymoon. In America, for not a Lineament of Gratified Desire to be seen. There were, instance, Hilary had tended to emit a high-pitched cry at of course, the students - everyone knew they had lots of sex.

the moment of climax which Philip found deeply exciting; As a tutor he saw mostly the disadvantages: it tired them but on their first night in Rummidge, as they were making out, distracted them from their work; they got pregnant up their bed in the flat they had rented in a clumsily and missed their examinations, or they went on the Pill and converted old house, some unknown person had coughed suffered side-effects. But he envied them the world of lightly but very audibly in the adjoining room, and from thrilling possibility in which they moved, a world of ex-that time onwards, though they moved in due course to posed limbs, sex manuals on railway bookstalls, erotic music better-insulated accommodation, Hilary's orgasms (if such and frontal nudity on stage and screen. His own adolescence they were) were marked by nothing more dramatic than a seemed a poor cramped thing in comparison, limited, as far hissing sigh, rather like the sound of air escaping from a Li-as satisfying curiosity and desire went, to the more risquel

Penguin Classics and the last waltz at College Hops when lo.

they dimmed the lights and you might hold your partner, In the course of their married life in Rummidge Hilary encased in yards of slippery taffeta, close enough to feel the had never refused his advances, but she never positively bas-relief of her suspenders against your thighs.

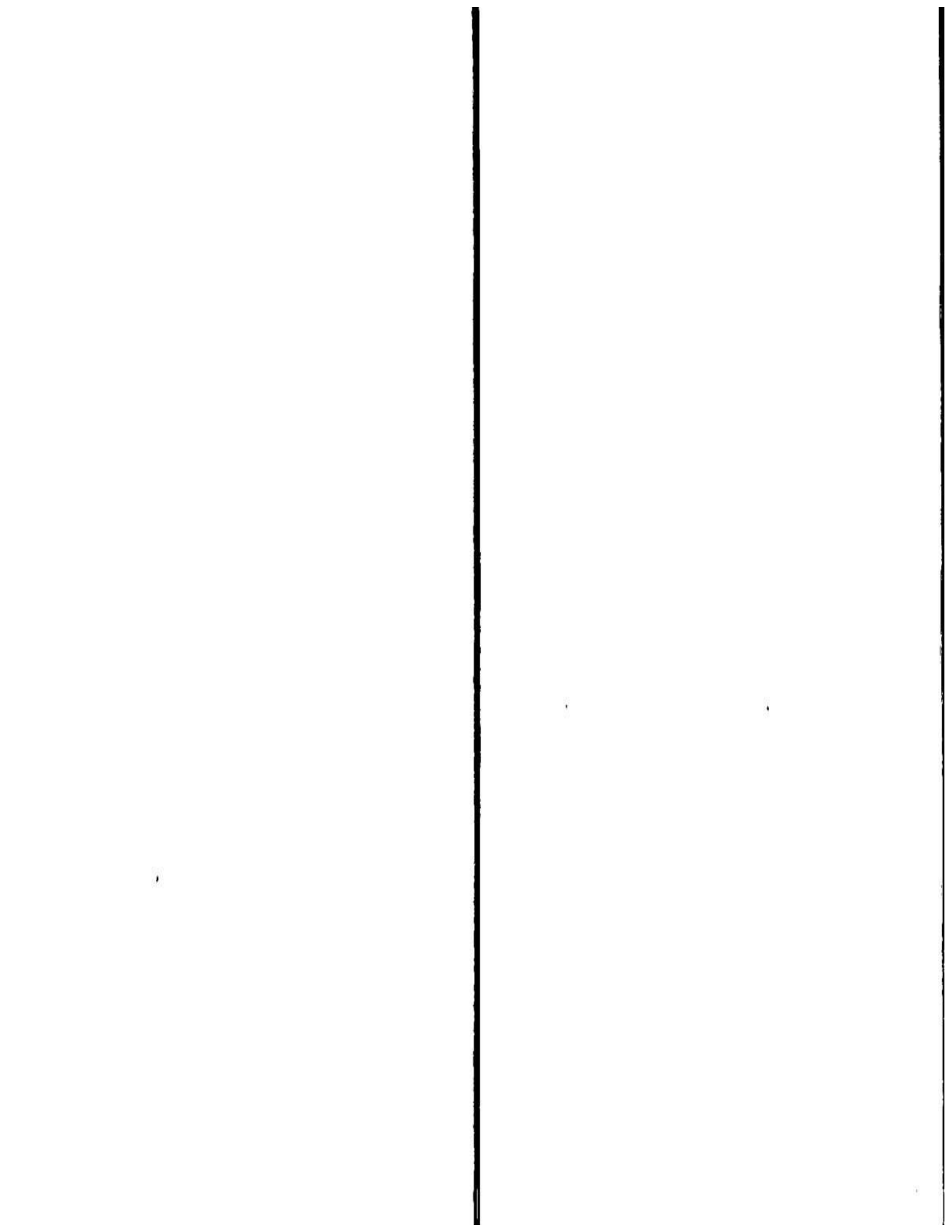
invited them either. She accepted his embrace with the same That was something he *did* envy the young - their style of calm, slightly preoccupied amiability with which she pre-dancing, though he never betrayed the fact to a soul.

pared his breakfasts and ironed his shirts. Gradually, over Under the pretence of indulging his children, and with an the years, Philip's own interest in the physical side of expression carefully adjusted to express amused contempt, marriage declined, but he persuaded himself that this **was** he watched *Top of the Pops* and similar TV programmes with only normal.

a painful mingling of pleasure and regret. How enchanting, The sudden eruption of the Sexual Revolution in the mid-those flashing thighs and twitching buttocks, lolling heads sixties had, it is true,

unsettled him a little. The Sunday and bouncing breasts; how deliciously mindless, liberating, paper he had taken since first going up to the University, and it all was! And how infinitely sad the dancing of his own earnest, closely printed journal bursting with book reviews youth appeared in retrospect, those stiff-jointed, robot-like and excerpts from statesmen's memoirs, broke out abruptly fox-trots and quicksteps, at which he had been so inept.

in a rash of nipples and coloured photographs of apres-sex This new dancing looked easy: no fear of making a mistake, leisurewear; his girl tutees suddenly began to dress like of stepping on your partner's feet or steering her like a prostitutes, with skirts so short that he was able to distinguish dodgem car into another robot-couple. It must be easy, he them, when their names escaped him, by the colour of their felt in his bones he could do it, but of course it was too late knickers; it became uncomfortable to read contemporary now, just as it was too late to comb his hair forward or wear novels at home in case one of the children should glance over **27**



Paisley shirts or persuade Hilary to experiment with new front of the tourist compartment a stewardess is fiddling sexual postures.

with a piece of tubular apparatus. How delightful, they In short, if Philip Swallow felt sensually underprivileged, are going to have a film, or rather, *movie*. There is an extra it was in a strictly elegaic spirit. It never occurred to him charge: Philip pays it gladly. A withered old lady across the that there was still time to rush into the Dionysian horde. It aisle shows him how to plug in his headphones which are, never occurred to him to be unfaithful to Hilary with one of he discovers, already providing aural entertainment on the nubile young women who swarmed in the corridors of three channels: Bartok, Muzak and some children's the Rummidge English Department. Such ideas, that is, twaddle. Culturally conditioned to choose the Bartok, he never occurred to his conscious, English self. His unconscious switches, after a few minutes, to the Muzak, a cool, rippling may have been otherwise occupied; and perhaps, deep, rendition of, what is it, 'These Foolish Things' . . . ?

deep down, there is, at the root of his present jubilation, the anticipation of sexual adventure. If this is the case, however, Meanwhile, back in the other Boeing, Morris Zapp has no rumour of it has reached Philip's ego. At this moment just discovered what it is that's bugging him about his the most licentious project he has in mind is to spend his flight. The realization is a delayed consequence of walking very next Sunday in bed, smoking, reading the newspapers the length of the aircraft to the toilet, and strikes him, like a and watching television.

slow-burn gag in a movie-comedy, just as he is concluding Bliss! No need to get up for the family breakfast, wash the his business there. On his way back he verifies his suspicion, car, mow the lawn and perform the other duties of the covertly scrutinizing every row of seats until he reaches his secular British Sabbath. No need, above all, to go for a walk own at the front of the aircraft. He sinks down heavily and, on Sunday afternoon. No need to rouse himself, heavy with as is his wont when thinking hard, crosses his legs and plays a Sunday lunch, from his armchair, to help Hilary collect and complex percussion solo with his fingernails on the sole of dress their querulous children, to try and find some new, his right shoe.

pointless destination for a drive or to trudge out to one of the *Every passenger on the plane except himself is a woman*.

local parks, where other little knots of people wander What is he supposed to make of that? The odds against listlessly, like lost souls in hell, blown by the gritty wind such a ratio turning up by chance must be astronomical.

amid whirlpools of litter and dead leaves, past creaking Improvidence at work again. What kind of a chance is he swings and deserted football pitches, stagnant ponds and going to stand if there's an emergency, women and children artificial lakes where rowing boats are chained up, by first, himself a hundred and fifty-sixth in the line for the Sabbatarian decree, as if to emphasize the impossibility of lifeboats ?

escape. *La nause**, Rummidge-style. Well, no more of that for

• Pardon me.'

six months.

It's the bespectacled blonde in the next seat. She holds a Philip stubs out his cigarette, and lights another. Pipes magazine open on her lap, index finger pressed to the page are not permitted in the aircraft.

as if marking her place.

He checks his watch. Less than halfway to go now. There

' May I ask your opinion on a question of etiquette?'

is a communal stirring in the cabin. He looks round at-He grins, squinting at the magazine. 'Don't tell me tentively, anxious not to miss a cue. People are putting on *Ramparts* is running an etiquette column ?'

the little plastic headphones that were lying, in transparent

' If a lady sees a man with his fly open, should she tell him ?'

envelopes, on each seat when they boarded the plane. At the

'Definitely.'

'Your fly's open, mister,' says the girl, and recommences

'What has Stratford-upon-Avon got to do with it, for reading her copy of *Ramparts*^ holding it up to screen her face Chrissake?'

as Morris hastily adjusts his dress.

'It's supposed to give you a lift afterwards. You get to see

'Say,' he continues conversationally (for Morris Zapp a play.'

does not believe in allowing socially disadvantageous

'*All's Well That Ends Well?*' he snaps back, quick as a situations to cool and set), 'Say, have you noticed anything flash. But the jest conceals a deep unease. Of course he has funny about this plane?'

heard of these package tours operating from States where legal abortions are difficult to obtain, and taking advantage

'Funny?'

of Britain's permissive new law. In casual conversation he

'About the passengers.'

would have shrugged it off as a simple instance of the law of The magazine is lowered, the swollen spectacles turned supply and demand, perhaps with a quip about the limeys slowly in his direction.' Only you, I guess.'

finally licking their balance of payments problem. No prude,

'You figured it out too!' he exclaims. 'It only just struck no reactionary, Morris Zapp. He has gone down on many a me. Right between the eyes. While I was in the John . . .

poll as favouring the repeal of Euphoria's abortion laws That's why . . . Thanks for telling me, by the way.' He (likewise its laws against fornication, masturbation, adul-gestures towards his crotch.

tery, sodomy, fellatio, cunnilingus and sexual congress in

'Be my guest/ says the girl. 'How come you're on this which the female adopts the superior position: Euphoria charter anyway?'

had been first settled by a peculiarly narrow-minded

'One of my students sold me her ticket.'

Puritanical sect whose taboos retained a fossilized existence

' Now all is clear,' says the girl.' I figured you couldn't be in the State legal code, one that rigorously enforced would need an abortion.'

have entailed the incarceration of ninety per cent of its present citizens). But it is a different matter to find oneself BOINNNNNNNNGGGGGGGGGG! The penny drops

trapped in an airplane with a hundred and fifty-five women thunderously inside Morris Zapp's head. He steals a glance actually drawing the wages of sin. The thought of their one over the back of his seat. A hundred and fifty-five women hundred and fifty-five doomed stowaways sends cold shivers ranked in various attitudes - some sleeping, some knitting, roller-coasting down his curved spine, and a sudden vibra-some staring out of the windows, all (it strikes him now) un-tion in the aircraft, as it runs into the turbulence recently naturally silent, self-absorbed, depressed. Some eyes meet experienced by Philip Swallow, leaves him quaking with fear.

his, and he flinches from their murderous glint. He turns For Morris Zapp is a twentieth-century counterpart of back queasily to the blonde, gestures weakly over his Swift's Nominal Christian - the Nominal Atheist. Under-shoulder with his thumb, whispers hoarsely: 'You mean all neath that tough exterior of the free-thinking Jew (exactly those women . . . ?'

the kind T. S. Eliot thought an organic community could She nods.

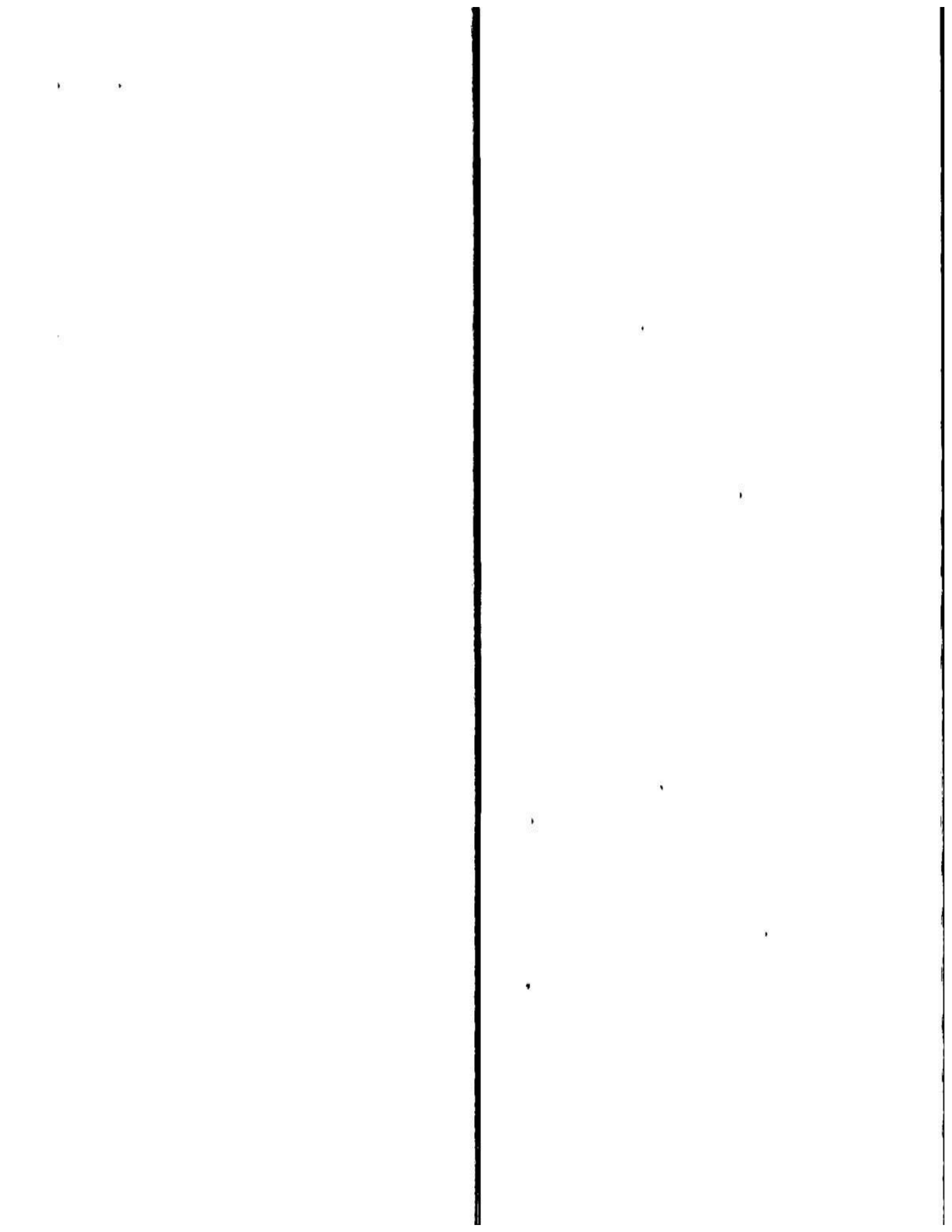
well do without) there is a core of old-fashioned Judaeo-

'Holy mackerel!' (Zapp, his stock of blasphemy and Christian fear-of-the-Lord. If the Apollo astronauts had obscenity threadbare from everyday use, tends to fall back reported finding a message carved in gigantic letters on the on such quaintly genteel oaths in moments of great stress.) backside of the moon, *'Reports of My death are greatly exag-*

'Pardon my asking,' says the blonde, 'but I'm curious.

gerated,' it would not have surprised Morris Zapp unduly, Did you buy the whole package - round trip, surgeon's fee, merely confirmed his deepest misgivings. At this moment he five days* nursing with private room and excursion to Stratford-upon-Avon ?'

3'



feels painfully vulnerable to divine retribution. He can't troubled. Morris Zapp experiences a rush of missionary zeal believe that Improvidence, old Nobodaddy, is going to sit to the head. He will do a good deed, instruct this innocent in placidly in the sky while abortion shuttle-services buzz right the difference between good and evil, talk her out of her under his nose, polluting the stratosphere and giving the wicked intent. One brand plucked from the burning should Recording Angel writer's cramp, no sir, one of these days he be enough to assure him of a happy landing. He leans is going to swat one of those planes right out the sky, and forward earnestly.

why not this one?

'Listen, kid, let me give some fatherly advice. Don't do it.

Zapp succumbs to self-pity. Why should he suffer with all You'll never forgive yourself. Have the baby. Get it adopted these careless callous women ? He has knocked up a girl only

- no sweat, the adoption agencies are screaming for new once in his life, and he made an honest woman of her (she stock. Maybe the father will want to marry you when he sees divorced him three years later, but that's another story, one the kid - they often do, you know.'

indictment at a time, please). It's a frame-up. All the doing

•He can't.'

of the little bitch who had sold him her ticket, less than half-

'Married already, h u h ? ' Morris Zapp shakes his head price, he couldn't resist the bargain but wondered at the over the depravity of his sex.

time at her generosity since only a week before he'd refused

'No, he's a priest.'

to raise her course-grade from a C to a B. She must have Zapp bows his head, buries his face in his hands.

missed her period, rushed to book a seat on the Abortion

•You feeling all right?'

Express, had a negative pregnancy test and thought to her-

•Just a twinge of morning-sickness,* he mumbles through self, I know what I'll do, Professor Zapp is going to Europe, his fingers. He looks up. 'This priest, is he paying for your I'll sell him my ticket, then the plane might be struck by a trip out of parish funds? Did he take a special collection or thunderbolt. A fine reward for trying to preserve academic something?'

standards.

• He doesn't know anything about it.'

He becomes aware that the girl in the next seat is studying

•You haven't told him you're pregnant?'

him with interest.' You're a college teacher ?' she asks.

'I don't want him to have to choose between me and his

•Yeah, Euphoric State.'

vows.'

'Really! What d'you teach ? I'm majoring in Anthropolo-

' Has he any vuws *left* ?'

gy at Euphoria College.'

' Poverty, chastity and obedience,' says the girl thoughtfully. ' Well, I guess he's still poor.'

'Euphoria College? Isn't that the Catholic school in

' So who is paying for this trip ? *

Esseph?'

'I work nights on South Strand.'

' R i g h t '

'One of those topless places ?'

'Then what are you doing on this plane?' he hisses, all

'No, record store. As a matter of fact I worked my first his roused moral indignation and superstitious fear focused year through college as a topless dancer. But then I realized on this kooky blonde. If even the Catholics are jumping on now exploitative it was, so I quit.'

to the abortion bandwagon, what hope is there for the

' They charge a lot in those joints, huh ?'

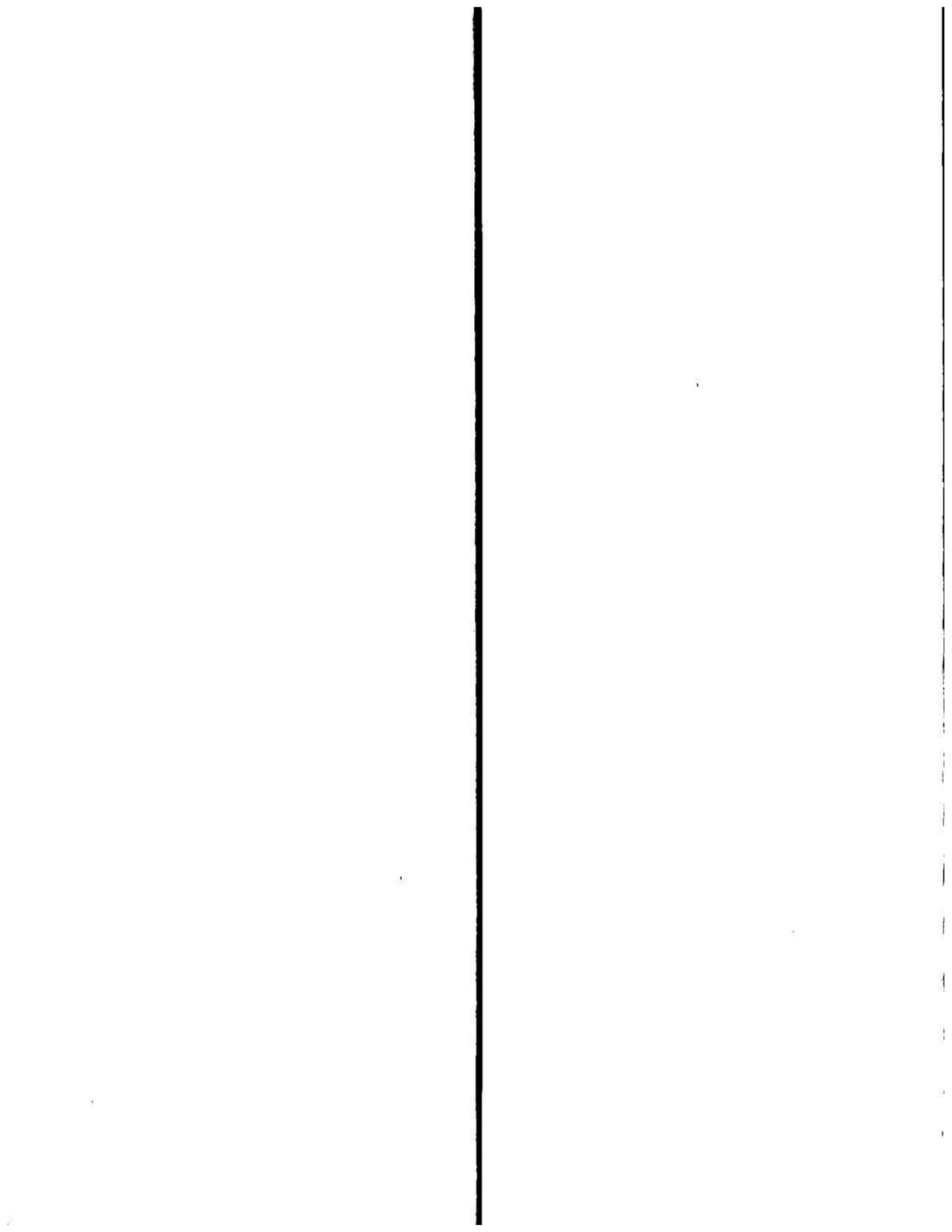
human race ?

'I mean exploiting *me*, not the customers,' the girl replies,

' I'm an Underground Catholic,' she says seriously. ' I'm a shade contemptuously. ' I t was when I got interested in not hung up on dogma. I'm very far out.'

Women's liberation.'

Her eyes, behind the huge spectacles, are clear and un-3



'Women's Liberation? What's that?' says Morris Zapp, shoots disconcertingly sideways, as if catching sight of an not liking the sound of it at all. 'I never heard of it.' (Few engine falling off the wing, and Philip remembers.

people have on this first day of 1969.)

'Boon! Good Lord, I didn't recognize . . . You've, or,

'You will, Professor, you will,' says the girl.

changed.'

Boon chuckles delightedly. 'Fantastic! Don't tell me Meanwhile, Philip Swallow has also struck up conversa-you're on your way to Euphoric State ?'

tion with a fellow passenger.

'Well, yes, as a matter of fact I am.'

The movie over (it was a Western, the noisy soundtrack

'Great! Me too.'

had given him a headache, and he watched the final gun-

•You?'

battle with his headphones tuned to Muzak), he finds that

'Dontcha remember writing a reference for me ?'

some of his *joie de vivre* has evaporated. He is beginning to

'A great many references, Boon.'

weary of sitting still, he fidgets in his seat in an effort to find

'Yeah, well, it's like a fruit machine, y*know, you got to some untried disposition of his limbs, the muffled din of the keep pulling the old lever. Never say die. Then, Bingo!

jet engines is getting on his nerves, and looking out of the Anybody sitting next to you? No? I'U join you in a sec. **Got** window still gives him vertigo. He tries to read a courtesy to have a slash. Don't run away.' He resumes his interrupted copy of *Time*, but can't concentrate. What he really needs is journey to the toilet, almost colliding with a stewardess a nice cup of tea - it is mid-afternoon by his watch - but coming in the opposite direction. Boon steadies her with a when he plucks up courage to ask a passing stewardess she firm, two-handed gesture.' Sorry, darling,' Philip hears him replies curtly that they will be serving breakfast in an hour's say, and she flashes him an indulgent smile. Still

the same **old** time. He has had one breakfast already that day and doesn't Boon!

particularly want another one, but of course it's a matter of A chance reunion with Charles Boon would not, in the time change. In Euphoria now it's, what, seven or eight normal circumstances, have gladdened Philip Swallow's hours earlier than in London, or is it later ? Do you add or heart. The young man had graduated a couple of years subtract? Is it still the day he left on, or tomorrow already?

previously after a contentious and troublesome undergra-Or yesterday ? Let's see, the sun comes up in the east.. . He duate career at Rummidge. He belonged to a category of frowns with mental effort, but the sums won't make sense.

students whom Philip referred to privately (showing his age)

' Well, blow me down!'

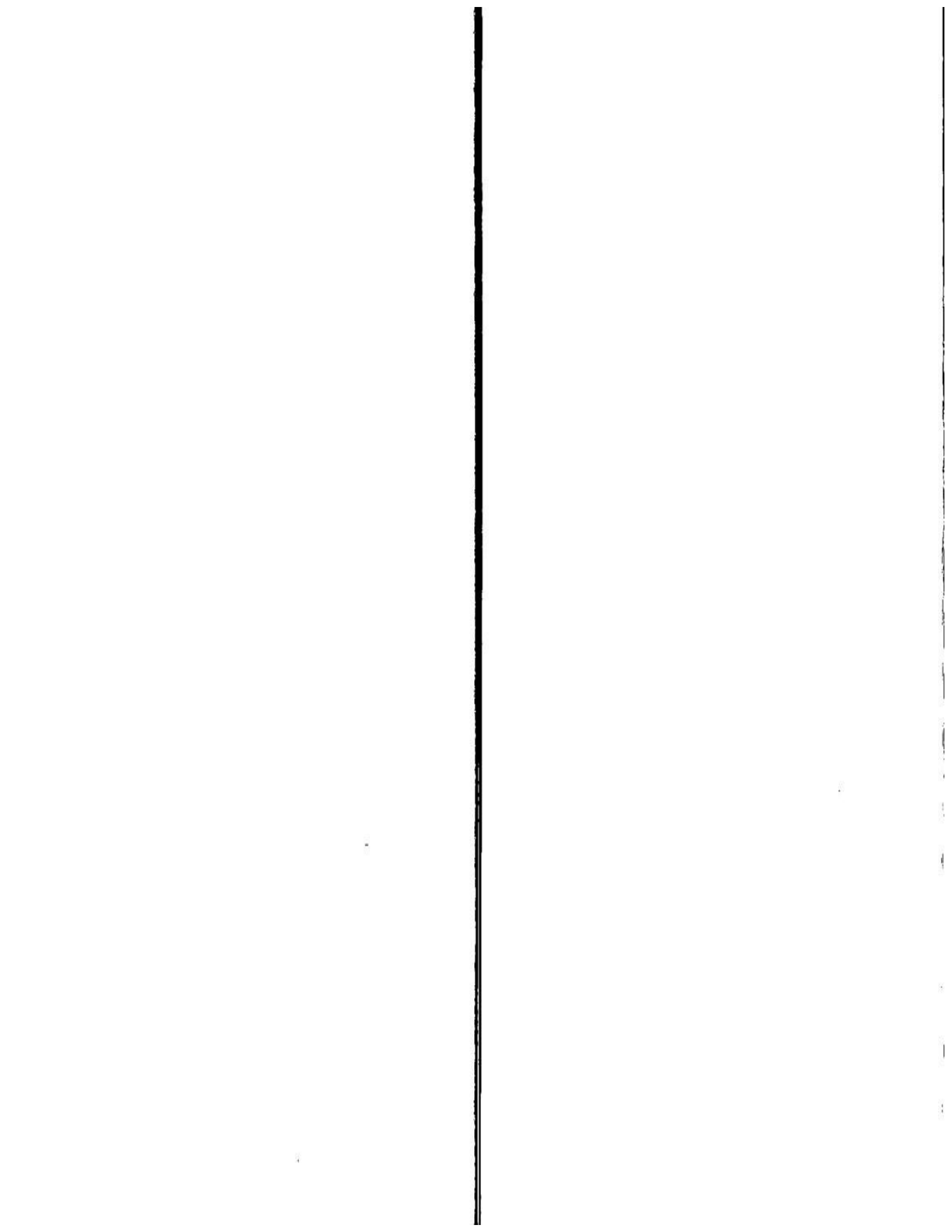
a s ' the Department's Teddy-Boys'. These were clever young Philip blinks up at the young man who has stopped in the men of plebeian origin who, unlike the traditional scholar-aisle. His appearance is striking. He wears wide-bottomed ship boy (such as Philip himself) showed no deference to the suede trousers, and a kind of oversize homespun fringed social and cultural values of the institution to which they had jerkin hanging to his knees over a pink and yellow candy-been admitted, but maintained until the day they graduated striped shirt. His wavy, reddish hair falls to his shoulders and a style of ostentatious uncouthness in dress, behaviour and he has a bandit moustache of slightly darker hue. On his speech. They came late to classes, unwashed, unshaven and jerkin, arranged in three neat rows like military medals, are wearing clothes they had evidently slept in; slouched in a dozen or more lapel buttons in psychedelic colours.

their seats, rolling their own cigarettes and stubbing them

' You remember me, dontcha, Mr Swallow ?'

out on the furniture; sneered at the girlish, suburban en-

'Well . . .' Philip racks his brains. There is something thusiasms of their fellow-students, answered questions vaguely familiar, b u t . . . Then the youth's left eye suddenly addressed to them in dialect monosyllables, and handed in **34**



disconcertingly subtle, largely destructive essays written in aimed absurdly high, sometimes grotesquely low. At one the style of F. R. Leavis. Perhaps overcompensating for moment he aspired to be Cultural Attach^e in the Diplomatic their own prejudices, the staff at Rummidge regularly ad-Service, or Chief Programme Planning Executive for Ghana mitted three or four such students every year. Invariably Television, at the next he was prepared to settle for Works they caused disciplinary problems. In his memorable under-Foreman, Walsall Screw Company, or Lavatory Attendant, graduate career Charles Boon had involved the student Southport Corporation. If Boon was appointed to any of newspaper *Rumble*, of which he was editor, in an expensive these posts he evidently failed to hold them for very long, for libel suit brought by the mayoress of Rummidge; caused the the stream of inquiries never ran dry. At first Philip had Lodgings warden to retire prematurely with a nervous dis-answered them honestly; after a while it dawned on him that order from which she still suffered; appeared on 'University he was in this way condemning himself to a lifetime's Challenge', drunk; campaigned (unsuccessfully) for the correspondence, and he began to suppress some of the less distribution of free contraceptives at the end of the Freshers'

creditable features of his former student's character and Ball, and defended himself (successfully) in a magistrate's record. He ended up answering every request for a reference court against a charge of shop-lifting from the University with an unblushing all-purpose panegyric kept on perma-Bookshop.

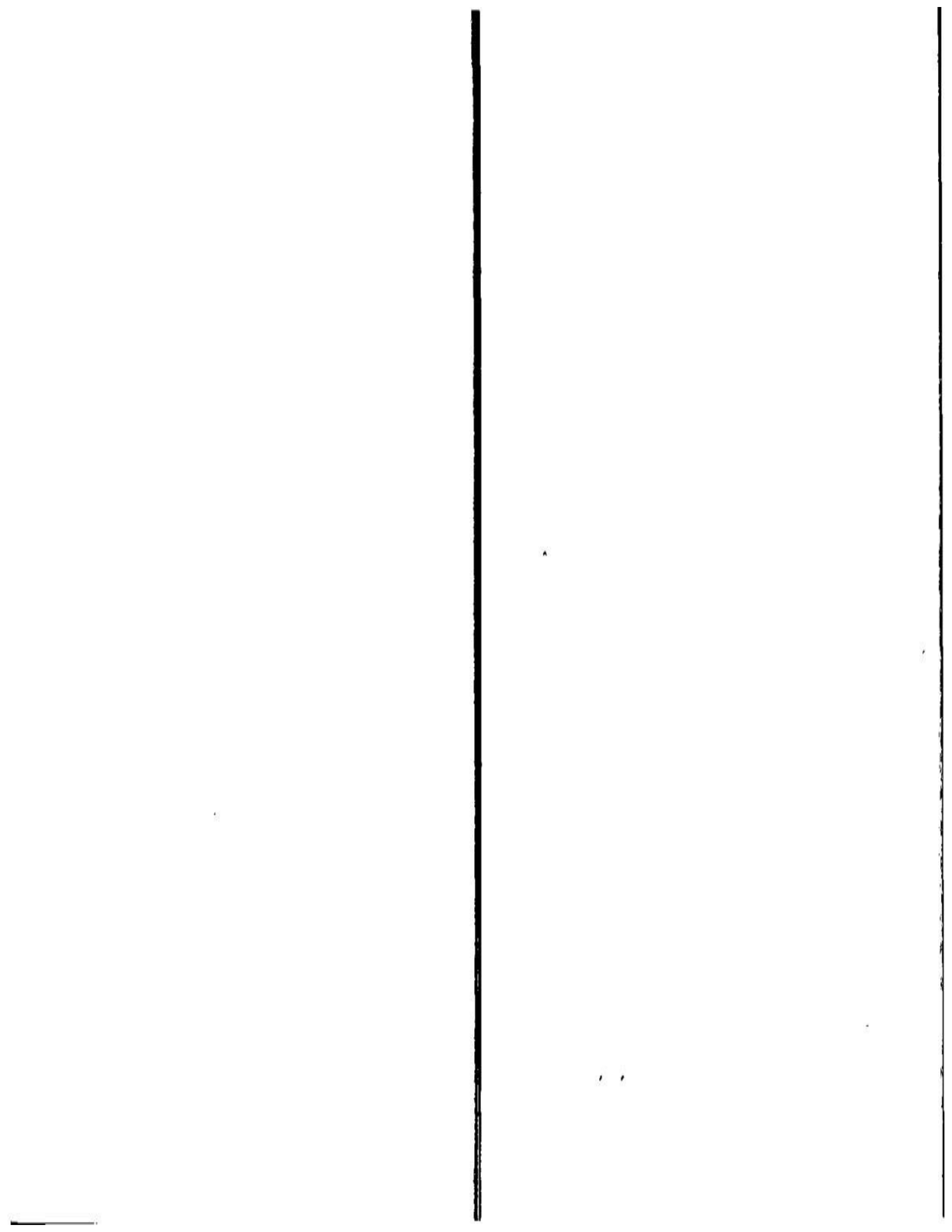
ment file in the Department Office, and this testimonial must As Boon's tutor in his third year, Philip had played a have finally obtained Boon some kind of graduate fellowship minor, but exhausting role in some of these dramas. After an at Euphoric State. Now Philip's perjury had caught up with examiners' meeting lasting ten hours, nine of which were him, as such sins always did. It was deuced awkward that spent in discussion of Boon's papers, he had been awarded a they should both be going to Euphoric State at the same

' low Upper Second' - a compromise grudgingly accepted by time - he fervently hoped that he would not be identified as those who wanted to fail him and those who wanted to give Boon's original sponsor. And at all costs Boon must be pre-him a First. Philip had shaken Boon's hand on Degree Day vented from enrolling in his own courses.

in joyful expectation of never having anything to do with Despite these misgivings, Philip is not altogether dis-him again, but the hope was premature. Though Boon had pleased at finding himself on the same plane as Charles failed to qualify for a postgraduate grant, he continued to Boon. He awaits the latter's return, indeed, with something haunt the corridors of the Faculty of Arts for some months, like eagerness. It is, he explains to himself, because he is giving other students to understand that he was employed as bored with the journey, glad of company for the last, long a Research Assistant, hoping in this way to embarrass the hours of this interminable flight; but, truthfully, it is be-Department into actually making him one. When this cause he wants to show off. The glory of his adventure gambit failed, Boon at last disappeared from Rummidge, but needs, after all, a reflector, someone capable of registering Philip, at least, was not allowed to forget his existence.

the transformation of the dim Rummidge lecturer into Seldom did a week pass without a request for a confidential Visiting Professor Philip Swallow, member of the academic assessment of Mr Charles Boon's character, intelligence and jet-set, ready to carry English culture to the far side of the suitability for some position in the great world. At first these globe at the drop of an airline ticket.

And for once he will were usually teaching posts or postgraduate fellowships at have the advantage of Boon, in his previous experience of home and abroad. Later, Boon's applications took on a America. Boon will be eager for advice and information: random, reckless character, as of a man throwing dice com-about looking left first when crossing the road, for example; pulsively, without bothering to note his score. Sometimes he about 'public school' meaning the opposite of what it means



in England, and 'knock u p ' meaning something entirely

'You guessed it.'

different. He will also frighten Boon a little with the rigours

' Why not ? Where are you going ?'

of American graduate programmes. Yes, he has lots to say to

'A dump called Rummidge. You don't have to pretend Charles Boon.

you've heard of it.'

'Now,' says Boon, easing himself into the seat beside

' Why are you going there ?'

Philip's, 'let me put you in the picture about the situation

'It's a long story.'

in Euphoria.'

It was indeed, and the question put by Mary Makepeace Philip gapes at him. 'You mean you've been there al-had exercised many a group of gossiping faculty when it was ready?'

announced that Morris Zapp was the year's nominee for Boon looks surprised. 'Sure, this is my second year. I've the Rummidge-Euphoria exchange scheme. Why should just been home for Christmas.'

Morris Zapp, who always claimed that he had made himself

'Oh,' says Philip.

an authority on the literature of England not in spite of but *because* of never having set foot in the country, why should he

'I guess you must've visited England many times, Proof all people suddenly join the annual migration to Europe?'

fessor Zapp,' says the blonde, whose name is Mary Make-And, still more pressingly, why did a man who could have peace.

gotten a Guggenheim by crooking his little finger, and spent

'Never.'

a pleasant year reading in Oxford, or London, or on the

'Really? You must be all excited then. All those years of Cote d'Azur if he chose, condemn himself to six months'

teaching English Literature, and now you finally get to see hard labour at Rummidge? Rummidge. Where was it?

where it all happened.'

What was it? Those who knew shuddered and grimaced.

'That's what I'm afraid of,' says Morris Zapp.

Those who did not went home to consult encyclopedias and

'If I get the time I'm going to visit my great-grand-atlases, returning baffled to confer with their colleagues. If mother's grave. It's in a village churchyard in County it was a plot by Morris to further his career, no one could Durham. Don't you think that sounds idyllic ?'

give a satisfactory account of how it would work. The most

' You going to have the foetus buried there ?'

favoured explanation was that he was finally getting tired of Mary Makepeace turns her head away and looks out of the the Student Revolution, its strikes, protests, issues, non-window. The word '*Sorry*' rises to Morris's lips, but he bites negotiable demands, and was willing to go anywhere, even it back. 'You don't want to face facts, do you? You want to to Rummidge, for the sake of a bit of peace and quiet.

pretend it's just like going to the dentist. Having a tooth Nobody dared actually to test this hypothesis on the man extracted.'

himself, since his resistance to student intimidation was as

'I've never *had* a tooth extracted,' she says, and he be-legendary as his sarcasm. Then at last the word got round lieves her. She continues to gaze out of the window, though that Morris was going to England on his own, and all was there is nothing to see except cloud, stretching to the horizon clear: the Zapps were breaking up. The gossip dwindled like an endless roll of roof insulation.

away; it was nothing unusual after all. Just another divorce.

' I'm sorry,' he says, surprising himself.

Actually, it was more complicated than that. De°sir£e, Mary Makepeace turns her head back in his direction.

Morris's second wife, wanted a divorce, but Morris didn't. It

'What's eating you, Professor Zapp? Don't you want to go was not Desiree that he was loth to part from, but their to England?'

children, Elizabeth and Darcy, the darlings of Morris **38**

39

''

''

''

''

''

Zapp's otherwise unsentimental heart. Desiree was sure to Dean's reception to go home and screw the baby-sitter, that get custody of both children - no judge, however fair-should make an impression on the judge.'

minded, was going to split up a pair of twins - and he would

'I told you, she's gone back East, I don't even know her be restricted to taking them out to the park or a movie once a address.'

month. He had been all through that routine once before

'I'm not interested. Can't you get it into your head that I with his daughter by his first wife, and in consequence she don't care where you keep your big, fat circumcised prick?

had grown up with about as much respect for him as for the You could be banging the entire women's field hockey team insurance salesman whom he must have resembled to her every night for all I care. We're past all that.'

childish vision, turning up on her stoop at regular intervals

'Look, let's talk about this like two rational people,' he with a shy, ingratiating smile, his pockets bulging with candy said, making a gesture of serious concern by turning off the dividends; and this time it would cost him \$300.00 per visit TV football game he had been watching with one eye in fares since Desiree proposed moving to New York. Morris throughout this argument.

had been born and brought up in New York, but he had no After an hour's exhausting discussion, Desiree agreed to a intention of returning there, in fact he would not repine if he compromise: she would delay starting divorce proceedings never saw the city again: on the evidence of his last visit it for six months on condition he moved out of the house.

was only a matter of time before the garbage in the streets

'Where to ?' he grumbled.

reached penthouse level and the whole population suffo-

'You can find a room somewhere. Or shack up with one of cated.

your students, I'm sure you'll have plenty of offers.'

No, he didn't want to go through all that divorce hassle Morris Zapp frowned, foreseeing what an ignominious again. He pleaded with Desiree to give their marriage figure he would cut in and around the University, a man another chance, for the children's sake. She was unmoved.

turned out of his own home, washing his shirts in the He was a bad influence on the children anyway, and as for campus launderette and eating lonely dinners at the Faculty herself she could never be a fulfilled person as long as she Club.

was married to him.

'I'll go away,' he said. 'I'll take six months' leave at the

'What have I done ?' he demanded rhetorically, throwing end of the quarter. Give me till Christmas.'

his arms about.

' Where will you go ?'

'You eat me.'

'Somewhere.' Inspiration came to him, and he added,

' I thought you liked it!'

' Europe maybe.'

'I don't mean that, trust your dirty mind, I mean psy-

'Europe? You?'

chologically. Being married to you is like being slowly Slyly he watched her out of the corner of his eye. For swallowed by a python. I'm just a half-digested bulge in years Desiree had been pestering him to take her to Europe, your ego. I want out. I want to be free. I want to be a and always he had refused. For Morris Zapp was that rarity person again.'

among American Humanities Professors, a totally un-

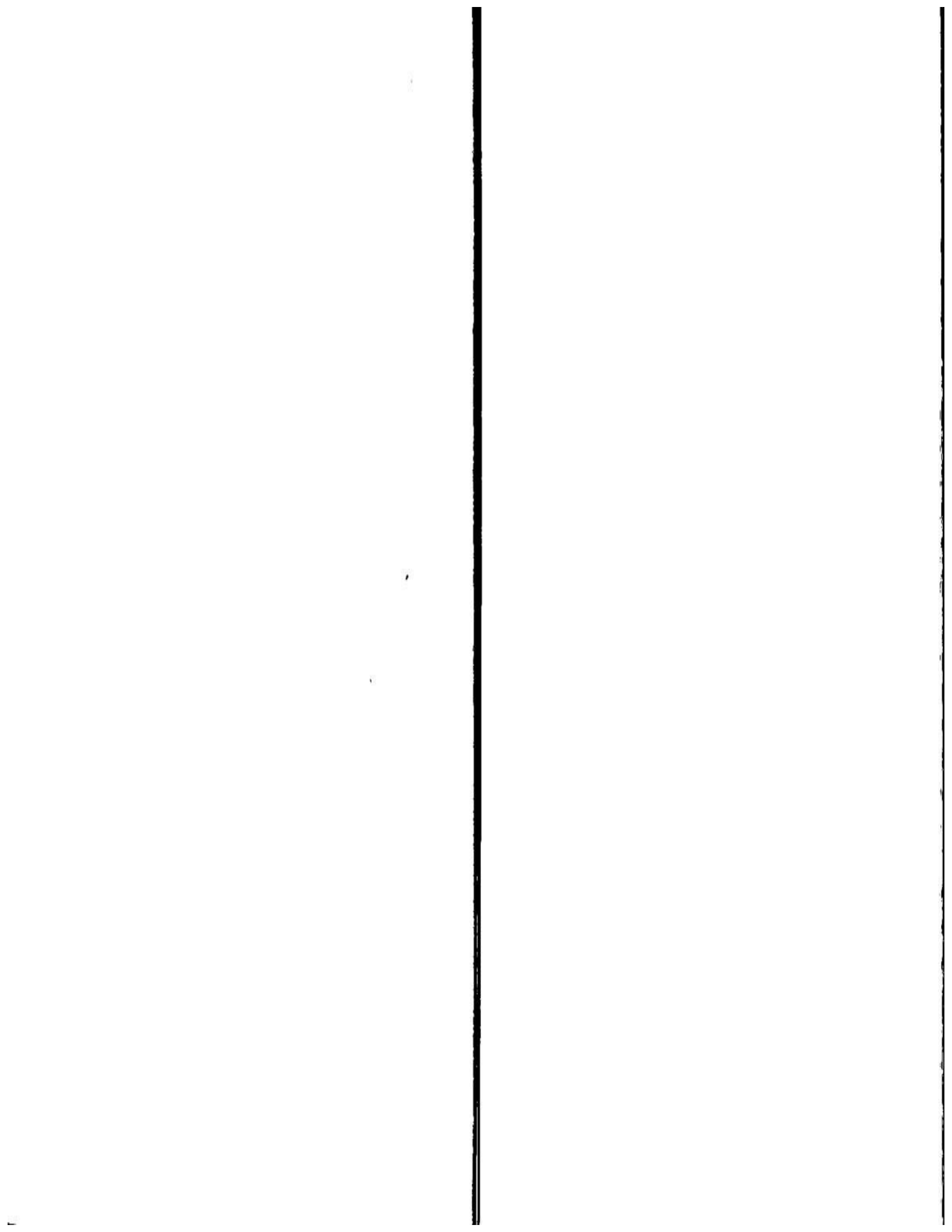
'Look,' he said, 'let's cut out all this encounter-group alienated man. He liked America, Euphoria particularly.

crap. It's that student you found me with last summer, His needs were simple: a temperate climate, a good library, isn't it?'

plenty of inviting ass around the place and enough money to

'No, but she'll do to get the divorce. Leaving me at the keep him in cigars and liquor and to run a comfortable

*



modern house and two cars. The first three items were, so to Rummidge exchange, but you wouldn't be interested in speak, natural resources of Euphoria, and the fourth, the that, Morris.'

money, he had obtained after some years of strenuous effort.

'Just give me the dope.'

He did not see how he could improve his lot by travelling, Bill gave it to him, concluding, 'You see, it isn't your certainly not by trailing around Europe with D&irde and class, Morris.'

the kids. 'Travel narrows,' was one of the Zapp proverbs.

'I'll take it.'

Still, if it came to the crunch, he was prepared to sacrifice Bill tried to argue him out of it for a while, then confessed this principle in the interests of domestic harmony.

that the Rummidge post had already been given to a young

'Why don't we all go ?' he said.

assistant professor in Metallurgy.

He watched the emotions working across her face, lust for

'Tell him he can't have it after all. Tell him you made a Europe contending with disgust for himself. Disgust won by mistake.'

a knockout.

' I can't do that, Morris. Be reasonable.'

' Go fuck yourself/ she said, and walked out of the room.

'Give him accelerated promotion to Associate Professor.

Morris fixed himself a stiff drink, put an Aretha Franklin He won't argue.'

LP on the hi-fi and sat down to think. He was in a spot. He

' W e l l . . . ' Bill Moser hesitated, then sighed. 'I'll see what had to go to Europe now, to save face. But it was going to be I can do, Morris.'

difficult to fix things at such short notice. He couldn't afford

' Great, Bill, I won't forget it.'

to go at his own expense: though his salary was considerable, Bill's voice dropped to a lower, more

confidential pitch.

so was the cost of running the house and supporting Desirde

'Why the sudden yearning for Europe, Morris? Students in the style to which she was accustomed, not to mention getting you down ?'

alimony payments to Martha. He couldn't apply for paid

'You must be joking, Bill. No, I think I need a change. A study-leave because he had just had two quarters off. It was new perspective. The challenge of a different culture.'

too late to apply for a Guggie or a Fulbright and he had an Bill Moser roared with laughter.

idea that European universities didn't hire visitors as Morris Zapp wasn't surprised that Bill Moser was in-casually as they did in the States.

credulous. But there was a kind of truth in his answer that The next morning he called the Dean of Faculty.

he wouldn't have dreamed of admitting except in the guise

'Bill ? Look, I want to go to Europe for six months, as soon of a palpable lie.

after Christmas as possible. I need some kind of a deal. What For years Morris Zapp had, like a man exceptionally have you got ?'

blessed with good health, taken his self-confidence for

'Where in Europe, Morris ?'

granted, and regarded the recurrent identity crises of his

•Anywhere, Bill.'

colleagues as symptoms of psychic hypochondria. But re-

•England?'

cently he had caught himself brooding about the meaning of

* Even England.'

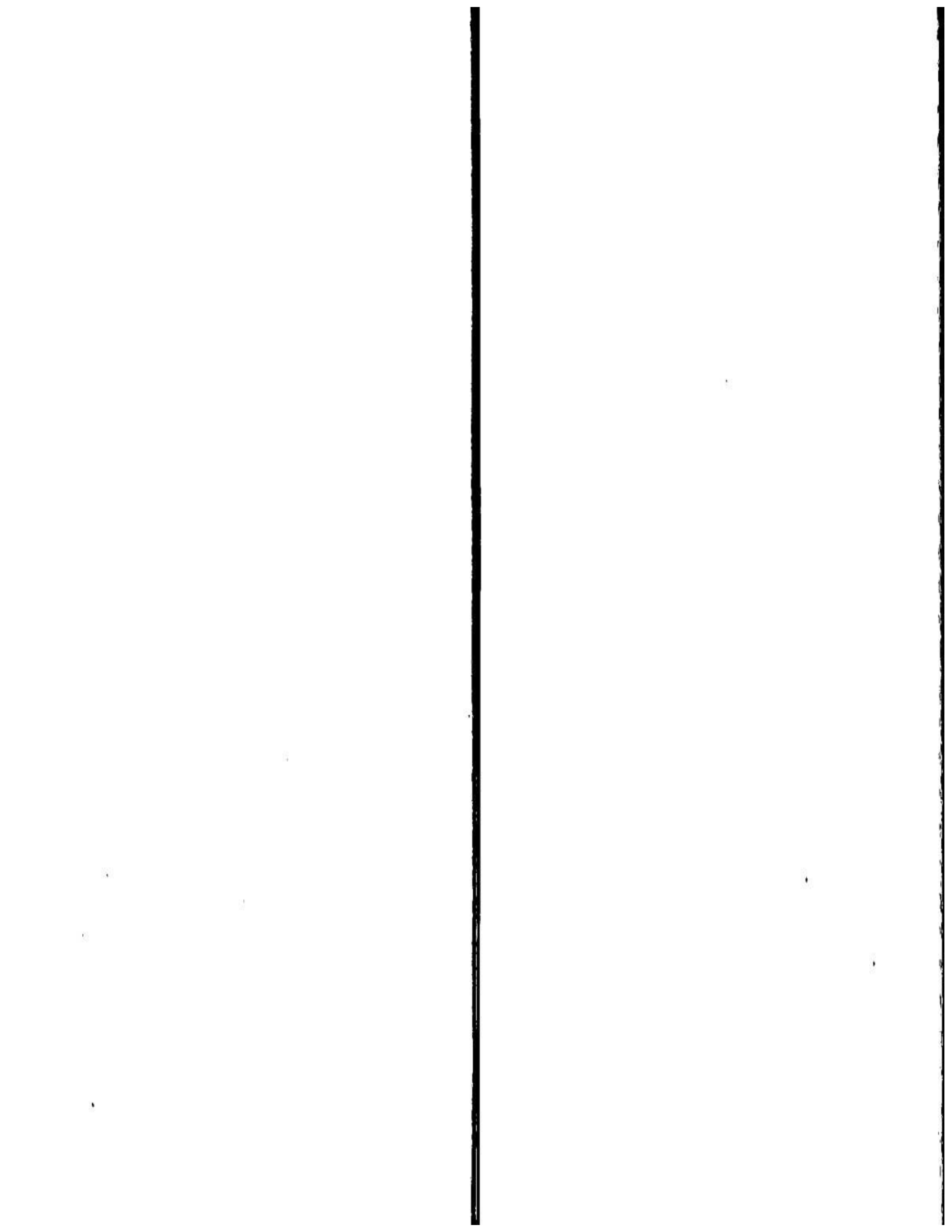
his life, no less. This was partly the consequence of his own

'Gee, Morris, I wish you'd asked me earlier. There was a success. He was full professor at one of the most prestigious swell opening in Paris, with UNESCO, I fixed lip Ed Waring and desirably located universities in America, and had al-in Sociology just a week ago.'

ready served as the Chairman of his Department for three

' Spare me the narrow misses, Bill, what have you got ?'

years under Euphoric State's rotating system; he was a There was a rustling of papers. 'Well, there is the highly respected scholar with a long and impressive list of **42**



publications to his name. He could only significantly in-after fixing Jane Austen, to do the same job on the other crease his salary either by moving to some god-awful place in major English novelists, then the poets and dramatists, per-Texas or the Mid-West where no one in his right mind haps using computers and teams of trained graduate stu-would go for a thousand dollars a day, or by switching to dents, inexorably reducing the area of English literature administration, looking for a college President's job some-available for free comment, spreading dismay through the where, which in the present state of the nation's campuses whole industry, rendering scores of his colleagues redundant: was a through ticket to an early grave. At the age of forty, in periodicals would fall silent, famous English Departments be short, Morris Zapp could think of nothing he wanted to left deserted like ghost towns...

achieve that he hadn't achieved already, and this depressed As is perhaps obvious, Morris Zapp had no great esteem him.

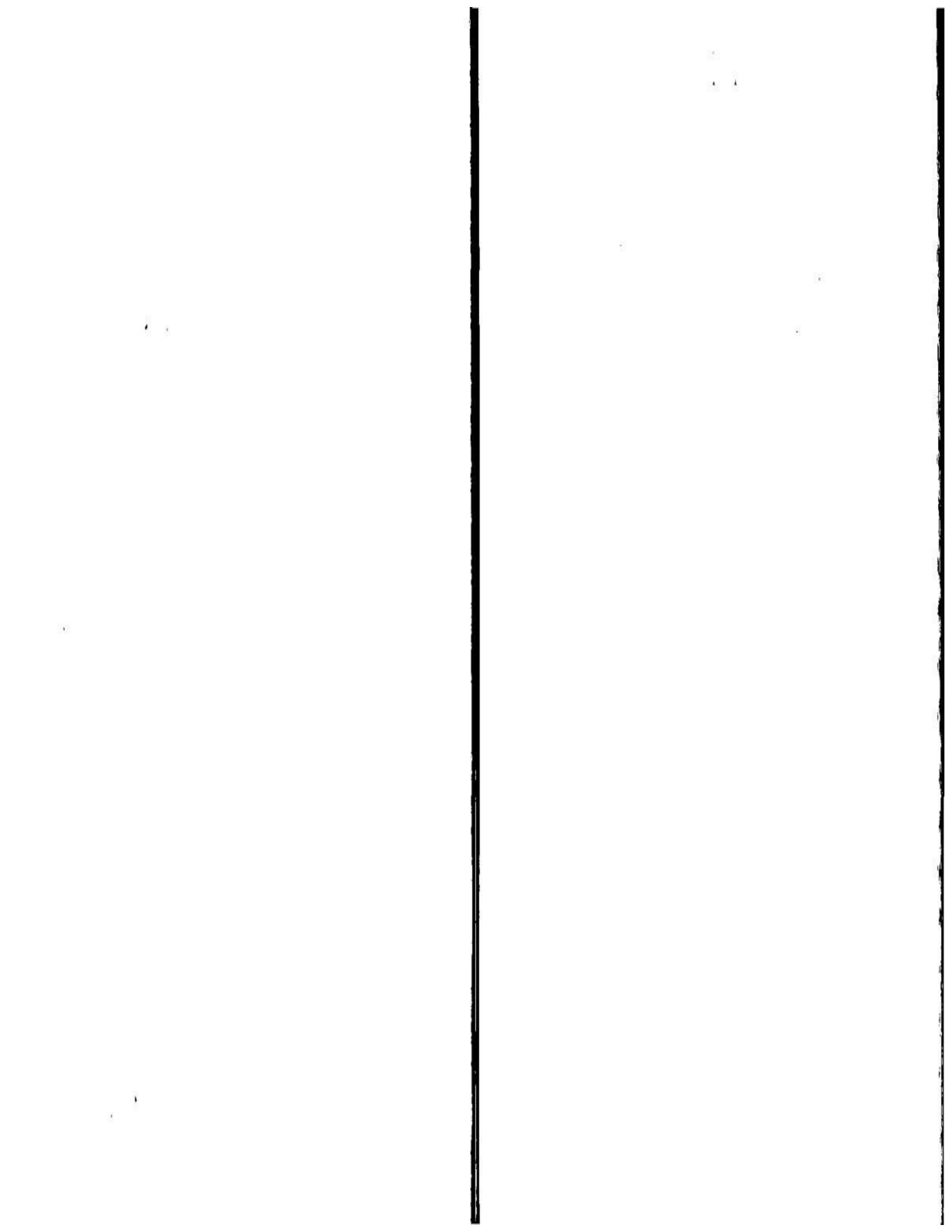
for his fellow-labourers in the vineyards of literature. They There was always his research, of course, but some of the seemed to him vague, fickle, irresponsible creatures, who zest had gone out of that since it ceased to be a means to an wallowed in relativism like hippopotami in mud, with their end. He couldn't enhance his reputation, he could only nostrils barely protruding into the air of common-sense.

damage it, by adding further items to his bibliography, and They happily tolerated the existence of opinions contrary to the realization slowed him down, made him cautious.

their own - they even, for God's sake, sometimes changed Some years ago he had embarked with great enthusiasm on their minds. Their pathetic attempts at profundity were an ambitious critical project: a series of commentaries on qualified out of existence and largely interrogative in mode.

Jane Austen which would work through the whole canon, They liked to begin a paper with some formula like, 'I want one novel at a time, saying absolutely everything that could to raise some questions about so-and-so', and seemed to possibly be said about them. The idea was to be utterly ex-think they had done their intellectual duty by merely raising haustive, to examine the novels from every conceivable them. This manoeuvre drove Morris Zapp insane. Any angle, historical, biographical, rhetorical, mythical, Freu-damn fool, he maintained, could think of questions; it was dian, Jungian, existentialist, Marxist, structuralist, Chris-answers that separated the men from the boys. If you tian-allegorical, ethical, exponential, linguistic, pheno-couldn't answer your own questions it was either because znenological, archetypal, you name it; so that when each you hadn't worked on them hard enough or because they commentary was written there would be simply *nothing* weren't real questions. In either case you should keep your *further to say* about the novel in question. The object of the mouth shut. One couldn't move in English studies these days exercise, as he had often to explain with as much patience as without falling over unanswered questions which some damn he could muster, was not to enhance others' enjoyment and fool had carelessly left lying about - it was like trying to understanding of Jane Austen, still less to honour the novel-mend a leak in an attic full of dusty, broken furniture. Well, ist herself, but to put a definitive stop to the production of his commentary would put a stop to that, at least as far as any further garbage on the subject. The commentaries Jane Austen was concerned.

would not be designed for the general reader but for the But the work proceeded slowly; he was not yet halfway specialist, who, looking up Zapp, would find that the book, through *Sense and Sensibility* and already it was obvious that article or thesis he had been planning had already been each commentary would run to several volumes. Apart from anticipated and, more likely than not, invalidated. After the occasional article, he hadn't published anything for Zapp, the rest would be silence. The thought gave him deep several years now. Sometimes he would start work on a satisfaction. In Faustian moments he dreamed of going on, problem only to remember, after some hours' cogitation, **44**



that he had solved it very satisfactorily himself years before.

cision forced upon him by De'sire'e's ultimatum. But, sitting Over the same period - whether as cause or effect he wasn't in the airplane beside pregnant Mary Makepeace, all these sure — he had begun to feel ill-at-ease in his own body. He reasons seemed unconvincing. If he needed a change, he was prone to indigestion after rich restaurant meals, he was fairly sure it wasn't the kind that England would afford.

usually needed a sleeping-pill before retiring, he was He had neither affection nor respect for the British. The ones developing a pot-belly, and he found it increasingly difficult he had met — expatriates and visiting professors - mostly to achieve more than one orgasm in a single session - or acted like fags and then turned out not to be, which he found so he would complain to his buddies over a beer. The truth unsettling. At parties they wolfed your canape's and gulped was that these days he couldn't count on making it even your gin as if they had just been released from prison, and once, and Desire"e had less cause for resentment than she talked all the time in high, twittering voices about the knew over the baby-sitter last summer. Things weren't differences between the English and American university what they used to be in the Zapp loins, though it was a systems, making it clear that they regarded the latter as a dark truth that he would scarcely admit to himself, let huge, rather amusing racket from which they were personal-alone to anyone else. He would not publicly acknowledge, ly determined to take the biggest possible cut in the shortest either, that he was finding it a strain to hold his students'

possible time. Their publications were vapid and amateur-attention as the climate on campus became increasingly ish, inadequately researched, slackly argued, and riddled hostile to traditional academic values. His style of teaching with so many errors, misquotations, misattributions and was designed to shock conventionally educated students out incorrect dates that it was amazing they managed to get of a sloppily reverent attitude to literature and into an ice-their own names right on the title page. They nevertheless cool, intellectually rigorous one. It could do little with had the nerve to treat American scholars, including even students openly contemptuous of both the subject and his himself, with sneering condescension in their lousy journals.

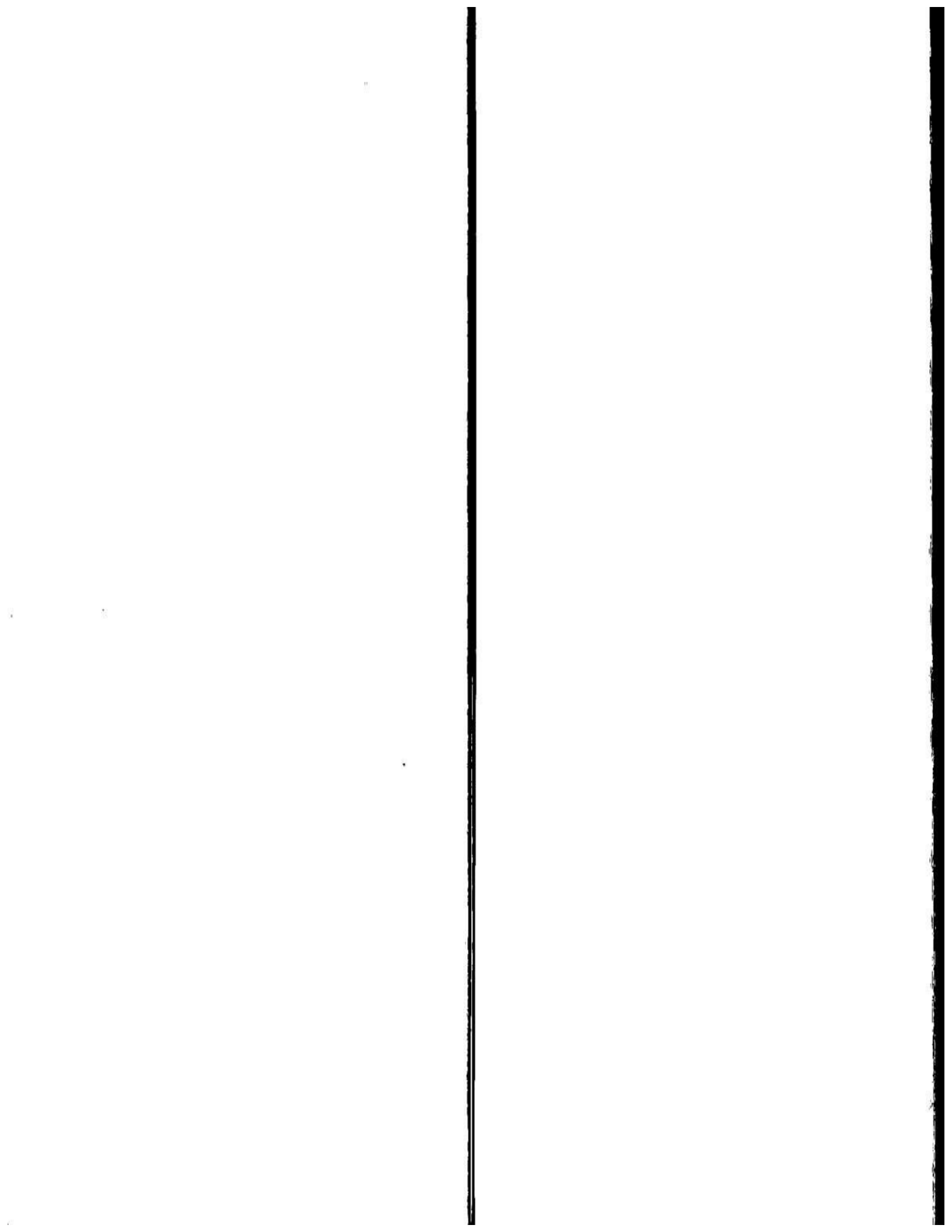
own qualifications. His barbed wisecracks sank harmlessly He felt in his bones that he wasn't going to enjoy England: into the protective padding of the new gentle inarticulacy, he would be lonely and bored, all the more so because he which had become so fashionable that even his brightest had taken a small provisional vow not to be unfaithful to graduate students, ruthless professionals at heart, felt ob-D6sir6e, just to annoy her; and it was the worst possible ligned to conform to it, mumbling in seminars, 'Well, it's place to carry on his research. Once he sank into the bottom-like James, ah, well the guy *wants* to be a modern, I mean he less morass of English manners, he would never be able to has the symbolism bit and God is dead and all, but it's like keep the mythic archetypes, the patterns of iterative ima-he's still committed to intelligence, like he thinks it all *means* gery, the psychological motifs, clear and radiant in his mind.

something for Chrissake - you dig?' Jane Austen was Jane Austen might turn *realist* on him, as she had on so many certainly not the writer to win the hearts of the new other readers, with consequences all too evident in the litera-generation. Sometimes Morris woke sweating from night-ture about her.

mares in which students paraded round the campus In Morris Zapp's view, the root of all critical error was a carrying placards that declared KNIGHTLEY SUCKS and naive confusion of literature with life. Life was transparent, FANNY P R I C E is A FINK. Perhaps he *was* getting a little literature opaque. Life was an open, literature a closed stale; perhaps, after all, he would profit from a change of system. Life was composed of things, literature of words.

scene.

Life was what it appeared to be about: if you were afraid In this fashion had Morris Zapp rationalized the de-your plane would crash it was about death, if you were 46



trying to get a girl into bed it was about sex. Literature **was** in general and on the Euphoric State campus in particular.

never about what it appeared to be about, though in the The factions, the issues, the confrontations; Governor Duck, case of the novel considerable ingenuity and perception Chancellor Binde, Mayor Holmes, Sheriff O'Keene; the were needed to crack the code of realistic illusion, which Third World, the Hippies, the Black Panthers, the Faculty was why he had been professionally attracted to the genre Liberals; pot, Black Studies, sexual freedom, ecology, free (even the dumbest critic understood that *Hamlet* wasn't speech, police violence, ghettos, fair housing, school about how the guy could kill his uncle, or the *Ancient* busing, Viet Nam; strikes, arson, marches, sit-ins, teach-ins, *Mariner* about cruelty to animals, but it was surprising how love-ins, happenings. Philip has long since given up trying many people thought that Jane Austen's novels were about to follow the details of Boon's argument, but the general finding Mr Right). The failure to keep the categories of drift seems to be concisely summed up by his lapel buttons: life and literature distinct led to all kinds of heresy and LEGALIZE POT

nonsense: to 'liking*' and 'not liking' books for instance, NORMAN O. BROWN FOR PRESIDENT

preferring some authors to others and suchlike whimsicalities SAVE THE BAY: MAKE WATER NOT **WAR**

which, he had constantly to remind his students, were of no KEEP THE DRAFT CARDS BURNING

conceivable interest to anyone except themselves (some-THERE IS A FAULT IN REALITY - **NORMAL**

times he shocked them by declaring that, speaking personal-SERVICE WILL RETURN SHORTLY

ly on this low, subjective level, he found Jane Austen a pain HAPPINESS IS (just IS)

in the ass). He felt a particularly pressing need to castigate KEEP GOD OUT OF **AMERICA**

naive theories of realism because they threatened his master-BOYCOTT GRAPES

work: obviously, if you applied an open-ended system (life) KEEP KROOP

to a closed one (literature) the possible permutations were SWINGING SAVES

endless and the definitive commentary became an impossi-BOYCOTT TRUFFLES

bility. Everything he knew about England warned him that **FUCK D*CK!**

the heresy flourished there with peculiar virulence, no doubt encouraged by the many concrete reminders of the In spite of himself, Philip is amused by some of the slogans.

actual historic existence of great authors that littered the Obviously it is a new literary medium, the lapel button, country - baptismal registers, houses with plaques, second-something between the

classical epigram and the imagist best beds, reconstructed studies, engraved tombstones and lyric. Doubtless it will not be long before some post-graduate suchlike trash. Well, one thing he was *not* going to do while is writing a thesis on the genre. Doubtless Charles Boon is he was in England was to visit Jane Austen's grave. But he already doing so.

must have spoken the thought aloud, because Mary Make-

'What's your research topic, Boon?' he asks, firmly inter-peace asks him if Jane Austen was the name of his great-rupting an involved legal disquisition on some persecuted grandmother. He says he thinks it unlikely.

group called the Euphoria Ninety-Nine.

'Uh?' Boon looks startled.

Meanwhile, Philip Swallow is wondering more desperate-

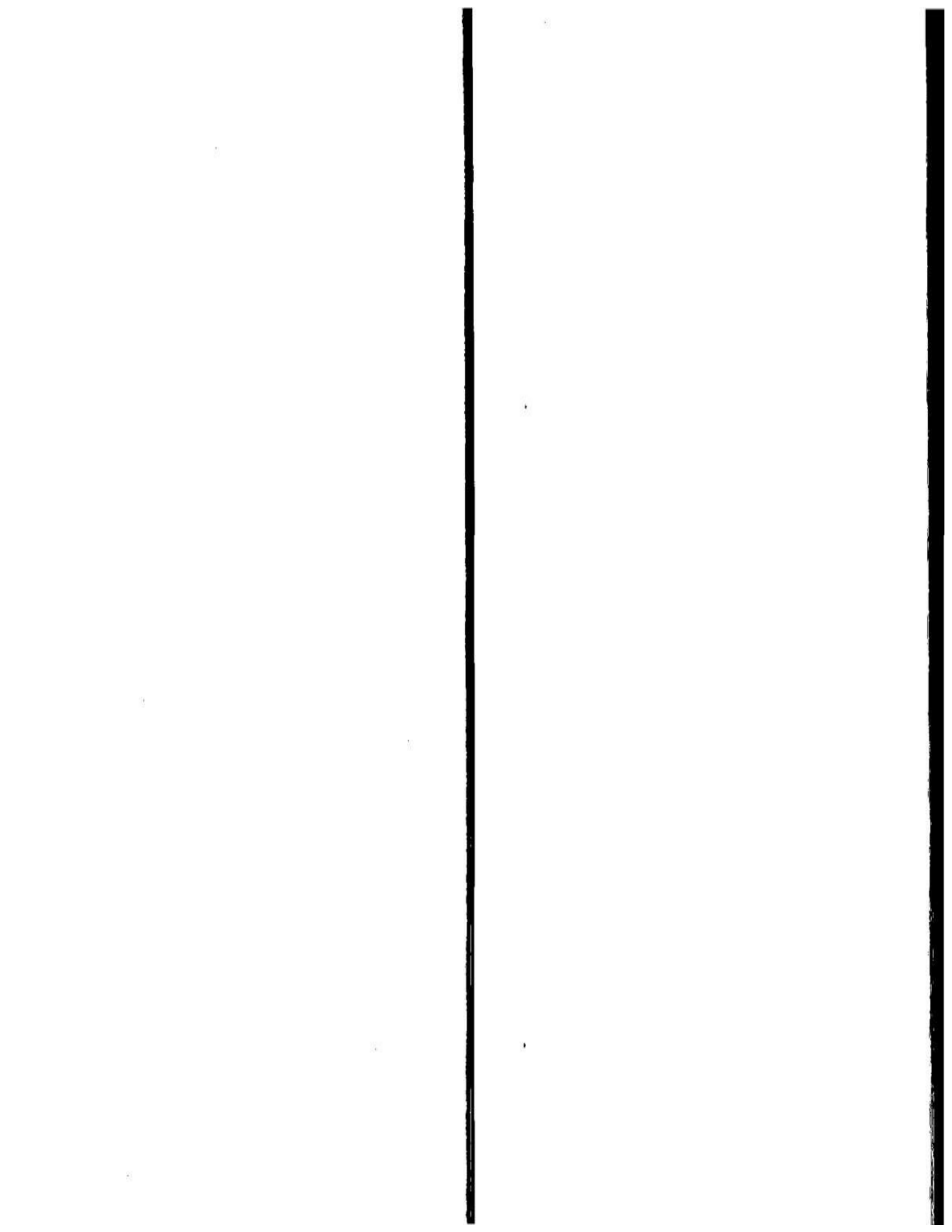
'Your PhD - or is it an MA?'

ly than ever when this flight is going to end. Charles Boon

'Oh. Yeah, I'm still getting a Master's. Thafs mostly has been talking at him for hours, it seems, permitting few course work. Just a little baby dissertation.'

'On what?'

interruptions. All about the political situation in Euphoria **48**



'Well, uh, I haven't decided yet. To tell you the truth, programme - Vmatter of fact, I'm flying at their expense, Phil, I don't have too much time for work, academic work.'

they sent me over to look at some European programmes.

At some point in their conversation Boon has begun Then there's *Euphoric Times*.. .'.

calling Philip by his first name, using moreover the con-

'What's that?'

traction he has always detested. Philip resents the familiarity,

'The underground newspaper. I do a weekly column for but can think of no way of stopping him, though he has them, and now they want me to take over the editorship.*'

declined the invitation to address Boon as ' Charles'.

'The editorship.'

'What other kind of work are you doing?' he asks ironi-

'But I'm thinking of starting a rival paper instead.'

cally.

Philip looks searchingly at Boon, whose left eye jumpi

'Well, you see, I have this radio show...'

abruptly to port. Philip relaxes: it is all a pack of lies after all.

'The Charles Boon Show?' Philip inquires, laughing There is no radio programme, no TV show, no expense heartily.

account, no newspaper column. It is all wish-fulfilment

' That's right, you know about it ?'

fantasy, like the Rummidge Research Assistantship and the Boon is not laughing. The same old Boon, barefaced liar, career in the diplomatic service. Boon has certainly changed weaver of fantasies.' No,' says Philip.' Do tell me.'

- not only in appearance and dress: his manner is more con-

'Oh, it's just a late-night phone-in programme. You fident, more relaxed, his speech has lost some of its Cockney know, people call up and talk about what's on their mind vowels and glottal stops, he sounds not unlike David Frost.

and ask questions. Sometimes I have a guest. Hey, you Philip has always supposed he despised David Frost but must come on the programme one night!

now realizes that in a grudging kind of way he must respect

'Will I get paid?'

David Frost quite a lot, so sickening has it been to enter-

'Fraid not. You get a free tape-recording of the pro-tain, even for a moment, the idea that Charles Boon is gramme and a coloured photograph of the two of us at the successfully launched upon a similar career. An extra-mike.'

ordinarily plausible fibber, Boon, even after years of close

'Well . . .' Philip is unsettled by the particularity of the acquaintance he could take you in, it was only the vagrant account. Could it conceivably be true? Some campus radio eye that gave him away. Well, it would make a good story system perhaps? 'How often have you done this pro-for his first letter home. *Who should I meet on the plane but the gramme ?*' he asks.

incorrigible Charles Boon -you remember him, of course, the Parolles

'Every night, that is morning, for the past year. Mid-of the English Department, graduated a couple of years ago. He night till two.'

was all dolled up in the latest 'gear', with hair down to his

'Every night! I'm not surprised your studies are suffering.'

shoulders, but as full of tall stories as ever. Patronized me like

'To tell you the truth, Phil, I'm not too bothered about *mad, of course! But he's so transparent, you can't take offence.*

my studies. It suits me to be registered at Euphoric State -

His train of thought, and Boon's continuing monologue, it allows me to stay in the country without getting drafted.

are interrupted by an announcement from the captain that But I don't really need any more degrees. I've decided my they will be landing in approximately twenty minutes, and future's in the media.'

he hopes they have enjoyed the flight. The instruction to

'The Charles Boon Show ?'

fasten safety belts is illuminated at the front of the cabin.

'That's just a beginning. I'm having discussions with a

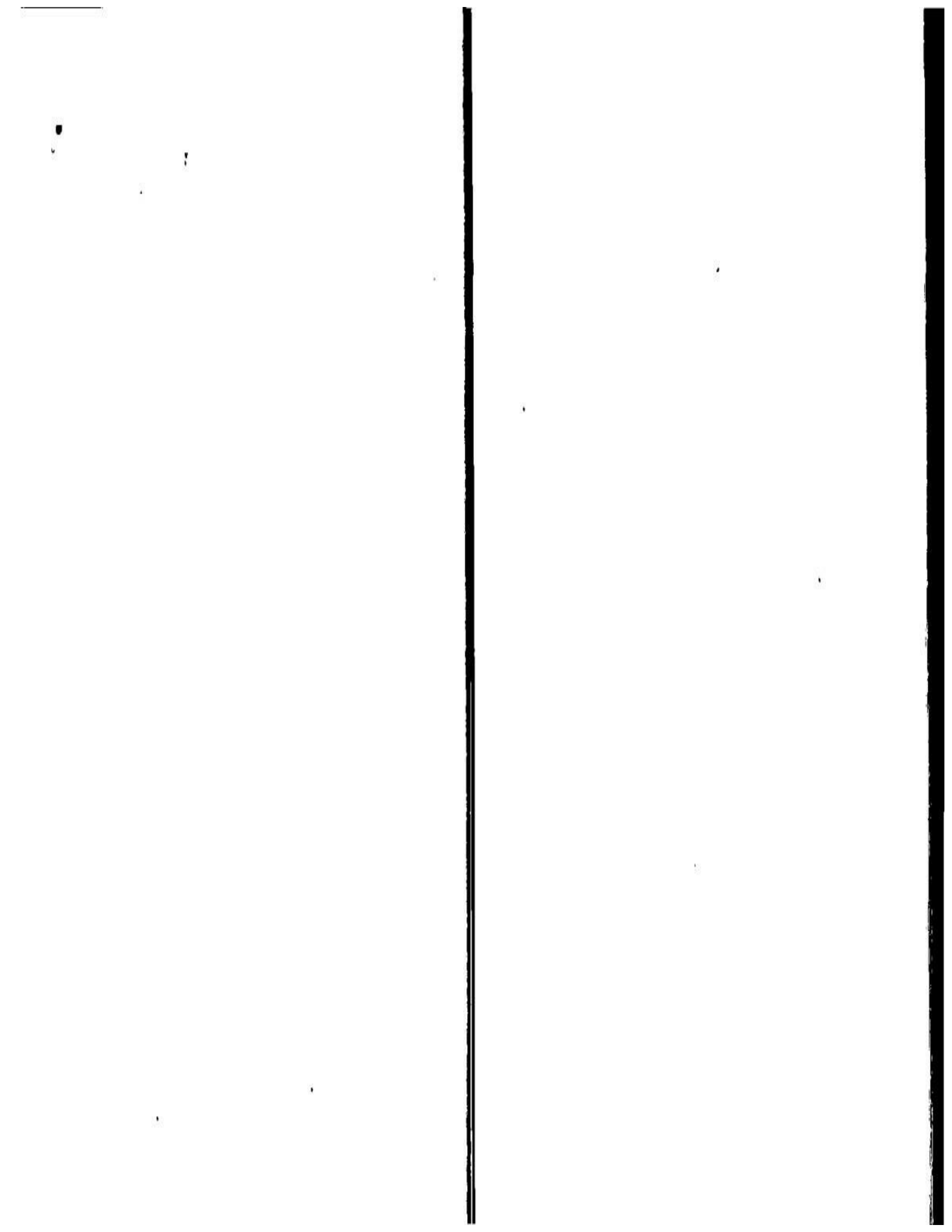
'Well, Phil, I'd better get back to my seat,' says Boon.

TV network right now about starting an experimental arts

'Yes, well, nice to have met you again.'

5°

5»



'If there's anything I can do for you, Phil, just call me.

sudden spasm of homesickness; then he wonders whether the *Lay* number's in the book.'

plane will crash, and what it would be like to die and

'Yes, well, I have seen to America before, you know. But whether there is a God, and where did he put his luggage thank you for the offer.'

tickets. Morris Zapp debates whether to stay in London for Boon wave* his hand deprecatingly. 'Any time, day or a few days or go straight to Rummidge and know the worst night. I have an answering service.'

at once. He thinks of his twins playing secretly in a corner And to Philip's astonishment, Charles Boon gets up and of the yard and breaking off their game reluctantly to say walks, unchallenged, past a hovering stewardess, through goodbye to him and how D6siree had refused to make love the curtains that conceal the First Glass cabin.

the night before he left, it would have been the first time in months, and remembers the first girl he ever had, Rose

'I guess we must be over England, now,' says Mary Finkelpearl the fish-monger's daughter on the next block, Makepeace, staring out of the window.

and how puzzled he'd been when his second girl also reeked

'Is it raining?' Zapp asks.

faintly offish, and wonders how many people at the airport

'No, it's very clear. You can see all the little fields, like a will know what this charter has come to England for.

patchwork quilt.'

The planes yaw and tilt. A wall of suburbs suddenly rears

'It can't be England if it's not raining. We must be off up behind Mary Makepeace's head, and falls away again.

course.'

Cloud swirls round Philip Swallow's plane and the windows

'There's a great dark smudge over there. That must be a are slashed with rain. Then houses, hills, trees, hangars, big city.'

trucks, skim by in recognizable scale, like old friends seen

' It's probably Rummidge. A great dark smudge sounds again after a long separation.

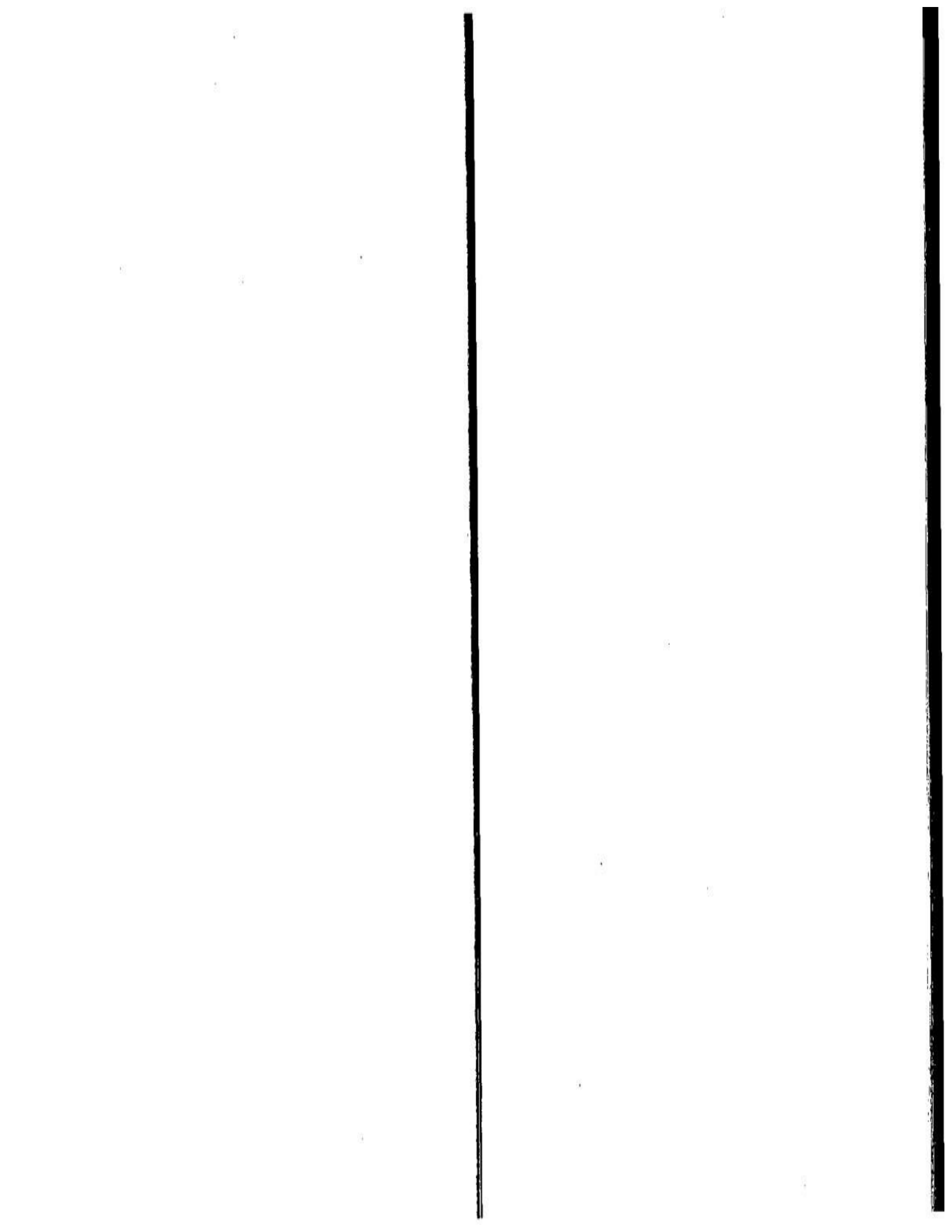
like Rummidge.'

Bump!

And now, in the two Boeings, falls simultaneously the special silence that precedes an airliner's landing. The Bump!

engines are all but cut off, and the conversation of the passengers is hushed as if in sympathy. The planes begin to At exactly the same moment, but six thousand miles lose height - clumsily, it seems, in a series of lurching, apart, the two planes touch down.

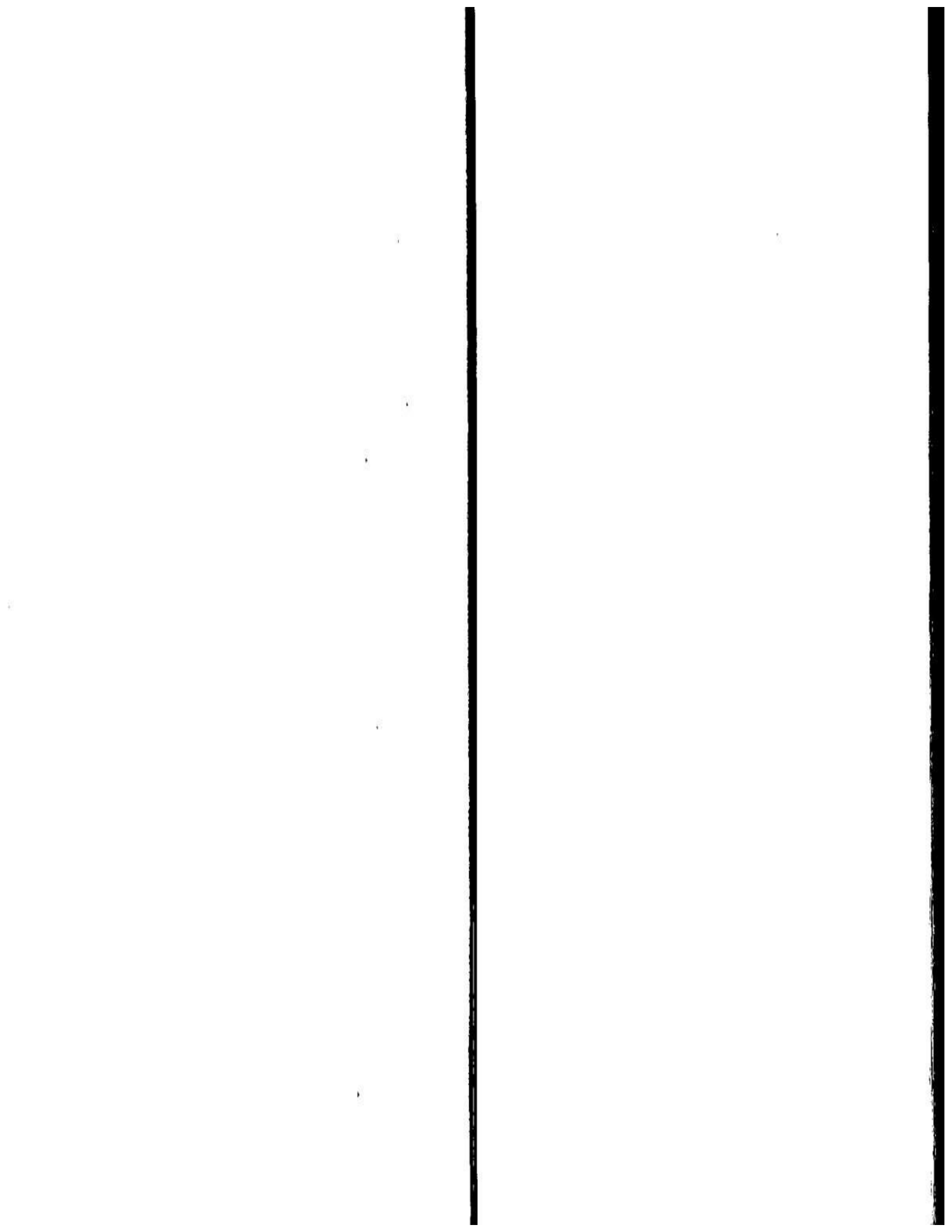
shuddering drops, as though bumping down an enormous staircase. The passengers swallow to relieve the pressure on their eardrums, close their eyes, finger their passports and vomit-bags. Time passes very slowly. Each person is alone, temporarily, with his own thoughts. But it is hard to think connectedly, swaying and lurching here between heaven and earth. Philip thinks of Hilary smiling bravely and the children waving forlornly on Rummidge station as his train drew away, of an essay that he has forgotten to return to a student, of the probable cost of a taxi from the airport to Plotinus. The future seems frighteningly blank and he has a **5a**



2. Settling

Philip Swallow rented an apartment in the top half of a two-storey house high up on Pythagoras Drive, one of many classically named but romantically-contoured residential roads that corkscrewed their way up and around the verdant hills of Plotinus, Euph. The rent was low, by Euphoric standards, because the house stood on what was called a Slide Area. It had, in fact, already slid twelve feet towards the Bay of Esseph from its original position - a circumstance that had caused the owner hurriedly to vacate it, leasing the accommodation to tenants too indigent, or too careless of life, to complain. Philip fell into neither of these categories, but then he had not learned the full history of 1037 Pythagoras Drive until after signing the six months' lease. That history had been related to him on the first evening of his occupancy by Melanie Byrd, the prettiest and most wholesome-looking of the three girls who shared the ground-floor apartment, as she kindly explained to him the controls of the communal washing machine in the basement. At first he had felt exploited, but after a while he grew reconciled to the situation. If the apartment was not, after all, *surprisingly* cheap, it was still cheap; and as Melanie Byrd reminded him, there was no truly safe place to live in Euphoria, whose unique and picturesque landscape was the product of a huge geological fault running through the entire State. It had caused a major earthquake in the nineteenth century, and a repetition of this disaster before the end of the twentieth was confidently predicted by seismo-logists and local millennial sects: a rare and impressive instance of agreement between science and superstition.

When he drew back the curtains in his living-room each **55**



morning, the view filled the picture window like a visual living-room window and seen at this distance, the view still *tour de force* at the beginning of a Cinerama film. In the looked very good indeed.

foreground, and to his right and left, the houses and gardens of the more affluent Euphoric faculty clung picturesquely to Morris Zapp was less enchanted with his view - a vista the sides of the Plotinus hills. Beneath him, where the foot-of dank back gardens, rotting sheds and dripping laundry, hills flattened out to meet the Bay shore, was the campus, huge, ill-looking trees, grimy roofs, factory chimneys and with its white buildings and bosky paths, its campanile and church spires - but he had discarded this criterion at a very plaza, its lecture rooms, stadia and laboratories, bordered by early stage of looking for furnished accommodation in the rectilinear streets of downtown Plotinus. The Bay filled Rummidge. You were lucky, he had quickly discovered, if the middle distance, stretching out of sight on both sides, you could find a place that could be kept at a temperature and one's eye naturally travelled in a great sightseeing arc: appropriate to human organisms, equipped with the more skimming along the busy Shoreline Freeway, swerving out rudimentary amenities of civilized life and decorated in a across the Bay via the long Esseph Bridge (ten miles from combination of colours and patterns that didn't make you toll to toll) to the city's dramatic skyline, dark downtown want to vomit'on sight. He considered living in a hotel, but skyscrapers posed against white residential hills, from which the hoteb in the vicinity of the campus were, if anything, it leapt across the graceful curves of the Silver Span sus-even worse than the private houses. Eventually he had taken pension bridge, gateway to the Pacific, to alight on the an apartment on the top floor of a huge old house owned by green slopes of Miranda County, celebrated for its redwood an Irish doctor and his extensive family. Dr O'Shea had forests and spectacular sea coast.

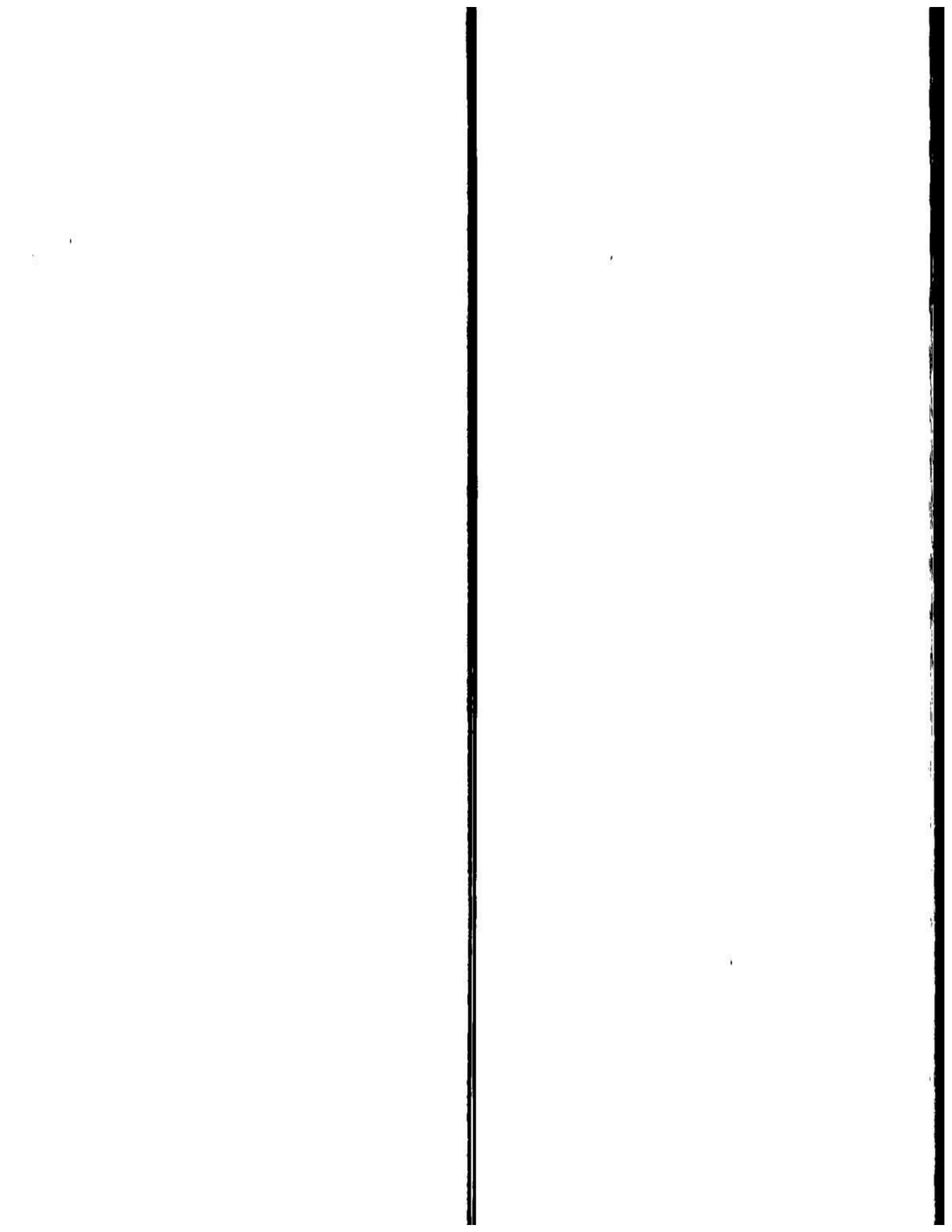
converted the attic with his own hands for the use of an This vast panorama was agitated, even early in the aged mother, and it was to the recent death of this relative, morning, by every known form of transportation - ships, the doctor impressed upon him, that Morris owed the good yachts, cars, trucks, trains, planes, helicopters and hover-fortune of finding such enviable accommodation vacant.

craft - all in simultaneous motion, reminding Philip of the Morris didn't see this as a selling point himself, but O'Shea brightly illustrated cover of a *Boy's Wonder Book of Modern* seemed to think that the apartment's sentimental associa-Transport he had received on his tenth birthday. It was tions were worth at least an extra five dollars a week to an indeed, he thought, a perfect marriage of Nature and American torn from the bosom of his own family. He Civilization, this view, where one might take in at a glance pointed out the armchair in which his mother had suffered the consummation of man's technological skill and the her fatal seizure and, while bouncing on the mattress to finest splendours of the natural world. The harmony he demonstrate its resilience, contrived at the same time to perceived in the scene was, he knew, illusory. Just out of reflect with a mournful sigh that it was scarcely a month sight to his left a pall of smoke hung over the great military since his beloved parent had passed to her reward from this and industrial port of Ashland, and to his right the oil very bed.

refineries of St Gabriel fumed into the limpid air. The Bay, Morris took the flat because it was centrally heated — the which winked so prettily in the morning sun, was, according first he had seen thus blessed. But the heating system turned to Charles Boon and other sources, poisoned by industrial out to be one of electric radiators perversely and unalterably waste and untreated effluent, and was

being steadily con-programmed to come on at full -blast when you were asleep tracted by unscrupulous dumping and filling.

and to turn themselves off as soon as you got up, from which For all that, Philip thought, almost guiltily, framed by his time they leaked a diminishing current of lukewarm air into **56**



the frigid atmosphere until you were ready to go to bed handed jig all year long, to the merry confusion of the again. This system, Dr O'Shea explained, was extremely vegetable world. Philip felt his pulse beating to its exhilara-economical because it ran on half-price electricity, but it ting rhythm.

still seemed to Morris an expensive way to work up a sweat He had no difficulty in finding his way to Dealer Hall, a in bed. Fortunately the apartment was well provided with large,, square building in the neoclassical style. He was pre-gas burners of antique design, and by keeping them on at vented from entering it, however, by a ring of campus full volume all day he was able to maintain a tolerable policemen. Quite a lot of students and staff were milling temperature in his rooms, though O'Shea evidently found it about, and a long-haired youth with a KEEP KROOP button excessive, entering Morris's apartment with his arm held up in the lapel of his suede jacket informed Philip that the to shield his face, like a man breaking into a burning house.

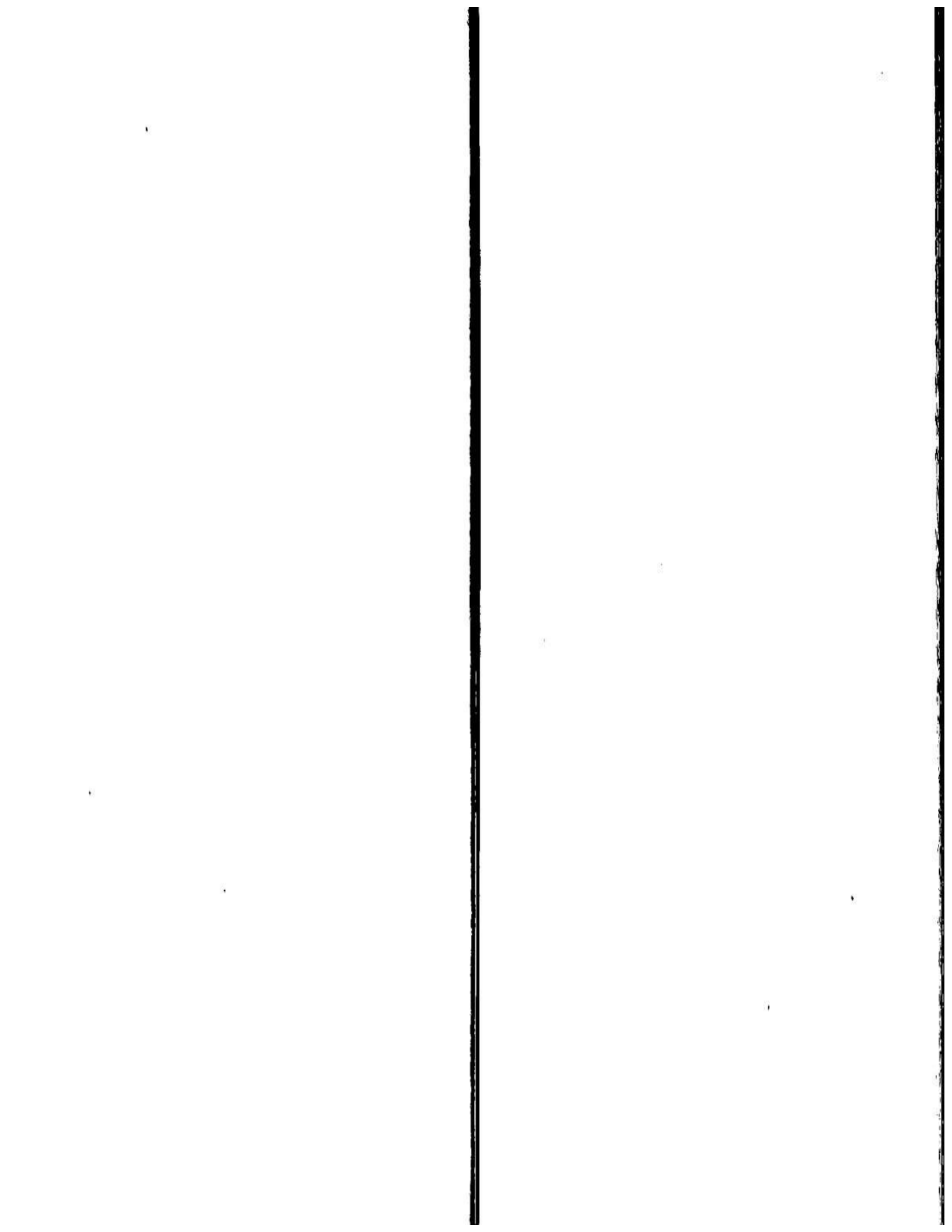
building was being checked out for a bomb allegedly Simply keeping warm was Morris Zapp's main preoccu-planted during the night. The search, he understood, pation in his first few days at Rummidge. On his first might take several hours; but as he was turning away it morning, in the tomb-like hotel room he had checked into ended quite suddenly with a muffled explosion high up in after driving straight from London airport, he had woken to the building and a tinkle of shattered glass.

find steam coming out of his mouth. It had never happened to him indoors before and his first thought was that he was As Morris Zapp learned much later, he made a bad im-on fire. When he had moved his baggage into the O'Shea pression on his first appearance in the Rummidge English house, he filled the micro-refrigerator with TV dinners, Department. The Secretary, young Alice Slade, returning locked his door, turned up all the fires and spent a couple of from her coffee break with her friend Miss Mackintosh of days thawing out. Only then did he feel ready to investigate Egyptology, observed him doubled up in front of the De-the Rummidge campus and introduce himself to the partmental noticeboard, coughing and wheezing and English Department.

blowing cigar ash all over the floor. Miss Slade had wondered whether it was a mature student having a fit and Philip Swallow was more impatient to inspect his place asked Miss Mackintosh to run and fetch the porter, but Miss of work. On his very first morning he strolled out after a Mackintosh ventured the opinion that he was only laughing, delicious breakfast of orange juice, bacon, hot cakes and which was indeed the case. The noticeboard distantly re-maple syrup (maple syrup! how delightful it was to recover minded Morris of the early work of Robert Rauschenberg: such forgotten sensations) to look for Dealer Hall, the a thumb-tacked montage of variegated scraps of paper -

location of the English Department. It was raining, as it had letterheaded notepaper, memo sheets, compliment slips, been the previous day. This had been a disappointment to pages torn clumsily from college notebooks, inverted en-Philip initially - in his memory Euphoria was bathed in velopes, reversed invoices, even fragments of wrapping perpetual sunlight, and he had forgotten - perhaps he had paper with tails of scotch tape still adhering to them - all never known - that it had a rainy season in the winter bearing cryptic messages from faculty to students about months. It was, however, a fine, soft rain, and the air was courses, rendezvous, assignments and books, scribbled in a warm and balmy. The grass was green, the trees and shrubs variety of scarcely decipherable hands with pencil, ink and were in full leaf and, in some cases, flower and fruit. There coloured ball-point. The end of the Gutenberg era was was no real winter in Euphoria - autumn joined hands with evidently not an

issue here: they were still living in a manu-spring and summer, and together they danced a three-script culture. Morris felt he understood more deeply, now, 58



what McLuhan was getting at: it had tactile appeal, this Recollecting all this reminded Morris that he had not noticed - you wanted to reach out and touch its rough, been able to prise any information about his own teaching irregular surface. As a system for conveying information it programme from Rummidge before leaving Euphoria.

was the funniest thing he'd seen in years.

The girl finally got the door open and he went in. He was Morris was still chuckling to himself as the mini-skirted pleasantly surprised: it was a large, comfortable room, well-furnished, looking, he thought, rather nervously over her furnished with desk, table, chairs and bookshelves of shoulder from time to time, led him down the corridor to his matching polished wood, an armchair and a rather hand-office. Walking along the corridors of Dealer Hall was like some rug. Above all, it was warm. Morris Zapp was to ex-passing through some Modern Language Association Hall perience the same sense of surprise and paradox many of Fame, but he recognized none of the nameplates here times in his first weeks at Rummidge. Public affluence and except the one on the door Miss Slade finally stopped at: private squalor, was how he formulated it. The domestic MR p. H. SWALLOW. That rang a distant bell - but, he standard of living of the Rummidge faculty was far below recalled, as the girl fumbled with the key (she seemed very that of the Euphoric faculty, but even the most junior jumpy, this chick) it wasn't in print that he had encountered teacher here had a large office to himself, and the Staff the name, merely in the correspondence about his trip.

House was built like a Hilton, putting Euphoric State's Swallow was the guy he was exchanging with. He recalled Faculty Club quite in the shade. Even the building in which Luke Hogan, present Chairman of Euphoric's English De-Morris's office was situated had its own spacious and compartment, holding a letter from Swallow in his enormous comfortable lounge, restricted to faculty, where you could get fist (a handwritten letter, again, it came back to him) and fresh coffee and tea served in real china cups and saucers by complaining in his Montana cowboy's drawl, 'Goddammit, two motherly women, whereas Dealer Hall boasted only a Morris, what are we gonna do with this guy Swallow? He small room littered with paper cups and cigarette ends claims he ain't got a field.' Morris had recommended where you fixed yourself instant coffee that tasted like hot putting Philip down to teach English 99, a routine intro-disinfectant. 'Public affluence' was perhaps too flattering to duction to the literary genres and critical method for Rummidge, and it couldn't be the socialism he'd heard so English majors, and English 305, a course in novel-writing.

much about, either. It was more like a narrow band of As Euphoric State's resident novelist, Garth Robinson, was privilege running through the general drabness and priva-in fact very rarely resident, orbiting the University in an tion of life. If the British university teacher had nothing else, almost unbroken cycle of grants, fellowships, leaves of he had a room he could call his own, a decent place to sit absence and alcoholic cures, the teaching of English 305

and read his newspaper and the use of a John that was off-usually fell to some unwilling and unqualified member of the limits to students. That seemed to be the underlying regular teaching staff. As Morris said, 'If he makes a fuck-up principle. Such coherent thoughts were not yet forming of English 305, nobody's going to notice. And any clown in Morris Zapp's mind, however, as he first cast his eyes with a PhD should be able to teach English 99.'

round Philip Swallow's room. He was still in a state of

' He doesn't have a PhD,' Hogan said.

culture shock, and it gave him a giddy feeling when he

* *What?* *

looked out of the window and saw the familiar campanile of Euphoric State flushed an angry red and
shrunk to half its

'They have a different system in England, Morris. The normal size, like a detumescent penis.

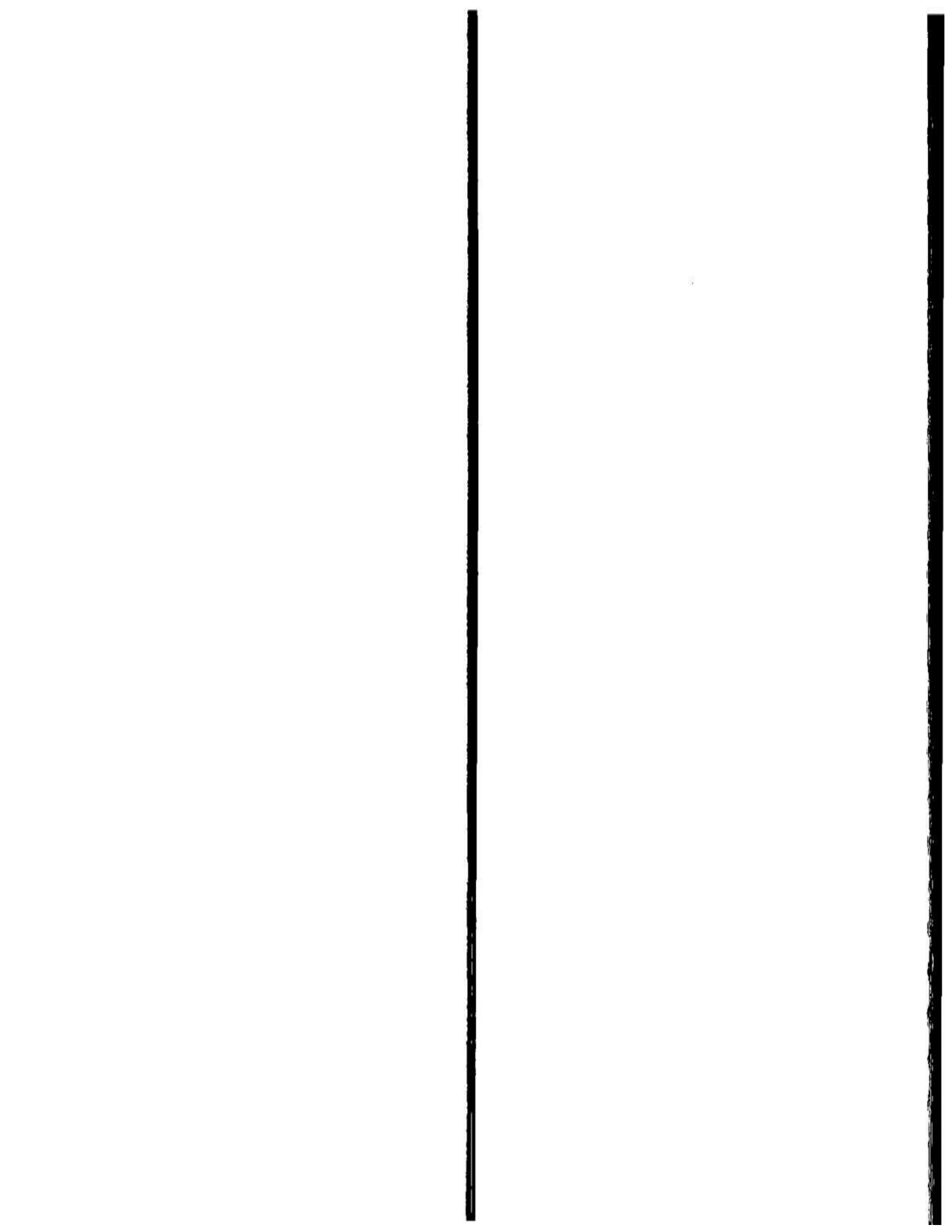
PhD isn't so important.'

' It's a bit stuffy in here, I'm afraid,' said the secretary,

' You mean the jobs are hereditary ? *

60

61



making a move to open a window. Morris, already basking Dear Professor Zapp,

in the radiator's warmth, lurched with clumsy haste to I gather you'll be using my room while you're here. I'm afraid prevent her, and she shrank back, quivering, as if he had I've lost the key to the filing cabinet, so if you have anything really been about to put his hand up her skirt - which, given its confidential I should keep it under the carpet, at least I always do.

dimensions, wouldn't have been difficult, it could easily Do feel free to use my books, though I'd be grateful if you wouldn't happen accidentally just shaking hands with her. He tried to lend them to students, as they *will* write in them.

soothe her by making conversation.

I gather from Busby that you'll probably be taking over my tutorial groups. The second-year groups are rather hard going,

* Don't seem to be many people on campus today.'

especially the Joint Honours, but the first-year group is quite She looked at him as if he had just arrived from **outer** lively, and I think you'll find the two final-year groups very space.' It's the vacation,' she said.

interesting. There are a few points you might like to bear in mind.

' Uhuh. Is Professor Masters around ?'

Brenda Archer suffers badly from pre-menstrual tension so don't

'No, he's in Hungary. Won't be back till the beginning of be surprised if she bursts into tears every now and again. The other term.'

third-year group is tricky because Robin Kenworth used to be

*At a conference ? *

Alice Murphy's boy-friend but lately he's been going around with

'Shooting wild pigs, I'm told.'

Miranda Watkins, and as they're all in the same group you may Morris wondered if he had heard aright, but let it go.

find the atmosphere rather tense...

' What about the other professors ?'

The letter continued in this vein for several pages, des-

'There's only the one.'

cribing the emotional, psychological and physiological

'I mean the other teachers.'

peculiarities of the students concerned in intimate detail.

'It's the vacation,' she repeated, speaking with delibera-
Morris read through it in total bewilderment. What kind of
tion, as if to a slow-witted child. 'You do get them coming in a man was this, that
seemed to know more about his stu-from time to time, but I've not seen anybody this morning.'

dents than their own mothers? And to care more, by the

'Who should I see about my teaching programme?'

sound of it.

' Dr Busby did say something about it the other d a y . . . '

He opened the other drawers in the desk, hoping to find

' Yes ?' Morris prompted, after a pause.

further clues to this eccentric character, but they were

'I've forgotten, now,' said the girl dejectedly. ' I ' m empty except for one containing a piece of chalk,
an ex-leaving in the summer to get married,' she added, as if she hausted ball-point, two bent pipe-
cleaners and a small, had decided on this course as the only way out of a hopeless empty can that had
once contained an ounce of pipe to-situation.

bacco, Three Nuns Empire Blend. Sherlock Holmes might

'Congratulations. Would there be a file on me some-have made something of these clues . . . Morris
moved on to where?'

examine the cupboards and bookshelves. The books did no

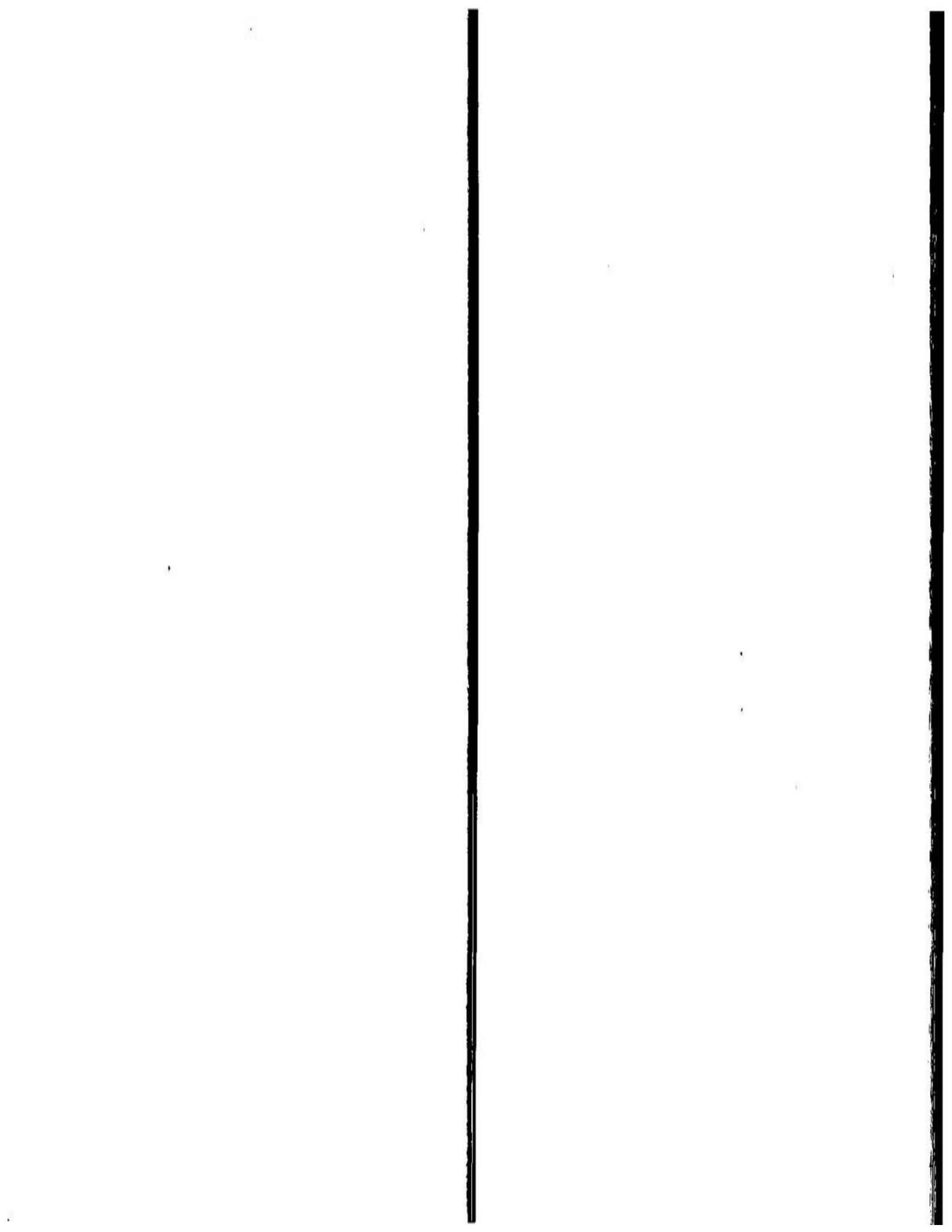
'Well, there might be. I could have a look,' said the girl, more than confirm Swallow's confession that
he had no parti-obviously relieved to escape. She left Morris alone in **bis** cular scholarly field, being
a miscellaneous collection of Eng-office.

lish literature, with a thin representation of modern criticism, He sat down at the desk and opened the
drawers. In the Morris's own not included. He established that the cup-top right-hand one was an
envelope addressed to himself.

boards were empty, except for one at the top of the book-It contained a long hand-written letter from

Philip shelves which was too high for him to reach. Its inaccessi-Swallow.

bility convinced Morris that it contained the revelation he **62**



was looking for - a dozen empty gin bottles, for instance, or concluded.' He's **busy** with the Fire Chief right now. I know a collection of women's underwear - and he clambered on he'll call you.'

to a chair to reach the catch of the sliding door. It was Philip found his room on the fourth floor. A sallow youth stuck, and the whole bookshelf began to sway dangerously as with a mop of frizzy hair was squatting outside, smoking a he tugged. The catch suddenly gave, however, and a hun-cigarette. He was wearing some kind of army combat jacket dred and fifty-seven empty tobacco cans, Three Nuns with camouflage markings and he looked, Philip Couldn't Empire Blend, fell on his head.

help thinking, just the sort of chap who might plant a bomb somewhere. As Philip fitted his key into the Yale lock, he

'You've been allocated room number 426,' said Mabel scrambled to his feet. A fluorescent KEEP KROOP button Lee, the petite Asian secretary. 'That's Professor Zapp's glowed on his lapel.

office.'

' Professor Swallow ?'

' Yes,' said Philip.' He'll be using my room at Rummidge.'

'Yes?'

Mabel Lee gave him an amiable, but non-attending

'Could I see you?'

smile, like that of an air-hostess - whom, indeed, she

•What, now?'

resembled, in her crisp white blouse and scarlet pinafore

'Now would be great.'

dress. The Departmental Office was full of people just ad-

'Well, I've only just arrived...'

mitted to the building, loudly discussing the bomb which

• You have to run that key twice.'

had exploded in the fourth-floor mensroom. Opinion This was true. The door opened suddenly and Philip seemed to be fairly evenly divided between those who dropped some of his papers. The young man picked them up blamed the Third World Students who were threatening to adroitly and made this an opportunity to follow him into the strike in the coming quarter, and those who suspected police

room. It was stuffy, and smelled of cigars. Philip threw up provocateurs aiming to discredit the Third World Students the window and observed with satisfaction that it opened on and their strike. Though the conversation was excited, to a narrow balcony.

Philip missed the expected note of outrage and fear.

'Nice view,' said the youth, who had stolen up silently

'Does, er, this sort of t h i n g . . . happen often ?' he asked.

behind him. Philip started.

•Hmm? Oh, yeah. Well, I guess it's the first *bomb* we've

•What can I do for you, Mr, e r . . . ?'

had in Dealer.' With this ambiguous reassurance Mabel Lee

'Smith. Wily Smith.'

proceeded to hand over the keys to his room, together with a

'Willy?'

wad of forms and leaflets which she briskly explained to him,

'Wily.'

dealing them out on the counter that divided the room: Wily perched himself on the only part of the desk that was

'Identity Card, don't forget to sign it, application for **car** not covered with books. Philip's first thought was that it was parking, medical insurance brochures - choose any one rather careless of the Zapp fellow to leave his room so un-plan, typewriter rental application - you can have electric tidy. Then he registered that many of the books were still in or manual, course handbook, income tax immunity form, unwrapped postal packaging and addressed to himself.

key to the elevator in this building, key to the Xerox room,

'Good Lord,'he said.

just sign your name in the book each time you use the

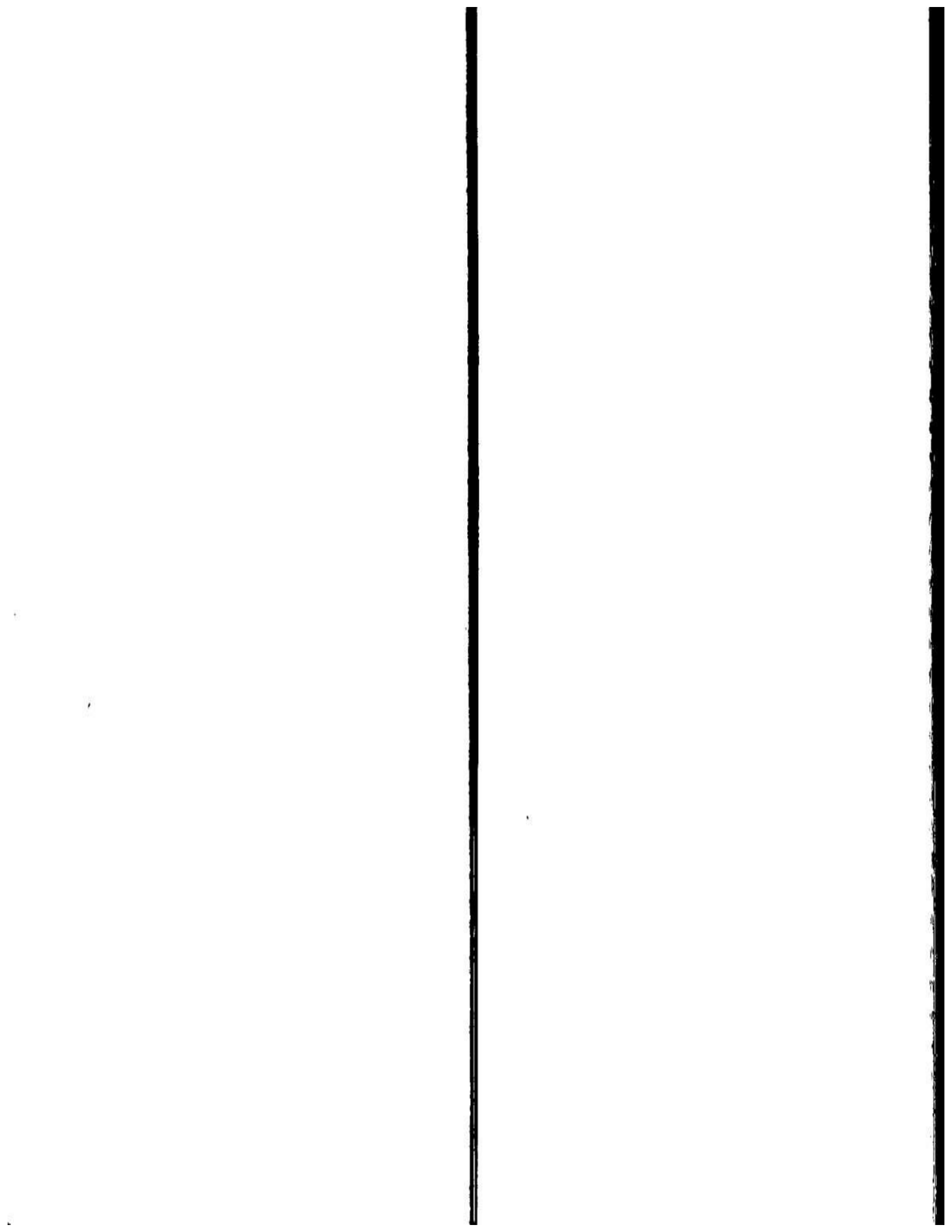
• What's the problem, Professor Swallow ?'

machine . . . I'll tell Professor Hogan you've arrived,' **she**

' These books . . . Where have they come from ?'

64

65



' Publishers. They want you to assign them for courses.

'Fine. And while I think of it, Mrs Hogan and I are

'And what if I don't?'

having some folks round for drinks on Sunday, 'bout five,

'You keep them anyway. Unless you want to sell them. I could you make it ?'

know a guy will give you fifty per cent of the list price...'

' Well, yes, thank you very much. About my courses -'

' No, no,' Philip protested, greedily tearing the wrappers

'Fine. That's just fine. And how are you settling in, Mr from huge, heavy anthologies and sleek, seductive paper-Swallow?'

backs. A free book was a rare treat in England, and the sight

' Oh, fine, thanks,' said Philip mechanically.' I mean, no, of all this unsolicited booty made him slightly delirious. He that is -' But he was too late. With a last' Fine', Hogan had rather wished Wily Smith would leave him to gloat in rung off.

solitude.

' So do I get into the course ?' said Wily Smith.

' What is it you want to see me about, Mr Smith ?'

' I would strongly advise you against it,' said Philip. 'Why

'You're teaching English 305 next quarter, right?'

are you so keen, anyway ?'

'I really don't know what I'm teaching yet. What is

' I have this novel I want to write. It's about this black kid English 305?'

growing up in the ghetto . . . '

'Novel-writing.'

'Isn't that going to be rather difficult?' said Philip. 'I Philip laughed. 'Well, it's certainly not me, then. I mean, unless you actually *are*...'

couldn't write a novel to save my life.'

Philip hesitated. He had been instructed by Charles Boon Wily Smith frowned and, plunging his hand inside his that 'black' was the correct usage these days, but he found combat jacket, produced what Philip feared might be a himself unable to pronounce a word associated in Rummidge bomb but which turned out to be a catalogue of courses.

with the crudest kind of racial prejudice.' Unless you've had

'English 305,' he read out, 'an advanced course in the the experience yourself,' he amended his sentence.

writing of extended narrative. Selective enrolment. Winter

'Sure. Like the story is autobiographical. All I need is Quarter: Professor Philip Swallow.'

technique.'

Philip took the catalogue from his hands and read for

'Autobiographical?' Philip scrutinized the young man, himself. ' Good Lord,' he said weakly. ' I must stop this at narrowing his eyes and cocking his head to one side. Wily once.'

Smith's complexion was about the shade of Philip's own a With Wily Smith's assistance he telephoned the Chairman week after his summer holiday, when his tan would begin to of the Department.

fade and turn yellow. 'Are you sure ?'

'Professor Hogan, I'm sorry to bother you so soon,

'Sure I'm sure.' Wily Smith looked hurt, not to say b u t - '

insulted.

'Mr Swallow!' Hogan's voice boomed out of the receiver.

Philip hastily changed the subject: 'Tell me, that badge

'Mighty glad to hear you arrived. Have a good flight?'

you're wearing — what *is* Kroop ?'

' Not at all bad, thank you. I -'

Kroop turned out to be the name of an Assistant Pro-

' Fine! Where are you staying, Mr Swallow ?'

fessor in the English Department who had recently been

'At the Faculty Club for the time being, while I look -*

refused tenure. 'But there's a grass-roots movement to have

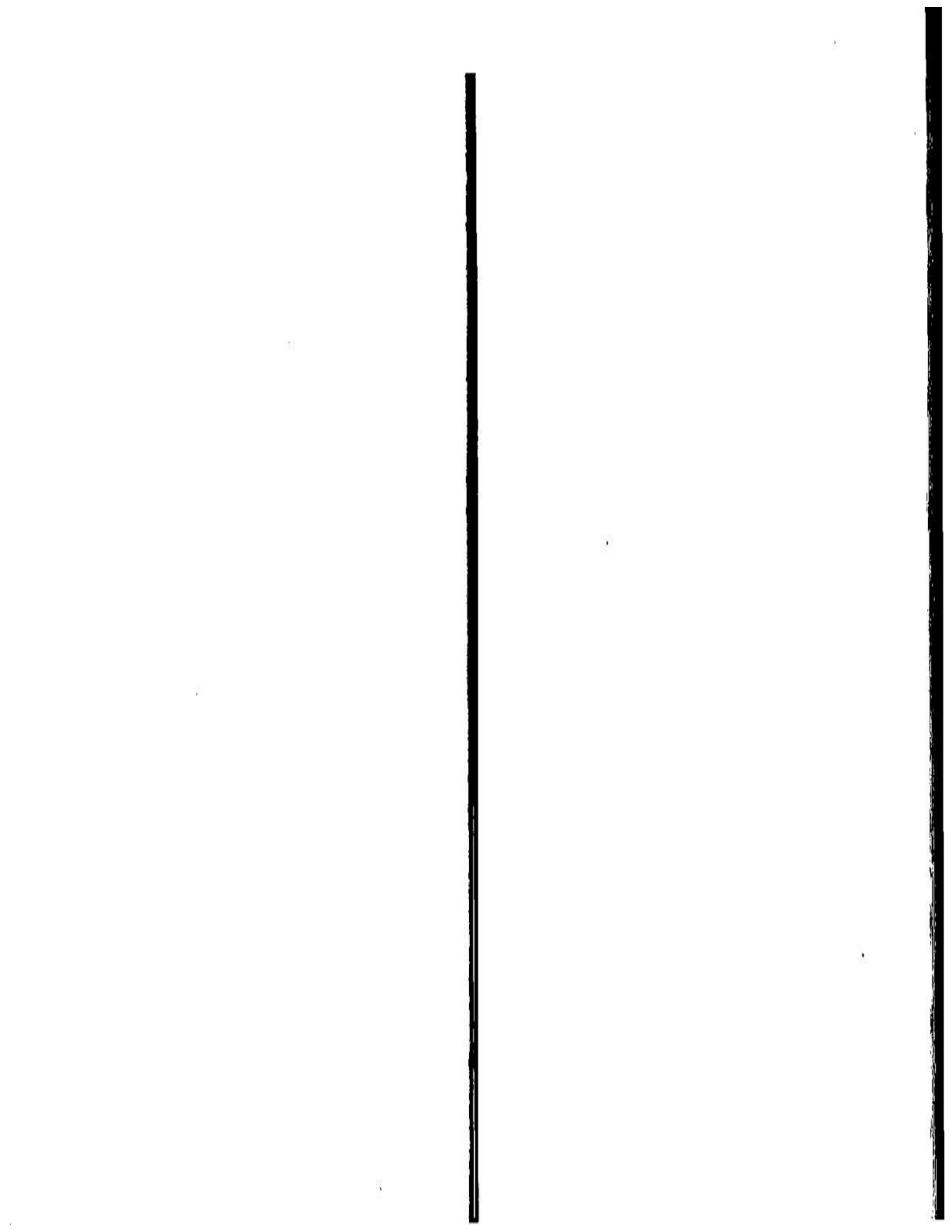
' Fine, that's fine, Mr Swallow. You and I must have lunch him kept on here,' Wily explained. 'Like he's a real groovy together real soon.'

teacher and his classes are very popular. The other pro-

' Well, that would be very nice, but what I -'

fessors make out he hasn't published enough, but really **66**

67



I

they're sick as hell because of the raves he gets in the *Course*

makes Austen swing,' was one comment. Only 'A' students need *Bulletin*:

apply.

And what was that? It was apparently a kind of consumers' guide to teachers and courses based on question-Miss Slade was just about to knock on Morris Zapp's door naives handed out to students in previous quarters. Wily to inform him that there was nothing in the files about his produced the current issue from one of his capacious pockets.

teaching programme, when she heard the noise of the

'You won't be in there, Professor Swallow. But you will hundred and fifty-seven tobacco cans falling out of the next quarter.'

cupboard. He listened to the sound of her high heels fleeing

'Really?' Philip opened the book at random.

down the corridor. She did not return. Neither did anyone *English 14s. Augustan Pastoral Poetry. Asst. Professor Howard* else violate his privacy.

Ringbaum. Juniors and Seniors. Limited enrolment.

Morris came into the University most days to work on his *Sense and Sensibility* commentary and at first he appreciated Ringbaum, according to most reports, does little to make his the peace and quiet; but after a while he began to find these subject interesting to students. One commented: 'He seems to amenities oppressively absolute. In Euphoria he was know his material very well, but resents questions and discussion as they interrupt his train of thought.' Another comment: 'Dull, constantly being pursued by students, colleagues, adminis»

dull, dull.' Ringbaum is a strict grader and, according to one trators, secretaries. He didn't expect to be so busy at report, 'likes to set insidious little quizzes.'

Rummidge, at least not initially; but he had vaguely supposed the faculty would introduce themselves, show him

'Well,' said Philip with a nervous smile. 'They certainly around, offer the usual hospitality and advice. In all modes-don't mince their words, do they?' He leafed through other ty Morris imagined he must be the biggest fish ever to swim pages on English courses.

into this academic backwater, and he was prepared for a re-English 213. The Death of the Book? Communication and ception of almost exaggerated (if that were possible) interest *Crisis in*

and excitement. When nobody showed, he didn't know what *Limited enrolment*.

to do. He had lost the art, cultivated in youth, of making his existence known to people. He was used, by now, to letting Rise early on Enrolment Day to sign on for this justly popular interdisciplinary multi-media head-trip. 'Makes McLuhan seem the action come to him. But there was no action.

slow,' was one comment, and another raved: 'the most exciting As the beginning of term approached, the Departmental course I have ever taken.' Heavy reading assignments, but flexible corridor lost its tomb-like silence, its air of human desertion.

assessment system. Kroop takes an interest in his students, is always The faculty began to trickle back to their posts. From behind available.

his desk he heard them passing in the corridor, greeting each other, laughing and opening and shutting their doors. But

' Who compiles these reports ?' Philip inquired.

when he ventured into the corridor himself they seemed to

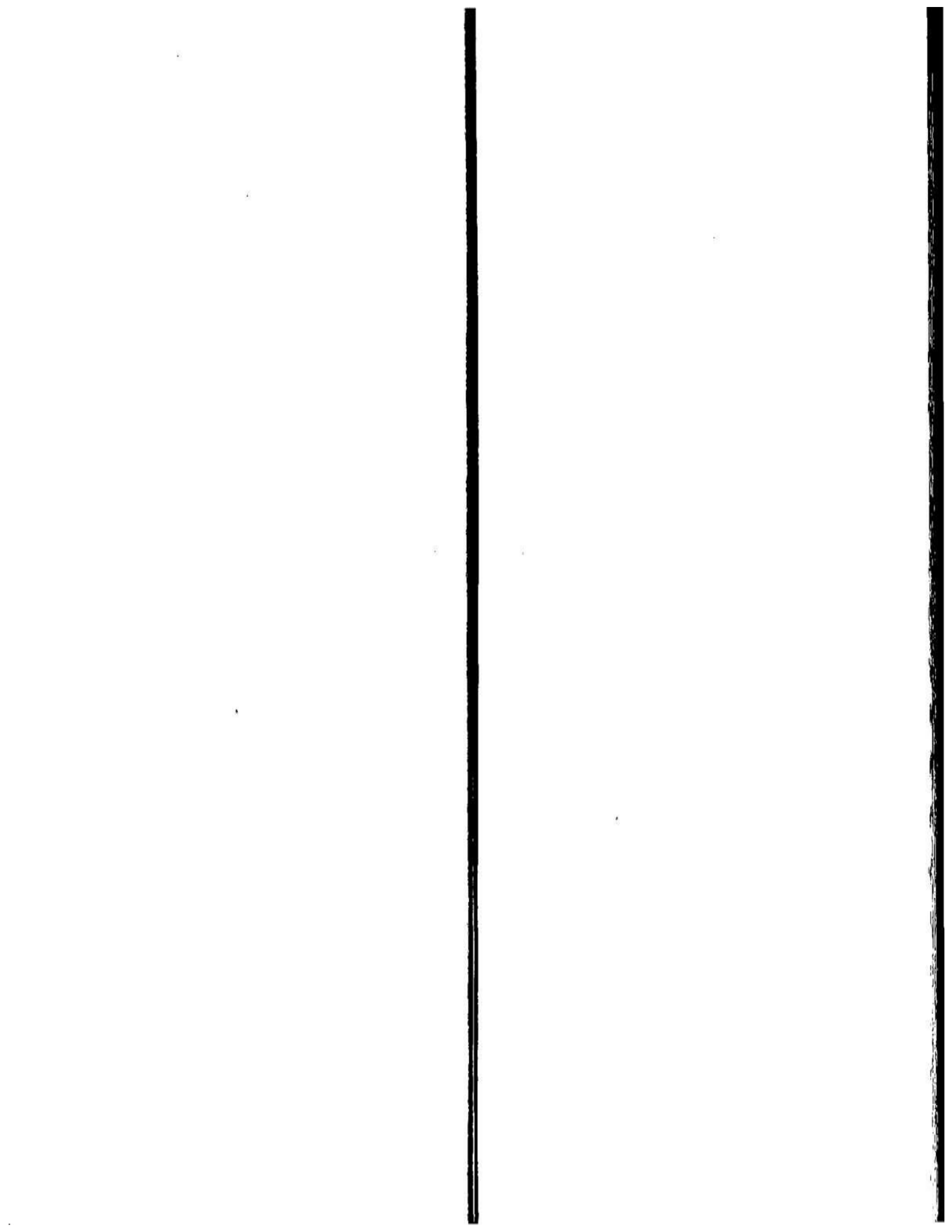
' I do,' said Wily Smith.' Do I get into your course ?'

avoid him, bolting into their offices just as he emerged from

' I ' ll think about it,' said Philip. He continued to browse.

his own, or else they looked straight through him as if he *English 350. Jane Austen and the Theory of Fiction. Professor* were the man who serviced the central heating. Just when he *Morris J. ZaPP' Graduate Seminar. Limited enrolment.*

had decided that he would have to take the initiative by Mostly good reports of this course. Zapp is described as vain, ambushing his British colleagues as they passed his door at sarcastic and a mean grader, but brilliant and stimulating. 'He coffee-time and dragging them into his office, they began to



acknowledge his presence in a way which suggested long but spectator sport - but the amount of screen time devoted to it not deep familiarity, tossing him a perfunctory smile as they was meagre. There was a four-hour programme of sport on passed, or nodding their heads, without breaking step or Saturday afternoons which he had settled down to watch their own conversations. This new behaviour implied that expectantly, but it seemed to be some kind of conspiracy to they all knew perfectly well who he was, thus making any drive the population out to the soccer stadiums or to the attempt at self-introduction on his part superfluous, while at supermarkets or anywhere rather than watch ladies' arch-the same time it offered no purchase for extending acquaint-ery, county swimming championships, a fishing contest and tance. Morris began to think that he was going to pass a table-tennis tournament all in breathtaking succession.

through the Rummidge English Department without any-He switched on to the other channel and that seemed to be a one actually speaking to him. They would fend him off for cross-country race for wheel-chairs, as far as you could tell six months with their little smiles and nods and then the through the sleet.

waters would close over him and it would be as if he had He had a brief honeymoon with Radio One that turned never disturbed their surface.

into a kind of sado-masochistic marriage. Waking early in Morris felt himself cracking under this treatment. His the Rummidge hotel on that morning when his breath vocal organs began to deteriorate from disuse - on the rare turned to steam, he had flicked on his transistor and listened occasions when he spoke, his own voice sounded strange and to what he took, at the time, to be a very funny parody of the hoarse to his ears. He paced his office like a prisoner in his worst kind of American AM radio, based on the simple but cell, wondering what he had done to provoke this treatment.

effective formula of having non-commercial commercials.

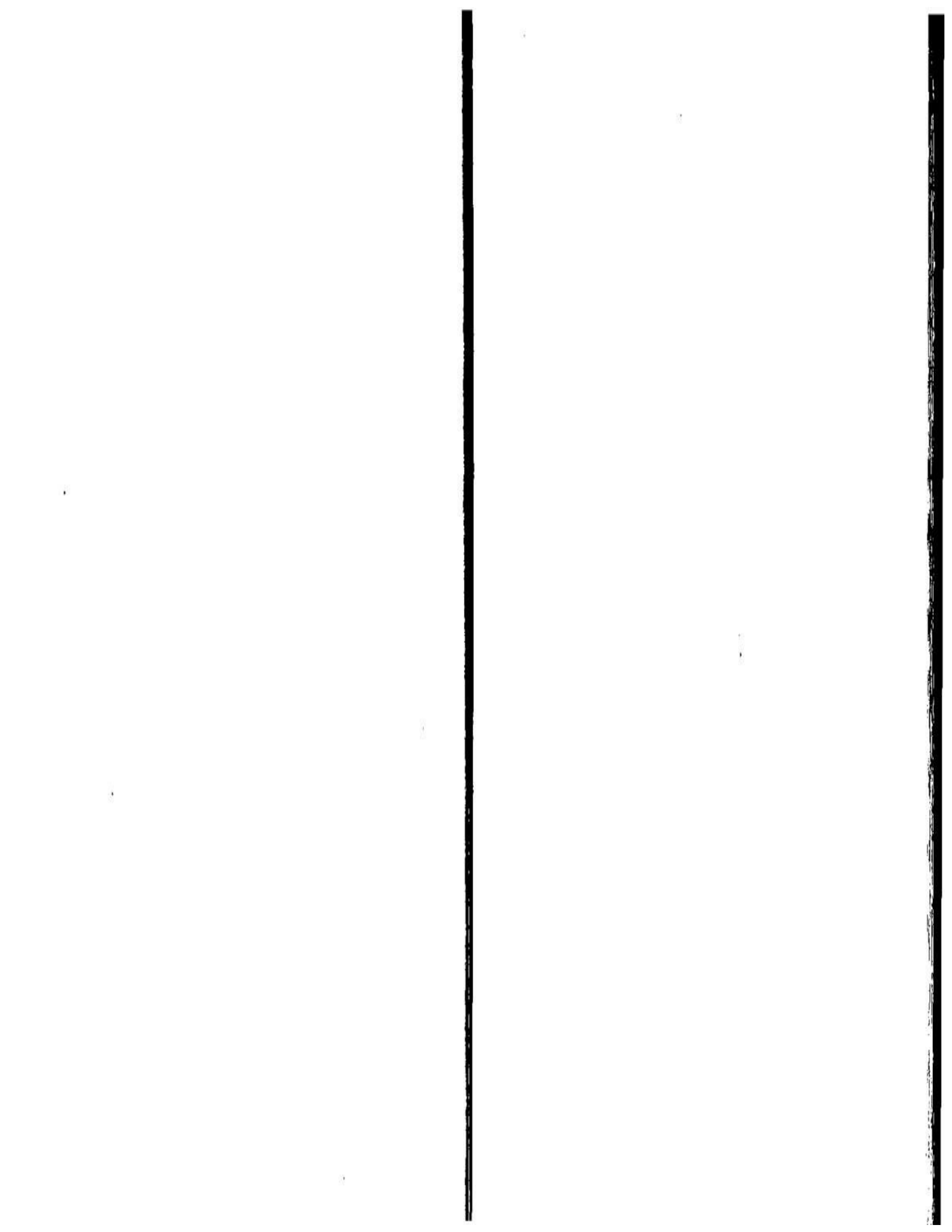
Did he have halitosis? Was he suspected of working for the Instead of advertising products, the disc-jockey advertised CIA?

himself- pouring out a torrent of drivel generally designed to In his lonely isolation, Morris turned instinctively for convey what a jolly, amusing and lovable guy he was - and solace to the media. He was at the best of times a radio and also advertised his listeners, every one of whose names and TV addict: he kept a radio in his office at Euphoric State addresses he seemed determined to read out over the air, tuned permanently to his favourite FM station, specializing plus, on occasion, their birthdays and car registration in rock-soul ballads; and he had a colour TV in his study at numbers. Now and again he played musical jingles in praise home as well as in the living-room because he found it easier of himself or reported, in tones of unremitting jollity, a to work while watching sports broadcasts at the same time.

multiple accident on the freeway. There was almost no (Baseball was most conducive to a ready flow of words, but time left for playing records. It was a riot. Morris thought it football, hockey and basketball would also serve.) He rented was a little early in the morning for satire, but listened a colour TV soon after moving into his apartment in entranced. When the programme finished and was followed Rummidge, but the programmes were disappointing, con-by one of exactly the same kind, he

began to get restive. The sisting mainly of dramatizations of books he had already British, he thought, must be gluttons for satire: even the read and canned American series he had already seen. There weather forecast seemed to be some kind of spoof, predicting was, naturally, no baseball, football, hockey or basketball.

every possible combination of weather for the next twenty-There was soccer, which he thought he might get interested four hours without actually committing itself to anything in, given time - he sniffed, there, the mixture of spite and specific, not even the existing temperature. It was only after skill, gall and grace, which characterized an authentic four successive programmes of almost exactly the same **70**



formula - DJ's narcissistic gabble, lists of names and grace from the contact. 'Sure, if I hadn't seen it with me addresses, meaningless anti-jingles - that the awful truth own eyes I shouldn't have believed it,' he said with a sigh.

dawned on h i m : *Radio One was like this all the time.*

'You're a fortunate man, Mr Zapp.'

Morris's only human contact these lonely days was Doctor

'But I just rented it,' Morris protested in bewilderment.

O'Shea, who came in to watch Morris's colour TV and to

•Anybody can rent one. It only costs a few dollars a week.'

drink his whisky, and perhaps to escape the joys of family

'Well, now, that's easily said, Mr Zapp, for a man in life for an hour or so, because he knocked softly on the door your position, that's easily said, but easier said than done, and tiptoed into the room, winking heavily and raising a Mr Zapp.'

cautionary finger as if to restrain Morris from speaking until

' Well, if there's anything you want to see, just drop b y . . . '

the door was shut against the wails of Mrs O'Shea and her

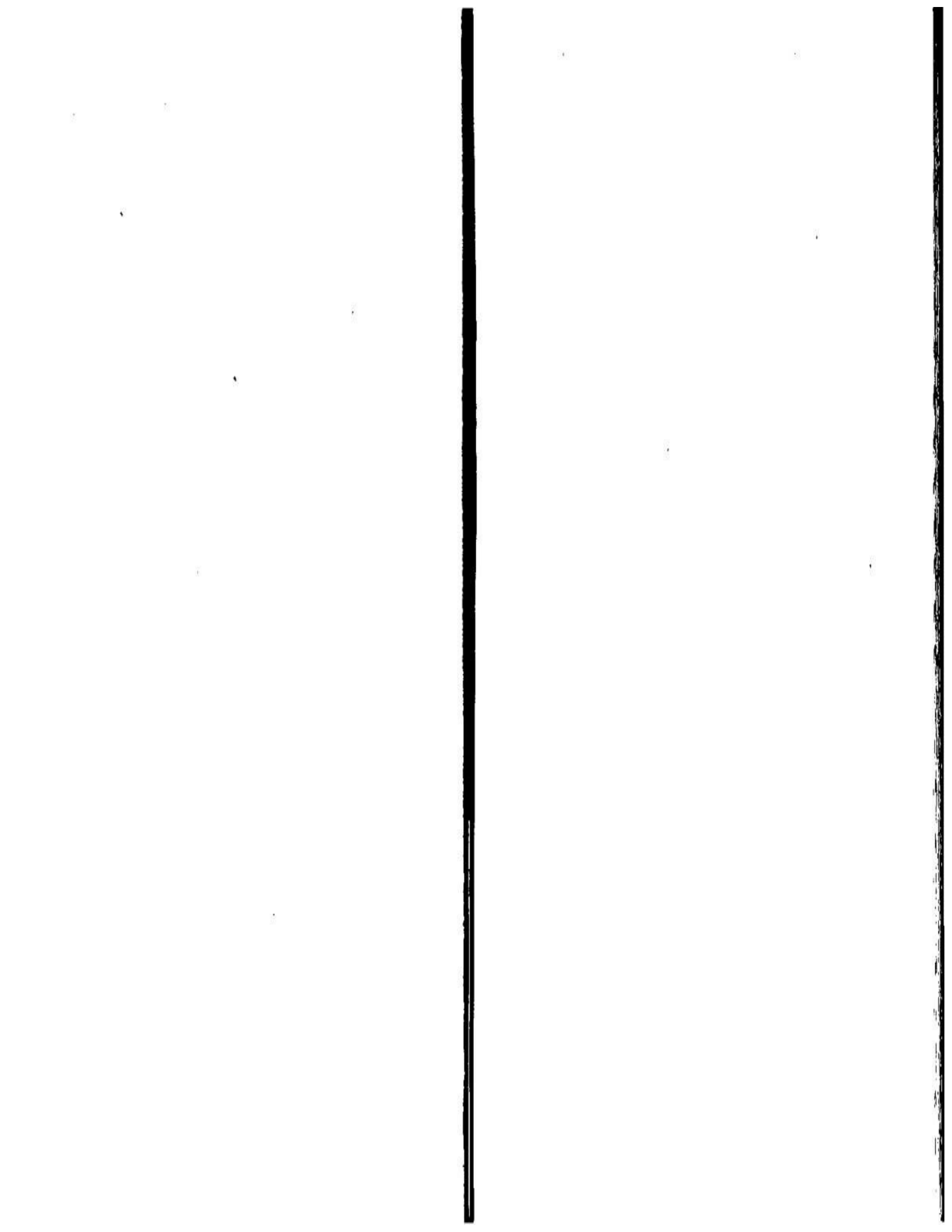
'That's very kind of you, Mr Zapp, very thoughtful. I'll babies rising up the staircase. O'Shea puzzled Morris. He take you up on that generous invitation.' And so he did. Un-didn't look like a doctor, not like the doctors Morris knew -

fortunately, O'Shea's tastes in TV ran to situation comedy sleek prosperous men who drove the biggest cars and owned and sentimental serials, to which he reacted with naive, the plushiest houses in any neighbourhood he had ever lived unqualified credulity, writhing and jumping up and down in. O'Shea's suit was baggy and threadbare, his shirts were in his seat, pounding the arm of his chair and nudging frayed, he drove a small car that had seen better days, he Morris vigorously in the ribs, maintaining a stream of highly looked short of sleep, money, pleasures, everything except personal commentary on the action: 'Ahah! Caught you worries. By the same token Morris's possessions, few as they there, laddie, you weren't expecting t h a t . . . Oh! What's this, were, seemed to throw the doctor into fits of envious awe, as what's this, you little hussy? Ah, now, that's better, that's if his eyes had never beheld such opulence. He examined better . . . NO, DON'T DO IT ! DON'T DO IT ! Mother of God, Morris's Japanese cassette recorder with the half-fearful, half-that boy will be the death of me . . .' and so on. Fortunately, covetous curiosity of a nineteenth-century savage handling a Dr O'Shea usually fell asleep halfway through the pro-missionary's tinder-box; he seemed astounded that a man gramme, exhausted by the strains of audience participa-might own so many shirts that he could send them to the tion and the rigours of the day's labours, and Morris would laundry half-a-

dozen at a time; and, invited to fix himself a turn down the sound and get out a book. It wasn't exactly drink, he was almost (but not quite) incapable of making a company.

choice from three varieties of whisky, groaning and muttering under his breath as he handled the bottles and read To his considerable mortification, Philip Swallow's chief the labels, 'Mother of God, what is it we have here, Old social asset at Euphoric State turned out to be his associa-Grandad Genuine Kentucky Bourbon and here's th'old tion with Charles Boon. He carelessly let this information josser himself looking none the worse for it, would you slip in conversation with Wily Smith and, within hours it believe i t . . . '

seemed, the news had been flashed to all points of the cam-The installation of the colour TV had made Dr O'Shea pus. His office began to fill up with people anxious to make quite ill with excitement. He followed the delivery men up his acquaintance for the sake of some anecdote of Charles the stairs and skipped around the room getting in their way Boon's early life, and before the end of the afternoon the and sat enraptured before the tuning signal for hours after Chairman's wife, Mrs Hogan, had phoned to plead for they left, getting up now and again to lay his hand reverent-Philip's assistance in persuading Boon to attend their cock-ly on the cabinet as if he expected to derive some special tail party. It was hard to believe, but the Charles Boon **7a**



Show was all the rage at Euphoric State. Philip listened to Show, and Philip was regaled with the highlights of certain it at the first opportunity, and, by some kind of sado-past programmes so often that he came to believe that he masochistic compulsion, at most subsequent opportunities.

had heard them himself: the time, for instance, Boon had The basic formula of the programme - an open line on talked a panic-stricken pregnant mother through her first which listeners could call up to discuss various issues with labour-pains, or when he argued a homosexual clergyman the compere and with each other - was a familiar one. But out of suicide, or when he invited - and obtained - post-the Charles Boon Show was different from the ordinary coital reflections on the Sexual Revolution from bedside phone-in programme in several respects. To begin with, it telephones around the Bay. There were, of course, no com-was put out by the non-commercial network, QX YZ, which mercials on the progamme, but just to annoy the rival net-was supported by listeners' subscriptions and foundation works Boon would sometimes give an unsolicited and un-grants, and was therefore free from business and political paid testimonial to some local restaurant or movie or shirt-pressures. Where the comperes of most American phone-in sale that had taken his fancy. To Philip it seemed obvious programmes were bland, evasive, middle-of-the-road men, that beneath all the culture and the eccentricity and the giving a fair hearing to all sides of the question - endlessly human concern there beat a heart of pure show-business, patient, endlessly courteous, ultimately without convictions but to the local community the programme evidently

- Charles Boon was violently, wilfully opinionated. Where appeared irresistibly novel, daring and authentic.

they provided the reassurance of a surrogate father or

'Isn't Mr Boon with you?' was his hostess's first question uncle, he offered the provocation of a delinquent-son-figure.

when he presented himself at the Hogans' palatial ranch-He took an extreme radical position on all such issues as pot, style house for their cocktail party. Her eyes raked him from sex, race, Viet Nam, and argued heatedly - often rudely -

head to foot as though she suspected that he had concealed with callers who disagreed with him, sometimes abusing his Boon somewhere on his person. Philip assured her that he control of the telephone line by cutting them off in mid-had passed on the invitation, as Hogan himself loomed up sentence. It was rumoured that he collected the phone and crunched Philip's fingers in a huge, horny handclasp.

numbers of likely-sounding girls and called them back after

'Hi, there, Mr Swallow, mighty glad to see you.' He the programme to make dates. He would sometimes begin a ushered Philip into the spacious living-room, where forty or programme by quoting a passage of Wittgenstein or Camus more people were already assembled, and helped him to or by reading a poem of his own composition, and use this as a gin and tonic of giant proportions. 'Now, who would you a starting point for a dialogue with his listeners. And an ex-like to meet? Nearly all English Department folk here, I traordinary variety of listeners they were, those who faith-

guess.'

fully tuned into Q,XYZ at midnight - students, professors, Only one name would come into Philip's head.' I haven't hippies, runaways, insomniacs, drug addicts and Hells met Mr Kroop yet.'

Angels. Housewives sitting up for laggard husbands con-Hogan went slightly green about the jowls.' Kroop ?'

fided their marital problems to the Charles Boon Show;

'I've read so much about him, in buttonholes,' Philip truck-drivers listening to the programme in their shuddering quipped, to cover what was evidently a *faux pas*.

cabs, unable to suppress their rage at Boon, or Camus, any

' Yeah ? Oh yeah. Ha, ha. I'm afraid you won't see Karl at longer, swerved off the freeway to phone in their incoherent many cocktail parties - Howard!' Hogan's enormous paw contributions from emergency call-boxes. Already a con-fell heavily on the shoulder of a sallow, bespectacled young siderable folk-lore had accumulated about the Charles Boon man cruising past with a tumbler of Scotch held to pursed **74**

lips. He staggered slightly, but skilfully avoided spilling the red kerchief knotted round his throat, accosted Philip's drink. Philip was introduced to Howard Ringbaum. 'I was companion. He towed behind him a delectable blonde in telling Mr Swallow,' said Hogan, 'that you don't often see pink party pyjamas. 'Hey, Howard, somebody just told me Karl Kroop at faculty social gatherings.'

there's an English guy at this party who asked Hogan to

'I hear,' said Ringbaum, 'that Karl has totally rethought introduce him to Karl Kroop. I'd love to have seen the old his course on " The Death of the Book ? " He's removing the man's face.'

query mark this quarter.'

'Ask him,' said Ringbaum, nodding towards Philip.

Hogan guffawed and thumped Ringbaum between the Philip blushed and laughed uneasily.

shoulder blades before moving away. Ringbaum, swaying

'Oh my God, you aren't the English guy by any with the punch, kept his balance and his drink intact. chance?'

' What are you working on ?' he asked Philip.

'You goofed again, Sy, dear,' said the woman.

cOh, I'm just trying to sort out my teaching at the mo-

'I'm terribly sorry,' said the man. 'Sy Gootblatt is the ment.'

name. This is Bella. You might think by the way she's Ringbaum nodded impatiently.' What's your field ?'

dressed that she's just got out of bed, and you wouldn't be

'Yours is Augustan pastoral, I believe,' Philip returned far wrong.'

evasively.

'Take no notice of him, Mr Swallow,' said Bella. 'How Ringbaum looked pleased. 'Right. How did you know?

are you liking Euphoria ?'

You've seen my article in *College English* ?'

Of the two questions he was asked at the cocktail party by

'I was looking through the Course Bulletin the other day everyone he met, this was the one he preferred. The other day . . .'

was,' What are you working on ?'

Ringbaum's countenance darkened. 'You don't want to

'What are you working on, Mr Swallow?' Luke Hogan believe everything you read in that.'

asked him when they bumped into each other again.

'Oh no, of course . . . What d'you think of this chap

'Luke,' said Mrs Hogan, saving Philip from having to Kroop then ?' Philip inquired.

think of a reply, ' I really think Charles Boon is here at

'As little as possible. I'm coming up for tenure myself this last.'

quarter, and if I don't make it nobody around here is going There was a flurry of activity in the hall, and heads to be wearing RETAIN RINGBAUM buttons.'

turned all across the room. Boon had indeed arrived, dressed

'This tenure business seems to create a lot of tension.'

offensively in singlet and jeans, and escorting a handsome,

'You must have the same thing in England ?'

haughty Black Pantheress who was to appear on his pro-

' Oh no. Probation is more or less a formality. In practice, gramme later that night. They sat in a corner of the room once you're appointed they can never get rid of you - un-drinking Bloody Marys and giving audience to a neck-less you seduce one of your students, or something equally craning circle of entranced faculty and their wives. The scandalous.' Philip laughed.

Pantheress did little except look coolly around at the

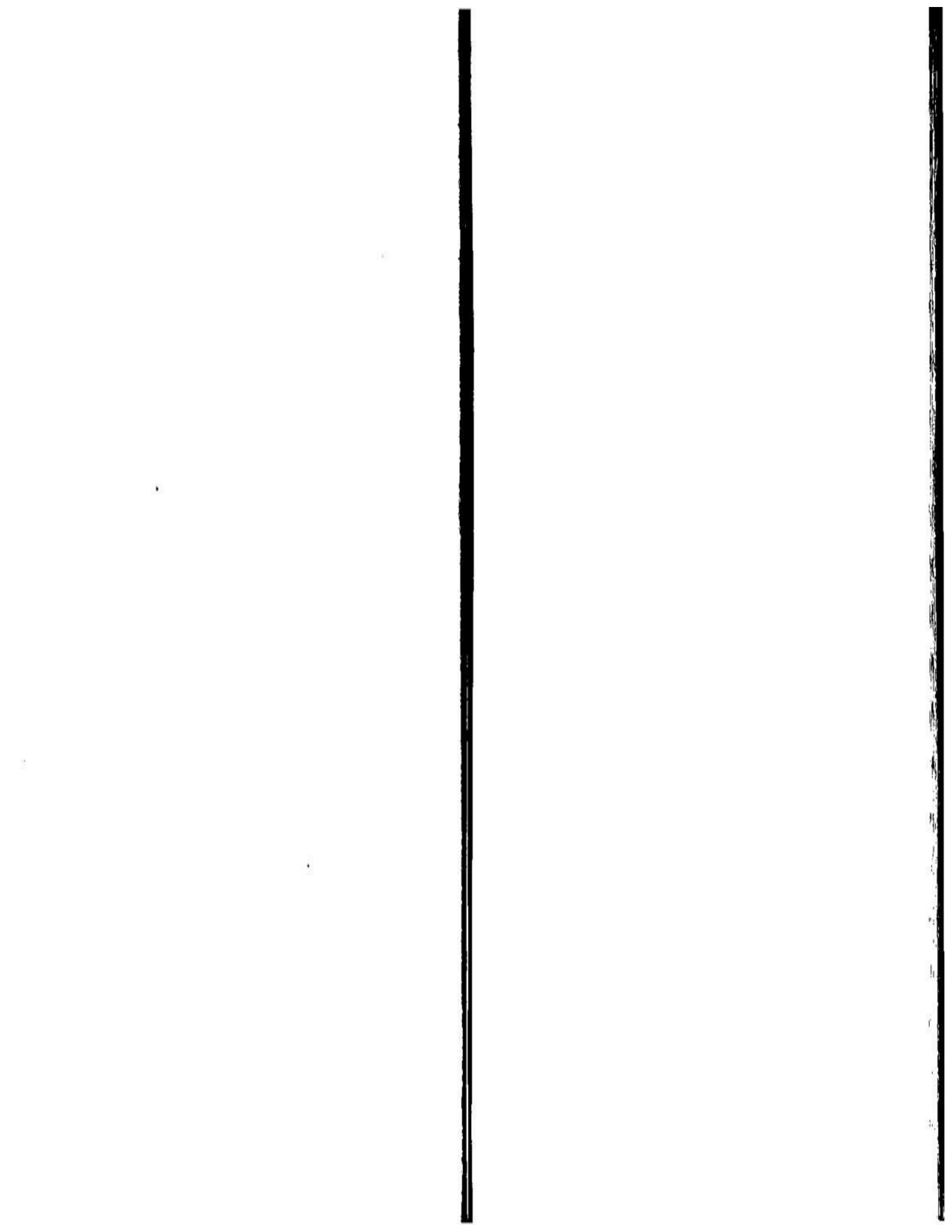
'You can screw as many students as you like here,' said Hogans' opulent furnishings as if calculating how well they Ringbaum unsmilingly. 'But if your publications are unsatis-would burn, but Boon more than compensated for her taci-factory . . . ' He drew a finger expressively across his throat.

turnity. Philip, who had rather counted on being himself the

'Hey, Howard!*

evening's chief focus of attention, found himself standing A young man dressed in a black grained-silk

shirt with a neglected on the fringes of this little court. Disgruntled, he **76**



wandered out of the living-room on to the terrace. A soli-

'Let's drink to that.'

tary woman was leaning against the balustrade, staring They drank to it.

moodily at the Bay, where a spectacular sunset was in pro-

'Wow,' said the woman. 'You mix a stiff drink.'

gress, the orange globe of the sun just balanced, it seemed,

'I just followed your instructions.'

on the suspension cables of the Silver Span bridge. Philip

'To the brim,' said the woman. 'I don't think we've met, took up his stand some four yards away from the woman.

have we ? Are you visiting here ?'

' Delightful evening,' he said.

'Yes, I'm Philip Swallow — exchanging with Professor She looked at him sharply, then returned to the con-Zapp.'

templation of the sunset. 'Yeah,' she said, at length.

' Did you say Zapp ?'

Philip sipped his drink nervously. The silent, brooding

' You know him ?'

presence of the woman made him uncomfortable, spoiled

' Very well. He's my husband.'

his enjoyment of the view. He decided to return to the Philip choked on his drink. 'You're Mrs Zapp ?'

living-room.

'Is that so surprising? You think I look too old? Or too

* If you're going back inside...!' said the woman.

young ?'

'Yes?'

'Oh, no,' said Philip.

'You might freshen my drink for me.'

'Oh no which?' Her small green eyes glinted with

'Certainly,' said Philip, taking her glass. 'More ice?'

mockery. She was a red-head, striking but by no means

'More ice, more vodka. No more tonic. And look for the pretty, and not particularly well-groomed. He guessed she Smirnoff bottle under the bar. Ignore the gallon jar of cut-was in her mid-thirties.

price stuff on the top.'

'I was just surprised,' said Philip. 'I suppose I assumed Philip duly found the concealed Smirnoff bottle and re-you had gone to Rummidge with your husband.'

filled the woman's glass, rather underestimating the space

'Your wife with you?'

required for ice, which (inexperienced in handling liquor)

'No.' She responded with a gesture which implied clearly he added last. Boon was still talking away in the back-enough that his assumption was therefore demonstrably un-ground, about his plans for a TV arts programme: 'Some-warranted. 'I would have liked to have brought her,' he thing entirely different... art in action . . . train a camera said. 'But my visit was arranged at rather short notice. Also on a sculptor at work for a month or two, then run the film we have children, and there were problems about schooling through at about fifty thousand frames per second, see the and so on. And there was the house . . . ' He heard himself sculpture taking shape . . . put an object in front of two going on like this for, it seemed, several hours, as if he were painters, let them get on with it, use two cameras and a answering a formal accusation in court. He felt increasingly split screen . . . contrast... auction the pictures at the end of foolish, but Mrs Zapp somehow kept him talking, involving the programme . . . ' Philip topped up his own gin and tonic himself deeper and deeper in implied guilt, by her silence and and carried the two glasses out on to the terrace.

her mocking regard. 'Do you have children yourself?' he

'Thanks,' said the woman. 'Is that little shit still shooting concluded desperately.

off his mouth in there?'

'Two. Twins. Boy and girl. Aged nine.'

'Yes, he is, actually.'

'Ah, then you understand the problems.'

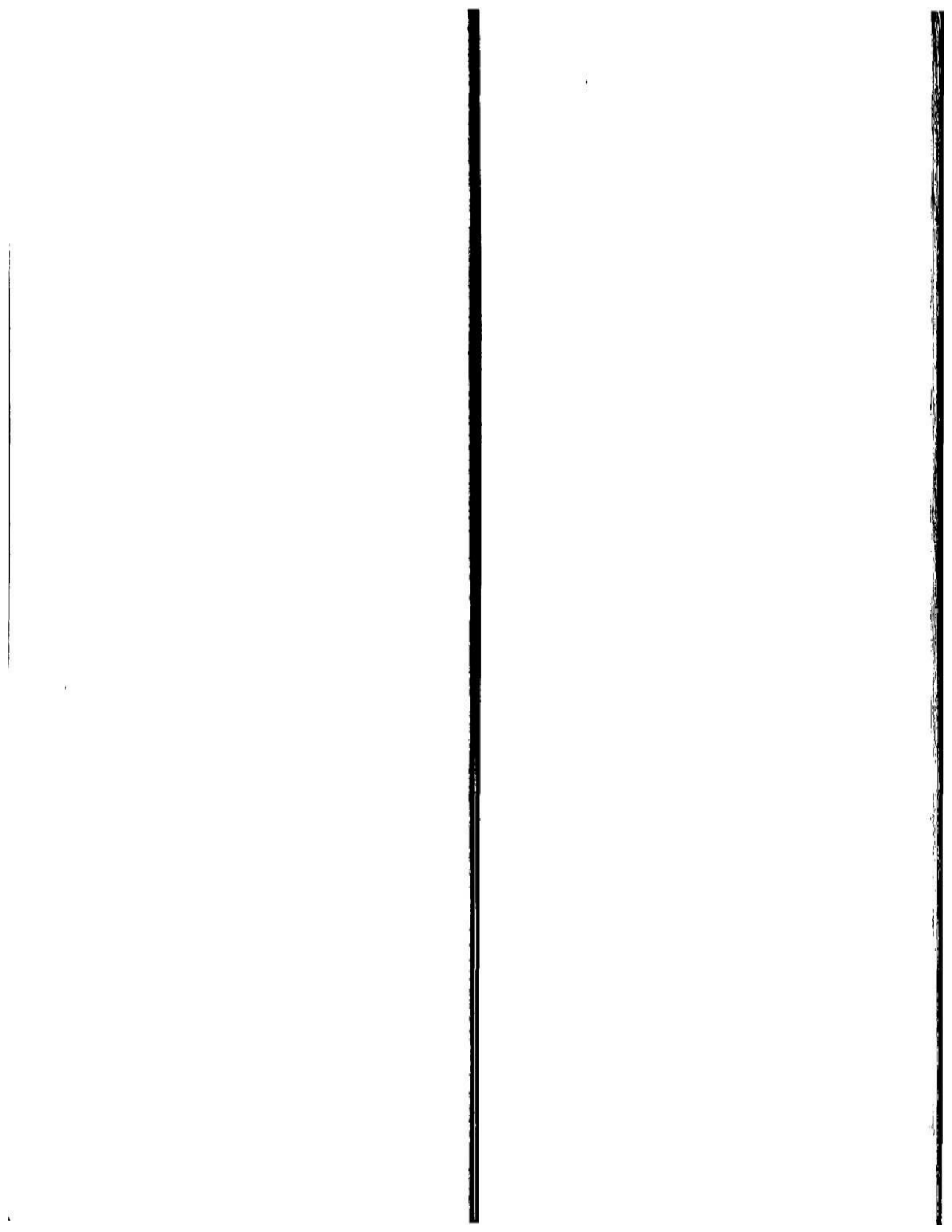
'You're not a fan?'

'I doubt if we have the same problems, Mr Sparrow.'

•Definitely not.'

'Swallow.'

78



'Mr Swallow. Sorry. A much nicer bird.' She turned back

'I'm afraid I can't agree,' said Philip stiffly. 'I could to contemplate the sun, now sinking into the sea behind the never get tired of it.'

Silver Span, and took a reflective draught from her glass.

'But you haven't lived with it for ten years. Wait a

'Less promiscuous, for instance. How does your wife feel while. You can't rush nausea, you know.'

about it, Mr Swallow, I mean is she with you about the kids

'Well, I'm afraid that after R u m m i d g e . . . '

and the schools and the house and all ? She doesn't mind

•What's that?'

being left behind ?'

'Where I come from. Where your husband's gone.'

'Well, we discussed it very thoroughly, of course . . . It

* Oh y e a h . . . What's it called, Rubbish ?'

was a difficult decision. I left it to her ultimately . . . ' (He

'Rummidge.'

felt himself slipping into the groove of compulsive self-

' I thought you said Rubbish.' She laughed immoderately, justification again.) 'After all, she has the worst part of the and spilled some vodka on her frock. ' Shit. What's it like, bargain...'

then, Rummidge? Morris tried to make out it was the

' What bargain ?' said the woman sharply.

greatest, but everybody else says it's the asshole of England.5

'Just a figure of speech. I mean, for me, it's a great oppor-

'Both would be exaggerations,' said Philip. 'It's a large tunity, a paid holiday if you like. But for her it's just life as industrial city, with the usual advantages and disadvantages.'

usual, only lonelier. Well, you must know what it's like

'What are the advantages?'

yourself.'

Philip racked his brains, but couldn't think of any. 'I

'You mean, Morris being in England? It's great, just really ought to go back inside,' he said. 'I've scarcely met great.'

a n y o n e . . . '

Philip politely pretended not to have heard this remark.

'Relax, Mr Sparrow. You'll meet them all again. It's the

'Just to be able to stretch out in my own bed' - she same people at all the parties in this place. Tell me more gestured appropriately, revealing a rusty stubble under her about Rubbish. No, on second thoughts, tell me more about armpit - 'without finding another human body in my way, your family.'

breathing whisky fumes all over my face and pawing at my Philip preferred to answer the first question. 'Well, it's crotch...'

not really as bad as people make out,' he said.

'I think I'd better be going back inside,' said Philip.

'Your family?'

'Do I embarrass you, Mr Sparrow - Swallow? I'm sorry.

'Rummidge. I mean it has a decent art gallery, and a Let's talk about something else. The view. Don't you think symphony orchestra and a Rep and that sort of thing. And this is a great view? We have a view, too, you know. The you can get out into the country quite easily.' Mrs Zapp had same view. Everybody in Plotinus has the same view, except lapsed into silence, and he began to listen to himself again, for the blacks and the poor whites on the flats down there.

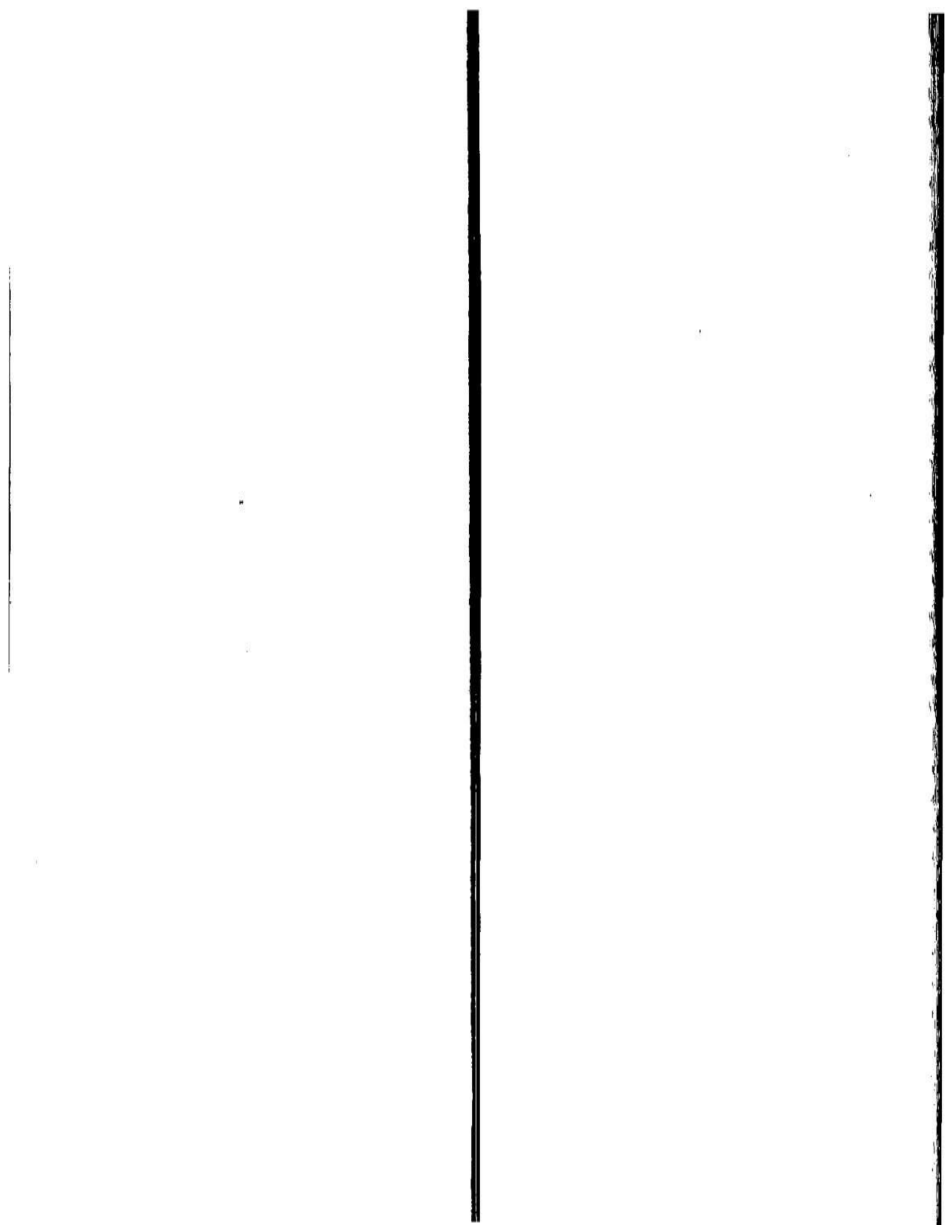
registering his own insincerity. He hated concerts, rarely You've got to have a view if you live in Plotinus. That's the visited the art gallery and patronized the local repertory first thing people ask when you buy a house. Has it got a theatre perhaps once a year. As for 'getting out', what was view? The same view, of course. There's only one view.

that but the dire peregrinations of Sunday afternoons? And Every time you go out to dinner or to a party, it's a different in any case, what kind of a recommendation for a place was house,

and different drapes on the windows, but the same it that you could get out of it easily? 'The schools are pretty fucking view. I could scream sometimes.'

good,' he said. 'Well, one or two -'

80



1 Schools ? You seem really hung up on schools.'

outside the house, and hurried to the front door just in time

'Well, don't you think education is terribly important?'

to see Mrs Zapp driving away in a big white station wagon.

'No. I think our culture's obsession with education is self-defeating.'

Morris Zapp was standing at the window of his office at

'Oh?'

Rummidge, smoking a cigar (one of the last of the stock he

'Each generation is educating itself to earn enough money had brought with him into the country) and listening to the to educate the next generation, and nobody is actually *doing* sound of footsteps hurrying past his door. The hour for tea anything with this education. You're knocking yourself out had arrived, and Morris debated whether to fetch a cup to educate your children so they can knock themselves out back to his office rather than drink it in the Senior Common educating their children. What's the point?'

Room, where the rest of the faculty would gather to gossip in

'Well, you could say the same thing about the whole the opposite corner or peer at him over their newspapers business of getting married and raising a family.'

from his flanks. He gazed moodily down at the central

'*Exactly!*' cried Mrs Zapp. 'I do, I do!' She looked at her quadrangle of the campus, a grassed area now thinly watch suddenly, and said, 'My God, I must go,' somehow covered with snow. For some days, now, the temperature had managing to imply that Philip had been detaining her.

wavered between freezing and thawing and it was difficult Unwilling to make a Noel-Coward-type entrance through to tell whether the sediment thickening the atmosphere was the French windows in the company of Mrs Zapp, Philip rain or sleet or smog. Through the murk the dull red eye of a bade her good evening and lingered alone on the terrace.

sun that had scarcely been able to drag itself above roof level When he had allowed her enough time to get off the pre-all day was sinking bleakly beneath the horizon, spreading a mises, he would plunge back into the throng and try to find rusty stain across the snow-covered surfaces. Real pathetic some congenial people who would offer him a lift home and fallacy weather, Morris thought. At which moment there perhaps invite him to share a meal. At that moment he be-was a knock on his door.

came aware that the throng had fallen eerily silent. Alarmed, He swung round startled. *A knock on his door!* There must he hurried through the French windows and found that the be some mistake. Or his

ears were playing him tricks. The living-room was quite deserted, except for a coloured, or darkness of the room - for he had not yet switched on the rather black, woman emptying ashtrays. They stared at each lights - made this seem more plausible. But no — the knock other for a few moments.

was repeated. 'Come in,' he said in a thin, cracked voice,

'Er, where is everybody?' Philip stammered.

and cleared his throat. 'Come in!' He moved eagerly to-

'Everybody gone home,' said the woman.

wards the door to welcome his visitor, and to turn the lights

'Oh dear. Is Professor Hogan somewhere? Or Mrs on at the same time, but collided with a chair and dropped Hogan?'

his cigar, which rolled under the table. He dived after it as

'Everybody gone home.'

the door opened. A segment of light from the corridor fell

'But this *is* their home,' Philip protested. 'I just wanted to across the floor, but did not reveal the hiding-place of the say good-bye.'

cigar. A woman's voice said uncertainly, 'Professor Zapp?'

'They gone somewhere to eat, I guess,' said the woman

'Yeah, come in. Would you switch the light on, please?'

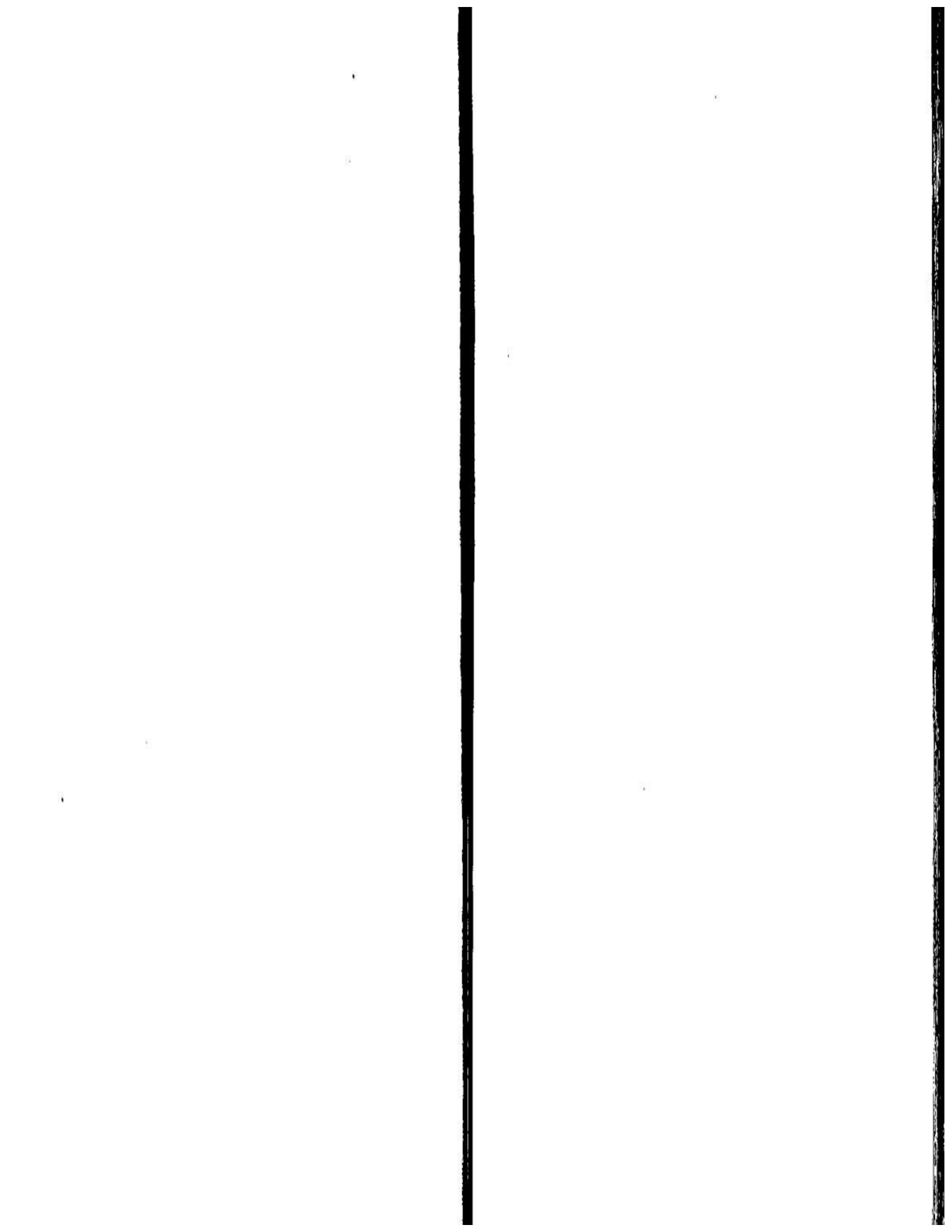
with a shrug, and recommenced her leisurely tour of the The lights came on and he heard the woman gasp.

ashtrays.

'Where are you?'

'Damn,' said Philip. He heard the sound of a car starting

'Under here.' He found himself staring at a pair of thick **82**



fur-lined boots and the hemline of a shaggy fur coat. To

'What are you doing?' he said.

these was added, a moment later, an inverted female face,

'Looking for your cigar.'

scarved, red-nosed and apprehensive. T i l be right with

'Never mind the cigar.'

you,' he said.' I dropped my cigar somewhere under here.'

'That's all very well,' came the muffled reply. 'But it isn't

' Oh,' said the woman, staring.

your carpet.'

'It's not the cigar I'm worried about,' Morris explained,

' Well, it isn't yours either, if it comes to that.'

crawling around under the table.' It's the r u g . . . CHRIST! '

'It's my husband's.'

A searing pain bored into his hand and shot up his arm.

'Your husband's?'

He scrambled out from under the table, cracking his head on The woman, looking rather like a brown bear emerging the underside in his haste. He stumbled round the room, from hibernation, backed slowly out from under the table cursing breathlessly, squeezing his right hand under his left and stood up. She held, between the thumb and forefinger armpit and clasping his right temple with his left hand.

of one gloved hand, a squashed and soggy cigar-end. 'I With one eye he was vaguely aware of the fur-coated woman didn't get a chance to introduce myself,' she said. 'I'm backing away from him and asking what was the matter. He Hilary Swallow. Philip's wife.'

collapsed into his archchair, moaning faintly.

' O h ! Morris Zapp.' He smiled and extended his hand.

' I'll come back another time,' said the woman.

Mrs Swallow put the cigar butt into it.

'No, don't leave me,' said Morris urgently. 'I may need

'I don't think it did any damage,' she said. 'Only it's medical attention.'

rather a good carpet. Indian. It belonged to Philip's grand-The fur coat loomed over him, and his hand was firmly mother. How do you do?' she added suddenly, stripping off removed from his forehead. 'You'll have a bump there,' she a glove and holding out her hand. Morris disposed of the said. 'But I can't see any skin broken. You should put some dead cigar just in time to grab it.

witch-hazel on it.'

'Glad to meet you, Mr» Swallow. Won't you take off your coat?'

'You know a good witch?'

"Thanks, but I can't stop. I'm sorry to barge in on you The woman tittered. 'You can't be too bad,' she said.

like this, but my husband wrote asking for one of his books.

'What's the matter with your hand?'

I've got to send it on to him. He said it was probably in here

'I burned it on my cigar.' He withdrew his injured hand somewhere. Would you mind if I . . .' She gestured towards from his armpit and tenderly unclasped it.

the bookshelves.

'I can't see anything,' said the woman, peering.

'Go ahead. Let me help you. What's the name of the

'There!' He pointed to the fleshy cushion at the base of book?'

his thumb.

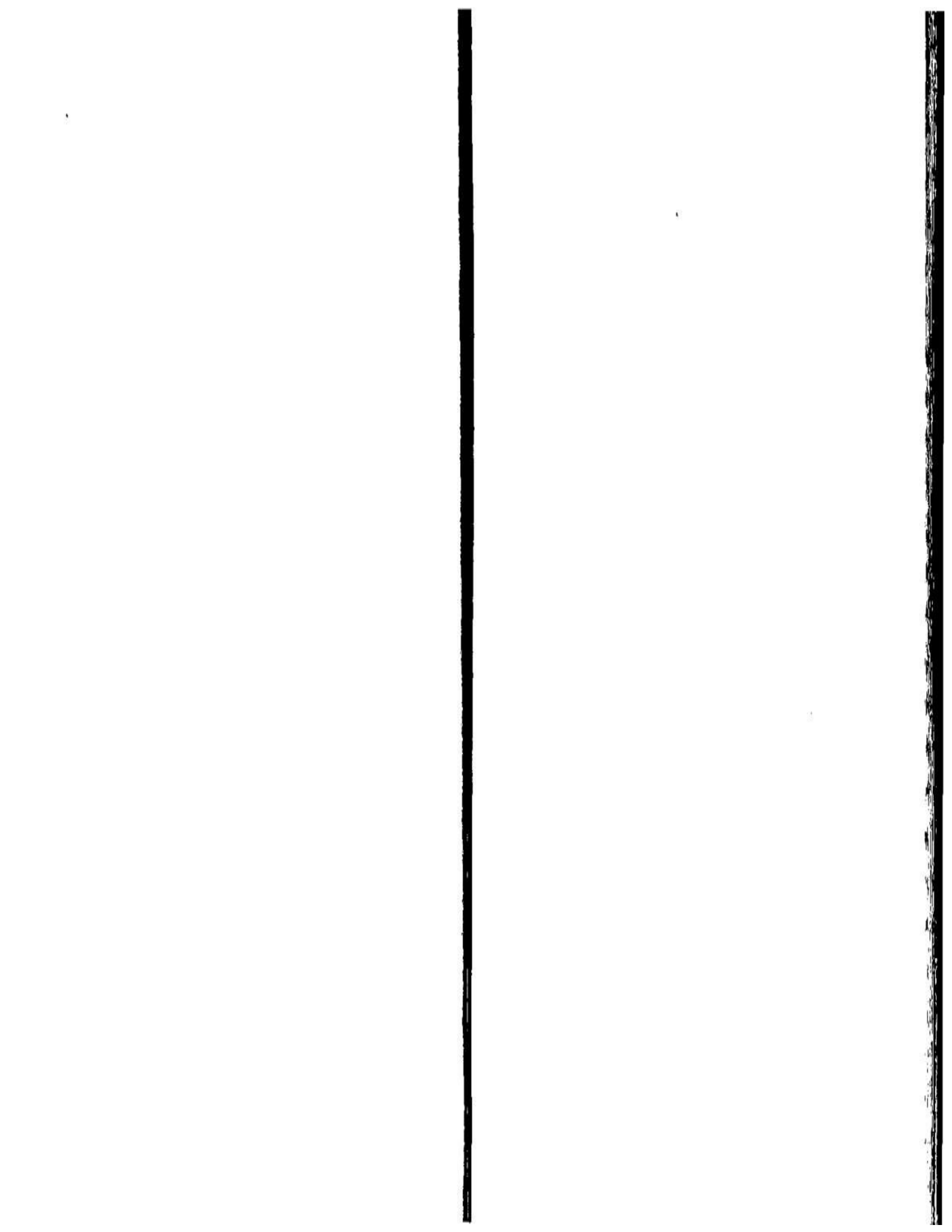
She coloured slightly. 'He said it's called *Lei's Write a*

'Oh, well, I think those little burns are best left alone.'

Novel. I can't imagine what he wants it for.'

Morris looked at her reproachfully and rose to his feet. He Morris grinned, then frowned. 'Perhaps he's going to went over to the desk to find a fresh cigar. Lighting it with write one,' he said, while he thought to himself, 'God help trembling fingers, he prepared a little quip about getting the students in English 305.'

your nerve back after a smoking accident, but when he Mrs Swallow, peering at the bookshelves, gave a sceptical turned round to deliver it the woman had disappeared. He grunt. Morris, drawing on his cigar, examined her with shrugged and went to close the door, tripping, as he did so, curiosity. It was difficult to tell what manner of woman was over a pair of boots protruding from under the table.



hidden beneath the woollen headscarf, the huge shapeless used so much tobacco bought it in little tiny cans instead of fur coat, the thick zippered boots. All that could be seen was the huge one-pound canisters like the ones Luke Hogan a round, unremarkable face with rosy cheeks, a red-tipped kept on his desk, but he thought this would be too personal nose and the hint of a double chin. The red nose was for Mrs Swallow.

evidently the result of a cold, for she kept sniffing discreetly

'The book doesn't seem to be here,' she said with a sigh.

and dabbing at it with a Kleenex. He went over to the

'And I must be going, anyway.'

bookshelves. 'So you didn't go to Euphoria with your

'I'll look out for it.'

husband ?'

'Oh, please don't bother. I don't suppose it's all that

'No.'

important. I'm sorry to have been such a nuisance.'

'Why was that?5

'You're welcome. I don't have too many visitors, to tell The look she gave him couldn't have been more hostile if you the truth.'

he had inquired what brand of sanitary towels she used.

'Well, it's nice to have met you, Professor Zapp. I hope

"There were a number of personal reasons,* she said.

you'll enjoy your stay in Rummidge. If Philip were here I'd

'Yeah, and I bet you were one of them, honey,' said like to ask you round for dinner one evening, but as it is . . .

Zapp, but only to himself. Aloud he said: 'What's the name You understand.' She smiled regretfully.

of the author?'

'But if your husband was here, I wouldn't be,' Morris

'He couldn't remember. It's a book he bought second-hand out.

hand, years ago, off a sixpenny stall. He thinks it has a Mrs Swallow looked nonplussed. She opened her mouth a green cover.'

number of times, but no words came out. At last she said,

'A green cover . . . ' Morris ran his index finger over the

'Well, I mustn't keep you any longer,' and abruptly de-rows of books. 'Mrs Swallow, may I ask you a personal parted, closing the door behind her.

question about your husband ?'

' Uptight bitch,' Morris muttered. Little as he coveted her She looked at him in alarm. 'Well, I don't know. It company, he hungered for a home-cooked meal. He was depends...'

tiring rapidly of TV dinners and Asian restaurants, which

'You see that cupboard over your head? In that cup-was all Rummidge seemed to offer the single man.

board there are one hundred and fifty-seven tobacco cans.

He found *Let's Write a Novel* five minutes later. The cover All the same brand. I know how many there are because I had come away from the spine, which was why they hadn't counted them. They fell on my head one day.'

spotted it earlier. It had been published in 1927, as part of a

' They fell on your head ? How ?'

series that included *Let's Weave a Rug*, *Let's Go Fishing* and

' I just opened the cupboard and they fell on my head.'

Let's Have Fun With Photography. 'Every novel must tell a A ghost of a smile hovered on Mrs Swallow's lips. 'I hope story,' it began. 'Oh, dear, yes,' Morris commented sar-you weren't hurt ?'

donically.

' No, they were empty. But I'm curious to know why your And there are three types of story, the story that ends happily, the husband collects them.'

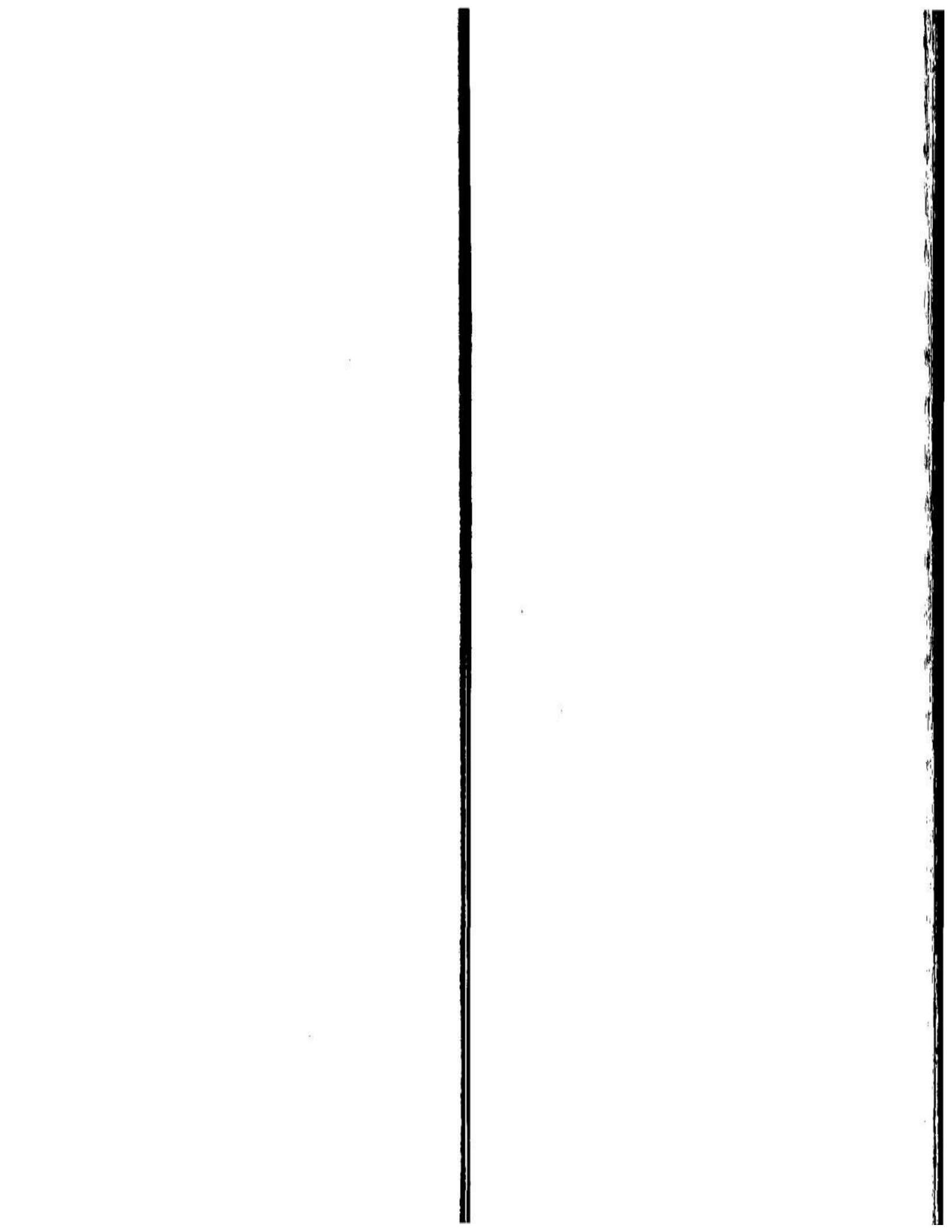
story that ends unhappily, and the story that ends neither happily

' Oh, I don't suppose he collects them. I expect he just nor unhappily, or, in other words, doesn't really end at all.

can't bear to throw them away. He's like that with things. Is that all you wanted to know ?'

Aristotle lives! Morris was intrigued in spite of himself. He

'Yeah, that's about all.' He was puzzled why a man who turned back to the title page to check out the author. 'A. J.



Beamish, author of *A Fair But Frozen Maid*, *Wild Mystery*, invited to partake of refreshment in the Senior Common *Glynis of the Glen*, etc., etc' He read on.

Room.

Evidently the return of Professor Masters was the signal The best kind of story is the one with a happy ending; the next for which the rest of the faculty had been waiting. It was as best is the one with an unhappy ending, and the worst kind is the if some obscure taboo had restrained them from introducing story that has no ending at all. The novice is advised to begin with the first kind of story. Indeed, unless you have Genius, you should themselves before their chief had formally received him into never attempt any other kind.

the tribe. Now, in the Senior Common Room, they hurried forward and clustered around Morris's chair, smiling and

'You've got something there, Beamish,' Morris mur-chattering, pressing upon him cups of tea and chocolate mured. Maybe such straight talking wouldn't hurt the stu-cookies, asking him about his journey, his health, his work in dents in English 305 after all, lazy, pretentious bastards, progress, offering him belated advice about accommoda-most of them, who thought they could write the Great tion and discreetly interpreting the strangled utterances of American Novel by just typing out their confessions and Gordon Masters for his benefit.

changing the names. He put the book aside for further

'How d'you know what the old guy is saying?' Morris reading. Then he would take it round to Mrs Swallow one asked Bob Busby, a brisk, bearded man in a double-breasted supertime and stand on her stoop, salivating ostentatiously.

blazer with whom he found himself walking to the car park -

Morris had a hunch she was a good cook, and he prided him-or rather running, for Busby maintained a cracking pace self he could pick out a good cook in a crowd as fast as he that Morris's short legs could hardly match.

could spot an easy lay (they were seldom the same person).

' I suppose we've got used to it.'

Good plain food, he would predict; nothing fancy, but the

'Has he got a cleft palate or something? Or is it that portions would be lavish.

moustache getting between his teeth when he talks?'

There was a knock at his door. ' Come in,' he called, ex-Busby stepped out faster. ' He's a great man, really, you pectantly, hoping that Mrs Swallow had repented and know,' he said, with faint reproach.

beside Busby. 'How come,' he gasped, 'Masters is Head of Morris gathered that Bernadette had come to live with your Department ?'

the O'Sheas as domestic slave labour, or 'Oh pear' as

'That was before the war. Gordon was extraordinarily O'Shea preferred to phrase it. As a special treat the doctor young, of course, to get the Chair. But the Vice-Chancellor had brought her along this evening to watch the colour TV.

in those days was a huntin', shootin', fishin' type. Took all

' If that's not inconveniencing you, Mr Zapp ?'

the candidates down to his place in Yorkshire for a spot of

'Sure. What is it you want to watch, Bernadette, "Top of grouse-shooting. Naturally Gordon made a great impression.

the Pops"?'

Story goes the most highly qualified candidate had a fatal

'Er, no, not exactly, Mr Zapp,' said O'Shea. 'The accident with a gun. Or that Gordon shot him. Don't BBC 2 has a documentary on the Little Sisters of Misery, believe it myself.'

and Bernadette has an aunt in the Order. We can't get BB C 2 on the set downstairs, you see.'

Morris could keep up the pace no longer. 'You'll have to tell me more another time,' he called after the figure of This was not Morris's idea of an evening's entertainment, Busby as it receded into the gloom of the ill-lit car park.

so having switched on the TV he retired to his bedroom with a copy of *Playboy* that had caught up with him in the

'Yes, good night, good night.' To judge by the sound of his mail. Stretched out on the penultimate resting place of Mrs feet on the gravel, Busby had broken into a trot. Morris was O'Shea Sr., he ran an expert eye over Miss January's boobs left alone in the darkness. The flame of sociability lit by and settled down to read a photo-feature on the latest sports Masters' return seemed to have gone out as abruptly as it cars, including the Lotus Europa which he had just ordered.

had flared up.

One of the few satisfactions Morris had promised himself But the excitements of the day were not over. The very from his visit to England was the purchase of a new sports same evening he made the acquaintance of a member of the car to replace the Chevrolet Corvair which he had bought O'Shea menage hitherto concealed from his view. At the in 1965 just three days before Ralph Nader published customary hour the doctor knocked on his door and pushed *Unsafe at Any Speed*, thus

reducing its value by approximately into the room a teenage girl of sluttish but not unsexy fifteen hundred dollars overnight and depriving Morris of appearance, raven-haired and hollow of cheek, who stood any further pleasure in owning it. He had left Desiree with meekly in the middle of the floor, twisting her hands and instructions to sell the Corvair for what she could get for it: peeping at Morris through long dark eyelashes.

that wouldn't be much, but he would save a considerable

'This is Bernadette, Mr Zapp,' said O'Shea gloomily.

amount on the Lotus by taking delivery in England and

'You've no doubt seen her about the house.'

shipping it back to Euphoria himself. *Playboy*, he was glad to

'No. Hi, Bernadette,' said Morris.

note, approved of the Lotus.

'Say good evening to the gentleman, Bernadette,' said Returning to the living-room to fetch a cigar, he found O'Shea, giving the girl a nudge which sent her staggering O'Shea asleep and Bernadette looking sullenly bored. On across the room.

the screen a lot of nuns, photographed from behind, were

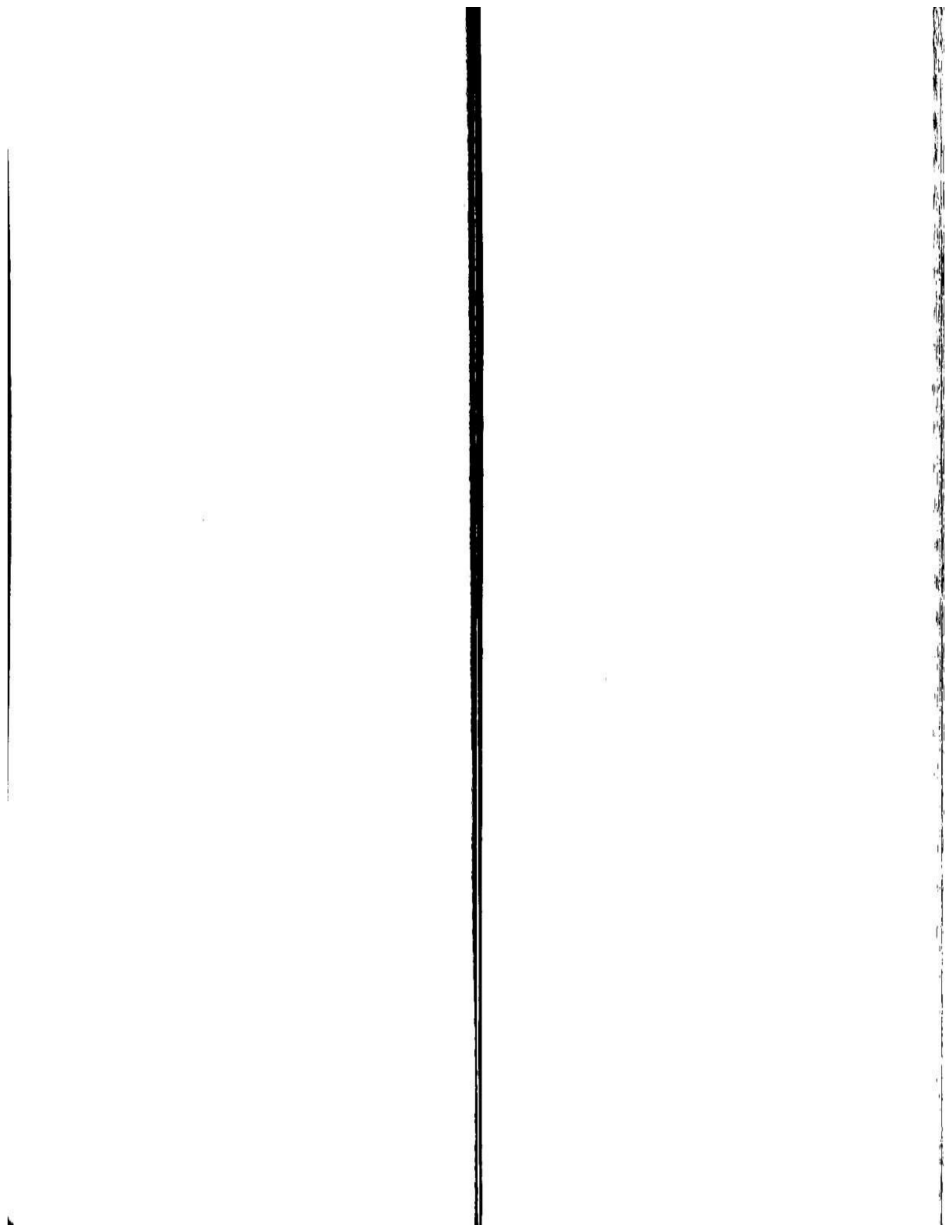
'Good evening, sir,' said Bernadette, making a clumsy singing a hymn.

little bob.

' Seen your aunt yet ?' he inquired.

'Manners a little lacking in polish, Mr Zapp,' said O'Shea Bernadette shook her head. There was a knock on the in a loud whisper. ' But we must make allowances. A month door and one of the O'Shea children stuck his head round ago she was milking cows in Sligo. My wife's people, you the door.

know. They have a farm there.'



Please sir, will you tell me Dad Mr Reilly phoned **and** his car, a perfectly ordinary, rather underpowered Austin Mrs Reilly is having one of her turns.*

that he had rented at London Airport. Morris tried with Such summonses were a common occurrence in the life of some difficulty to imagine the likely reaction of O'Shea when Dr O'Shea, who seemed to spend a fantastic amount of time he drove up in the burnt-orange Lotus, with its black on the road - compared, anyway, to American doctors, who leather bucket seats, remote-control spot lamp, visored in Morris's experience would only visit you at home if you headlights, streamlined wing-mirrors and eight-track stereo.

were actually dead. Roused from his slumbers, O'Shea de-Mother of God, he'd have a coronary on the spot.

parted, groaning and muttering under his breath. He

'Down there, down there to your left,' said Dr O'Shea.

offered to remove Bernadette, but Morris said she could stay

'There's Mr Reilly at the door, looking out for us. God bless to watch out the programme. He returned to his bedroom you, Mr Zapp. It's terribly good of you to turn out on a and after a few minutes heard the sound of plainsong change night like this.'

abruptly into the driving beat of a current hit by the Jackson

'You're welcome,' said Morris, drawing up in front of the Five. There was still hope for Ireland, then.

house, and fending off the attempts of the distracted Mr A few moments later he heard footsteps thundering up the Reilly, evidently under the impression that Morris was the stairs, and the sound of the TV reverted to sacred music.

doctor, to drag him from behind the wheel.

Morris went into the living-room just as O'Shea burst in But it *was good* of him, uncharacteristically good of Morris through the opposite door. Bernadette cowered in her Zapp. The truth of the sentiment struck him more and more seat, looking between the two men as if calculating which forcibly as he sat in the cold and cheerless parlour of the one was going to beat her first.

Reilly house waiting for O'Shea to finish his ministrations,

'Mr Zapp,' O'Shea panted, ' the devil take me if I can and as he drove him back through the shadowy streets, get my car to start. Would you be so good as to give me a listening with half an ear to lurid descriptions of Mrs Reilly's push down the road? Mrs O'Shea would do it, but she's symptoms. He cast his mind back over the day - helping feeding the baby at this minute.'

Mrs Swallow look for her husband's book, letting the Irish

'You want to use my car?' said Morris, producing the kid watch his TV, driving O'Shea around to his patients -

keys.

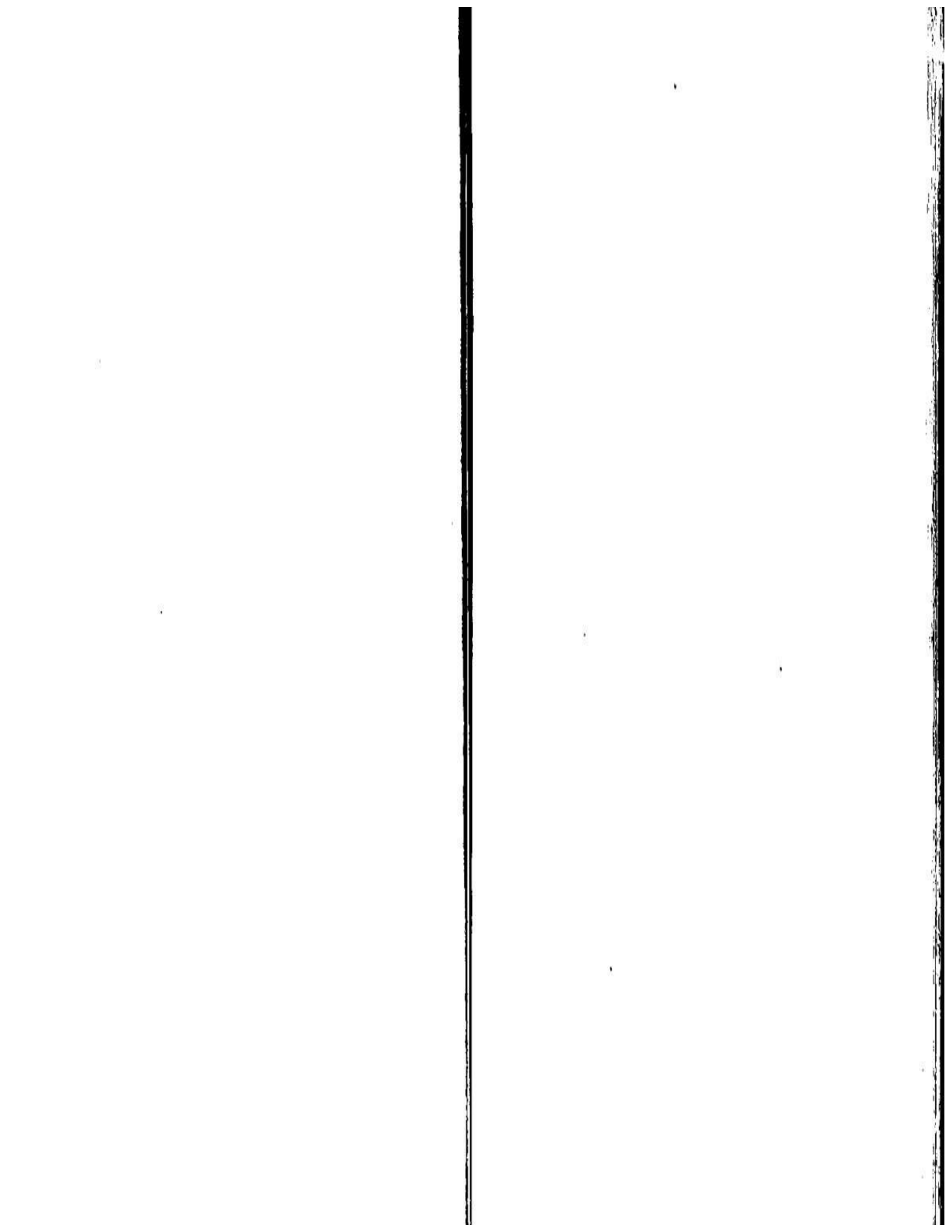
and wondered what had come over him. Some creeping O'Shea's jaw sagged. 'God bless you, Mr Zapp, you're a English disease of being nice, was it? He would have to generous man, but I'd hate to take the responsibility.*

watch himself.

' Go ahead. It's only a rented car.'

*Aye, but what about the insurance?' O'Shea went into Philip decided it was not too far to walk home from the the matter of insurance at such length that Morris began to Hogans' party, but wished he had phoned for a cab when it fear for the life of Mrs Reilly, so he cut the discussion short by began to rain. He would really have to set about getting offering to drive O'Shea himself. The doctor thanked him himself a car, a business he had postponed from fear of effusively and galloped down the stairs, shouting over his tangling with American second-hand car dealers, no doubt shoulder to Bernadette that she was to leave Morris's even more intimidating, venal and treacherous than theii room. 'Take your time,' said Morris to the girl, and fol-British counterparts. When he arrived at the house on lowed him out.

Pythagoras Drive he discovered that he had forgotten his Between giving Morris directions through the badly-lit latch-key - the final aggravation of an evening already back streets, O'Shea complimented Morris extravagantly on thoroughly spoiled by Charles Boon and Mrs Zapp. Fortu-9*



nately someone was in the house, because he could hear promptly forgot, identifying them by the various kinds of music playing faintly; but he had to ring the bell several fancy dress they wore - one in Confederate Civil War uni-times before the door, retained by a chain, opened a few form, one in cowboy boots and a tattered ankle-length suede inches and the face of Melanie Byrd peered apprehensively topcoat and the third in loose black judo garb - he was also through the aperture. Her face brightened.

black himself and wore sunglasses with black frames, just in

•Oh, hi! It's you.'

case there was any doubt about where he stood on the racial

'Terribly sorry - forgot my key.'

issue.

She opened the door, calling over her shoulder, 'It's OK, Philip sat down on one of the mattresses, feeling the only Professor Swallow.' She explained with a giggle: 'We shoulders of his English suit ride up to nuzzle his ears as he thought you were the fuzz. We were smoking.'

did so. He took off the jacket and loosened his tie in a feeble

'Smoking?' Then his nostrils registered a sweetish, acrid effort to fit in with the general sartorial style of the company.

odour on the air and the penny dropped. 'Oh, yes, of Melanie brought him a plate of pizza and Carol poured him course.' The 'of course' was an attempt to sound urbane, a glass of harsh red wine from a gallon bottle in a wicker bas-but succeeded only in sounding embarrassed, which indeed ket. While he ate, the others passed from hand to hand he was.

what he knew must be a 'joint'. When he had finished the

'Like to join us?'

pizza he hastily lit his pipe, thus excusing himself from

'Thank you, but I don't smoke. Not, that is . . . '

partaking of the drug. Puffing clouds of smoke into the air, Philip floundered. Melanie laughed. 'Have some coffee, he gave a humorous account, which went down quite well, then. Pot is optional.'

of how he had found himself left alone in the Hogans' house.

'Thanks awfully, but I'd better get myself something to

'You were trying to make out with this woman?' asked the eat.' Melanie, he couldn't help observing,

looked remark-black wrestler.

ably fetching this evening in a white peasant-style dress that

'No, no, I got trapped. As a matter of fact, she's the wife reached to her bare feet, her long brown hair loose about of the man I'm replacing here. Professor Zapp.'

her shoulders, her eyes bright and dilated.' First,' he added.

Melanie looked startled.' I didn't know that.'

' There's some pizza left from dinner. If you like pizza.'

' D'you know him ?' Philip asked.

Oh, yes, he assured her, he loved pizza. He followed

'Slightly.'

Melanie down the hall to the ground-floor living-room,

'He's a fascist,' said the Confederate Soldier. 'He's a luridly lit by a large orange paper globe suspended about well-known campus fascist. Everybody knows Zapp.'

two feet from the floor, and furnished with low tables,

'I took a course with Zapp once,' said the Cowboy.

mattresses, cushions, an inflatable armchair, brick-and-

' Gave me a lousy " C " for a paper that got an "A" the last plank bookshelves and an expensive-looking complex of time I used it. I told him, too.'

stereo equipment emitting plaintive Indian music. The

'What did he say.'

walls were covered with psychedelic posters and the floor

'Told me to fuck off.'

was littered with ashtrays, plates, cups, glasses, magazines

'Man!' The black wrestler dissolved into giggles.

and record sleeves. There were three young men in the room

'How about Kroop?' said the Confederate Soldier.

and two young women. The latter, Melanie's flat-mates

'Kroop lets his students grade themselves.'

Carol and Deirdre, Philip had already met. Melanie intro-

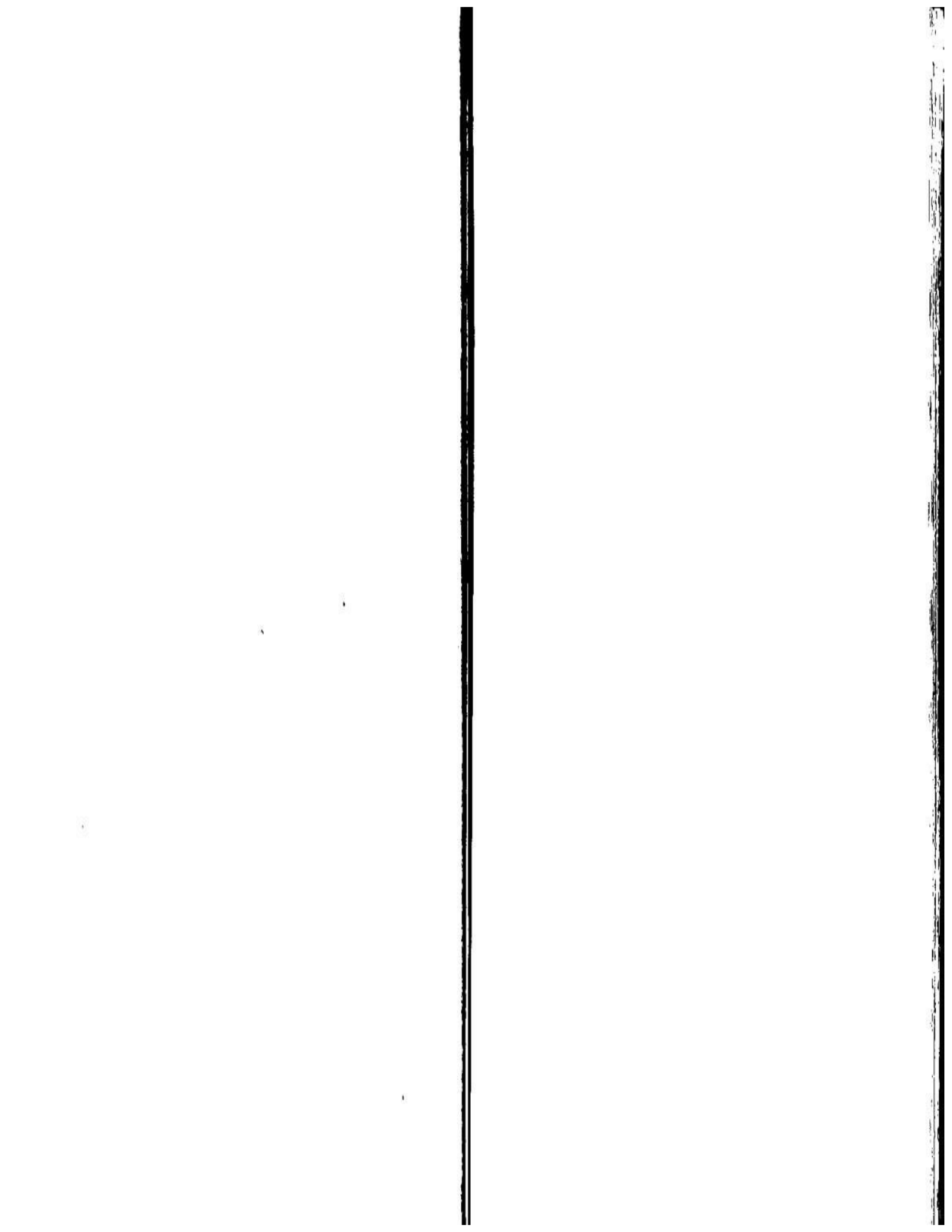
'You're putting us on,' said Deirdre.

duced him casually to the three young men, whose names he

'It's true, I swear.'

94

95



1/•

'Don't everybody give themselves "A"s?' asked **the** party was what it appeared to be, or perhaps encounter black wrestler.

group. This was a term new to Philip, which the young

'It's funny, but no. As a matter of fact there was a chick people did their best to explain to him.

who flunked herself.'

' It's like, to get rid of your inhibitions.'

'Come on!'

'Overcome loneliness. Overcome the fear of loving.'

'No bullshit. Kroop tried to talk her out of it, said her

' Recover your own body.'

paper was worth at least a " G " , but no, she insisted on

'Understand what's really bugging you.'

flunking.'

They exchanged anecdotes.

Philip asked Melanie if she was a student at Euphoric

'The worst is the beginning,' said Carol. 'When you're State.

feeling all cold and uptight and wishing you hadn't come.'

' I was. I sort of dropped out.*

'And the one I went to,' said the Confederate Soldier,

'we didn't know who was the group leader, and he didn't

'Permanently?'

identify himself, like deliberately, and we all sat there for an

'No. I don't know. Maybe.'

hour, a solid hour, in total silence.'

All of them, it appeared, either were or had been students at the University, but like Melanie they were vague and

'Sounds like one of my seminars,' said Philip. But they were too engrossed in the subject to respond to his little evasive about their backgrounds and plans. They seemed to jokes.

live entirely in the present tense. To Philip, who was always squinting anxiously into his putative future and casting Carol said: 'Our leader had a neat idea to break the ice.

worried glances over his shoulder at the past, they were Everybody had to empty their purses and wallets on to the scarcely comprehensible. But intriguing. And friendly.

table. The idea was total self-exposure, you know, turning He taught them a game he had invented as a postgraduate yourself inside out, letting everybody see what you usually student, in which each person had to think of a well-known keep hidden. Like rubbers and tampax and old love letters book he hadn't read, and scored a point for every person and holy medals and dirty pictures and all. It was a revela-present who *had* read it. The Confederate Soldier and Carol tion, you've no idea. Like one guy had this picture of this were joint winners, scoring four points out of a possible five man on a beach, completely naked except for a gun in a with *Steppenwolf* and *The Story of O* respectively, Philip in holster. Turned out to be the guy's father. How about that?'

each case accounting for the odd point. His own nomination,

'Groovy,' said the Confederate Soldier.

Oliver Twist — usually a certain winner - was nowhere.

'Let's do it now,' said Philip, tossing his wallet into the ring.

'What d'you call that game ?' Melanie asked Philip.

'Humiliation.'

Carol spread the contents on the floor. 'This is no good,'

she said. 'Just what you'd expect to find. All very boring and

'That's a great name. *Humiliation...*'

moral.'

'You have to humiliate yourself to win, you see. Or to

'That's me,' sighed Philip. 'Who's next?' But no one else stop others from winning. It's rather like Mr Kroop's had a wallet or a purse to hand.

grading system.'

'That's a lot of crap anyway,' said the Cowboy. 'In *my* Another joint was circulating, and this time Philip took a group we're trying to learn body-language...'

drag or two. Nothing special seemed to happen, but he had

'Are these your children?' Melanie asked, going through been drinking the red wine steadily enough to keep up with his photographs.' They're cute, but they look kind of sad.'

the developing and enveloping mood of the party - for a 96

A A A

'That's because I'm so uptight with them,' said Philip.

room. 'What you have to do is communicate by rubbing

'And is this your wife ?'

against each other,' he explained, suiting actions to words.

'She's uptight, too,' he said. He found the new word

"Through your spine, your shoulder-blades -'

expressive. 'We're a very uptight family.'

'Your ass . . . '

'She's lovely.'

'Right, your ass. Most people's backs are dead, just *dead*, from not being used for anything, you dig?'
The Cowboy

'That was taken a long time ago,' said Philip.' Even I was made way for the Confederate Soldier, and began to super-lovely then.'

wise Deirdre and the black wrestler.

' I think you're lovely now,' said Melanie. She leaned over

'You want to try ?' Melanie said.

and kissed him on the mouth.

'All right.'

Philip felt a physical sensation he hadn't felt for more than Her back felt straight and supple against his scholar's twenty years: a warm, melting sensation that began in some stoop, her bottom was pressed firmly and blissfully against deep vital centre of his body and spread outwards, gently his thin shanks, her hair was thrown back and cascaded fading, till it reached his extremities. He recaptured, in that down his chest. He was transported. She was giggling.

one kiss, all the helpless rapture of adolescent eroticism -

'Hey, Philip, what are you trying to tell me with the and all its embarrassment too. He couldn't bring himself to shoulder-blades ?'

look at Melanie, but stared sheepishly at his shoes, dumb, Someone dimmed the lights and turned up the sitar his ears burning. Fool! Coward!

music. They swayed and pressed and wriggled against each

'Look, I'll show you,' said the Cowboy, stripping off his other in the twanging, orange, smoky twilight, it was a kind suede coat. He stood up and shoved aside with his foot some of dance, they were all dancing, he was dancing - at last: the of the dirty crockery littering the floor. Melanie stacked up free, improvised, Dionysian dancing he'd hankered after. He the plates and carried them out to the kitchen. Philip was doing it.

trotted ahead of her, opening doors, happy at the prospect Melanic's eyes were fixed on his, but vacantly. Her body of a tete-a-tete at the sink. Washing up was more his scene was listening to the music. Her eyelids listened, her nipples than body language.

listened, her little toes listened. The music had gone very

' Shall I wash or wipe?' he asked, and then, as she looked quiet, but they didn't lose it. She swayed, he swayed, they blank:' Can I help you with the dishes ?'

all swayed, swayed and nodded, very slightly, keeping time,

'Oh, I'll just leave them to soak.'

responsive to the sudden accelerations and slowings of the

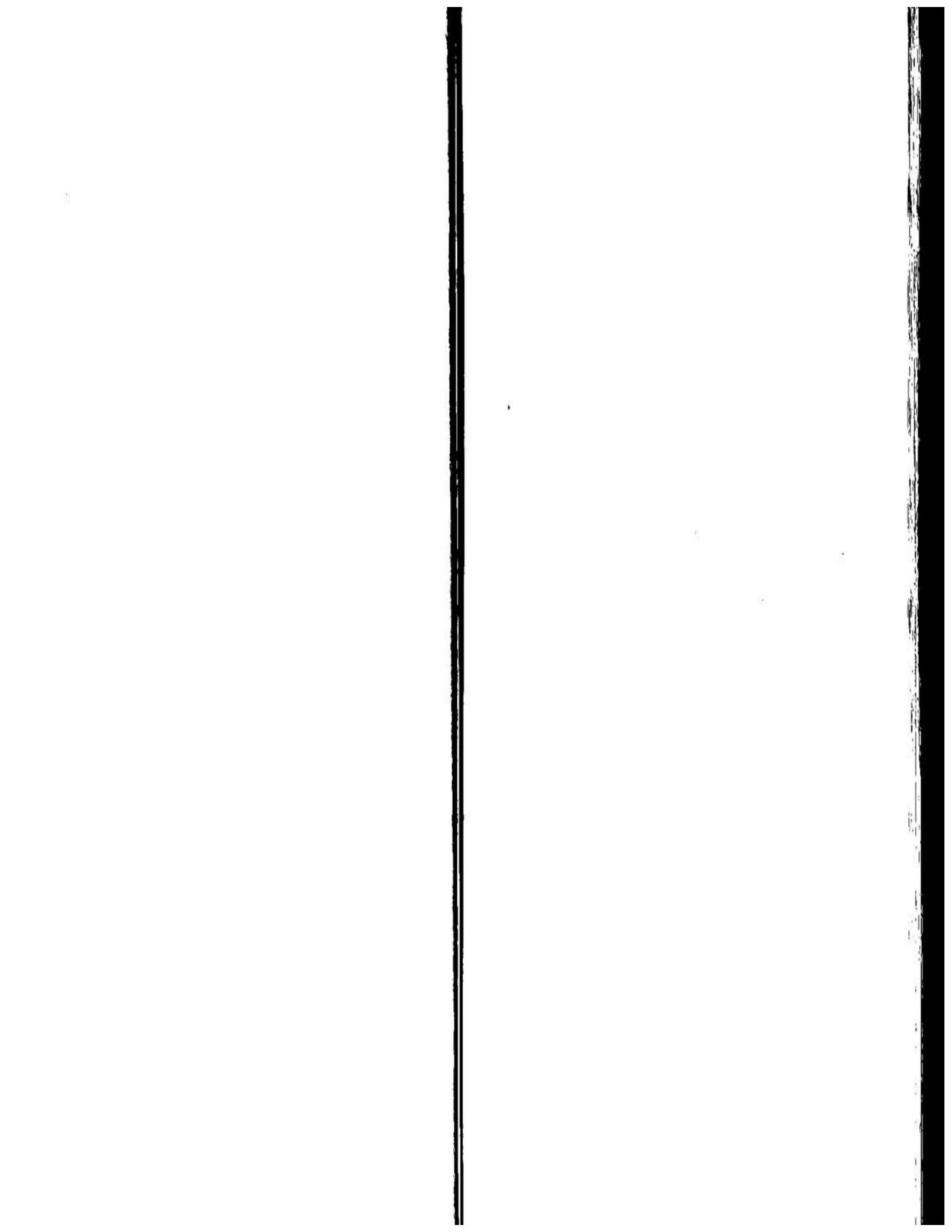
'I don't mind washing up, you know,' he wheedled. 'I plucking fingers, the light patter of the drum, the swerves quite like it, really.'

and undulations of tone and timbre. Then the tempo Melanie laughed, showing two rows of white teeth. One of became faster, the twanging notes louder, faster and louder, the upper incisors was crooked: it was the only flaw he could and they moved more violently in response to the music, detect in her at this moment. She was pretty as a poster m they writhed and twitched, stamped and lifted their arms her long white dress gathered under the bosom and falling and snapped their fingers and clapped their hands. Melanie's straight to her bare feet.

hair swept the floor and soared towards the ceiling, catching

' Let's just leave them here.'

the orange light in its million fine filaments, as she bent and He followed her back to the living-room. The Cowboy straightened from the waist. Eyes rolled, sweat glistened, was standing back to back with Carol in the middle of the 99



breasts bounced, flesh smacked flesh; cries, shrill and ec-

*No, no, it's great, it's doing my vertebrae a whole **lot** of static, pierced the smoke. Then abruptly the music stopped.

good, I can feel it.'

They collapsed on to cushions, panting, perspiring, grinning.

He balanced himself on one foot planted firmly in the Next, the Cowboy had them do foot massage. Philip lay small of her back and with the other gently rotated the face down on the floor while Melanie walked up and down cheek of each buttock in turn. The foot, he decided, was a his back in her bare feet. The experience was an exquisite much underestimated erogenous zone. Then he overmixture of pleasure and pain. Though his face was pressed balanced and stepped backwards on to a coffee cup and to the hard floor, his neck twisted, the breath squeezed out of saucer, which broke into several pieces.

his lungs, his shoulder-blades pushed nearly through his

' Oh dear,' said Melanie, sitting up. 'You haven't cut your chest and his spine was creaking like a rusty hinge, he foot?'

could have had an orgasm without difficulty - hardly sur-

'No, but I'd better get rid of these pieces.' He slipped on prising when you thought about it, some men paid good his shoes and shuffled out to the kitchen with the broken money in brothels for this kind of thing. He groaned softly as fragments. As he was disposing of these in the trashcan, the Cowboy rushed into the kitchen and began opening cup-Melanie balanced on his buttocks. She jumped off.

boards and drawers. He was wearing only jockey shorts.

•Did I hurt you?'

'No, no, it's all right. Carry on.'

' Seen the salad oil anywhere, Philip ?'

' It's my turn.'

4 People getting hungry again ?'

No, he protested, he was too heavy, too clumsy, he would

'No, no. We're all gonna strip and rub each other with oil. Ever tried it? It's terrific. Ah!' He pulled out of a cup-break her back. But she insisted, prostrated herself before board a large can of corn-oil and tossed it triumphantly in him in her white dress like a virgin sacrifice. Talk about the air.

brothels . . . Out of the corner of his eye he saw Carol jumping up and down on the mountainous figure of the

'Do you need pepper and salt?' Philip jested weakly, **but** black wrestler, 'Stomp me baby, stomp me,' he moaned; the Cowboy was already on his way out. 'C'mon!' he and in a dark corner the Cowboy and the Confederate threw over his shoulder.' The party's beginning to swing.'

soldier were doing something extraordinary and compli-Philip laced up his shoes slowly, deferring decision. Then cated with Deirdre that involved much grunting and deep he went into the hall. Laughter, exclamations and more sitar breathing.

music were coming from the darkened living-room. The

' Come on, Philip,' Melanie urged.

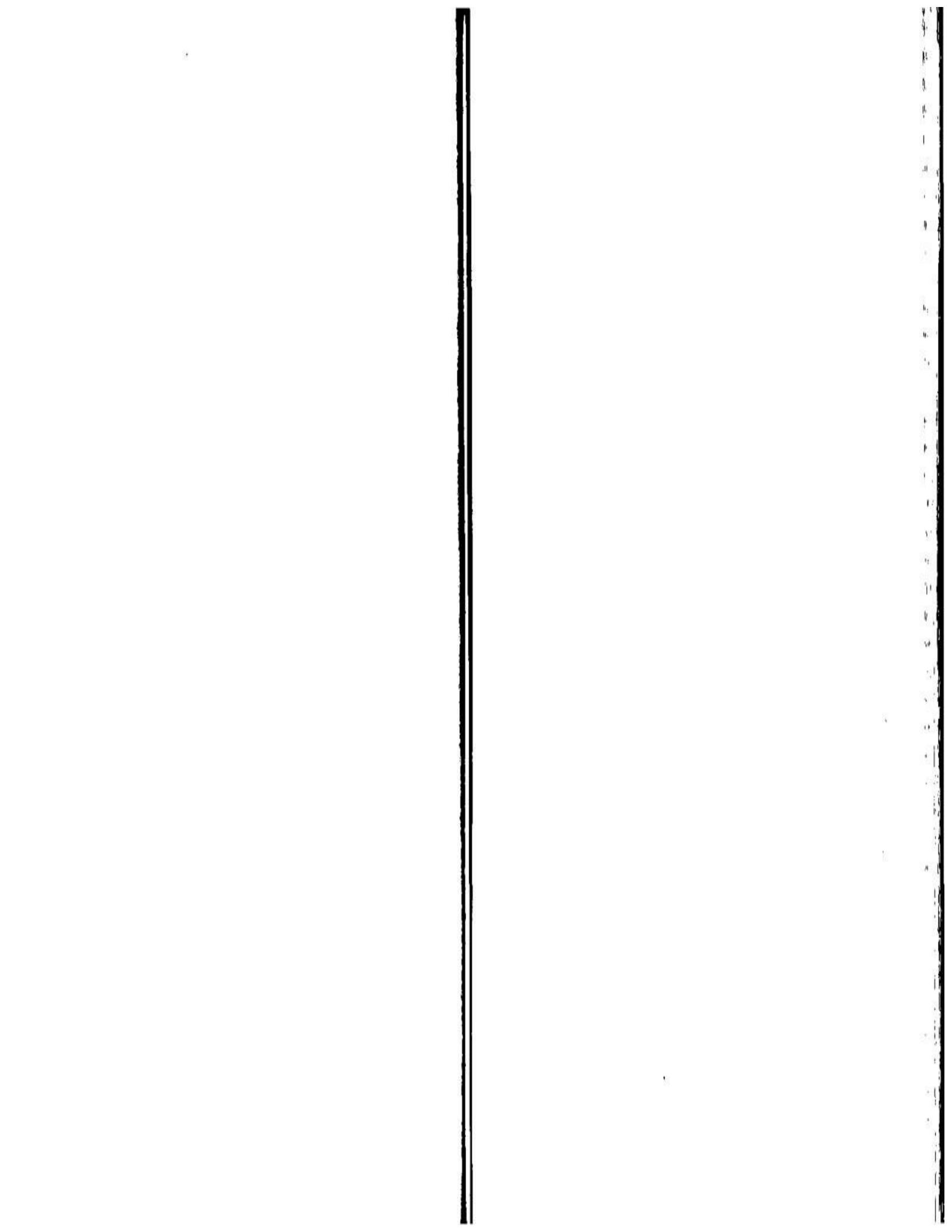
door was ajar. He hesitated at the threshold, then moved on, He took offhis shoes and socks and climbed gingerly on to out of the apartment, up the staircase to his own empty Melanie's back, balancing himself with outstretched arms as rooms, one part of himself saying ruefully, ' You're too old the flesh and bone yielded under his weight. Oh God, there for that sort of thing, Swallow, you'd only feel embarrassed was a terrible kind of pleasure in kneading the soft girl's body and make a fool of yourself and what about Hilary?' and under his calloused feet, treading grapes must be rather like another part of himself saying, 'Shit!' (a word he was sur-it. He felt a dark Lawrentian joy in his domination over the prised to hear himself using, even mentally) 'Shit, Swallow, supine girl even as he felt concern for her lovely bosom when were you *ever young* enough for that sort of thing?

crushed flat against the hard floor, unprotected, unless he You're just scared, scared of yourself and scared of your wife was much mistaken, by any undergarment.

and think of what you've missed, rubbing salad oil into

' I'm hurting you ?'

Melanie Byrd, just think of that!' Thinking of it, he actually **IOI**



turned round outside his door, debating whether to go back, ly about in his king-size bed. He turned the clock-radio on but was surprised to find Melanie herself rustling up the low, hoping it would send him to sleep. It was tuned where stairs behind him to whisper, 'Mind if I crash in your place he had left it the previous night, to the Charles Boon Show.

tonight? I happen to know one of those guys had clap not The Black Pantheress was explaining to a caller the appli-too long ago.'

cation of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory to the

'Not at all/ he murmured faintly, and let her in to the situation of oppressed racial minorities in a late stage of apartment, suddenly sober, his heart thumping and his industrial capitalism. Philip switched off. After a while he bowels melting, wondering, was this it ? - after twelve years'

went to the bathroom to get an aspirin. The door of his study monogamy, was he going to make love to another woman ?

was ajar, and without premeditation he turned into it.

Just like that? Without preliminaries, without *negotiations*?

Melanie was sleeping peacefully: he could hear her deep, He switched on the light inside the apartment, and they regular breathing. He sat down at his desk and turned on both blinked in the sudden dazzle. Even Melanie looked a the reading lamp. Its hooded light threw a faint radiance on little shy.

the sleeping girl, her long hair spread romantically over the

'Where d'you suggest I sleep ?' she said.

pillow, one bare arm hanging to the floor. He sat in his

' I don't know, where would you like to sleep ?' He led her pyjamas and looked at her until one of his feet went to sleep.

down the hall, throwing open doors like a hotel porter.

As he tried to rub life back into it, Melanie opened her eyes,

'This is the main bedroom,' he said, switching on the light staring at him blankly, then fearfully, then with drowsy and exhibiting the king-size bed that felt as big as a recognition.

playing field when he stretched out in it at night. 'Or

' I was looking for a book,' he said, still rubbing his foot.

there's this other room which I use as a study, but it has a

'Can't seem to get to sleep.' He laughed nervously. 'Too bed in it.' He went into the study and swept some books and excited . . . at the thought of you in here.'

papers off the couch. 'It's really quite comfortable,' he Melanie raised the corner of the coverlet in a silent gesture said, pressing the mattress with splayed fingers. 'Take your offer of invitation.

choice.'

'Very kind of you, you're sure you don't mind?' he

'Well, I guess it depends on whether you want to fuck or murmured, like someone for whom room has been made in a note.'

crowded railway compartment. The bed was indeed crowded Philip winced. 'Well, how do you feel about it?'

when he got into it, and he had to cling to Melanie to avoid

'I'd just as soon not, to tell you the truth, Philip. Nothing falling out. She was warm and naked and lovely to cling to.

personal, but I'm tired as hell.' She yawned like a cat.

'Oh,' he said, and, 'Ah.' But it wasn't altogether satisfac-

'In that case, you take my bed, and I'll sleep in here.'

tory. She was still half-asleep and he was half-distracted by

'Oh no, I'll take the couch.' She sat down on it emphatically-the novelty of the situation. He came too soon and gave her a cally. 'This is fine, really.'

little pleasure. Afterwards, in her sleep, tightening her arms

'Well, if you insist . . . the bathroom is at the end of the round his neck, she whimpered, 'Daddy.' He stealthily hall.'

disengaged himself from her embrace and crept back to his

'Thanks. This is really kind of you . . . '

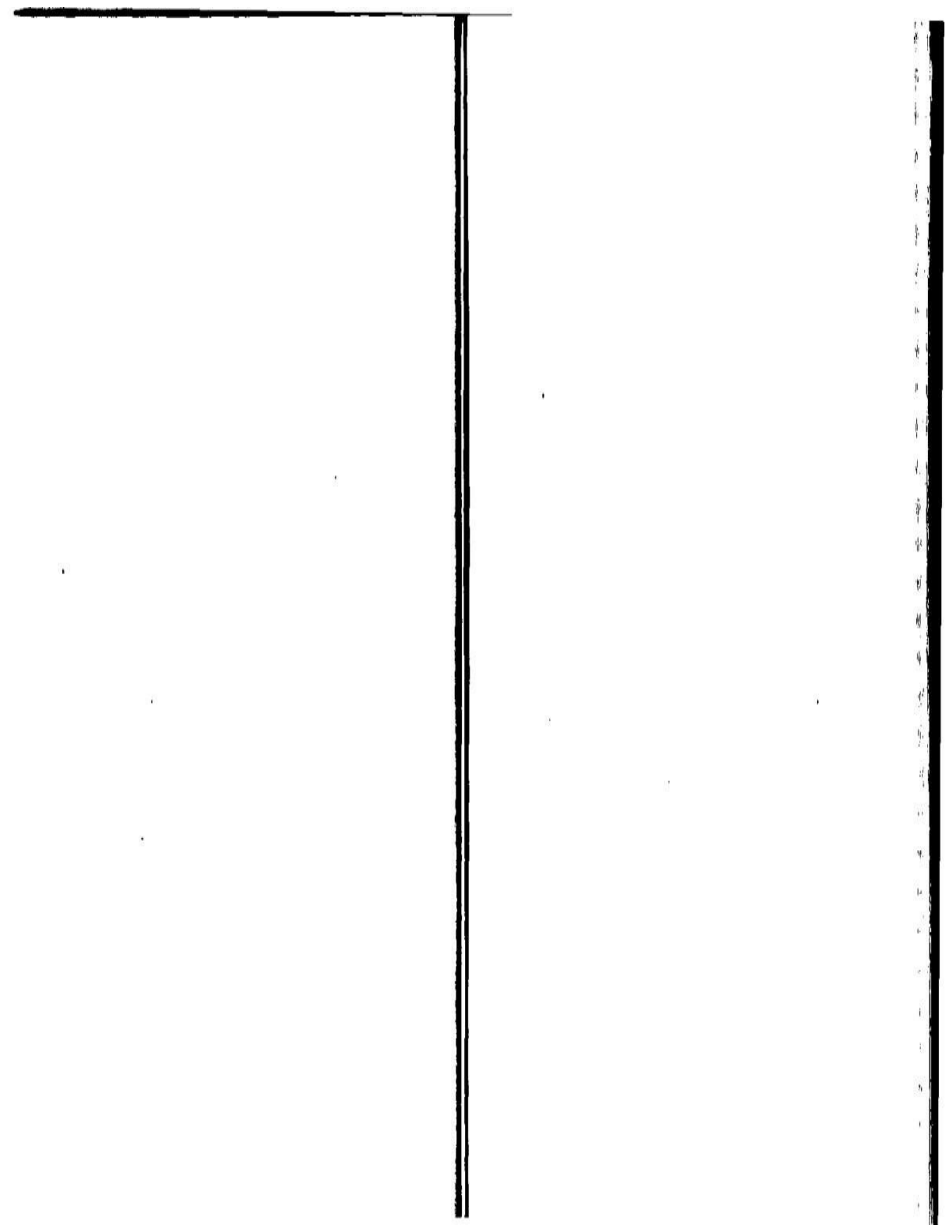
king-size bed. He did not lie down on it: he knelt at it, as

'Don't mention it,' Philip said, bowing himself out of the thought it were a catafalque bearing the murdered body of room. He didn't know whether to feel glad or sorry at his Hilary, and buried his face in his hands. Oh God, the guilt, dismissal, and the indecision kept him awake, rolling fretful-the guilt!

102

*

103



And Morris Zapp felt some pangs of guilt as he listened,

'Would you mind raising your right arm just a little?' said cowering behind his door, to the wails of Bernadette and the Morris. 'You're cutting out part of the screen.'

imprecations of Dr O'Shea, as the latter chastised the former O'Shea obligingly lifted his arm, thus resembling a man with the end of his belt, having caught her in the act of taking the oath in court. A luridly coloured advertisement reading a filthy book, and not merely reading it but abusing for Strawberry Whip swelled like an obscene blister under herself at the same time - an indulgence that was (O'Shea his armpit. 'But I must ask you not to bring pornography thundered) not only a mortal sin which would whisk her into the house.'

soul straight to hell should she chance to expire before

'Pornography? Me? I haven't even got a pornograph,'

reaching the confessional (as seemed, from her screams, all Morris quipped, confident that the gag would be new to too possible) but was also a certain cause of physical and O'Shea.

mental degeneration, leading to blindness, sterility, cancer

'I'm referring to a disgusting magazine which Bernadette of the cervix, schizophrenia, nymphomania and general took from your room. Without your knowledge, I trust.'

paralysis of the insane . . . Morris felt guilty because the Morris evaded this probe, which indicated that plucky filthy book in question was the copy of *Playboy* he had been Bernadette hadn't squealed. 'You don't mean my copy of perusing earlier that evening, and which he himself had *Playboy*, by any chance? But that's ridiculous, *Playboy* isn't given to Bernadette an hour before, having discovered her *pornography*, for heaven's sake I Why, clergymen read it.

reading it by the flickering light of the TV on his return Clergymen *write* for it!

from ferrying O'Shea to and from Mrs Reilly, so engrossed

'Protestant clergymen, perhaps,' O'Shea sniffed.

that she was a microsecond too late in closing the magazine

'Can I have it back, please,' said Morris. 'The magazine.'

and pushing it under the chair. Blushing and cringing, she

'I have destroyed it, Mr Zapp,' O'Shea declared severely.

stammered some apology as she sidled towards the door.

Morris didn't believe him. Inside thirty minutes he would be

'You like *Playboy*? ' Morris said soothingly. She shook her head and hid up somewhere, jerking himself off and drooling over her suspiciously. 'Here, borrow it,' he said, and tossed her the *Playboy* pix. Not the girls, of course, but the full-colour magazine. It fell on the floor at her feet, opening, as it ads for whisky and hi-fi equipment...

happened, on the centrefold of Miss January, tilting her. The commercials on the TV ended and the credits for one ass invitingly at the camera. Bernadette flashed him a grin of O'Shea's favourite series appeared on the screen accompanied by a disconcertingly gap-toothed grin.

panied by its unmistakable theme tune. The doctor began to

'Tanks mister,' she said; and snatching up the magazine, watch out of the corner of his eye, while his body maintained she disappeared.

a stiff pose of umbrage.

Now her screams had subsided to a muffled sobbing and,

' Why don't you sit down and watch ?' said Morris.

hearing the footsteps of the outraged *paterfamilias* approach-O'Shea subsided slowly into his customary chair.

ing, Zapp scuttled back to his chair and turned on the

'It's nothing personal you understand, Mr Zapp,' he TV.

muttered sheepishly. 'But Mrs O'Shea would never let me

' Mr Zapp!' said O'Shea, bursting into the room and hear the last of it if she found the girl reading that sort of taking up his stand between Morris and the TV.

stuff. Bernadette being her niece, she feels responsible for the

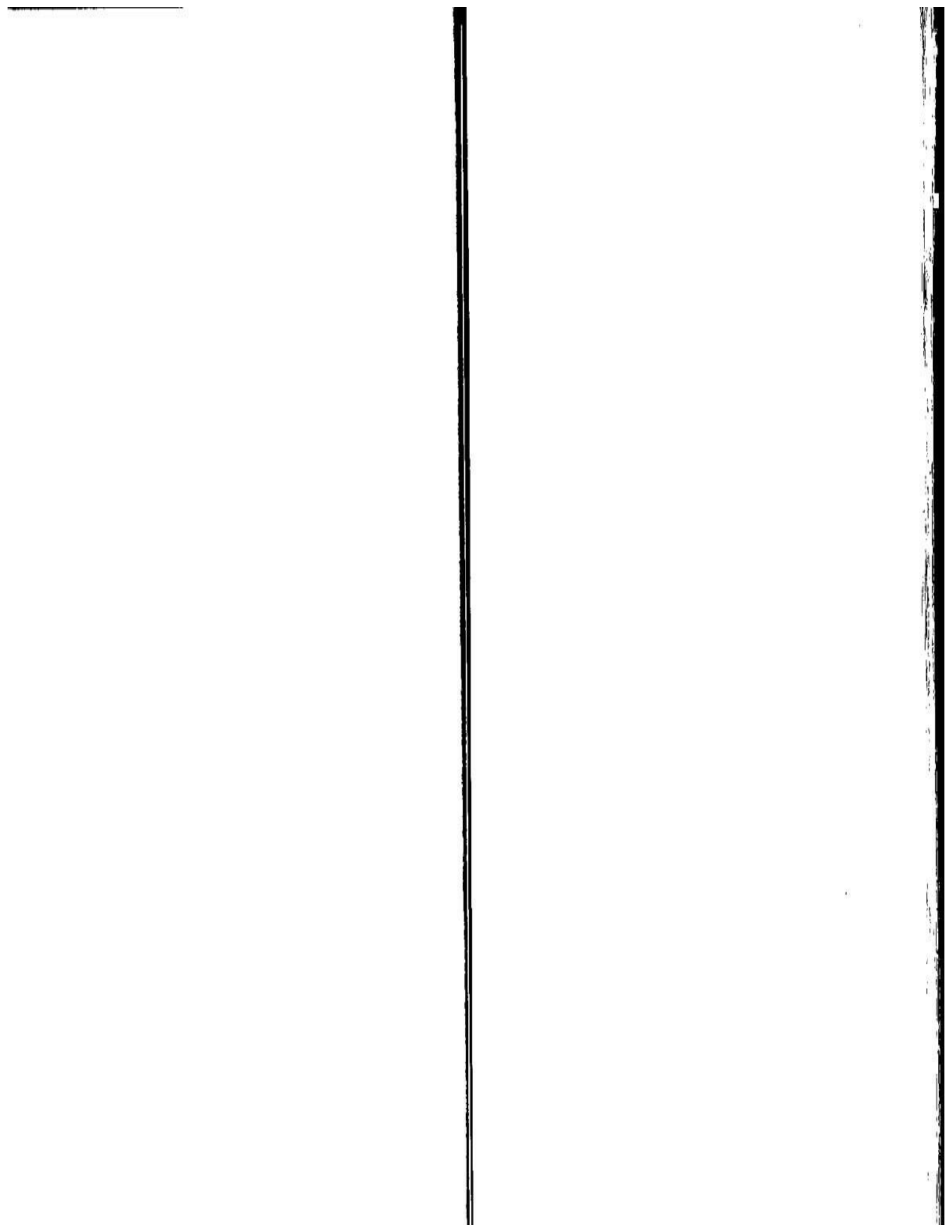
' Come in,' said Morris.

girl's moral welfare.'

'That's natural,' Morris said soothingly. 'Scotch or

'Mr Zapp, it's no business of mine what you choose to Bourbon?'

r e a d - '



A little drop of Scotch would be very welcome, Mr Zapp.

staring with dismay at the growing pile of shards. He groaned and rubbed his eyes. At first he was conscious only I apologize for my outburst just now.'

of physical discomfort: indigestion, headache and a sul-

'Forget it.'

phurous taste in his mouth. On his way to the bathroom his

'We're men of the world, of course. But a young girl bleary gaze was drawn, through the open door of his study,

: 9

straight from Sligo . . . I think it would put our minds at rest to the tousled sheets on the couch, and he remembered. He if you would keep any inflammatory reading matter under croaked her name: 'Melanie?' There was no answer. The lock and key.'

bathroom was empty. So was the kitchen. He drew the

' You think she may break in here ? *

curtains in the living-room and cringed as daylight flooded

'Well she does come in to clean the rooms, in the day-the room. Empty. She had gone.

time . . . '

Now what?

'You don't say?'

His soul, like his stomach, was in turmoil. Melanie's Morris paid an extra thirty shillings a week for this ser-casual compliance with his tired, clumsy lust seemed, in vice, and doubted whether much, if any, of the money found retrospect, shocking, moving, exciting, baffling. He couldn't its way to Bernadette. Passing her on the stairs the next guess what significance she might attach to the event; and morning, Morris slipped her a pound note. 'I understand didn't know, therefore, how to behave when they next met.

you've been cleaning my rooms,' he said.' You've done a real But, he reminded himself, holding his throbbing head in nice job.' She flashed him her toothless grin and looked both hands, problems of etiquette were secondary to prob-yearningly into his eyes.

lems of ethics. The basic question was: did he want to do it

' Shall I come to ye tonight ?'

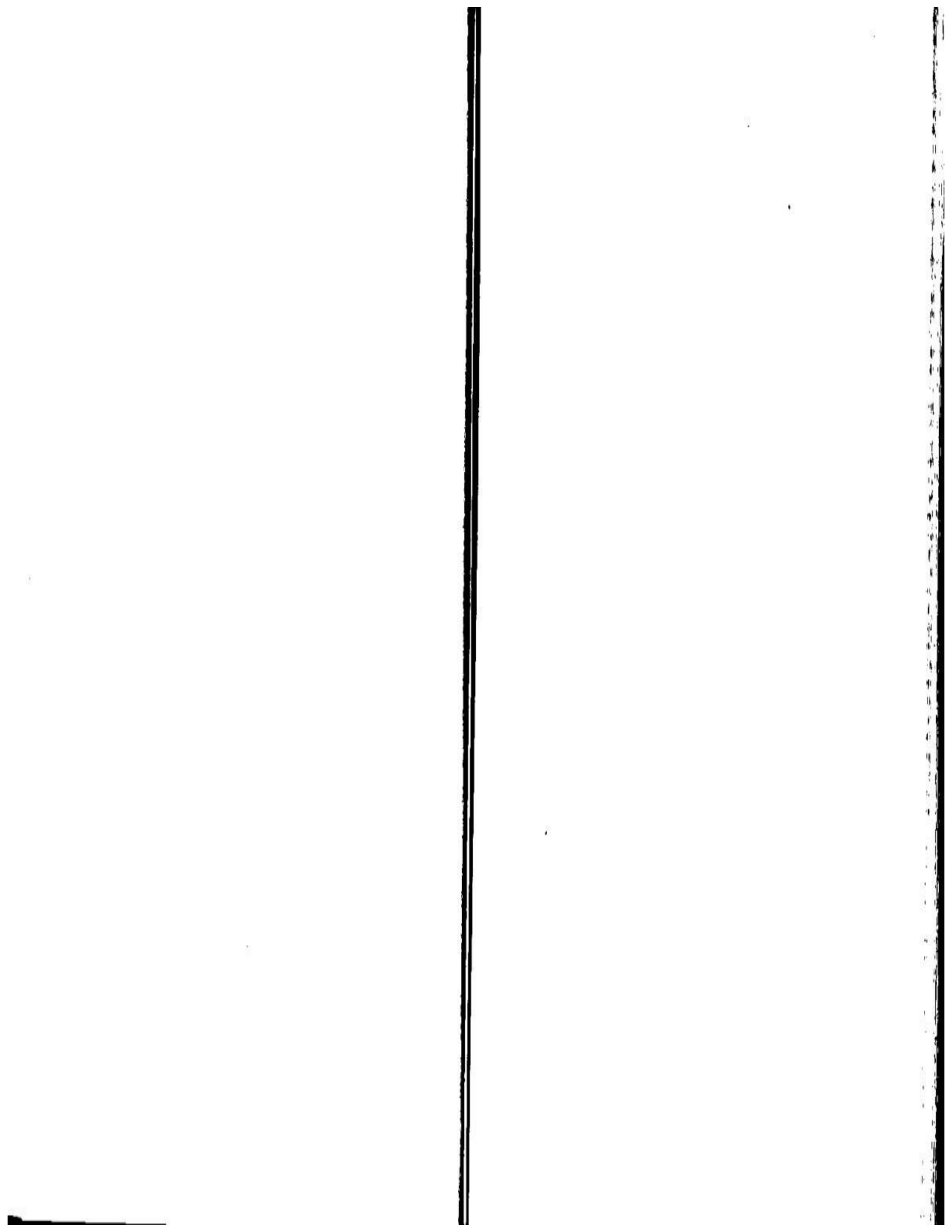
again? Or rather (since that was a silly question, who

'No, no.' He shook his head in alarm. 'You misunder-wouldn't want to do it again) *was* he going to do it again, if stand me.' But she had heard the heavy tread of Mrs O'Shea the opportunity presented itself? Not for nothing had he on the landing, and passed on. There was a time when taken up residence in a Slide Area, he thought sombrely, Morris would have snapped up a chance like this, teeth or no gazing out of the window at the view.

teeth, but now - whether it was his age, or the climate, he He did a lot of looking out of the window that day, un-didn't know - but he didn't feel up to it, he couldn't make willing to venture out of his apartment until he had decided the effort, or face the possible complications. He could what to do about Melanie - whether to cultivate the con-picture all too easily the consequences of being found by the nection, or pretend that nothing had happened. He thought O'Sheas in bed with Bernadette, or even behind a door at of putting through a long-distance call to Hilary to see which she was suing for admittance. Nothing was worth the whether the sound of her voice would act like some kind of price of looking for new accommodation in Rummidge in electro-shock therapy on his muddled mind, but at the last mid-winter. To avoid any accidents, and to give himself a minute his courage failed him and he asked the operator for well-deserved break, Morris decided to take a trip to Lon-Interflora instead. The sun set on his indecision. He retired don and stay overnight.

early and woke in the middle of the night after a wet dream.

Philip woke sweating from a dream in which he was Clearly he was reverting rapidly to adolescence. He turned on washing up in the kitchen at home. Plate after plate dropped the radio and the first word he heard was ' pollution'. Charles from his nerveless fingers and smashed on the tiles under-Boon was talking about the end of the world. Apparently the neath the sink. Melanie, who seemed to be helping him, was US Army had buried some canisters of nerve gas, enough to 106



kill the entire population of the globe, deep in underground

'I don't know,' said Philip. (I haven't seen her lately.

caves and encased in solid concrete, but unfortunately the Have you?'

US Army had overlooked the fact that the caves were on the The Cowboy shook his head.

line of the same geological fault that ran through the state of Ringbaum's thin, nasal voice floated out into the corridor: Euphoria.

'You seem to confuse the words *satire* and *satyr* in your paper, The thing to do, Philip decided, was to see Melanie and Miss Lennox. A satire is a species of poem; a satyr is a have a heart-to-heart talk with her. If he explained his lecherous creature, half man, half goat, who spends his time feelings, perhaps she could sort them out for him. What he chasing nymphs.'

had vaguely in mind was a mature, relaxed, friendly re-11 have to be going,' said Philip.

lationship which wouldn't entail their sleeping together

'Ciao,' said the Cowboy.' Hang loose.'

again, but wouldn't entirely rule out such a possibility That was easier said than done. He felt himself sliding either. Yes, tomorrow he would see Melanie. He fell asleep into obsession. That night he was sure it was Melanie's voice again and dreamed, this time, that he was the last man out that he heard talking to Charles Boon on the radio. Tan-of Esseph at the time of its second and final earthquake. He talizingly, it was only the tail-end of the conversation that he was alone in an airplane taking off from Esseph airport, and caught when he switched on. 'Don't you think,' Melanie was as it hurtled down the runway he looked out of the window saying,' that we have to aim towards a whole new concept of and saw cracks spreading like crazy paving in the tarmac.

interpersonal relationships based on sharing rather than The plane lifted off just as the ground seemed to open to owning? I mean, like a socialism of the emotion?...'

swallow it. It climbed steeply, and banked, and he stared out

'Right on!'

of the window at the unbelievable sight of the city of Esseph,

'And a socialism of sensations, a n d . . . '

its palaces and domes, its cloud-capped skyscrapers,

'Yeah?'

burning and collapsing and sliding into the sea.

'Well, that's all, I guess.'

Next morning the Bay and the city were still there, smiling

'Well, thanks anyway, that was great.*

in the sunshine, awaiting the rabbit punch of the earthquake;

'Well, that's what I think, Charles. Good night.'

but Melanie was not to be found - not that day, nor the next

'Good night, and call again. Anytime,' Boon added day, nor the day after that. Philip went in and out of the meaningfully. The girl - was it Melanie? - laughed and house at all hours, found pretexts for lingering in the hall and whistled loudly on the stairs, all to no avail. He saw Carol rang off.

'Queue Ex Why Zee Underground Radio,' Charles Boon and Deirdre often enough and eventually summoned up the intoned. "This is the Charles Boon Show, the one Governor courage to ask them if Melanie was around. No, they said, Duck tried to get banned. Call 024-9898 and let's hear what's she had gone away for a few days. Was there anything they on your mind.'

could do for him ? He thanked them: no.

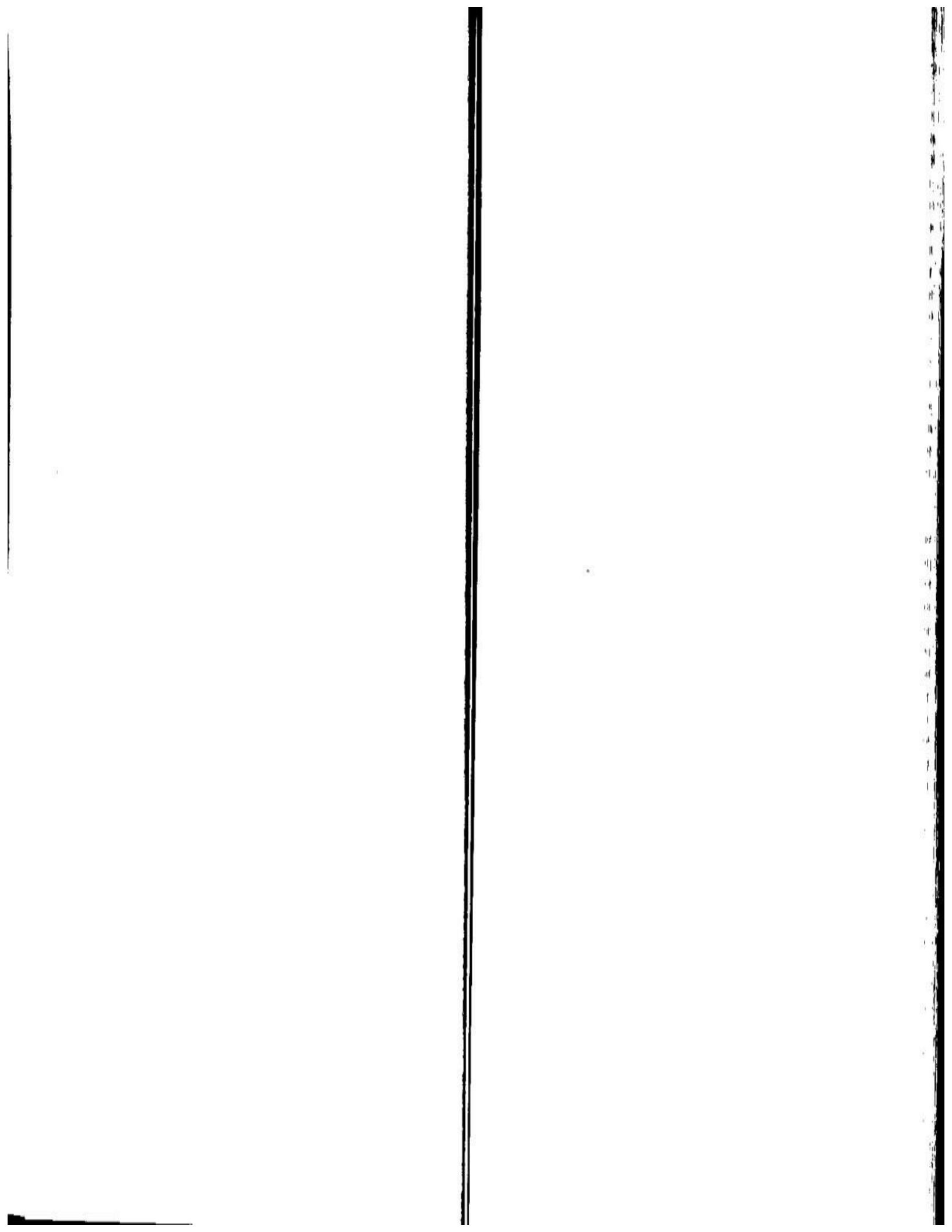
Philip jumped out of bed, pulled on his dressing gown, and That afternoon he fell over a pair of boots in a corridor of ran downstairs to the ground-floor apartment. He rang the Dealer Hall which proved to belong to the Cowboy, bell. After a longish pause, Deirdre came to the door and squatting on the floor outside Howard Ringbaum's door, called through it.

waiting for a consultation.

'Who are you?'

' Hi I' said the Cowboy, with a leer.' How's Melanie ?'

'It's me, Philip Swallow. I want to speak to Melanie.'



Deirdre opened the door. 'She's not here.'

'I just heard her speaking on the radio. She phoned in to and then, via Shaftesbury Avenue, he found himself in the Charles Boon show.'

Soho. Touts shivering in the doorways of strip-clubs accosted him every few yards.

'Well, she didn't call from here.'

'Are you sure?'

Now Morris Zapp, who had lived for years on the door-Deidre opened the door wide. 'You want to search the step of one of the world's great centres of the strip industry, apartment?' she inquired ironically.

namely South Strand in Esseph, had never actually sampled

'I'm terribly sorry,' said Philip.

this form of entertainment. Blue movies, yes. Dirty books, of course. Pornography was an accepted diversion of the I must snap out of this, he said to himself as he climbed Euphoric intelligentsia. But strip-tease, and all the special-the stairs. I need a break, some distraction. On his next free ized variations on it indigenous to Esseph . . .

day he took a bus across the long, double-decker bridge into downtown Esseph. He alighted at exactly the same moment (though seven hours earlier by the clock) that Morris Zapp, Which at this very moment Philip Swallow is observing seated in the grill-room of the London Hilton, sank his teeth for the first time: having walked to the South Strand district luxuriously into the first respectable-looking steak he had to look up old haunts he now stands gawping incredulously seen since arriving in England.

at the strip-joints that jostle each other all along Cortez Avenue - topless and bottomless ping-pong, roulette, shoe-

•in;

shine, barbecue, all-in wrestling and go-go dancing -

The Hilton was a damned expensive hotel, but Morris where once stood sober saloons and caf& and handicraft reckoned that he owed himself some indulgence after three shops and art galleries and satirical nightclubs and poetry weeks in Rummidge and in any case he was making sure cellars, now GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS! and S T R I P - S T R I P -

that he got full value out of his occupation of the warm, S T R I P - S T R I P in giant neon letters strain against the sun sound-proofed and sleekly furnished room on the sixteenth (for it is still only afternoon in Euphoria) and seek to lure the floor. He had already showered twice since checking in, and idle male into the smoky-coloured darkness behind the walked about naked on the fitted carpet,

bathed in fluent velvet curtains where rock music twangs and thuds and the waves of heated air, had climbed back into bed to watch TV

girls pictured outside with huge polished breasts like the and ordered his lunch from Room Service - a club sand-nose-cones of missiles 'DANCE BEFORE YOU ENTIRELY

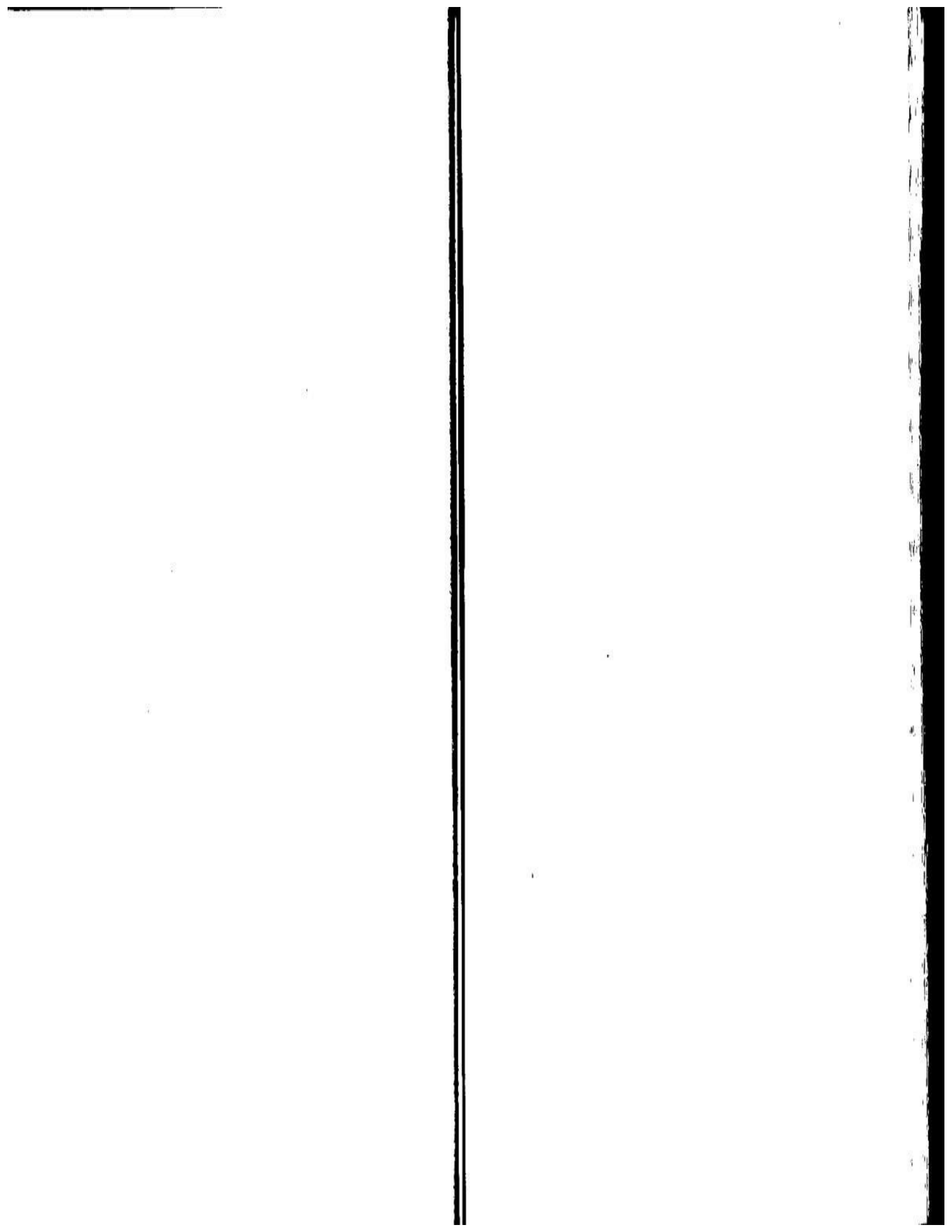
wich with french fries on the side preceded by a large Manhattan and followed by apple pie *A la mode*. All simple **NAKED THEY HIDE ABSOLUTELY N O T H I N G . . .**'

everyday amenities of the American way of life - but what rare pleasures they seemed in exile.

. . . that was strictly for hicks, tourists and businessmen.

Morris Zapp's reputation as a sophisticate would have been However, perhaps it was time he put his nose outside the destroyed the moment he was seen by a colleague or student revolving doors and took a look at Swinging London, he patronizing one of the South Strand strip-bars. 'What, conceded, as he waddled from the dining-room with a com-Morris Zapp ? going to *topless* shows ? Morris Zapp *paying* fortably full belly and selected an expensive Panatella from to see bare tits ? What is this, Morris, not getting enough of the cigar store in the lobby. He donned overcoat and gloves it these days?' And so on and thus would have been the and a Khrushchev hat in black nylon fur he had bought badinage. So Morris had never crossed the threshold of any from a Rummidge chain store, and sallied out into the raw strip-club on South Strand, though he had often felt a stab London nigh* He walked along Piccadilly to the Circus, of low curiosity, passing on his way to a restaurant or i to

in



'I bring heat, sir.'

movie-house; and now, standing amid the alien porn of Morris returned to his place and the Indian followed, Soho, six thousand miles from home, only strangers around trailing a small electric heater on a long cord - but not quite to observe him, and not many of those (for it is a cold, raw long enough to reach Morris. The heater glowed feebly in night) he thinks, 'Why not?' and ducks into the very next the violet murk some yards from his seat. Morris put on his strip-joint he comes to, under the nose of a disconsolate-hat and gloves, buttoned up his topcoat, and grimly lit a looking Indian at the door.

fresh cigar, determined to stick it out. He had made a terrible mistake, but he wasn't going to admit it. So he sat and And 'Why not?' thought Philip Swallow. 'It's something smoked and stared at the empty stage, chafing his chilled I've never seen and always wanted to and what's the harm limbs from time to time to keep the circulation going.

and who's to know and anyway it's a phenomenon of cultural and sociological interest. I wonder how much it would cost.'

While Philip Swallow, having been prepared to be disapHe walked up and down the length of the Avenue assessing pointed, cheated, frustrated and finally bored (for was that the establishments that were open this early in the day and not the conventional wisdom concerning commercialized eventually selected a small bar calling itself the Pussycat Gosex, that it was a fake and a bore?) found that on the con-go, which promised topless and bottomless dancers with no trary he was not at all bored, but quite entranced and de-cover charge or other extras. He took a deep breath and lighted, sitting over a gin and tonic (dear at \$1.50, but it plunged into the darkness.

was true there was no cover charge) while one of three beautiful young girls danced quite naked not three yards 4 Good evening, sir,' said the Indian, smiling brilliantly.

from his nose. And not only were they beautiful, but also

'One pound, please sir. The performance is about to begin, unexpectedly wholesome and intelligent-looking, not at all sir.'

the blowsy, blase* hoydens he had anticipated, so that one Morris paid his pound and pushed through a baize might almost suppose that they did it for love rather than curtain and a swing door. He found himself in a small, money - as though liking, in any case, to shuffle their feet dimly-lit room, with three rows of bentwood chairs drawn up and wiggle their hips to the sound of pop music they thought before a small, low stage. A spotlight threw a pool of violet they might as well take off their clothes while they were light on to the stage, and an ancient amplifier wheezed about it and give a little harmless pleasure to others at the laboured pop music. The room was very cold and, except same time. Three of them there were, and while one danced, for Morris, entirely empty. He sat down in the middle of another served drinks and the third rested. They wore the front row of chairs and waited. After a few minutes, he briefs and little shifts like children's vests and they slipped in went back to the entrance.

and out of these simple garments modestly but quite un-

'Hey,' he said to the Indian.

selfconsciously in full view of the bar's clientele, for there

'You like a drink, sir? Beer, sir?'

was no changing-room in the cramped premises, strip-

' I'd like to see some strip-tease.'

tease was quite the wrong term, there was no tease about it

'Certainly, sir. One moment sir. If you would be a little at all, and they gave each other little friendly pats on the patient. The girl arrives very soon, sir.'

shoulder as they changed over, with all the considerate cama-

' Is there only one ?'

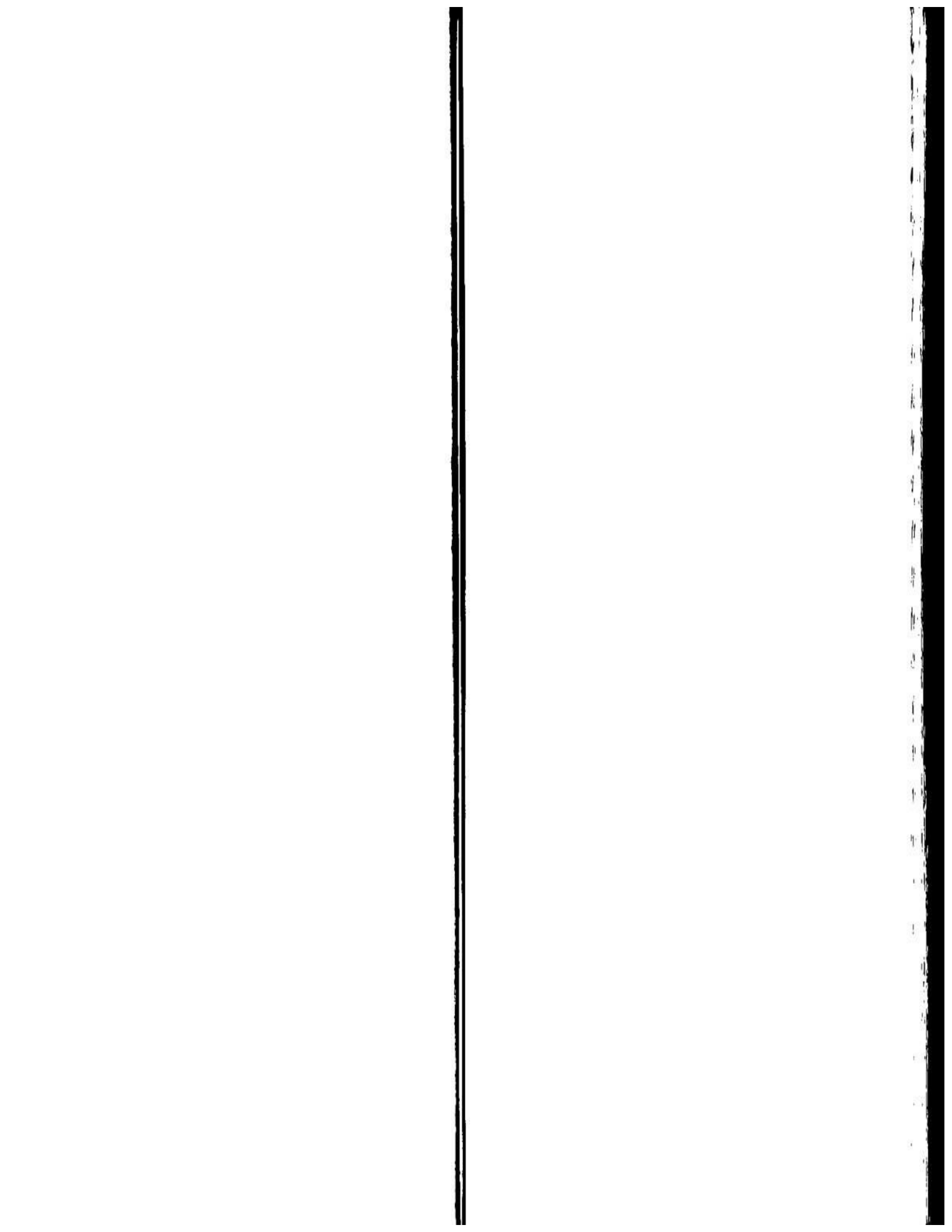
raderie of a convent school relay team. Nothing could have

' One at a time, sir.'

been less sordid.

'And it's cold as hell in there.'

*



Morris's cigar was about half smoked when he heard the

'You're fired,' said the Indian.

voice of a girl raised - apologetically or protestingly, he

'OK,' said Mary.

couldn't be sure, for she was suffering from a head cold - on

'Come and have a drink,' said Morris.

the other side of the baize curtain. At length the Indian

'Where?'

escorted her behind a rough-and-ready screen in one corner

'At the Hilton?'

of the room. As she scuffed past in boots like Mrs Swallow's,

'You talked me into it,' said Mary. 'I'll fetch my coat.'

wearing a headscarf and carrying a little plastic zipper-bag, Morris hurried off eagerly to get a cab. The evening had she looked about as sexy as a Siberian Miss Five Year Plan.

been suddenly redeemed. He looked forward to getting The Indian, however, plainly thought his reputation was better acquainted with Mary Makepeace in his cosy room at saved. He was all smiles. Picking up a hand mike and fixing the Hilton. As the cab drew away from the kerb, he put his his gaze on Morris, who was still the only customer, he arm round her shoulders.

boomed out:

'What's a nice girl like you doing in a joint like that?' he

'GOOD EVENING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! Our first said.' To coin a phrase.'

performer this evening is Fifi the French Maid. Thank you.'

'I hope it's understood I'm just having a drink with you, The music swelled as the Indian manipulated the knobs Professor Zapp ?'

on his tape recorder, and a blonde wearing a minuscule lace

'Of course,' he said blandly. 'What else ?'

apron over black underwear and stockings stepped into the

'For one thing, I'm still pregnant. I didn't go through spotlight and posed with a feather duster.

with the abortion.'

' Well I'm damned,' said Morris aloud.

'I'm very glad to hear it,' Morris said flatly, removing his Mary Makepeace (for that was who it was) took a step arm.

forward, shielding her eyes against the light. 'Who's that?

' I thought you would be. But there was nothing ethical I know that voice.'

about my decision, you understand? I still believe in a

' How was Stratford-upon-Avon ?'

woman's right to determine her own biological destiny.'

' Hey, Professor Zapp! What are you doing here ?'

'You do?'

' I was going to ask you the same question.'

'But I chickened out at the last moment. It was the The Indian hurried forward. 'Please! please! Customers nursing home. Girls wandering about in bedsocks with tears are not permitted to converse with the artistes. Kindly con-streaming down their cheeks. Toilet bowls full of blood . . . '

tinue the performance, Fifi.'

Morris shuddered. 'Spare me the details,' he begged.

'Yeah, continue, Fifi,' said Morris.

' But what about the stripping bit ? Isn't that exploitation ?'

' Listen, this is no customer, this is someone I know,' said

'Sure, but I desperately need the bread. This is one job Mary Makepeace. ' I'm darned if I'm going to strip for *him*.

you can do without a work permit.'

With nobody else in the audience, too. It's indecent.'

'What d'you want to stay in this lousy country for?'

' It's supposed to be indecent. That's what strip-tease is

' To have the baby here. I want him to have dual nation-for,' said Morris.

ality, so he can avoid the draft when he grows up.'

' Please Fifi!' the Indian pleaded. ' If you begin, maybe

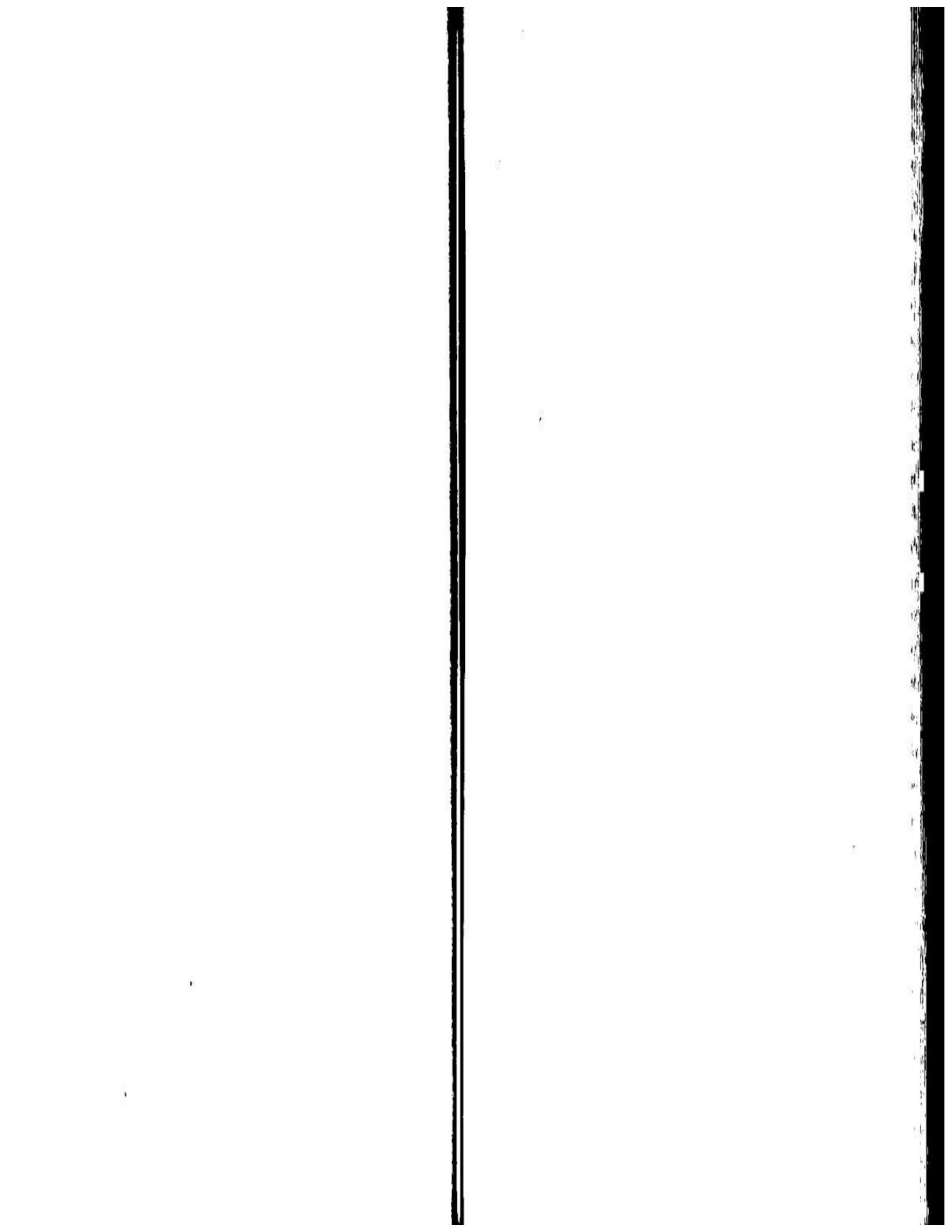
' How d'you know it's going to be a boy ?'

other customers will come.'

'Either way, I can't lose. Having babies is free in this

'No,'said Mary.

country.'



But how much longer can you do this type of work? Or Euphoria **Ninety-Nine, you know? She gets kind of lonely** are you changing your act to Fifi the pregnant maid ?'

• • •

' I see your sense of humour hasn't changed, Professor

' I'm lonely too. Come back to Plotinus with **me, Melanie,**'

Zapp.'

he said, the words sounding thrillingly passionate and poetic

' I do my best,' he said.

to his own ears.

' Well, I'm kind of tied up right now, Philip.'

While Philip, now nursing his fourth gin and tonic, and

*'Come live with me and be my love. And we will **all the pleasures** having studied the anatomies of the three Pussycat Go-go **prove.***' He leered at her.

girls for some two hours, had reached, he felt, a profound

'Take it easy, Philip.' Melanie smiled apprehensively, insight into the nature of the generation gap: it was a and attempted to disengage her arms from his grip. "Those difference of age. The young were younger. Hence more go-go girls have gotten you all excited. Tell me, **I've always** beautiful. Their skin had a bloom, they still had their back wondered, are they really quite naked ?'

teeth, their bellies were flat, their breasts (ah!) were firm,

' Quite. But not as beautiful as you, Melanie.'

their thighs (ah! ah!) were not veined like Danish Blue

'That's very sweet of you, Philip.' She managed to free cheese. And how was the gap to be bridged? By love, of herself. 'I guess I must be going now. See you.' She began course. By girls like Melanie generously giving their firm walking briskly towards the junction of Cortez Avenue and **1**

young flesh to withered old sticks like himself, restoring the Main Street. Philip limped along beside **her. The Avenue** circulation of the sap. Melanie! How simple and good her was getting busy. Cars honked and hummed **in the road**, gesture seemed in the clear light of his new understanding.

pedestrians jostled them on the pavement.

I

How needlessly he had complicated it with emotions and

'Melanie! **You** can't disappear again. **Have you for-ethics.**

gotten what happened **the** other night ?'

He stood up to leave at last. His foot had gone to sleep

' Do you have to tell everybody in the **street** ? *

again, but his heart was full of goodwill to all men. It Philip lowered **his** voice:' **It was the first time it ever hap-seemed entirely natural that, coming out of the Pussycat Go-pened to me.'**

go, dazzled by the sunbeams slanting low over Cortez She stopped and stared' You mean - you **were a virgin ?** '

Avenue, and a trifle unsteady on his feet because of the

' **I** mean apart from my wife, of course.'

liquor and the pins and needles, he should collide with She put her hand sympathetically on his **arm.** **'I'm sorry** Melanie Byrd herself, as if she had materialized on the Philip. If I'd realized what a big deal it was **for you,** I pavement in obedience to his wishes.

wouldn't have gotten involved.'

'Why, Professor Swallow!'

'I suppose it meant absolutely nothing to you?' he said

'Melanie! My dear girl!' He grasped her fondly with bitterly, hanging his head. The sun had dropped behind the both hands. 'Where have you been? Why did you run rooftops and he shivered in a sudden gust of chill wind off away from me ?'

the Bay. The glory had gone from the afternoon.

' I didn't run away from anybody, Professor Swallow.'

'It was one of those things that happen when you get a

""Philip", please.'

little high. It was nice, b u t . . . you know.' She shrugged.

'I've just been staying here in the city, with a friend.'

'I know it wasn't very successful,' he mumbled. **'But**

'A boy friend ?' he asked anxiously.

give me another chance.'

'A girl friend. Her husband's in jail - he's one of the

' Philip, please.'

'At least have dinner with me here. I must talk...'

3. Corresponding

She shook her head. 'Sorry, Philip. I just can't. I have a date.'

'A date? Who with?'

'Just a guy. I don't know him all that well, actually, so I don't want to keep him waiting.'

'What are you going to do with him?'

Melanie sighed. 'If you must know, I'm going to help him look for an apartment. Seems his roommate freaked out on *Hilary to Philip*

LSD and burned their place down last night. See you, Philip.'

Dearest,

'He can sleep in my spare room, if you like,' Philip bid. Many thanks for your airletter. We were all glad to hear desperately, clutching at her arm.

that you had arrived safely, especially Matthew, who saw Melanie frowned, hesitated. 'Your spare room?'

pictures of an air-crash in America on television and was

'Just for a few days, while he's looking round. Phone him convinced that it was your plane. Now he's worried by your up and tell him. Then come and have dinner with me.'

joke about living in a house that's going to slide into the sea

'You can tell him yourself,' said Melanie. 'He's over there at any moment, so will you please put that right in your outside Modern Times.'

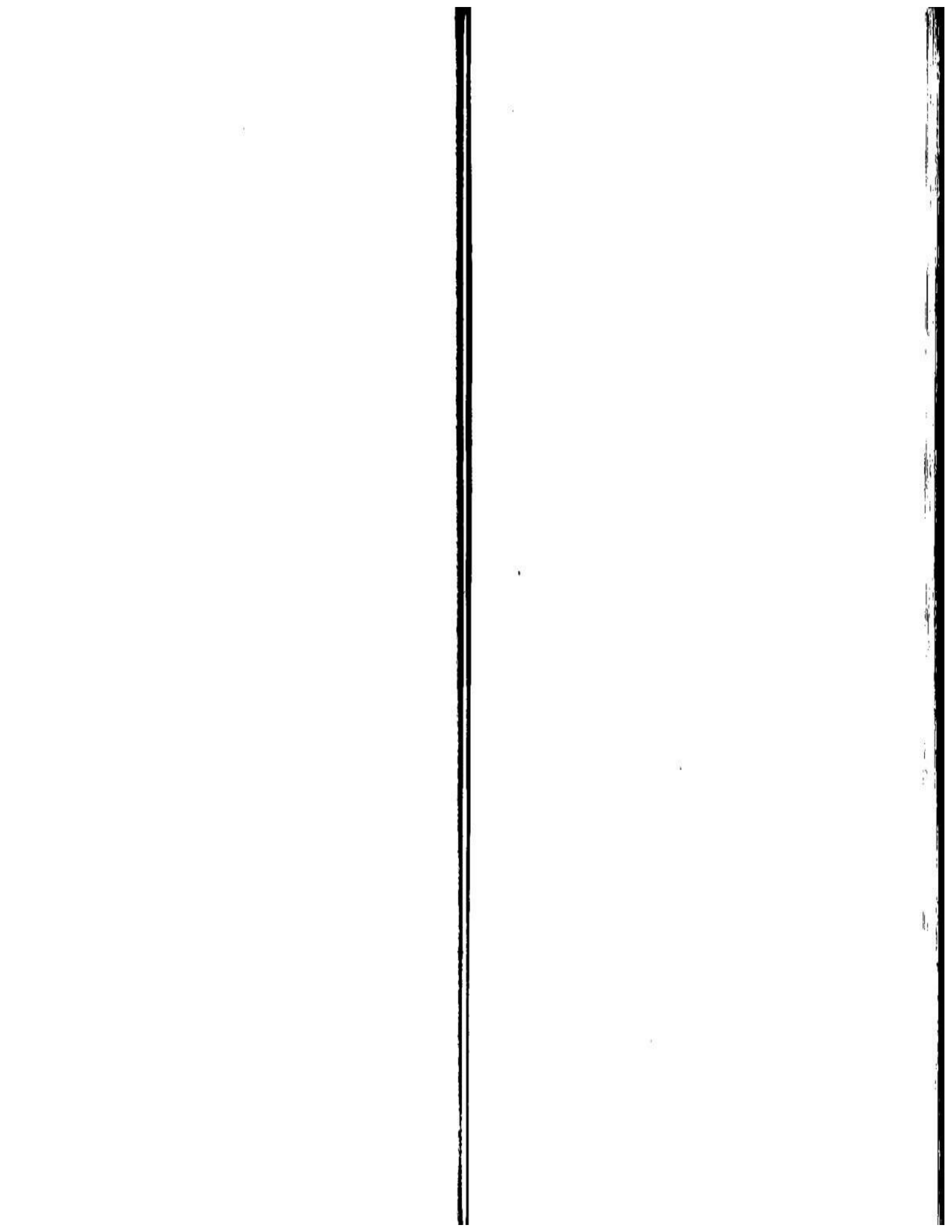
next letter.

Philip stared across the gleaming, throbbing river of cars I expect the girls underneath you will take pity on your to the Modern Times Bookshop, once famous as the head-wifeless state and offer to wash your shirts and sew buttons quarters of the Beat Generation. Outside, hunched slightly etc. I can't see you coping with that washing-machine in the against the wind, hands thrust deep into the pockets of his basement. Incidentally I'm afraid our own washing-jeans, making a bulge like a codpiece, was Charles Boon.

machine is making a terrible grinding noise and the service man says the main bearing is going and it will cost £21 to repair. Is it worth it, or shall I trade it in for a new one while it's still working?

Yes, the view, I do remember it so well, though from the other side of the Bay of course - you remember that funny little attic apartment we had in Esseph. When we were young and foolish . . . Ah well, no point in getting sentimental, with you 6000 miles away, and me with the washing up still to do.

Oh - before I forget - I've not been able to find *Let's Write a Novel*, either here or at the University. Though I couldn't make a really thorough search at the University because Mr Zapp is already occupying your room. I can't say I took to him. I asked Bob Busby how he was settling in, and he said that very few people had seen much of him - he seems to be a



rather silent and standoffish person, who spends most of his surprise, there are signs of trouble on campus. A bomb ex-time in his room.

ploded in the men's John on the fourth floor of Dealer last Fancy your meeting that rogue Charles Boon on the plane, week, presumably intended to go off while one of your and his being such a success out there. Americans *are* rather colleagues was taking a crap, but the building was evacuated gullible, aren't they?

as the result of a tip-off. The Hogans invited me to a lousy Love from all of us here,

cocktail party, but I didn't talk to anyone much, it was the Hilary

usual crowd of schmucks plus a new one, Charles Boon of the ditto radio show. Oh yes, I nearly forgot, and I met your opposite number, Philip Swallow. I was somewhat slewed *Disirie to Morris*

by this time and kept calling him Sparrow, but he took it straight on the stiff upper lip. Jesus, if all the British are like Dear Morris,

him I don't know how you're going to survive. He hadn't even Thank you for your letter. Really. I enjoyed it. Especially the bits about Dr O'Shea and about the four different kinds Coincidence: just as I was writing that last sentence, I of electric sockets in your rooms and the Department notice-looked out of the window and who should be walking up the board. The kids enjoyed those bits too.

drive but Mr Swallow himself. Not so much walking, actually, I guess it's the first real letter I've ever received from you as crawling up on his hands and knees. He'd climbed all the

- I mean apart from scrawls on hotel notepaper about way up here on foot from the campus - said it didn't look so meeting you at the airport or sending on your lecture notes.

far on the street map and he hadn't realized that the road Reading it made you seem almost human, somehow. Of was practically vertical. Turned out he was the guy who course, I could see you were trying like hell to be witty and had called about the Corvair and he'd come to look at it.

charming, but that's all right, as long as I'm not taken in.

So it was too bad I'd met him at the Hogans because of And I'm not. Are you receiving me, Morris? i AM NOT

course I had to tell him all about Nader etc. And naturally **TAKEN IN**.

enough he decided against it. Actually, I felt kind of sorry I'm not going to change my mind about the divorce, so for him. Apparently he's already been conned into renting a please don't waste typewriter ribbon trying to make me.

house built on a slide area so if he'd bought the Corvair he'd And for that matter, don't abstain from sexual intercourse have been a pretty lousy actuarial risk whether he went out on my account, either. There was a hint to that effect in or stayed at home.

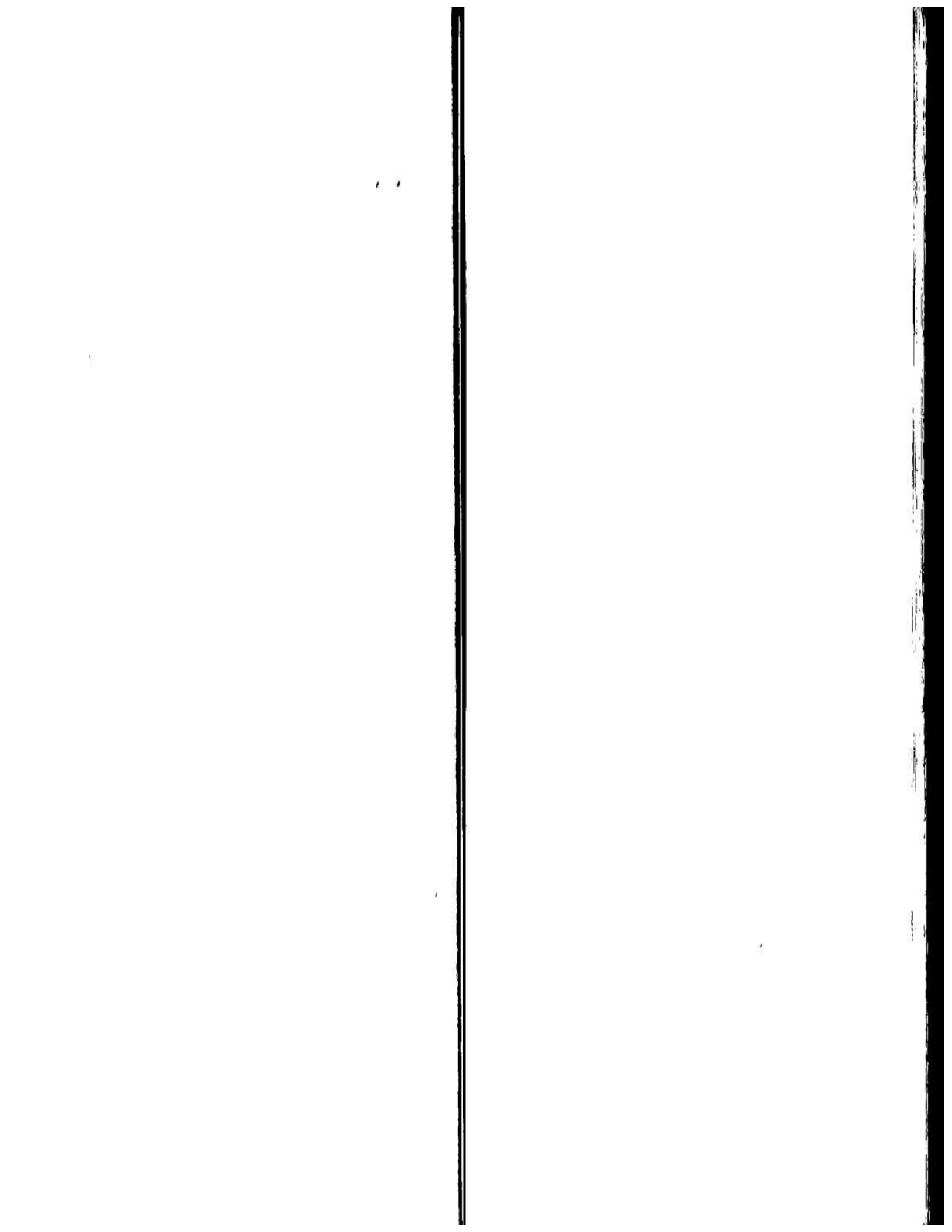
your letter, and I'd hate you to feel, when you return, that It is very quiet and pleasant here without you, Morris. I you'd thrown away six months' good screwing for nothing.

have turned the TV to the wall, and spend a lot of time A propos of that, isn't the Lotus Europa you've ordered a reading and listening to classical music on the hi-fi -

somewhat^oang car for you ? I saw one in downtown Esseph Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov and Sibelius, all that yesterday and, well, frankly it's just a penis on wheels, isn't Slav romanticism you made me feel ashamed of liking when it? As regards the Corvair, I didn't forget to put a card in we first met.

the Co-op last week, but there's been only one inquiry so far and unfortunately I was out. Darcy took the call and God The twins are fine. They spend a lot of time holed up knows what he told the guy.

together somewhere and I expect they are experimenting The Winter quarter begins this week and, surprise, sexually but figure there's nothing I can do about it. Biology i« their great passion at the moment. They have even de-ISO



veloped an interest in gardening, which I have encouraged, and I'd hoped that the roses would have been some assurance naturally, by donating a sunny corner of our precipitous that I was alive and kicking and thinking of you. Instead of yard. They send you their love. It would be hypocritical of which they seem to have had the opposite effect. I confess I'd me to do the same.

put back a fair amount of gin the night before, and perhaps Desirec

the roses were a morning-after act of atonement. The cocktail party was given by Luke Hogan, the Chairman of the PS. No, I haven't seen Melanie around. Why don't you Department, whose wife enlisted my help in coaxing Charles write to her yourself?

Boon to come and be lionized, an irony I could have done without. Among the other guests was Mrs Zapp, extremely tight, and in a highly aggressive mood. I didn't take to her *Hilary to Philip*

at all, but since then, through an odd coincidence, I've had Dearest,

to revise my estimate somewhat in her favour. I followed up A man from Johnson's came round this morning with an advertisement for a second-hand Chevrolet Corvaire, a huge bunch of red roses which he said you had sent by which turned out to be the Zapps' second car. But when Interflora. I said there must be some mistake because it Mrs Zapp recognized me she told me that the Corvaire is wasn't my birthday or anything, but he wouldn't take them considered an unsafe model, and very honestly advised me back to the shop. I phoned Johnson's and they said, yes, not to buy it.

you had ordered them. Philip, is anything the matter? It's The Zapps live in a luxurious house, in some disarray not like you. Roses in January must have cost the earth.

when I called, at the top of an incredibly steep hill. There They were hothouse, naturally, and are dying already.

are two young Zapps, twins, called rather preposterously Did you get my last letter about not being able to find Elizabeth and Darcy (Zapp is a Jane Austen man, of course *Let's Write a Novel?* It seems a long time since we heard from

- indeed *the* Jane Austen man in the opinion of many). The you. Have you started teaching yet?

gossip here is that their marriage is breaking up, and Mrs I met Janet Dempsey at the supermarket and she said that Zapp intimated as much to me, so I suppose that might Robin was determined to move if he doesn't get promotion account for her rather off-putting manner, and his too, by this session. But surely they can't give him a senior lecture-the sound of it. The divorce rate is fantastically high here.

ship before you, can they? He's so much younger.

It's rather disturbing when one is used to a more stable Write soon, love from

social environment. So is the way everybody, including Mrs Hilary

Zapp, uses four-letter words all the time, even in front of their own children. It's a bit of a shock at

first, hearing P S . The noise from the washing-machine is getting worse.

faculty wives and nice young girls saying 'shit' and 'fuck', as one might say ' Gee whizz', or ' darn it'. Rather like one's first week in the army.

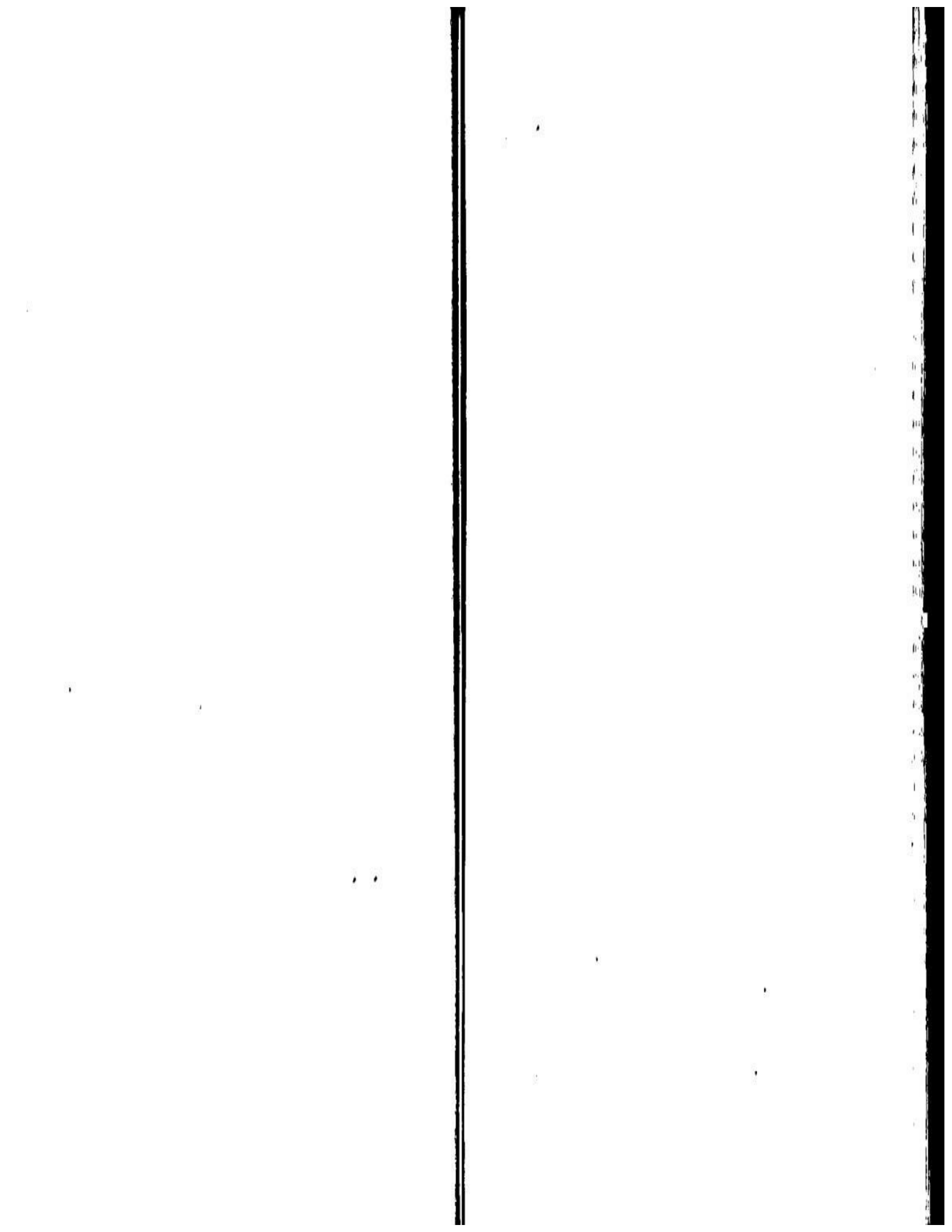
Philip to Hilary

I confess I had something of the raw-recruit feeling when I Darling,

went to meet my classes for the first time this week. The I was stricken with guilt as soon as I saw your second air-system is so different, and the students are so much more letter this morning. *Mea culpa*, but it has been a rather hectic heterogeneous than they are at home. They've read the week, with the term, or quarter as they call it, beginning; most outlandish things and not read the most obvious ones.

122

123



I had a student in my room the other day, obviously very please, and offer to come down a couple of hundred dollars.

bright, who appeared to have read only two authors, Offer green stamps and a tankful of gas, too, if that will help.

Gurdjieff (is that how you spell him ?) and somebody called Desir6e, your letter did nothing to lighten a heavy week.

Asimov, and had never even heard of E. M. Forster.

It isn't true after all that there are no students at British I'm teaching two courses, which means I meet two groups universities: this week they returned from their prolonged of students three times a week for ninety minutes, or would Christmas vacation. Too bad, I was just beginning to get the do if it weren't for the Third World Students' strike. There's hang of things. Now the teaching has thrown me back to a student called Wily (*sic*) Smith, who claims he's black, square one. I swear the system here will be the death of me.

though in fact he looks scarcely darker than me, and he Did I say system ? A slip of the tongue. There is no system.

pestered me from the day I arrived to let him enrol in my They have something called tutorials, instead. Three creative writing course. Well, I finally agreed, and then on students and me, for an hour at a time. We're supposed to the first occasion the class met, what d'you think happened?

discuss some text I've assigned. This, apparently, can be Wily Smith harangued his fellow students and persuaded anything that comes into my head, except that the campus them that they must support the strike by boycotting my bookshop doesn't have anything that comes into my head.

class. There's nothing personal in it, of course, as he was But supposing we manage to agree, me and the students, on kind enough to explain, but it did seem rather a nerve.

some book of which four copies can be scratched together, Well, darling, I hope the length of this letter will make up one of them writes a paper and reads it out to the rest of for my remissness of late. Please assure Matthew that my us. After about three minutes the eyes of the other two glaze house is not about to slide into the sea. As to Robin Demp-over and they begin to sag in their chairs. It's clear they sey, I think it's unlikely that he'll get a senior lectureship have stopped listening. I'm listening like hell but can't

<• I

this year, promotion prospects being what they are at understand a word because of the guy's limey accent. All too Rummidge, but not through any competition with me, I'm soon, he stops. 'Thank you,' I say, flashing him an appe-afraid. He has published quite a lot of articles.

ciative smile. He looks at me reproachfully as he blows his All my love,

nose, then carries on from where he paused, in mid-sentence.

Philip

The other two students wake up briefly, exchange glances and snigger. That's the most animation they ever show.

When the guy reading the paper finally winds it up, I ask for comments. Silence. They avoid my eye. I volunteer a *Morris to Disirie*

comment myself. Silence falls again. It's so quiet you can All right, so you're determined to divorce me, Desiree. OK, hear the guy's beard growing. Desperately I ask one of them so you hate my guts, but don't break my heart. I mean, a direct question. 'And what *did you* think of the text, Miss punish me if you must, but there's no need to be downright Archer ?' Miss Archer falls off her chair in a swoon.

sadistic about it. Unless you're joking. You're joking, yes?

Well, to be fair, it only happened once, and it had some-You didn't really throw away the chance to sell the Corvair thing to do with the kid's period that she fainted, but some-to Swallow? You didn't actually *advise* him NOT to buy it?

how it seemed symbolic.

Swallow - very probably the only prospective purchaser of Believe it or not, I'm feeling quite homesick for Euphoric a used Corvair in the State of Euphoria. If by any chance State politics. What this place needs is a few bomb outrages.

Mr Swallow is still thinking it over, get on the phone at once, They could begin by blowing up the Chairman of the 124

..

.

.

..

..

..

English Department, one Gordon Masters, whose main content merely to pour scorn on my arguments and my interest is murdering wildlife and hanging the corpses on the evidence and my accuracy and my style, to make my walls of his office. He was captured at Dunkirk and spent article out to be some kind of monument to imbecility and the war in a PO W camp. I can't imagine how the Germans perversity in scholarship, no, he wanted my blood and my stood him. He runs the Department very much in the spirit balls too, he wanted to beat my ego to a pulp.

of Dunkirk, as a strategic withdrawal against overwhelming Of course I need hardly say that the author was complete-odds, the odds being students, administrators, the Govern-ly out of his mind, that his account of my essay was a traves-ment, long hair on boys, short skirts on girls, promiscuity, ty, and his own arguments riddled with false assumptions Casebooks, ball-point pens - just about the whole modern and errors of fact that a child could have seen through. But, world, in short. I knew he was mad the first time I saw him, but - this is the turn of the screw - there's nothing I can do or half-mad, because it only shows in one eye and he's about it. I mean I can't write to the *TLS* saying, in the cunning enough to keep it closed most of the time, while he usual style, 'My attention has been drawn to a review pub-hypnotizes the faculty with the other one. They don't seem lished in your journal four years ago . . .' I should just look to mind. The tolerance of people here is enough to turn ridiculous. That's what bugs me about the whole business -

your stomach.

the time-slip. It's only just happened to *me*, but to everybody If you notice a certain acidity in my prose today, and else it's history. All these years I've been walking around hypothesize some wound inflicted on that tender plant, my with a wound I never knew had been inflicted. All my pride, you wouldn't be far wrong, Desiree, my dear. I was in friends must have known - they must have seen the knife the Library today, looking through the files of *The Times* sticking out between my shoulder-blades - but not one *Literary Supplement* for something, when quite by chance I sonofabitch had the decency to tell me. Afraid I'd bite their turned up a long review of that Festschrift for Jackson fucking heads off, I suppose, and so I would have done, but Milestone that I contributed to in '64, remember? No, of what are friends for anyway? And my enemy, who is he?

course, you make a point of forgetting anything I have Some PhD student I flunked? Some limey scholar whose written. Anyway, take my word for it, I wrote a dashing book I chewed up in a footnote ? Some guy whose mother I piece on 'ApoUonian-Dionysian Dialectic in the novels of ran over in my car without noticing? Do you remember, Jane Austen' for this collection, but for some reason I had Desiree, any exceptionally heavy bump in the road, driving never seen this particular review before. Naturally I somewhere four or five years ago ?

skimmed through the columns to see whether there was any De"siree, your concern that I should have a full sex-life comment on my contribution, and sure enough there it is: while I am over here is touching, but you should think

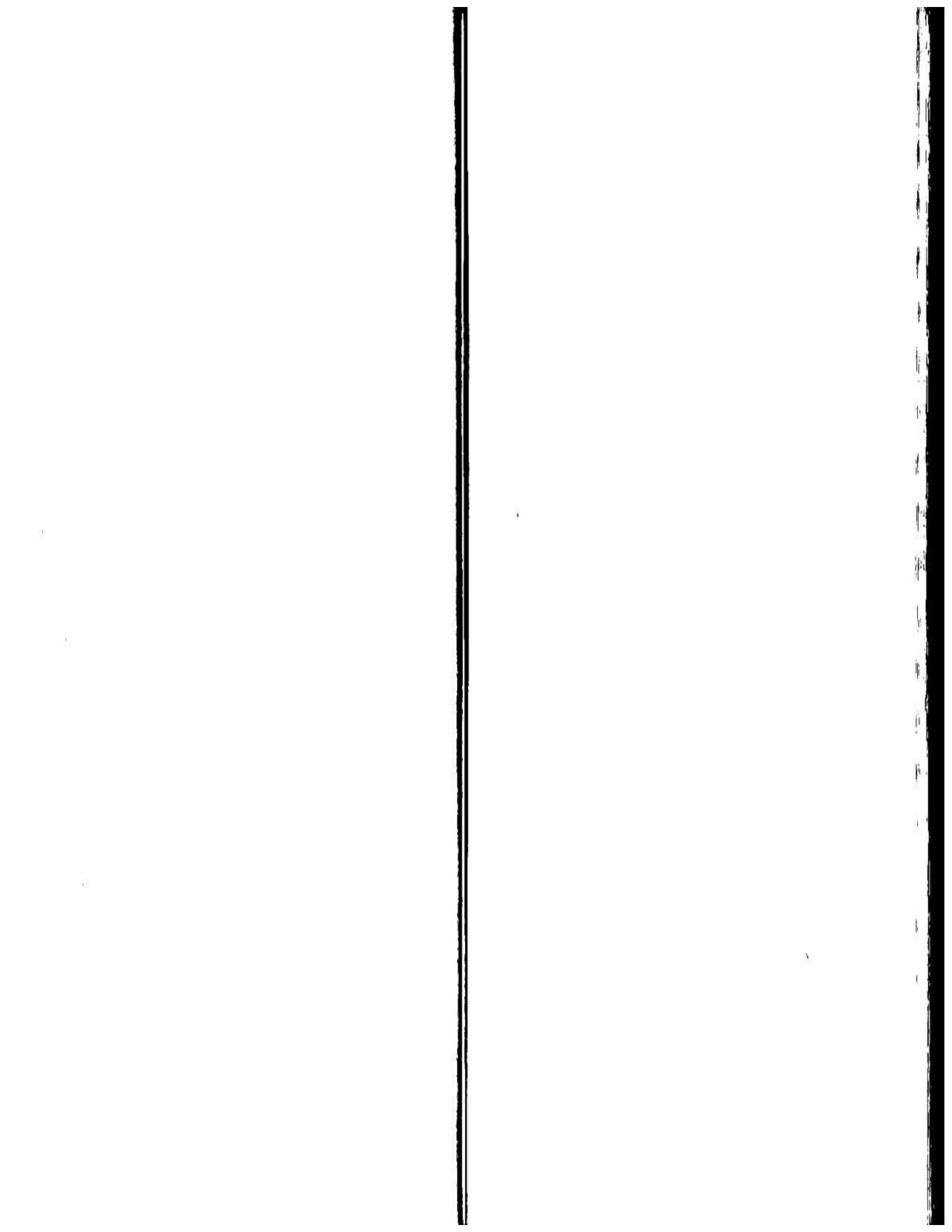
'Turning to Professor Zapp's essay . . .' and I can see at a twice before you put such generous thoughts

in writing: it glances that my piece is honoured with extensive discussion.

could louse up your divorce petition, though I continue to imagine receiving a poison-pen letter, or an obscene hope that our marital problem is not terminal. In any case, telephone call, or discovering that a hired assassin has been I haven't felt inclined to avail myself of your kind dispensa-following you about the streets all day with a gun aimed at tion. They have winter here, you see, Desiree - the old the middle of your back. I mean, the shock of finding some seasonal bit, and the sap is sunk low at the moment.

source of anonymous malice in the world directed specific-Tell me more about the twins. Or, better, ask them to ly at you, without being able to identify it or account for it.

write a line to their old Dad, if the Euphoric public school Because this guy really wanted to hurt. I mean, he wasn't system is still teaching such outdated skills as writing. But **126**



that is great about the gardening. O'Shea is what you might slush outside the front door wearing galoshes and an absurd call an avant-gardener. He believes in randomness. His yard kind of cossack's hat. He didn't need any persuading -

is a wilderness of weeds and heaps of coal and broken play practically knocked me over in his eagerness to get in the equipment and wheelless prams and cabbages, silted-up house. I took him into the front room for a quick sherry, but bird baths and great gloomy trees slowly dying of some un-it was like an iceberg - I don't bother to light a fire in there specified disease. I know how they must feel.

now you're away - so I had to take him into the dining-Love,

room, where the children were just beginning a fight be-Morris

cause they were hungry for their dinner. I asked him if he would mind finishing his drink while I served the children PS. I did write to M. but it was sent back marked Not their meal, hoping this would be a hint to him to leave Known Here. Try to get me her new address, will you, from promptly, but he said no, he didn't mind and I should eat the Dean of Students' Office ?

too, and he took off his hat and coat and sat down to watch us. And I mean watch us. His eyes followed every movement from dish to plate to mouth. It was acutely embarrassing.

The children fell eerily silent, and I could see that *Amanda Hilary to Philip*

and Robert were looking at each other and going red in the face with suppressed giggles. In the end I had to ask him if he Dearest,

wouldn't like to join us at the table.

Many thanks for your long and interesting letter. What a pity, though, that you had to write those words in it. Because I don't think I've ever seen anyone so heavily built move I couldn't of course let Amanda read it, though she pestered quite so fast. It was lucky that I'd cooked a biggish joint me for days. Rather thoughtless of you, dear, wasn't it, because there wasn't much left on the bone by the time Mr because naturally the children are interested in your letters.

Zapp had had his third helping. Though his table manners And I must say it seemed to me quite uncalled for.

left something to be desired, I didn't really begrudge him the You didn't tell me, by the way, that there was a bomb food, since he was obviously starved of decent home cooking.

explosion in your building shortly after you arrived, but I He also did his best to entertain the children, and made quite a hit with Amanda because he seemed to know all about her suppose you didn't want to worry us. Were you in any favourite pop songs-the names of the singers and the titles of danger? If things get any worse you'll just have to come the records and how high they had got in the Top Twenty home, and bother the money.

and so on, which seemed to me quite extraordinary in a man. By the way, as you didn't answer my question about the of his age and profession, but impressed the children hugely, washing-machine I have bought a new one. Fully automatic especially Amanda as I say. But I presumed he'd have the and rather expensive, but it's super.

tact to scoot off fairly soon after dinner, and served coffee I heard about the bomb from Mr Zapp. A very curious straight away to give him the hint. No such luck. He sat on encounter, which I must tell you about. He came round the and on, telling stories - admittedly rather funny ones - about other evening with *Let's Write a Novel*, which he'd found in the extraordinary household he is living in (a doctor called your room after all. It was the most awkward time, about O'Shea - have you heard of him ?) until eventually I just 6, just as I was about to serve up the dinner, but I felt I had had to send Matthew off to bed and Robert and Amanda to to invite him in since he'd taken the trouble to bring your do their homework. When I started ostentatiously clearing book round and he looked rather pathetic standing in the **128**

lag

the table he insisted on helping me wash up. He obviously *Philip to Hilary*

had no idea how to do it and broke two plates and a glass before I could stop him. By this time I was beginning to Darling,

panic a bit, wondering if I was ever going to get him out of Many thanks for your letter. What an extraordinary the house.

fellow Zapp seems to be. I hope he won't bother you any Then suddenly he completely changed. He asked me more. Frankly, the more I hear about him, the less I like where the lavatory was and when he came back he was fully him. In particular, I shouldn't like Amanda to see more of dressed in his outdoor clothes and scowling all over his face.

him than is absolutely unavoidable. The fact is that the man He growled out a good-bye and a curt thank you and rushed is entirely unprincipled where women are concerned, and out of the house into a whirling snowstorm. He started his while he's not, as far as I know, another Humbert Humbert, car and let out the clutch far too quickly and as a result got I feel he might have an insidiously corrupting influence on stuck in the gutter. I listened to his wheels spinning and his an impressionable girl of Amanda's age. So, at least, I infer engine howling until I couldn't stand it any longer. So I from Mrs Zapp, who recited a catalogue of her husband's put on my fur coat and boots and went out to give him a sins to me in the course of an extremely drunken and dis-push. I got him out all right, but overbalanced in the orderly party to which we were both invited last Saturday.

process and fell sprawling.

Our hosts were Sy and Bella Gootblatt. He's a young associAs I picked myself off the ground I saw him disappear ate professor here - very brilliant, I believe, has written the round the corner, skidding wildly, for he didn't stop or even definitive study of Hooker. The Hogans were there, and call out thank you. If Mrs Zapp wants to divorce him she three other couples all from the English Department, which has my sympathy.

may sound rather inbred, but you must remember that the I saw Janet Dempsey again this morning (we seem to have English Department here is nearly as big as the entire Arts fixed on the same day for supermarket shopping) and she Faculty at Rummidge.

said Robin knows that he's definitely on Gordon's list of The tempo of a Plotinus dinner party takes some getting nominations for senior lectureships. Are you on it? I think used to. To begin with, the invitation for eight really means what gets me is the way Janet implies that I'm naturally eight-thirty to nine, as I realized from the consternation on going to be as fascinated by her husband's career as she is.

my host's face when I appeared on his doorstep one minute Also the pointed way she never refers to or asks about yours, after the appointed hour; and even when all the guests are as if it were a dead issue. Professor Zapp says you have to assembled there are several hours' hard drinking to be got push yourself to get on in the academic world, that nobody through before you actually sit down to eat. During this time ever gets anything unless they ask for it, and I'm inclined to the hostess (Bella

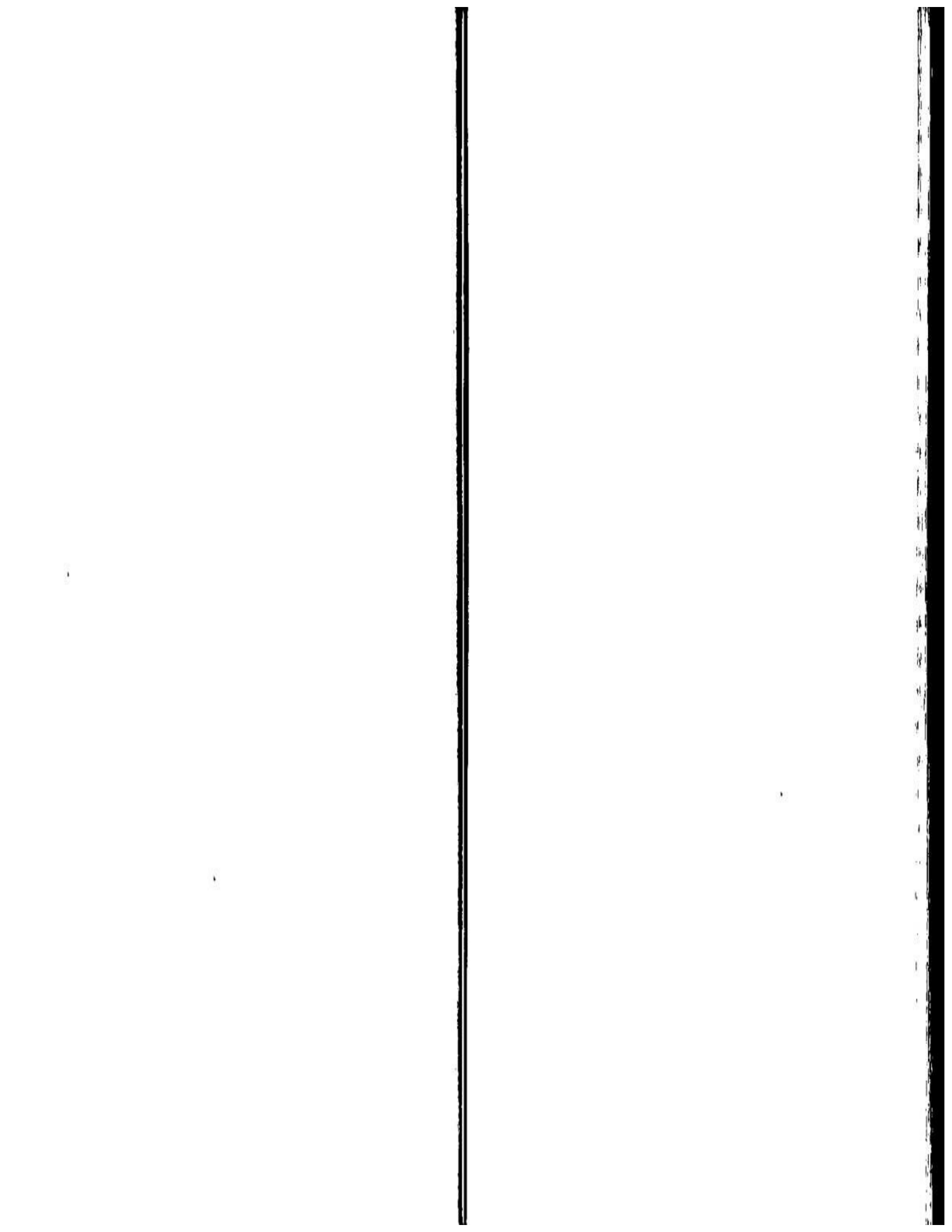
Gootblatt in see-through blouse and flared think he's right.

crushed velvet trousers) brings from the kitchen delicious Do you still want me to send on *Let's Write a Novel?* What snacks - sausages rolled in crisp bacon, cheese fondue, sour-a funny little book it is. There's a whole chapter on how to cream dips, tender hearts of artichokes, smoked fish and write an epistolary novel, but surely nobody's done that suchlike tangy delicacies, thus increasing one's thirst for the since the eighteenth century ?

lavish whisky-sours and daiquiris being prepared by the Love from all of us here,

host. The consequence is that when you finally sit down to Hilary

dine, at about eleven pm, everyone is totally sloshed and not very hungry. The food is half-spoiled anyway by being kept **130**



warm so long. Everybody drinks a great deal of wine to try as protection against the police truncheons (nightsticks as and wash down a respectable amount of food and so they all they rather sinisterly call them) and his face was glistening get drunker than ever. Everybody is shouting at the tops of with Vaseline which is supposed to protect your skin against their voices and cracking jokes frenziedly and screaming with MACE. I asked him what he wanted and he said he wanted laughter and then someone will say something just a bit too a consultation. I had my doubts but dutifully plied him with outrageous and suddenly there's murder in the air.

questions about his ghetto novel. He answered distractedly, Mrs Zapp was seated next to me at dinner. As we were his ears cocked for sounds of police activity in the building.

sitting over the coffee and the ruins of some intolerably Then he asked me if he could use my window. I said, sweet chocolate gateau, I tried to stem her flow of intimate certainly. He threw his leg over the sash and climbed out reminiscence by teaching the company how to play 'Humil-on to the balcony. After a few minutes I put my head out, iation'. Do you remember that old game? You've no idea but he had disappeared. I suppose he must have found a how difficult it was to get across the basic idea. On the first window open further along the balcony and left that way.

round they kept naming books they *had* read and thought The noise gradually faded. I went on reading *Lycidas*. ..

everyone else hadn't. But when they finally got the hang of I've no idea whether I've been nominated for a Senior it, they began to play with almost frightening intensity, Lectureship and I'd rather keep it that way, since I shan't especially a young chap called Ringbaum who ended up then have the mortification of knowing that I was definitely having a tremendous row with our host and left the house in turned down. If Dempsey wants to poke his nose into such a huff. The rest of us stayed on for an hour or so, mainly (as matters, let him. I think myself that there's a lot to be said far as I was concerned anyway, for I was quite exhausted) to for the English system of clandestine patronage. Here, for smooth over the awkwardness of this contretemps with Ring-instance, it's a jungle in which the weakest go to the wall.

baum.

There's been the most tremendous row going on all this The bomb, yes, I didn't think there was any point in week about a question *of* tenure - involving the Ringbaum worrying you by mentioning it. There's been no repetition chap, as it happens - and I'm glad to be well out of it.

of the incident, though there's still a good deal of disruption You'll be surprised to learn that Charles Boon is living on campus due to the strike. As I write this, sitting in my with me at the moment! He had to leave his previous

'office' as they call it, I can hear the chanting of the pickets quarters at short notice due to a fire and I offered to put rising up from Mather gate just below my window, ' O N

him up temporarily at the request of his girl friend, who lives **STRIKE, SHUT IT DOWN, ON STRIKE, SHUT IT DOWN!** A downstairs. I can't say he's applied himself very energeti-very

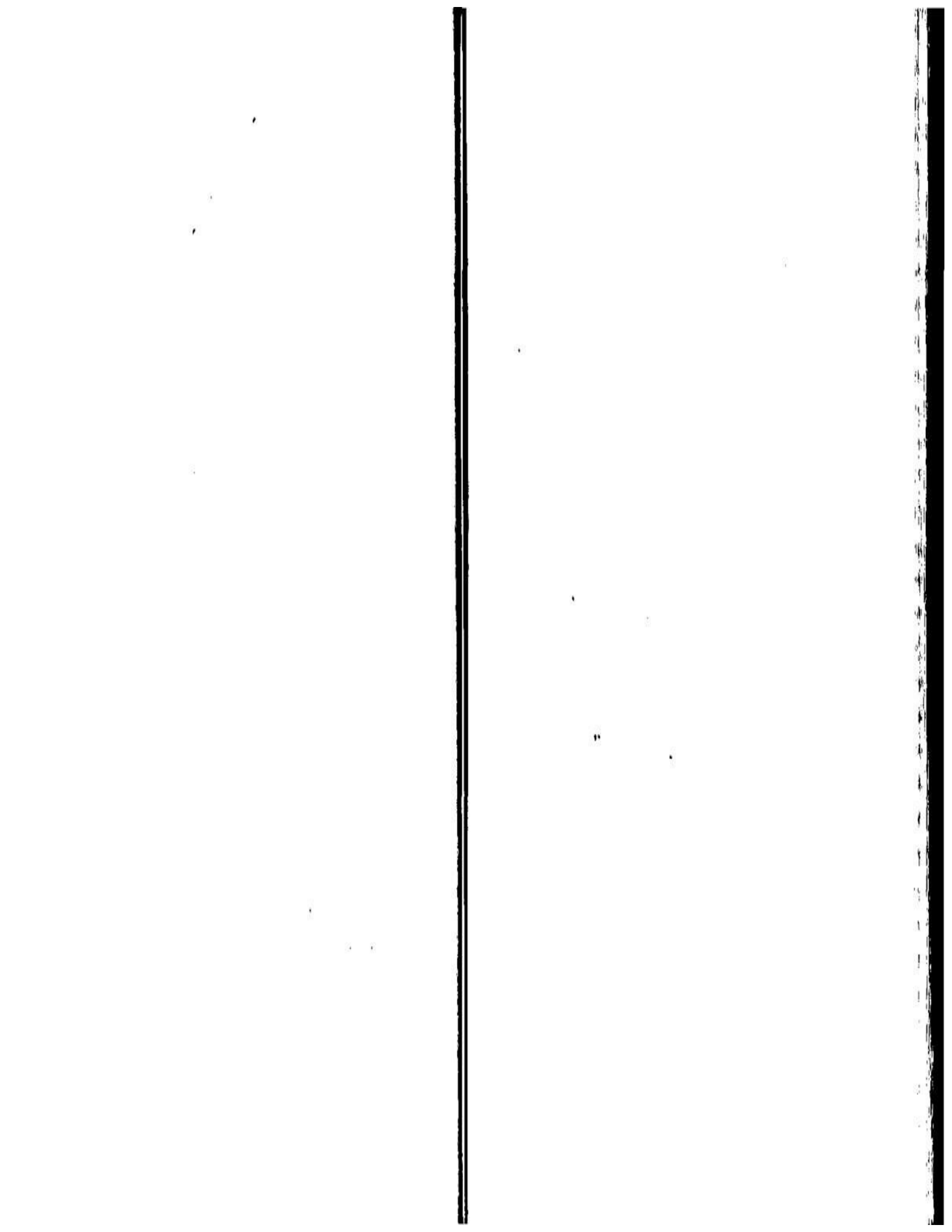
strange sound in an academic environment. Every now and then I call to look for a new apartment, but he's not much and then there is a confrontation at the Gate between the trouble to me as he sleeps most of the day and is out most of pickets and people trying to get through and then the cam-the night.

pus police intervene and occasionally the Plotinus police All my love,

force too and there's usually a scuffle and a few arrests.

Philip

Yesterday the police made a sweep through the campus and students were running in all directions. I was sitting at my desk reading *Lycidas* when Wily Smith burst into my room and shut the door behind him, leaning against it with closed eyes, just like a film. He was wearing a motor-cycle helmet 13a



Morris to Disirie

Disirie to Morris

What does he look like, Decree, for Christ's sake? What Dear Morris,

manner of man is he? Swallow, I mean. Do his canines hang out over his lower lip? Is his handshake cold and feet tall and weighs I should say about 140 pound - that is, clammy? Do his eyes have a murderous glint?

he's tall and skinny and stooped. He holds his head for-He wrote it, Disirie, he wrote that review, out of pure ward as if he's hit it too often on low doorways. His hair is impersonal spite, one sunny day five years ago he dipped his the texture of Brillo pads before they've been used and is pen in gall and plunged it into the heart of my lovely article.

deeply receding at the temples. He has dandruff, but who I can't prove it - yet. But the circumstantial evidence is hasn't? He has nice eyes. I couldn't say anything positively in overwhelming.

favour of his teeth, but they don't protrude like fangs. His When I think that you dissuaded him from buying the handshake is normal in temperature, if a little on the limp Corvair... the perfect revenge! Disirie, how could you?

side. He smokes one of those patent air-cooled pipes which I found a copy of that Festschrift, you see, in his house. It leaks tobacco juice all over his fingers.

the John, to be exact. A very strange John it is, too, a large I had an opportunity to observe all this because I was room obviously designed originally for some other purpose, seated next to him at dinner last Saturday. The Gootblatts perhaps ballroom dancing, in which the WG has been invited me. There seems to be a general conspiracy here to placed on a plinth in one corner. A tiled floor and a small oil pretend that I am lonely in your absence and must be in-lamp burning to prevent the water pipes from freezing give vited out. It turned out to be a fairly sensational evening, the whole place a slightly spooky ecclesiastical atmosphere.

with our friend Swallow right in the centre of the action.

There are books there too, not specially selected reading for Doing his British best to redeem what was looking to be a the can, but overspill from the rest of the house, which is draggy dinner, he taught us a game he claims to have practically lined with crappy old books stinking of wet-rot invented, called 'Humiliation'. I assured him I was married and bookworm droppings. The Milestone book has been to the World Champion, but no, he said, this was a game you festering in my subconscious ever since I read that review in won by humiliatngj'oarje/'. The essence of the matter is that the *TLS*, so I identified its binding and gilt lettering right each person names a book which he hasn't read but assumes away. A curious coincidence, I thought to myself, picking the others have read, and scores a point for every person who the volume off the shelf - for after all it wasn't exactly a has read it. Get it? Well, Howard Ringbaum didn't. You world best-seller - and leafed through it as I sat on the can.

know Howard, he has a pathological urge to succeed and a Imagine my feelings when I turned to my article and found pathological fear of being thought uncultured, and this t h a t *the passages which had been marked exactly corresponded to those game set his two obsessions at war with each other, because cited by the TLS reviewer.* Imagine the effect on my bowels.

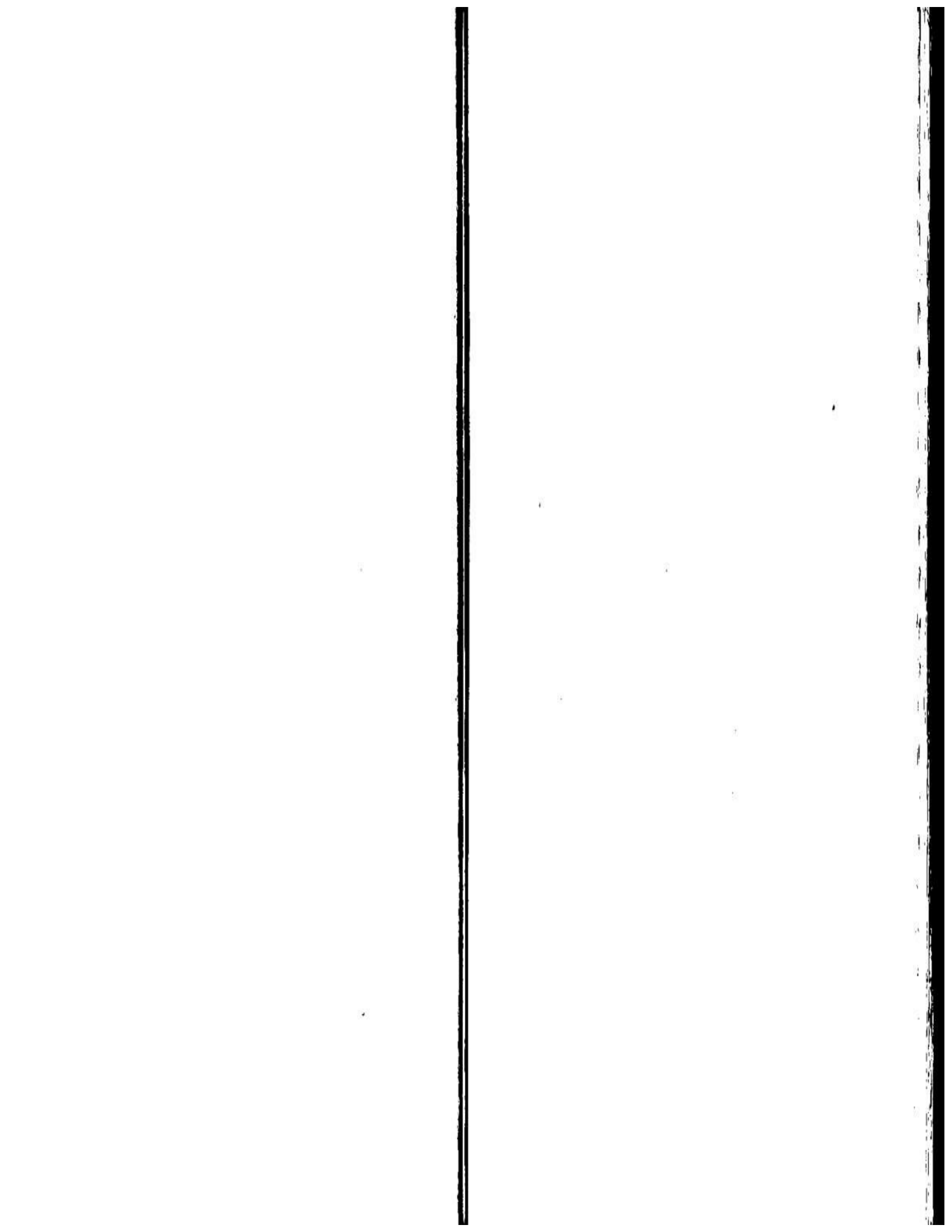
he could succeed in the game only by exposing a gap in his Why don't you write to me any more, De'sire'e? I am culture. At first his psyche just couldn't absorb the paradox lonely here these long English nights. Just to give you an idea and he named some eighteenth-century book so obscure I how lonely I am, this evening I'm going to the English can't even remember the name of it. Of course, he came last Department's Staff Seminar to listen to a paper on linguistics in the final score, and sulked. It was a stupid game, he said, tics and literary criticism.

Love,

and refused to play the next round. 'I pass, I pass,' he said Morris

sneeringly, like Mrs Elton on Box Hill (I may not read your **134**

'35



books, Zapp, but I remember my Jane Austen pretty good).

vacancy in the Department, they've reconsidered the case of But I could see he was following the play attentively, Kroop and offered him tenure after all. I don't suppose he's knitting his brows and twisting his napkin in his fingers as read *Hamlet* either, but nobody was asking. The students are the point of the game began to dawn on him. It's quite a wild with joy. Ringbaum is convinced Swallow conspired to groovy game, actually, a kind of intellectual strip poker. For discredit him in front of Hogan. Mr-Swallow himself is instance, it came out that Luke Hogan has never read blissfully ignorant of his responsibility for the whole drama.

Paradise Regained. I mean, I know it isn't his field, but to I'm sorry to have to report that the twins' sudden craze think you can get to be Chairman of the English Department for gardening turned out to be an attempt to cultivate at Euphoric State without ever having read *Paradise Re-marijuana*. *I had to root up all the plants and burn them gained makes you think, right? I could see Howard taking before the cops got wise.*

this in, going a bit pale when he realized that Luke was I'm told Melanie hasn't enrolled this term, so I couldn't telling the truth. Well, on the third round, Sy was leading get her address from the University.

the field with *Hiawatha*, Mr Swallow being the only other Desirle

person who hadn't read it, when suddenly Howard slammed his fist on the table, juttet his jaw about six feet over the table and said:

Hilary to Philip

'Hamlet!'

Well, of course, we all laughed, not very much because it Dearest,

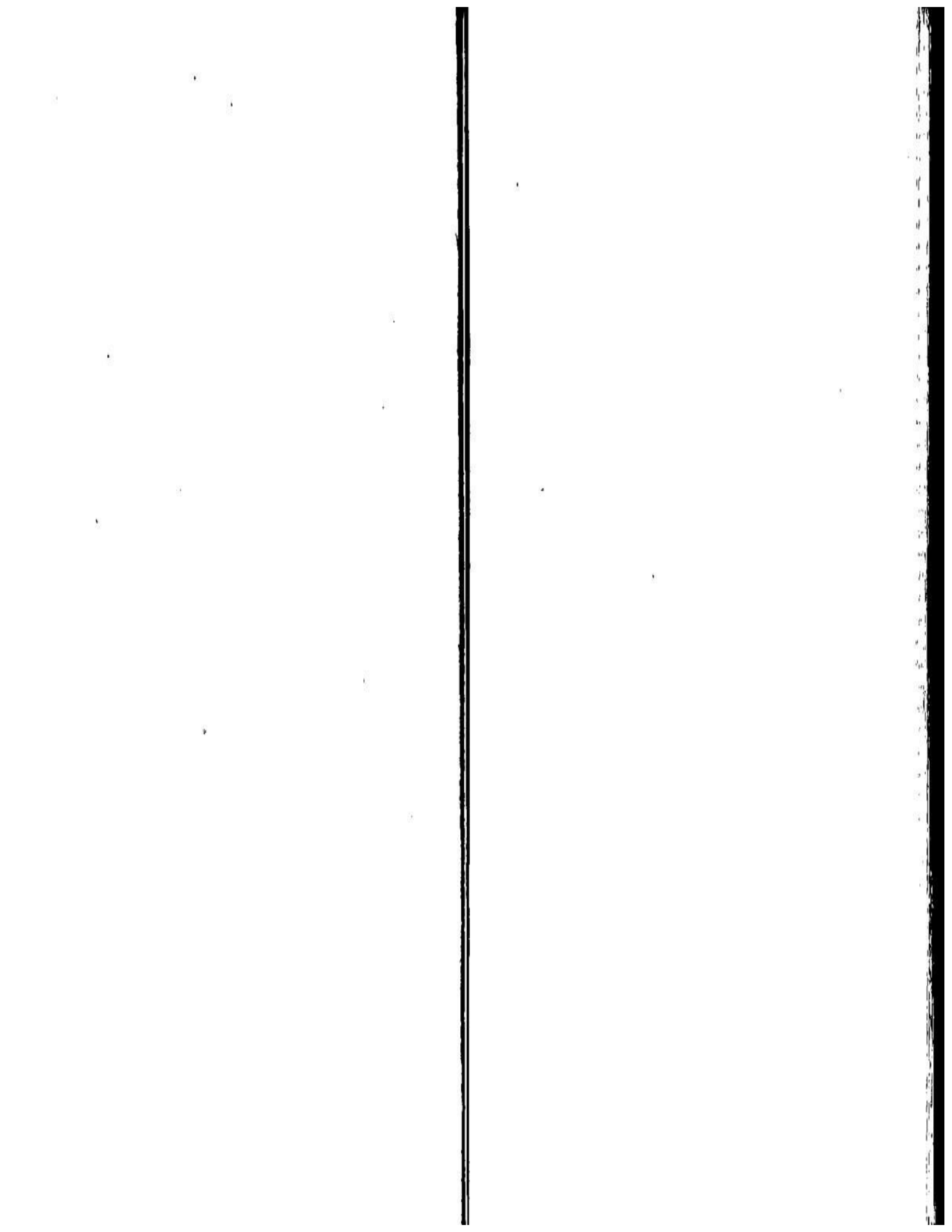
didn't seem much of a joke. In fact it wasn't a joke at all.

I had the most frightful shock this morning. Bob Busby Howard admitted to having seen the Lawrence Olivier rang me up to ask how you were. I said you were fine as far movie, but insisted that he had never read the text of as I knew, and he said, 'Jolly good, so he's out of hospital, *Hamlet*. Nobody believed him of course, and this made him then?' and poured out a horrifying story he'd got from sore as hell. He said did we think he was lying and Sy more some student about how you had been taken hostage by a or less implied that we did. Upon which Howard flew into a gang of desperate Black Panthers and held out of a fourth-great rage and insisted on swearing a solemn oath that he floor window by your ankles and finally shot in the arm had never read the play. Sy apologized through tight lips when the police burst into the building blazing away with for having doubted his word. By this time, of course, we their guns. It was only about halfway through this lurid were all cold sober with embarrassment. Howard left, and tale that I recognized it as a wildly distorted and embroi-the rest of us stood around for a while trying to pretend dered version of an anecdote in your last letter which I pre-nothing had happened.

sumably put into circulation in the first place. I think I A piquant incident, you must admit - but wait till I tell must have mentioned it to Janet Dempsey.

you the sequel. Howard Ringbaum unexpectedly flunked his Incidentally, Bob told me that Robin took rather a review three days later and it's generally supposed that this pasting from Morris Zapp at the last Staff Seminar. It seems was because the English Department dared not give tenure to that Mr Zapp, despite his somewhat Neanderthal appeara man who publicly admitted to not having read *Hamlet*.

ance and loutish manners, is really quite clever and knows The story had been buzzed all round the campus, of course, all about these fashionable people like Chomsky and and there was even a paragraph alluding to it in the *Euphoric* Saussure and LeVi-Strauss that Robin has been brow-State Daily. Furthermore, as this created an unexpected beating the rest of you with, or at least enough about them 136



to make Robin look fairly silly. I gather all present derived his car, he replied, to my astonishment. Well, it was a certain quiet satisfaction from the proceedings. Anyway, I freezing night, so I told him to bring her inside at once. He began to think more kindly of Mr Zapp, which was rather was off like a shot and I followed him to the front door. It fortunate for him, as he turned up again yesterday evening was like some scene from a Victorian novel, the snow, the to beg a rather odd favour.

fallen woman, etc., but in reverse, because she was coming in It took him some time to get to the point. He kept looking instead of going out, if you see what I mean. And I admit to round the room, and asking me about the house and how feeling a mite sentimental as she crossed the threshold, many bedrooms it had, and wasn't I lonely living on my with snowflakes melting in her long blonde hair. She was own, until I began to fear that he wanted to move in with turning blue with cold, poor thing, and practically speech-me. But no, it appeared he was looking for accommodation less either from that or shyness. Mary Makepeace is her for a friend, a young lady, and he wondered whether I name. There didn't seem to be anything else to do but ask would consider, as a special favour, letting her rent a room.

her to stay the night, so I made some soup (Professor Zapp I told him that we'd had students living in the house once wolfed three bowls) and packed her off to bed with a hot and found it such hell that we'd vowed never to have lodgers water bottle. I told Mr Zapp I would have her to stay for a again. He looked rather crestfallen at that, so I asked him if few days while they worked out something but that I he'd looked in the Rummidge papers. He shook his head couldn't commit myself to having her indefinitely. How-dolefully and said it was no good, they'd already tried ever, I'm seriously thinking of letting her stay on. She seems several addresses and nobody would have the girl. People to be a very nice girl, and would be company in the evenings.

were prejudiced against her, he said. Was she coloured, I You know I still get frightened in the night sometimes -

asked compassionately. No, he said, she was pregnant.

silly, I know, but there it is. I'll have to see how we get on Well, after what you'd said in your last letter about Mr on closer acquaintance, of course, and I haven't made any Zapp's reputation, I drew my own conclusions, which promises. But if I should be inclined to let Mary stay, I must have been pretty clearly written on my face, for he presume you wouldn't have any objections ? She'd pay for hastily assured me that he was not responsible. He'd met her her board and lodging, of course - apparently she didn't on the plane coming over, he said, and he was the only lose all her money, and Mr Zapp was very insistent that he person she knew in England, so she'd turned to him for would help financially. I imagine he can afford it. He was help. She's an American girl who came to England to get an driving some incredibly low-slung and expensive-looking abortion, but decided at the last moment that she didn't orange sports car yesterday, which is to replace the one want to go through with it. She wants to have the baby in you didn't buy.

England because it would then have dual nationality and if I hope, by the way, that Charles Boon is making a contri-it was a boy he would be able to avoid the draft, should the bution to *your* rent. A hint to that effect might be one way of Viet Nam War still be going on in twenty years' time. She'd getting rid of him.

worked illegally for a while in Soho as a waitress, but had to All love,
give it up because her pregnancy was beginning to show.

Hilary

And then she had some money stolen.

Well, this story sounded so implausible that I wondered PS. Mr Zapp asked particularly that if I wrote to you about whether he could possibly have invented it. I didn't know Mary you should regard all information about her as what to think. Where was this girl now, I asked ? Outside in confidential.

138

139

Philip to Hilary

my safe balcony I feel rather despicable, like those ancient kings who used to watch their set battles from specially Darling,

built towers. Afterwards one goes home and watches it all Just a note in haste to say that I should think very carefully over again on the local TV news. And the next morning before you take this girl of Zapp's into the house. And she there are reports and photos in the *Euphoric State Daily* -

surely *is* Zapp's girl. Whether he's the father of her child, that's the campus paper, produced with incredible speed or not, is another question, but doesn't affect the likely and professionalism by the students; makes our own once-nature of their relationship. I can understand how you a-week *Rumble* seem a rather amateurish effort.

would naturally feel sorry for the girl and want to help, but I All my love,

think you've got to consider yourself in this, and the children, Philip

especially Amanda. She's at a very sensitive and impres-PS. I hope you realize that Mary Makepeace is almost cer-sionable age now - have you thought of the consequences of tainly an *illegal immigrant* in the eyes of the law, and that you having an unmarried mother on the premises? The same could get into trouble for harbouring her ?

goes for Robert, for that matter. I can't believe that it would be a good thing for the children. Then Zapp would no doubt be in and out of the house all day - and possibly *Hilary to Philip*

all night too. Have you thought of *that* ? I'm a reasonably tolerant person but I draw the line at providing a room in Dear Philip,

my house for Mr Zapp to have it off with his pregnant I may as well come straight to the point. I've had what I girl-friend, and I wonder whether you would be able to cope believe is called a poison-pen letter from Euphoria, an with such a situation, should it arise. Then one has to face anonymous letter. It says you are having an affair with the fact, whether one likes it or not, that 'people will talk' -

Morris Zapp's daughter. I know it's not true but please and I don't mean just the neighbours, but the people at the write at once and tell me that it isn't. I keep bursting into University, too.

tears and can't tell anybody why.

All in all, I'm not in favour. But of course you must do Love,

what you think best.

Hilary

The situation is getting uglier here. Some windows have been smashed, and catalogue cards in one of the small specialist libraries scattered over the floor. Every lunch hour XY42 Ab I 5 I INTL

there is a ritual confrontation which I watch from the balcony-WESTERN UNION

cony outside my room. A large crowd of students, hostile to the police if not positively sympathetic to the strikers, MRS HILARY SWALLOW

gathers to watch the pickets parading. Eventually someone 49 ST JOHNS RD

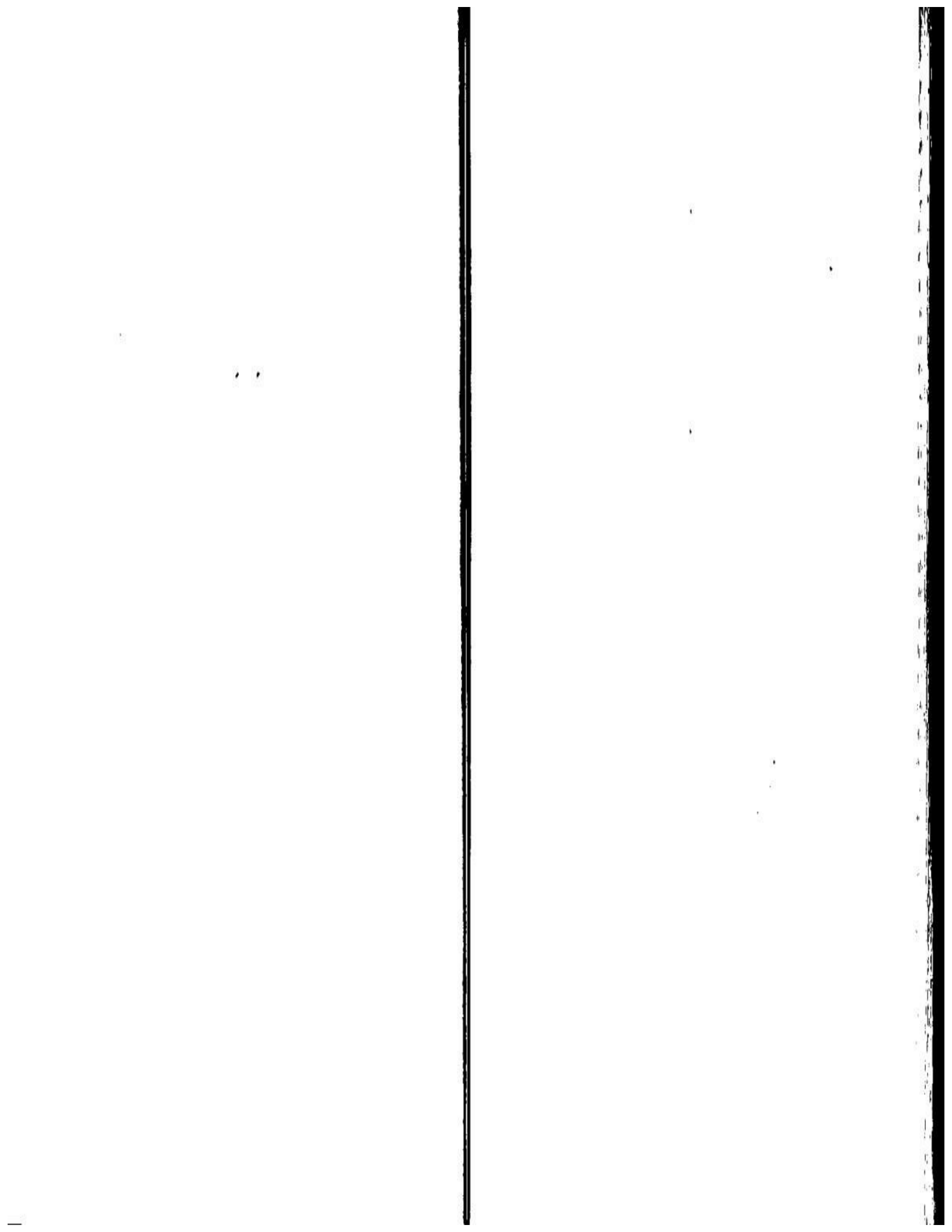
is jostled, the police intervene, the crowd howls and screams, RUMMIDGE

rocks are thrown, and out of the scrimmage the police come ENGLAND

running, dragging some unfortunate student behind them POTTY UPPERCOCK COCK COCK **COCK**

and take him to a temporary lockup under the Administration-UTTER POPPYCOCK OF COURSE STOP ZAPP8

tion building, pursued by the hooting mob. Perched up on 140



Melanie is Zapp's daughter by his first marriage. She **DAUGHTER ONLY NINE YEARS OLD STOP**

calls herself Melanie Byrd, which is her mother's maiden **LETTER FOLLOWS LOVE PHILIP**

name, because she doesn't want to be associated with her father at Euphoric State, for several good reasons. She came **PHILIP SWALLOW**

here as a student because as the child of a tenured faculty **IO37 PYTHAGORAS DR**

member she is entitled to free tuition, but she has stayed **PLOTINUS EUPH**

away from Zapp as much as possible and kept their relationship strictly secret. I got all this information from Mrs Zapp and Melanie this afternoon. They were in the house *Morris toDisirie*

together when I got home. I should explain that Melanie is one of the girls on the ground floor. Early on in my time Will you do me a favour, Desiree, and move your ass over to here I quite by chance got drawn into a kind of impromptu 1037 Pythagoras Drive and find out what the hell is going on party downstairs. I'd just come from cocktails at the there? I had a letter this morning, no signature, saying that Hogans' and was a bit squiffy already. What with one thing Philip Swallow is shackled up with Melanie at that address.

and another I suppose I got quite 'high', but when they You may laugh, but just check it out for me, will you?

started making preparations for an orgy, I retired gracefully.

There is a kind of outrageous logic in the notion that makes So, however, did Melanie. She took it for granted that we me think it may just be true. It would fit my idea of Swallow should sleep together. So I'm afraid we did.

and the role he seems destined to play in my life. Having I'm not going to try and justify or excuse myself. I was assassinated my academic character in the *TLS*, he pro-wretched afterwards, thinking what I'd done to you. It ceeds to screw my daughter. That figures. I tremble, wasn't even particularly enjoyable at the time, because I D6sir6e, I tremble.

was fuddled with drink and Melanie was half-asleep. I'm Morris

quite sure it meant absolutely nothing to her, and you must believe that it only happened on that one occasion. In fact PS. The envelope is franked by the University, so it must be since then - this would be funny in a less anguished context -

someone on the faculty or a secretary who sent the letter.

she's become Charles Boon's steady girl friend. In the cir-Who?

cumstances, there seemed to be no point in upsetting you by saying anything about the episode, and it

began to sink into *Philip to Hilary*

oblivion. When I got your letter it revived my guilty conscience, though I didn't connect Melanie with Morris Darling Hilary,

Zapp for a moment. I presumed someone was playing a This is the most difficult letter I have ever had to write.

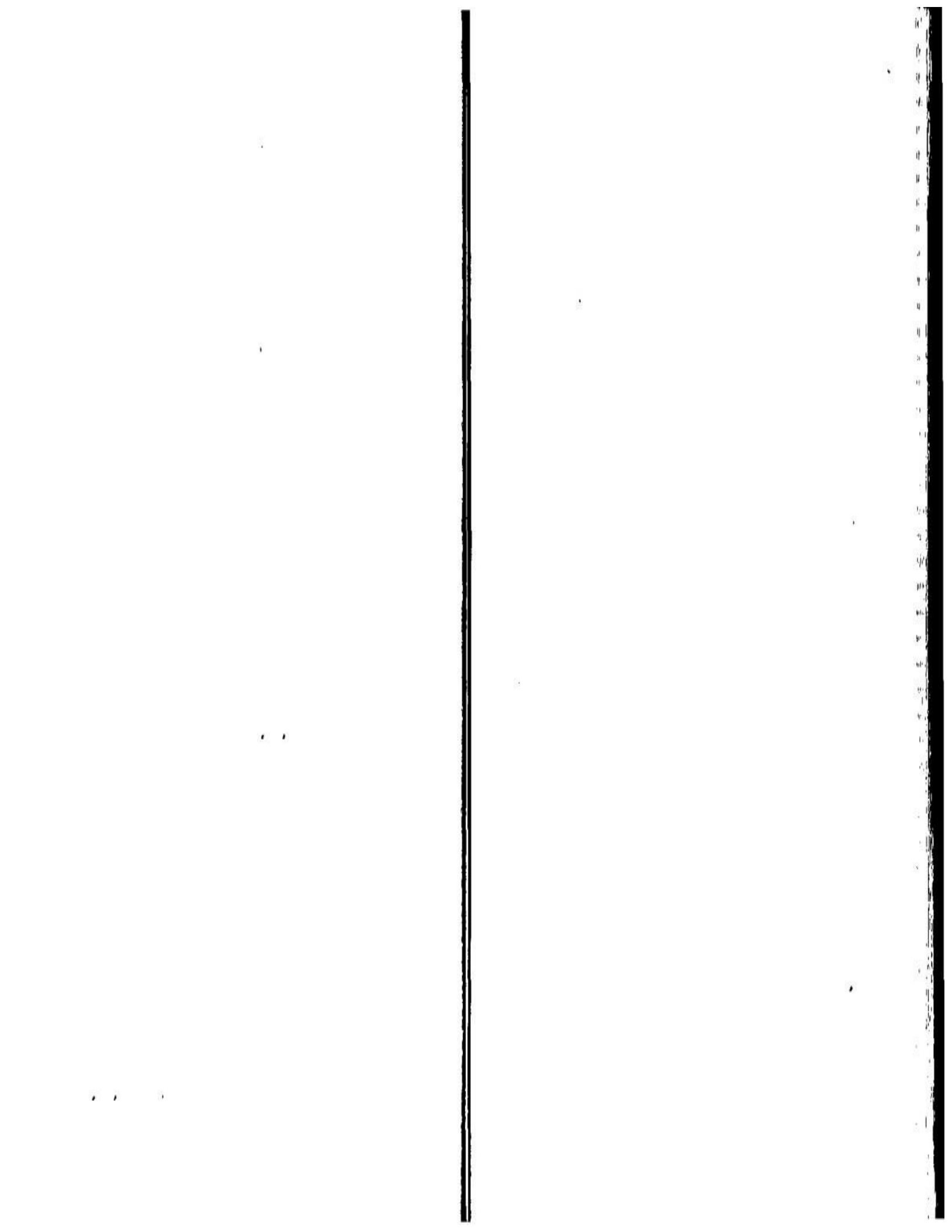
rather sick joke - who and for what reason I couldn't, and Morris Zapp *has* got a daughter - apart from the nine-still can't - imagine. But it put me in a difficult moral year-old. Her name is Melanie and I *did* sleep with her once.

dilemma.

Just once. So the wire I sent you was not quite true. But it Well, as you know, I took the easier way out, one which I wasn't a lie, either. I have only just discovered that Zapp is persuaded myself would also be easier on you. But when I Melanie's father and it's been as much of a shock to me as it discovered the true state of affairs, I immediately sat down will have been to you. Let me try and explain.

143

142



to put the record straight. It's now about midnight, so you'll Boon. 'And this is - " I recognize Mr Boon, dear,' I inter-realize how difficult I've found it. I'm sorry, very sorry, rupted. 'We were at the same party a few weeks ago. I Hilary. Please forgive me.

didn't have the opportunity, Mr Boon,' I prattled on, 'to All my love,

tell you how much I hate your show.' He smiled and blew Philip

smoke through his teeth while he thought up a riposte; one of his eyes was levelled on me while the other one was shooting about the room as if in search of inspiration. ' If *Disirie to Morris*

someone your age liked the show,' he said at last, ' I ' d know I'd failed.' We fenced like this for a while, weighing Dear Morris,

each other up. It was apparent that Boon was living in Much as I hate to do you a favour, my curiosity got the Swallow's apartment, which I must say surprised me be-better of me, so I hied me over to 1037 Pythagoras in cause I always understood from Swallow that he couldn't accordance with your brusque instructions. I had to take a stand the guy. However, it certainly looked as though Boon detour through the downtown area as the traffic was and Melanie had been in the sack together that afternoon, snarled up due to riots on the Campus at the Cable Street and as neither of them showed any sign of panic when entrance. I could hear gas grenades popping and a lot of Swallow's latchkey turned in the hall door I assumed that yelling and a police helicopter circling overhead all the this was not a possibility they were anxious to conceal from time: I tell you, it gets more like Viet Nam here every day.

him. He was startled of course to see me there, fussed around 1037 Pythagoras is a house that has been converted into getting us all tea, but didn't seem particularly defensive. I two apartments. Nobody answered the bell on the first floor had just decided that his relationship to Melanie was purely so I went upstairs and tried the second-floor apartment.

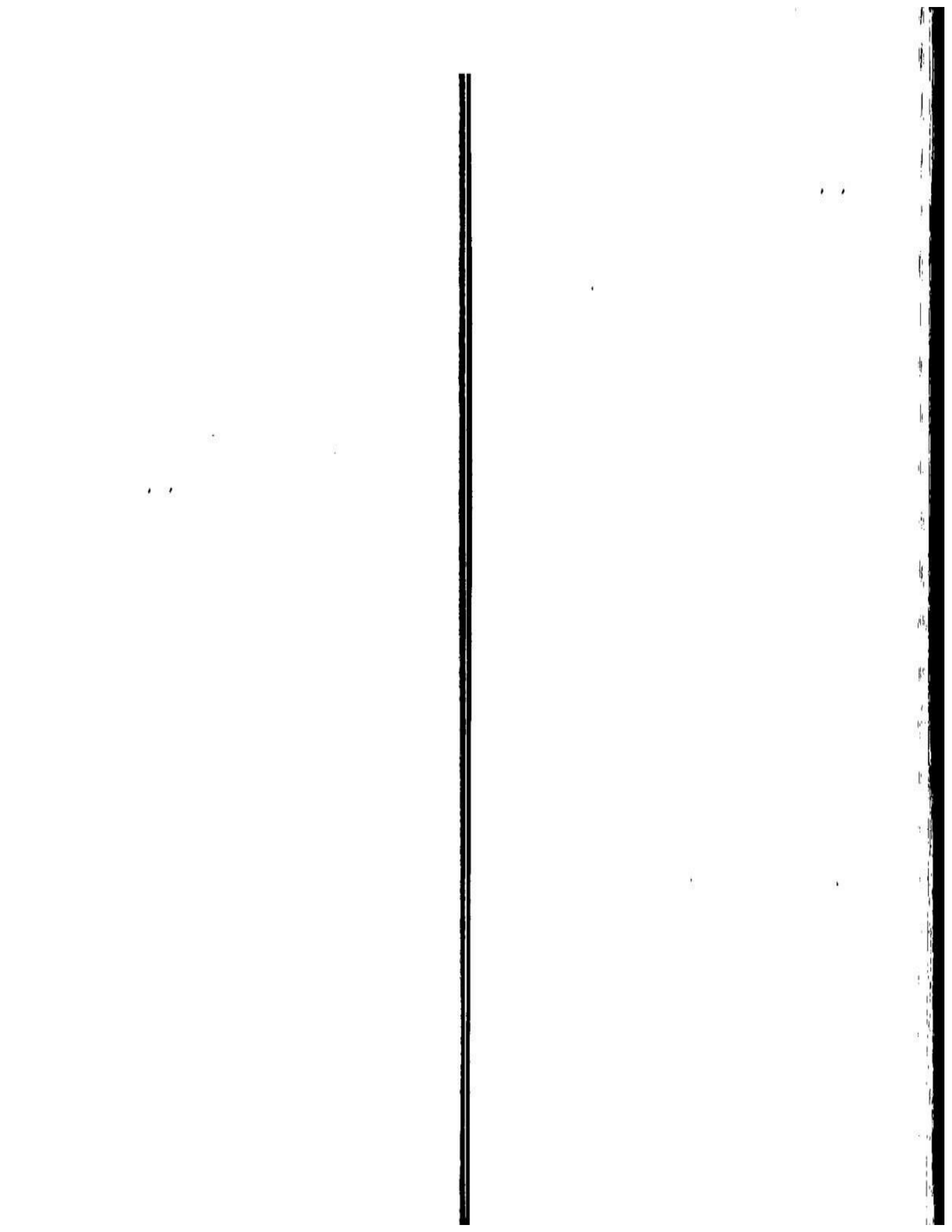
avuncular when it came out that you were her father. He Eventually Melanie answered the door, looking flushed and went white, Morris. I mean, if he'd just discovered that he'd rumped. Before you start grinding your teeth and fingering screwed his *oum* daughter, he couldn't have looked more your horsewhip, let me finish. We were both surprised, shocked. I suppose, on reflection, there is something kind of Melanie more so, naturally. 'Desiree! What are you doing incestuous about sleeping with the daughter of the guy here ?' she exclaimed.' I might ask you the same question,' I you've exchanged jobs with. Though if he's having sex with snapped back in my best Perry Mason manner. ' I thought Melanie presently, it must be something very kinky because Philip Swallow lived here.' 'He does but he's out.' 'Who is Charles Boon is right in there too, for sure.

it, Mel, the Gestapo?' said a voice from within. I looked As to the author of the poison-pen letter, I will hazard a over Melanie's shoulder and there was Charles Boon, guess that the author is Howard Ringbaum, who has a propped up against the wall dressed in a towelling bath-motive and is cheap enough to use university mail facilities robe and smoking a cigarette. 'Somebody for Philip,' she for the purpose - he's the kind of guy who would make a called back. ' Philip's out,' he said. ' He's at the University.'

heavy-breathing call collect if he could get away with it.

' Do you mind if I wait ?' I asked. Melanie shrugged: ' Please Desiree yourself.'

I eased myself over the threshold and penetrated into the apartment. Melanie closed the door and followed me . ' This is Desiree, my father's second wife,' she said to the gaping 144



i

Morris to Disirh

pregnant. Don't tell me that you're going to pollute the planet with another little Zapp, Zapp? I've heard about Many thanks for your quick reply, but why didn't you ask the hypocrisy of the English, but I didn't know it was Swallow straight out for Chrissake ? I enclose a Xerox of the contagious.

anonymous letter so that you can confront him with it.

Desiree

What a louse. Mrs Swallow has been looking so miserable lately that I have a shrewd suspicion she's had one of those letters too. She's a kind-hearted person, I've found, and I *Philip to Hilary*

feel sorry for her. She told me, by the way, that Boon was once a student of Swallow's. Yes, they're old buddies, so it's Darling Hilary,

all too probable they've got some very corrupt scene going It's two weeks now since I wrote to you, and I am finding there with Melanie. Poor little Melanie. I feel really bad it a strain waiting for your reply. If you haven't already about her. I mean I didn't suppose she was still a virgin or written, please don't keep me waiting any longer. I had anything, but that is no life for a young girl, being passed hoped that by making a clean breast of everything I should from one guy to another. Maybe if you and I could make a make it possible for you to forgive and forget, and that we fresh start, Desiree, she would come and live with us.

could put the whole thing behind us.

Morris

I hope you aren't thinking of divorce, or anything silly like that?

It's very difficult to discuss these things by letter. How *Disirie to Morris*

can you make up a misunderstanding when you're 6000

miles apart? We need to see each other, talk, kiss and make Dear Morris,

up. I've been thinking, why don't you come out here at Will you stop putting on this concerned parent act before Easter on a 17-day excursion ? I know the fare is expensive, I die laughing? It's a little late in the day to start talking but what the hell. I expect your mother would take the about giving a stable home life to 'little Melanie'. You children in the holiday, wouldn't she? Or perhaps you should have thought about that before you walked out on could even leave them with this Mary Makepeace girl. It her and her mother. Little Melanie, in case you've forgotten, would be a real holiday for both of us, away from the kids hasn't forgiven you for that; and since it was me you walked and everything. What is called a 'second honeymoon', I out on her for (leaving her a five-dollar bill to buy candy, if I

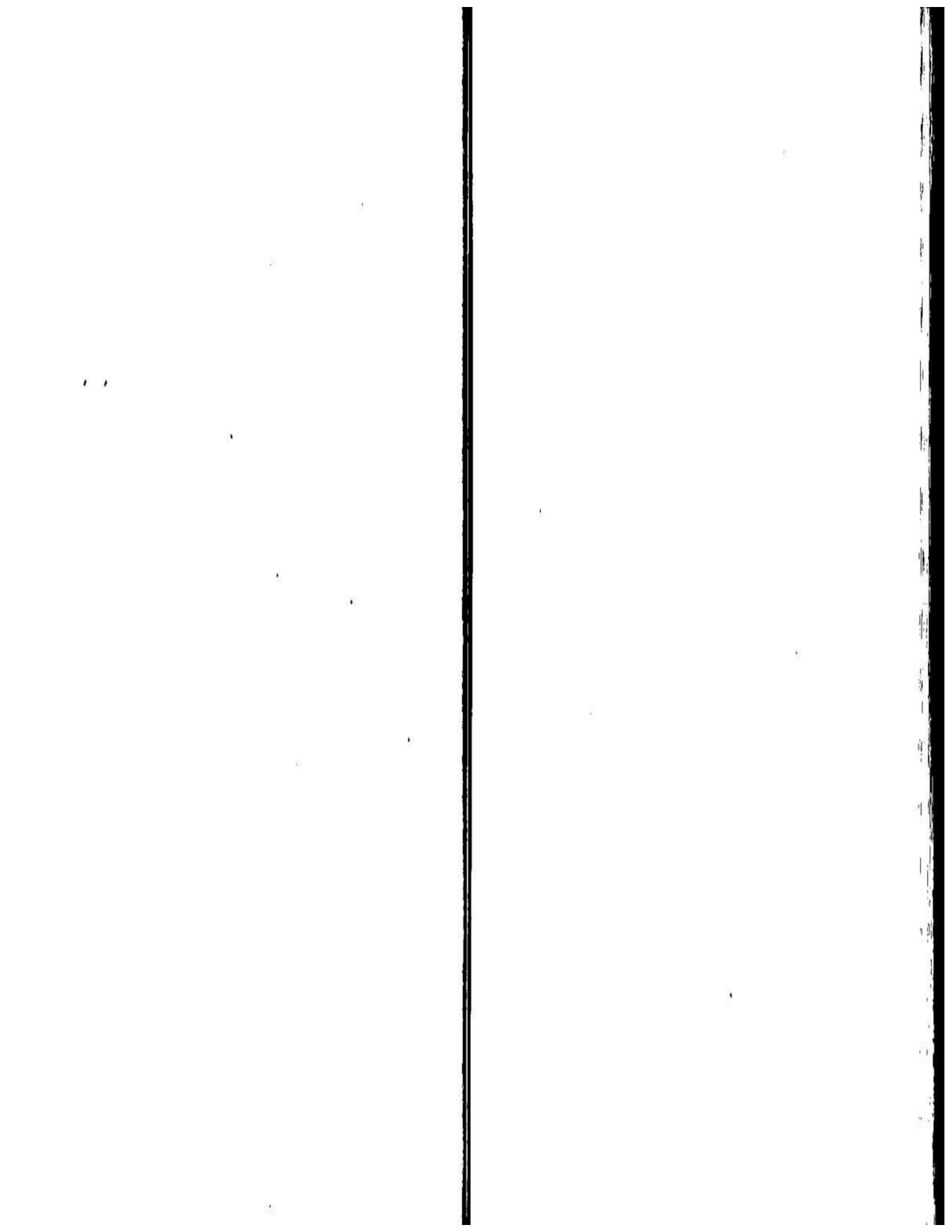
believe - a rather horribly coy phrase but not such a bad remember rightly, the most sordid transaction in the history idea. D'you remember what fun we had in that scruffy little of conscience-money) she isn't exactly spilling over with apartment in Esseph ?

love for me either.

Do think about it seriously, darling, and don't be put off I've no intention of confronting Philip Swallow with your by the student troubles. The signs are that with the end of the dirty little piece of paper. Neither he nor Melanie owe *me* winter quarter things will quieten down and some kind of any explanation. Write and ask them yourself if you must.

compromise will be worked out between the students and the But before you work up too much righteous indignation, Administration. Today there were no arrests for the first and as long as explanations are the order of the day, you time in weeks. Perhaps the weather has something to do might come clean about that blonde cookie you've parked with it. Spring has really arrived, the hills are green, the sky on big-hearted Mrs Swallow. Rumour has it that she's 146

'47



is blue, and it's eighty degrees in the shade. The bay is He gave me an ultimatum: either Mary had to leave or me.

winking in the sun, and the cables of the Silver Span are I couldn't very well abandon the girl, so I tried to find her a shimmering like harpstrings on the horizon. I walked place to stay. But there was nothing doing in Rummidge that through the campus today at lunchtime and you could night. The landladies we talked to obviously regarded Mary sense the change of mood. Girls in summer dresses and as a whore and me as a small-time gangster. I couldn't even people playing guitars. You would enjoy it.

find a hotel that admitted to having a vacant room. Then All my love,

we happened to pass Mrs Swallow's house, and I thought, Philip

why not try her? Which we did, successfully. In fact the two of them have become great buddies and it looks like Mary is *Morris to Disirie*

going to stay there until she has the baby. I didn't see the point of boring you with all this, and I didn't think Swallow Desiree,

would be so cheap as to run to you with the story.

You're not going to believe this, I know, but Mary Make-Morris

peace and I are just good friends. I have never made love to her. I admit the thought has crossed my mind, but she was pregnant when I first met her and I'm squeamish about *Hilary to Philip*

laying girls who are already pregnant by other guys. Something not quite kosher about it, if you know what I mean.

Dear Philip,

Especially in this case, since the father is a Catholic priest.

Many thanks for your last letter. I'm sorry I didn't reply Did I tell you the plane I flew over in was full of women immediately to the previous one, but as it took you six or going to England for abortions ? Mary was one of them - she seven weeks to get round to telling me about Melanie Zapp was sitting next to me and we got talking. A few weeks ago I (or Byrd) it seemed to me that I was entitled to take as came back from the University one afternoon to be am-many days thinking about my reply.

bushed by O'Shea in the lobby. He leaped out at me from That doesn't mean to say that I'm considering a divorce —

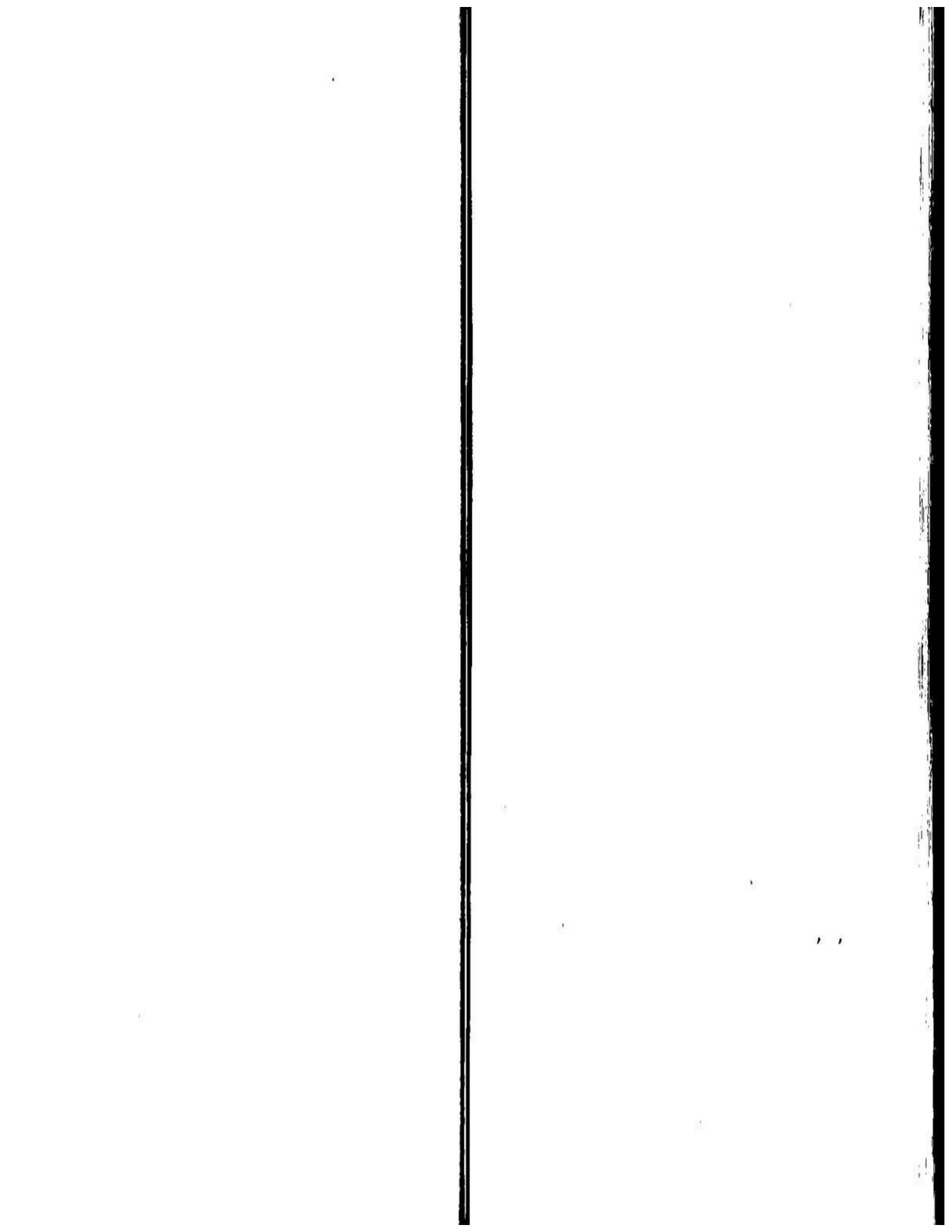
behind the grandfather clock and dragged me into the front a remarkably panicky reaction on your part, I thought. I parlour, which at this time of year is like the North Pole, take it that you've been quite candid with me, and that huge upholstered armchairs looming out of the fog like ice-you're no longer involved with the girl. I must say it was bergs. O'Shea was very agitated. He said that a young

unfortunate that of all the girls in Euphoria, you had to woman who was obviously in 'a certain condition', but not pick on Mr Zapp's daughter. Also somewhat ironic, not to wearing a ring, had called asking for me and had insisted say hypocritical, that you should have been so exercised on waiting in my rooms. It was Mary, of course — she'd about *his* bad influence on *your* daughter. I showed Mary decided to stay in England and have the baby, but she'd your letters and she says your obsessive concern to protect just lost her job and had some money stolen and turned for Amanda's innocence indicates that you are really in love help to the only person in the country she knew - me. I tried with her yourself, and that your affair with Melanie was a to calm O'Shea down, but he had the fear of God and Mrs substitute gratification for the incestuous desire. An in-O'Shea in him. It was obvious that nothing was going to teresting theory, you must admit. Does Melanie look any-persuade him I wasn't responsible for Mary's 'condition'.

thing like Amanda ?

148

149



As to your suggestion that I fly out to Euphoria for a men and women. She says there is a movement for the liber-holiday, it's not on, I'm afraid. First of all I wouldn't dream of women starting in America. Have you come across of asking either Mary or my mother to take on the res-any signs of it ?

possibility of the children, and I don't think we could afford I was glad to hear that things are quietening down on the to fly them out to Euphoria - or me on my own for that Euphoric campus at last. Believe it or not, we may be in for matter. You see, Philip, I decided not to wait any longer for some student trouble here. There is talk of a sit-in next term.

the central heating, but to have it put in immediately on the Apparently it's thrown the older members of staff into a flat HP. It was the first thing I did after receiving your letter spin. According to Morris, Gordon Masters is quite un-about Melanie: I got out the telephone book and began hinged - has taken to coming into the Department wearing ringing round to heating contractors for estimates. I suppose his old Territorial Army uniform.

that sounds funny, but it was quite logical. I thought to Love,

myself, here I am, slaving away, running a house and Hilary

family single-handed for the sake of my husband's career and my children's education, and I'm not even warm while I'm doing it. If he can't wait for sex till he gets home, *DisirSe to Morris*

why should I wait for central heating? I suppose a more sensual woman would have taken a lover in revenge.

Dear Morris,

Mr Zapp kindly helped me with the estimates, and mana-Oddly enough I do believe you about this Mary Make-ged to knock £100 off the lowest - wasn't that clever of him?

peace, though the kosher reference was despicable as only But of course the repayments are pretty heavy and the you know how to be. But don't blame Philip Swallow for deposit has put our current account in the red, so please the leak. It was your Irish colleen, the toothless Bernadette, send some more money home soon.

if orthography is any clue, who betrayed you and your But quite apart from the expense and the problem of the

'yaller-hared whoor' in a smudged, greasy and tear-stained children, Philip, I don't think I would want to fly out epistle which I received the other day, unsigned.

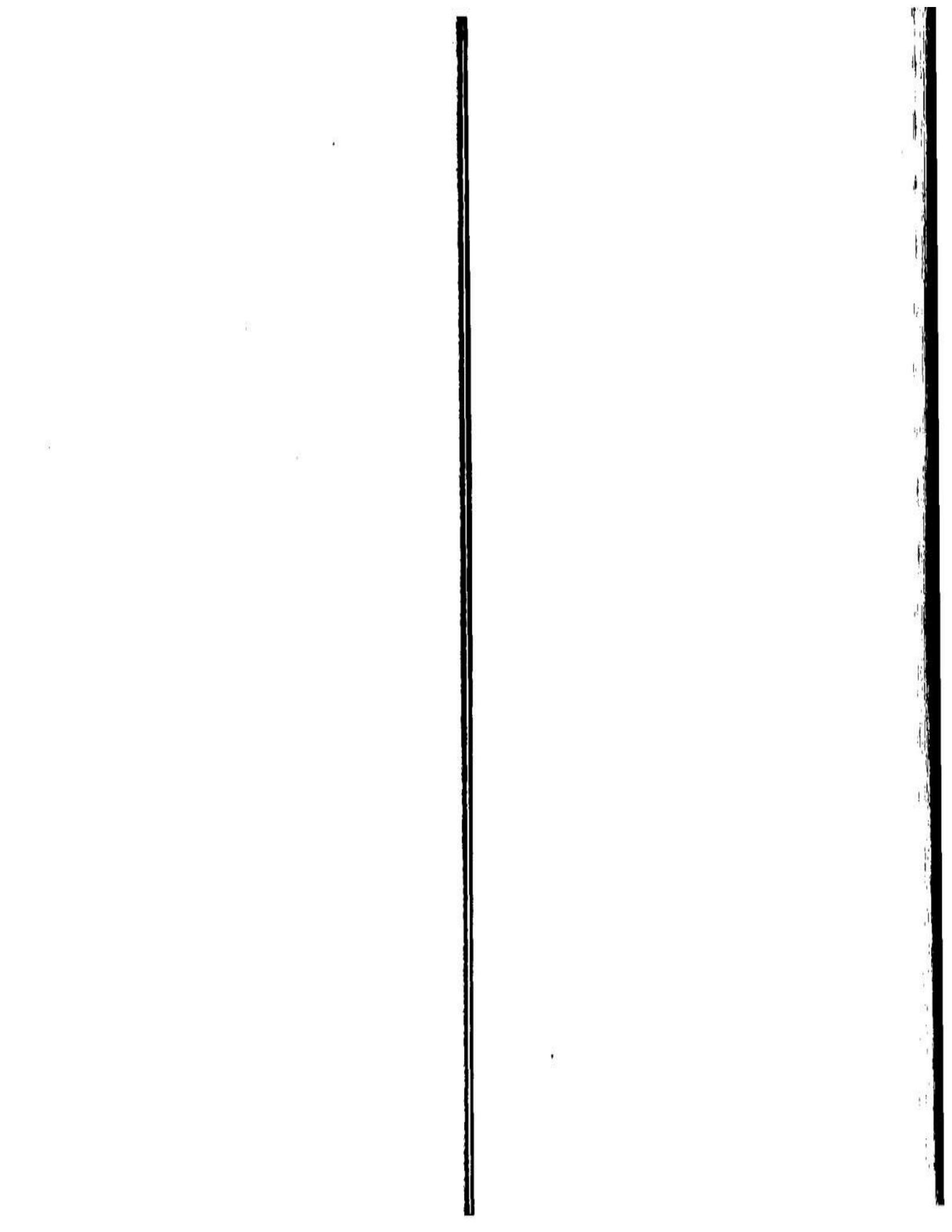
anyway. I've read through your letter very carefully and I'm Have you ever heard of Women's Liberation, Morris ? I've afraid I can't avoid the conclusion that you desire my pre-just discovered it. I mean I read about the way they busted sence mainly for the purpose of lawful sexual intercourse. I up the Miss America competition last November, but I suppose you've been frightened off attempting any more thought they were just a bunch of screwballs. Not at all.

extra-marital adventures, but the Euphoric spring has They've just started up a discussion group in Plotinus, and heated your blood to the extent that you're prepared to fly I went along the other night. I was fascinated. Boy, have me six thousand miles to obtain relief. I'm afraid I'd find they got^oar number 1

it a strain coming over in that kind of context, Philip. Even Desiree

the 17-day excursion fare costs £165-15-6, and nothing I can do in bed could possibly be worth that money.

Does this sound cutting? It's not meant to be. Mary says that men always try to end a dispute with a woman by raping her, either literally or symbolically, so you're only conforming to type. Mary is full of fascinating theories about **150**



4- Reading

COUPLE, mid-thirties, fat wife, would like to meet discreet couple.

NESTLING earth couple would like to find water brothers to grock with in peace.

NATURE is where it's at. Big Sur Dylan Hesse Bach baby racoons grass seashores sensitivity creativity sex and love. I want to groove with girl who likes same.

LOOKING for two or more bi girls for joyous 3 or more-somes with attractive man in early thirties. Shapely wife may also join in. Also, if desired, wife's young very feminine attractive transvestite cousin. Inquiries welcomed from gals in pairs or even singly. Especially urge novice inquiries from young singles or jaded housewives who'd like to try on the joys of group sex. Discretion assured. Photo optional but appreciated. If not sure, write anyway.

- small ads., *Euphoric Times*

PLOTINUS WOMEN ON MARCH

The Plotinus Women's Liberation Movement hit the streets Saturday in its first public appearance, to celebrate International Women's Day. Among the banners they carried: 'Is it smart to play Dumb?' 'You Earn More as a *Real* Whore' and 'Free Child Care Centers 24 Hours a Day'. The last of these slogans moved a Puerto Rican housewife to hold up the procession: where, please, could she find one of the Centers? The marchers explained regretfully that they didn't exist yet.

- *Plotinus Gazette*

PEOPLE'S GARDEN FOR PLOTINUS

HOUSE SLIDE

Students and street people moved on to a vacant lot on A small landslip on Pythagoras Avenue has made a house Poplar Ave, between Clifton and King Streets, at the unsafe for habitation, public health officials decided today.

weekend, to construct what they declared a People's Garden.

Occupants of 1037 Pythagoras were woken at 1.30 am last The land was acquired by the University two years ago, but Saturday night when their house slewed through a 450 turn has been used as an unofficial parking lot since then.

due to subsidence after a freak rainstorm. No one was hurt.

A spokesman for the gardeners said: 'This land does not

- Plotinus Gazette

belong to the University. If it belongs to anyone, it's the Costanoan Indians, from whom it was stolen by force two hundred years ago. If any Costanoans show, we'll gladly move out. Meanwhile, we're providing an open space for CONCERNING THE SITE ON POPLAR AVENUE

the people of Plotinus. The University has shown itself BETWEEN CLIFTON AND KING STREETS indifferent to the needs of the community.'

The gardeners worked through the weekend, digging and This property was purchased and cleared by the University leveling the ground and laying turf. 'I never thought to see approximately 18 months ago. The University was unable a hippie working,' said an elderly resident of nearby Pole St.

to proceed promptly with the construction of a playing

- Plotinus Gazette

field on the site because of financial difficulties. Funds are now available, and plans for the playing field are moving ahead.

In fairness to those who have worked on the land in recent weeks - many of them motivated by a genuine spirit - the **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF**

disutility of any additional labour there should be pointed RUMMIDGE STUDENTS UNION **COUNCIL**

out. The area will be cleared soon in preparation for work on the recreational field.

The following resolutions will be moved under Agendum 4

- Information Office, State University of Euphoria (*): That Union Council:

1. *Urges* the Union Executive to initiate direct action if the University Court of Governors, at its meeting of next Wednesday, does not agree to the following demands: PARADISE REGAINED

(a) acceptance *in toto* of the document *Student Participation* A new Eden is being created in the People's Garden in submitted by the Union to the Senate and Court last Plotinus - the most spontaneous and encouraging event so November.

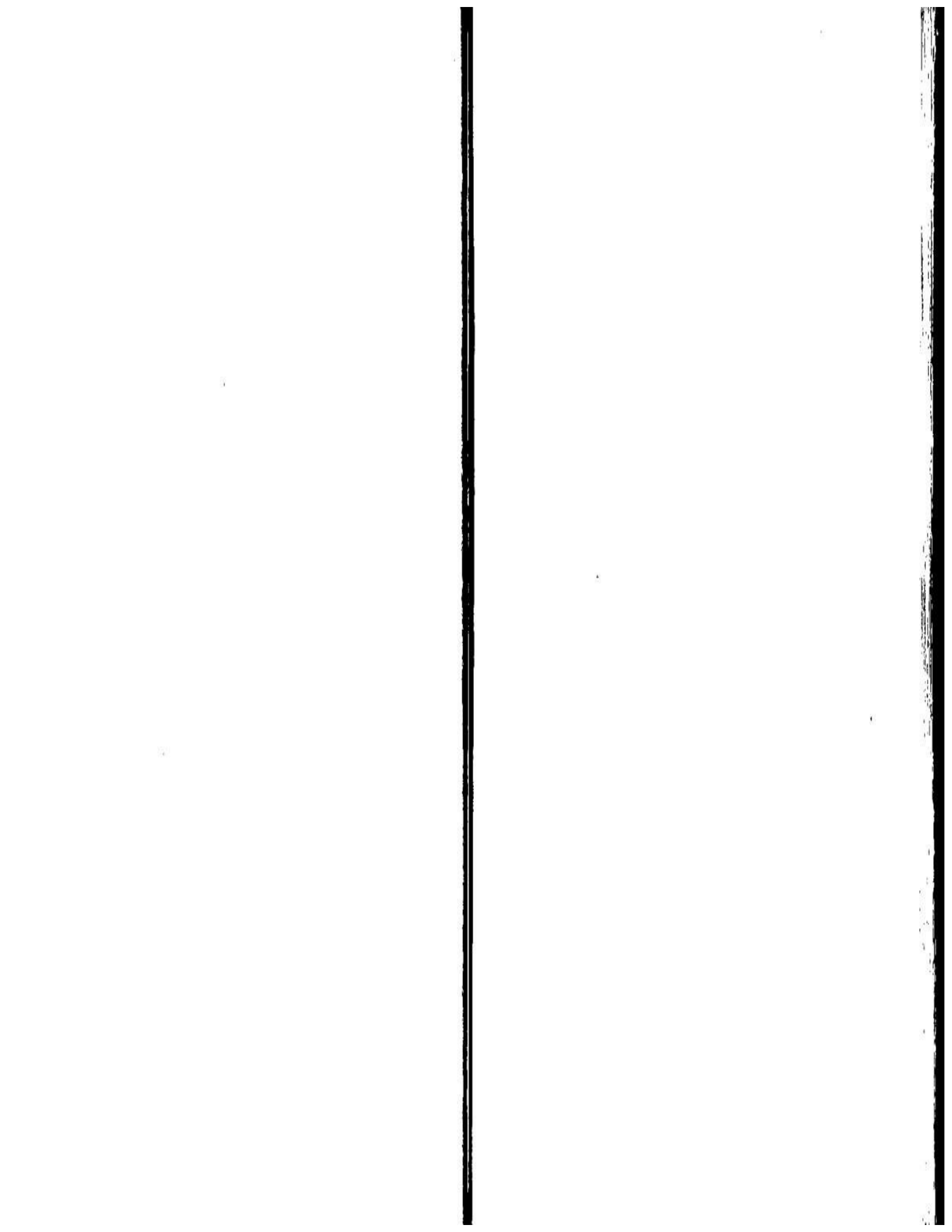
far in the continuing struggle between the University-

(b) immediate action to set up a Commission to investi-Industrial-Military complex and the Alternative Society of gate the structure and function of the University.

Love and Peace. Not just street people and students are (c) suspension of classes in all Departments for a two-day working and playing together in the Garden, but ordinary teach-in on the constitution and scope of the proposed commen and women, housewives and children - even professors!

mission.

- *Euphoric Times*



RUMMIDGE GRAND PRIX PROPOSED

Assembly Hall of the University. After a discussion on the ideal structure of a reorganized University, an improvised A newly formed consortium of Rummidge businessmen and discoltheque was set up. About 85 students were still in the motor-racing enthusiasts put forward plans yesterday to hall at 2 am. Later this morning an Extraordinary General hold Formula i motor races on the city's new Inner Ringway Meeting of the Union will debate a proposal that the occu-system. 'The new Ringway is just perfect for motor racing,'

pation of University buildings be endorsed and extended.

said the group's spokesman, Jack 'Gasket' Scott. 'You

- *Rummidge Morning Post*

might have thought this was what the designers had in mind all along.'

Rummidge Evening Mail

VISITING PROF AND STUDENTS DISCHARGED

Professor Philip Swallow, British visitor to the English De-EUPHORIC PROP AND STUDENTS

partment, was among sixteen people arrested on Saturday for allegedly stealing bricks from the demolition site on **ARRESTED FOR BRICK THEFT**

Buchanan St. Charges against the sixteen, mostly Euphoric Sixteen persons, including a visiting professor from England students, were dismissed at Plotinus Municipal Court and several students, were arrested on Saturday for stealing yesterday because the owner of the bricks, Mr Joe Mattiessen, used bricks from the demolition site of the Lutheran Church refused to sign the complaint. Some of Professor Swallow's on Buchanan Street. The bricks, valued at \$7.50, were students gathered outside the Court and cheered as he apparently destined for the People's Garden, where a emerged, smiling.

People's Fishpond is under construction.

'I've never been busted before,' he said. ' I t was a

- *Plotinus Gazette*

memorable experience, but I shouldn't care to repeat it.'

- *Euphoric State Daily*

MILITANT STUDENTS OCCUPY

RUMMIDGE UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY HALL

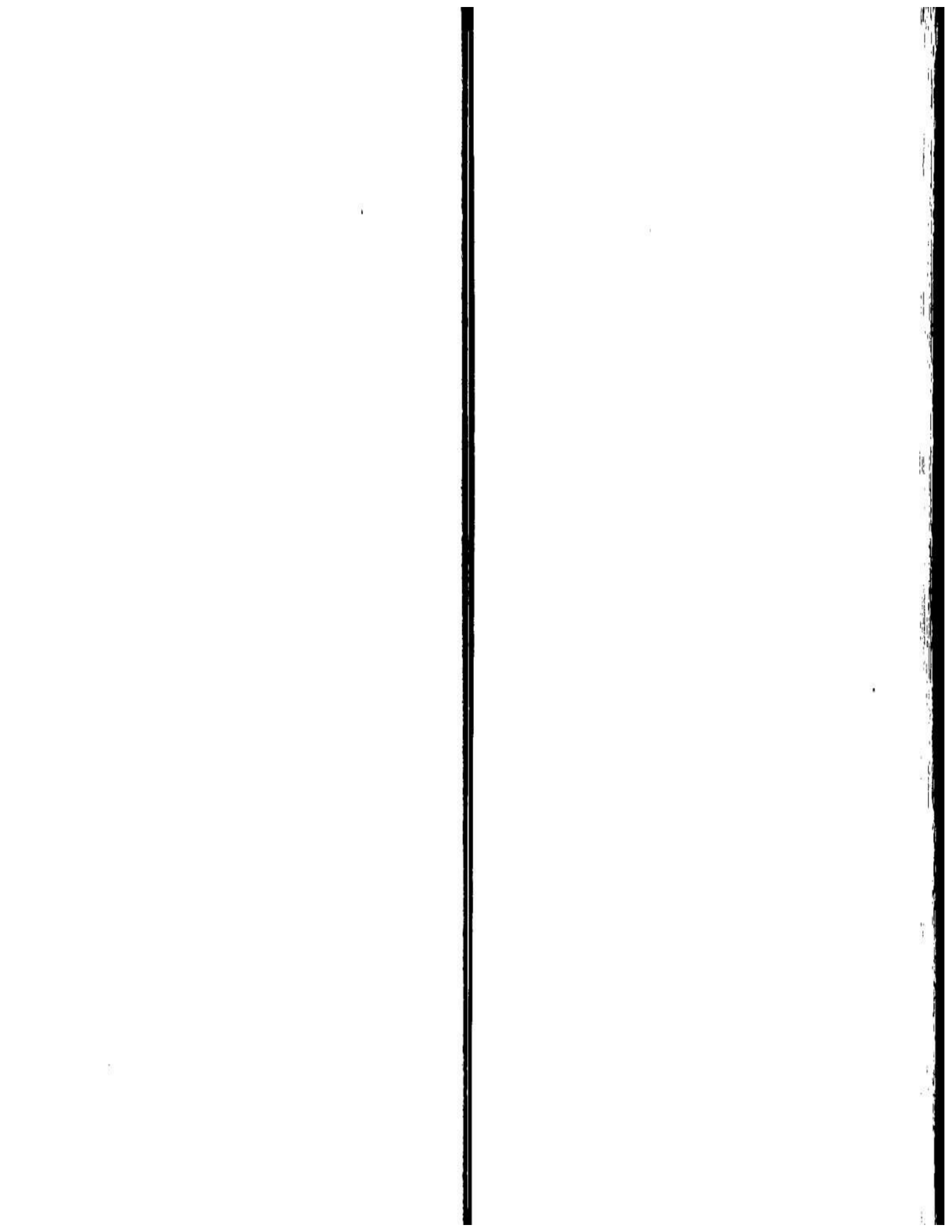
STATEMENT BY CHANCELLOR BINDE

Members of Rummidge University's Court of Governors had We have been presented with a Garden we hadn't planned to push their way through student pickets to attend their or even asked for, and no one is entirely happy about it. The meeting yesterday afternoon. The students were demanding people who have been working on the Garden are anxious that the meeting - called to discuss their Union's document about the future of their gift. The residents of the area are *Student Participation* - should be open to all-comers. Eventual-unhappy about the crowds, the noise and the behaviour of ly the President of the Union and two other students were some users of the Garden. The city officers are worried about allowed to address the Court, but the governors declined to the crime and control problems presented by the Garden.

give an immediate answer to the students' demands.

Many taxpayers are indignant at what they regard as an As soon as this was known, about 150 students, already illegal seizure of university - and therefore State - property.

prepared with sleeping bags and blankets, moved into the The organizers of intramural sport are unhappy about the **156**



prospective loss of playing fields. Most people are worried POLICE HOLD GARDEN, SHOOT 3 5 .
MARCH

about the possibility of a confrontation, although others are TRIGGERS CABLE AV. GASSING.
BYSTANDERS, afraid there might not be one. As for me, I feel the burden of STUDENTS
WOUNDED. EMERGENCY, CURFEW

these worries and several I haven't mentioned.

ENFORCED.

So what happens next? First, we shall have to put up a fence to re-establish the conveniently forgotten fact that the A noon rally and march yesterday to protest the University's field is indeed the University's property and to exclude un-seizure of the People's Garden erupted into a brutal battle authorized persons from the site. That's a hard way to between police and demonstrators lasting all afternoon.

make the point, but that's the way it has to be.

Sixty people were hospitalized and by dusk tear gas had

- Release from the Chancellor's Office, spread through the south campus and adjoining residential State University of Euphoria

districts. Police, openly wielding shotguns, fired birdshot into surging crowds of demonstrators, many of whom fled with blood streaming down their faces. One policeman was stabbed and three others received minor injuries from rocks and shattered glass. The National Guard has been called out
DEFEND THE GARDEN!

by Governor Duck, and a curfew has been enforced be-We have taken a solemn oath to defend the Garden, and tween the hours of 10 pm and 6 am.

wage a war of retaliation against the University if it At 6 am yesterday, after police had evicted students and moves against the Garden. If we fight the same way as we others sleeping out in the People's Garden, the Esseph have worked together on the Garden - together in teams, Fence Company arrived to erect a 10-foot high steel-link with determination, in brotherhood - we shall win.

(Contd. backpage)

NO FENCES AGAINST THE PEOPLE

- Euphoric State Daily

NO BULLDOZERS

BE MASTERS OF SILENCE, MASTERS OF THE

NIGHT WITH SHOVELS AND GUNS

POWER TO THE PEOPLE AND THEIR GUNS

RUMMIDGE SIT-IN CONTINUES

The Gardeners

An extraordinary meeting of the Rummidge University

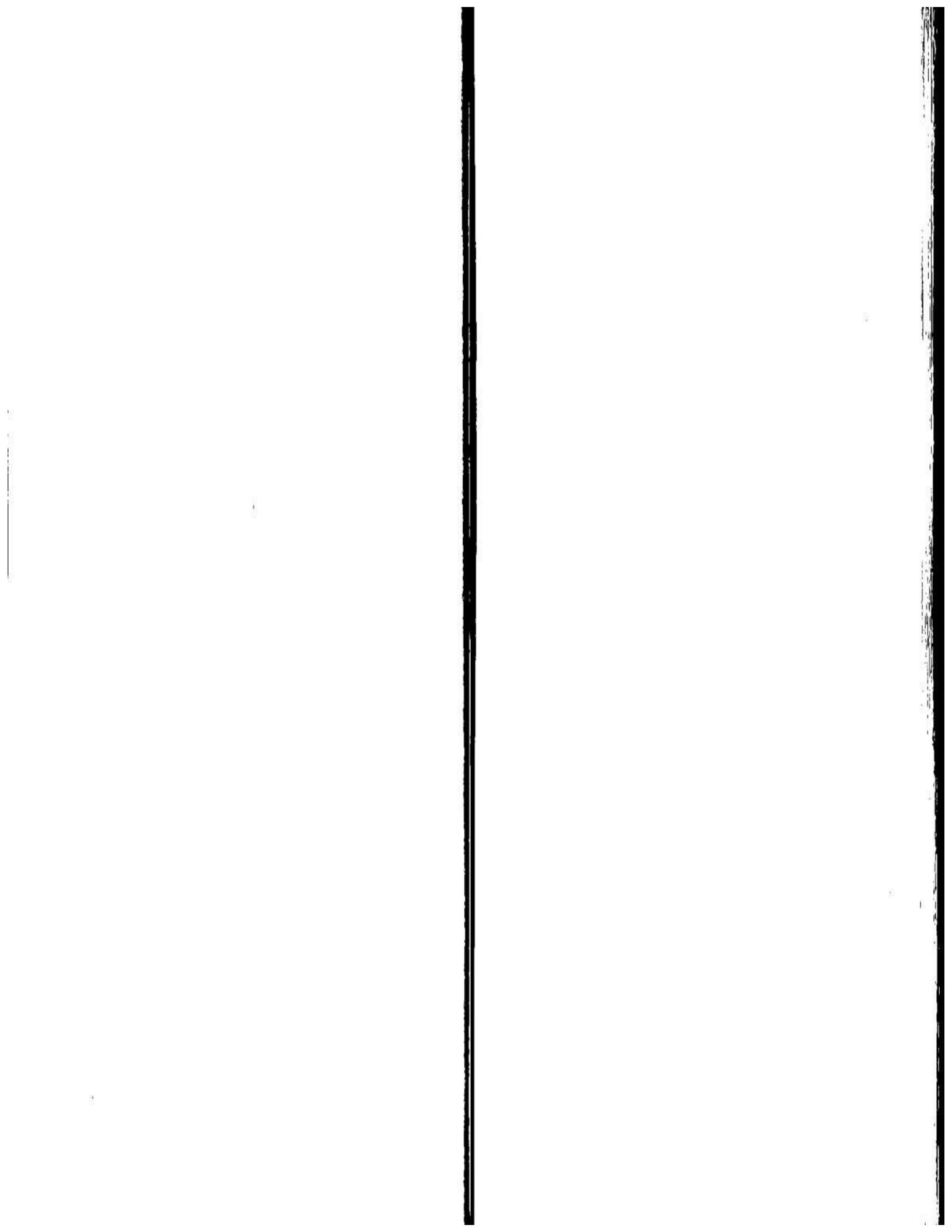
- Manifesto distributed on the streets of Plotinus Students' Union, attended by over 1000 students, voted today to endorse and continue the 'sit-in' already initiated by 150 left-wing extremists yesterday evening. At the end of their meeting the students went in a body to the Assembly **SUPPORT THE OCCUPATION**

Hall and a number of them forced their way into the office of the Vice-Chancellor's secretary and demanded that the Students of Rummidge! Support the Occupation at today's Vice-Chancellor Mr Stewart Stroud appear to hear their Meeting, then join us in the Assembly Hall. Show the grievances.

Administration that this *is your* University, not theirs.

'It was a waste of time,' one of the students present com-

- Flysheet issued by the Occupation Steering Committee mented afterwards. 'He showed no understanding of the 158



legitimate demands of students for democratic participation **UNIVERSITY AT WAR,**

in university decision-making.'

RUMMIDGE PROFESSOR WARNS

The students occupied several offices in the Administration Block, causing 'considerable alarm' among the staff of Rummidge, has condemned the present sit-in by senior staff, according to a senior official.

students in strong terms.

- *Rummidge Evening Mail*

'The situation closely resembles that of Europe in 1940,'

he said yesterday. 'The unacceptable ultimatum, followed by a *Blitzkrieg* and occupation of neighbouring territory, was Hitler's basic strategy. But we did not yield then and we **GARDENERS AND COPS,**

shall not yield now.'

GUARDSMEN CLASH IN DOWNTOWN PLOTINUS

On the wall of his office, Professor Masters has a large Supporters of the fenced-off People's Garden played cat-map showing the plan of the University's central heating and-mouse with police and National Guardsmen over the system. ' The heating pipes are conveyed through a maze of weekend. On Saturday they invaded the shopping area of tunnels,' he explained, 'which would make an excellent downtown Plotinus. Milling over a three block area on base for resistance activity should Senate and the Adminis-Shamrock Ave, they were confronted by a line of guardsmen tration have to go underground. I don't doubt that the who herded them back at bayonet point.

Vice-Chancellor has a secret bunker to which he can retreat At approximately I pm, Miranda County Sheriff's at short notice.'

Deputies jumped and clubbed a young man spraying The Vice-Chancellor's Office declined to comment.

WELCOME TO PRAOUE on a window of Cooper's Depart-

- *Rummidge Morning Post*

ment Store with an aerosol paint container. He was dragged off to the police station bleeding profusely, and was later identified as Wily Smith, 21, a black student at Euphoric **RIOT VICTIM ROBERTS DIES**

State.

STUDENT REFERENDUM TO BE HELD

On Sunday a huge procession of Garden supporters coiled **ACADEMIC SENATE SETS MEETING ON GARDEN**

its way through the streets of Plotinus, planting miniature

' People's Gardens' on every vacant lot they passed. Asked

- *Headlines, Euphoric State Daily*

why he had instructed his men to remove the grass and flowers, Sheriff O'Keene said, 'They're a violation of property.'

WE ACCUSE! WE SHALL OVERCOME!

- *Esseph Chronicle*

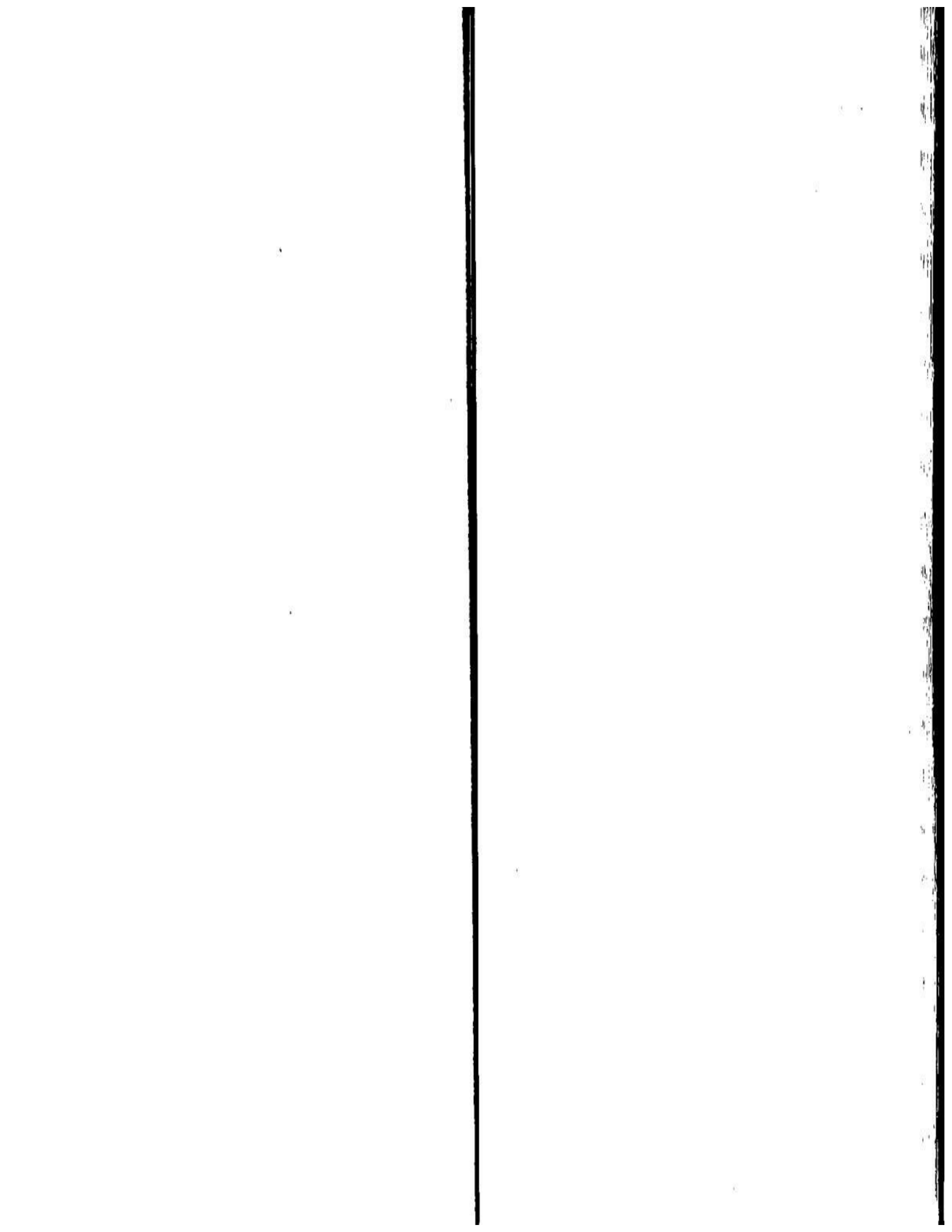
The People of Plotinus know who was responsible for the death of John Roberts.

Chancellor Binde, who declared war on the people over a piece of land.

Sheriff O'Keene, who armed his blue meanies with shotguns and let them loose on the streets.

The nameless pig who pumped two rounds of buckshot **t6o**

161



into the back of a defenceless young man at pointblank cession of 3000 mourners marching in memory of John Roberts. Wind blew the gas and carried it hundreds of range.

yards away. It blanketed residential houses, entered uni-Our land is desecrated, but the spirit of the Garden is versity classrooms and offices, seeped into the wards of the alive on Shamrock Avenue and Howie Plaza. The people of University Hospital. Faculty wives and children in the Plotinus are united against the pigs and tyrants. The bull-Blueberry Creek swimming pool J mile away were affected shit barriers are coming down, the barricades of love are by the gas. A group of faculty have lodged a strong protest going up against the pigs. Street freaks, politicos, frat rats, with Chancellor Binde against the indiscriminate use of gas sallys and jocks and mommas for peace are pulling off their by the law enforcement agencies.

masks of isolation and touching each other's hearts.

- *Esseph Chronicle*

- *Euphoric Times*

AN EIGHT - YEAR - OLD ' S VIEW OF THE CRISIS

PROFESSOR RESIGNS

I didn't get to see the People's Garden really, but I could Professor Gordon H. Masters, Professor of English at feel that it was beautiful. In the Garden it was made of Rummidge University, yesterday tendered his resignation people's feelings, not just their hands, they made it with to the Vice-Chancellor, who has accepted it' with regret'.

their heart, who knew if they made it to stay, there are It is well known that Professor Masters, who was due to hundreds of people that built that garden, and so we'll never retire in a few years' time, has not enjoyed good health lately, know if they meant it to stay.

and friends close to him say that the current student troubles The police are just ruining their lives by being police, at the University have been a source of severe strain for they're also keeping themselves from being a person. They him.

act like they are some kind of nervous creatures.

Professor Masters' resignation takes effect from next

- Submitted by Plotinus schoolteacher

October, but he has already left Rummidge for a period of to *Euphoric State Daily*

rest and recuperation.

- *Rummidge Morning Post*

ASSEMBLY HALL TEACH-IN

This weekend the organizers of the sit-in have arranged a **CHOPPER SPRAYS DEMONSTRATORS** -

teach-in on the subject of THE UNIVERSITY AND THE

TEAR GAS BLANKETS CAMPUS

COMMUNITY.

A National Guard helicopter clattered over the Euphoric What is the role of the University in modern society ?

State campus yesterday, spraying white tear gas over some What is the social justification of University Education ?

700 students and faculty trapped in Howie Plaza by a tight What do ordinary people really think about Universities and Students ?

ring of guardsmen.

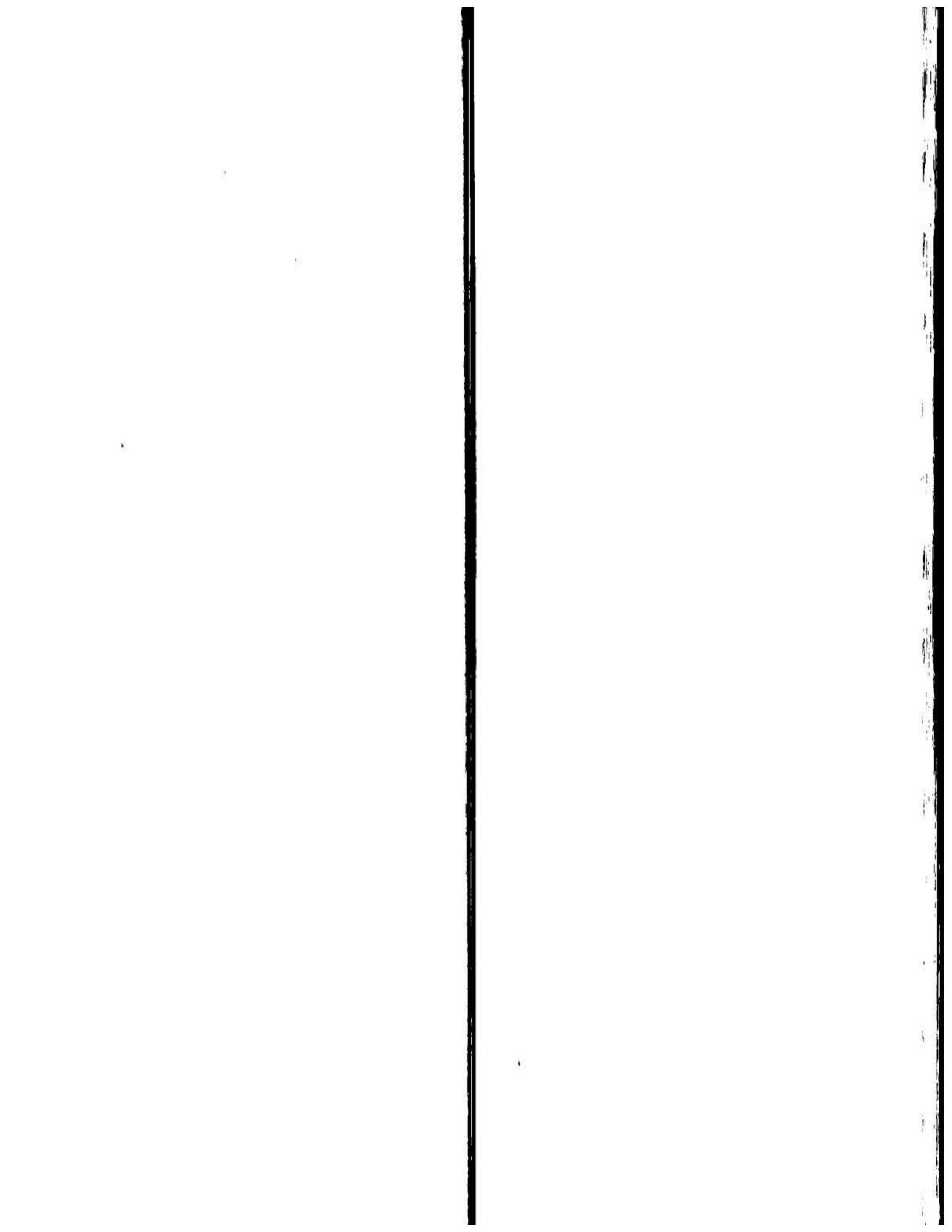
These are some of the questions we shall be discussing.

The gas attack was authorized by Miranda County

- Handout, Rummidge University

Sheriff Hank O'Keene, to disperse the remnants of a pro-163

16a



RUMMIDOE SCHOOLKIDS ON STUDENTS

RUMMIDGE DONS PROPOSE MEDIATOR

most students don't like the way colleges and universities The non-professorial staff association at Rummidge Uni-are run tats why they have protested and sit-in. When stu-versity has proposed that a mediator be nominated to chair dents are older they will find it was ran in a good way.

negotiations between the University Administration and the Students waste people and police-mens time, i think just for Students' Union Executive, to try and bring the sit-in to a laff. Most of them are hippeys and act like big fools and an end. Earlier today, the students voted to continue the waste thier brain when someone else would be proud to be sit-in.

brainy.

Professor Morris J. Zapp, a visiting professor from the State University of Euphoria, U S A, has been suggested as a I think students are stupid they throw stink bombs at possible candidate for the job of mediator.

people on purpose ony because they want to be noticed.

- *Rummidge Evening Mail*

They are a load of old tramps with their long dirty hair.

They look like they haven't had a wash. Their clothes are disgraceful and they don't have any money. They go on the television and smoke drugs in front of the viewers. They **EARTHQUAKE CURE**

cause riots in the streets fighting and destroying everything that comes their way. Some students are sensible they wear Earthquakes, said a speaker at yesterday's Euphoric State nice clothes and got nice hair, they have a nice home and are teach-in on Ecology and Politics, were nature's way of pro-not stupid.

testing all the concrete that had been laid on top of the good earth. By planting things, one was liberating the ground, and if a student came to me and said something i would walk on.

therefore preventing earthquakes.

Lets say you are a cat and the students pick you up and you

- *Plotinus GazstU*

think he is kind, but they cut you up and experiment on you. Some students are all right but they are stuck up noses.

I don't like students cos they all follow each other in what **CHANCELLOR PROPOSES LEASE OF GARDEN.**

they do they all wear the same clothes and they all talk like **MAYOR HAS DOUBTS. GIANT MARCH PLANNED**

americans, and they smoke drugs and have injections to **FOR MEMORIAL DAY**

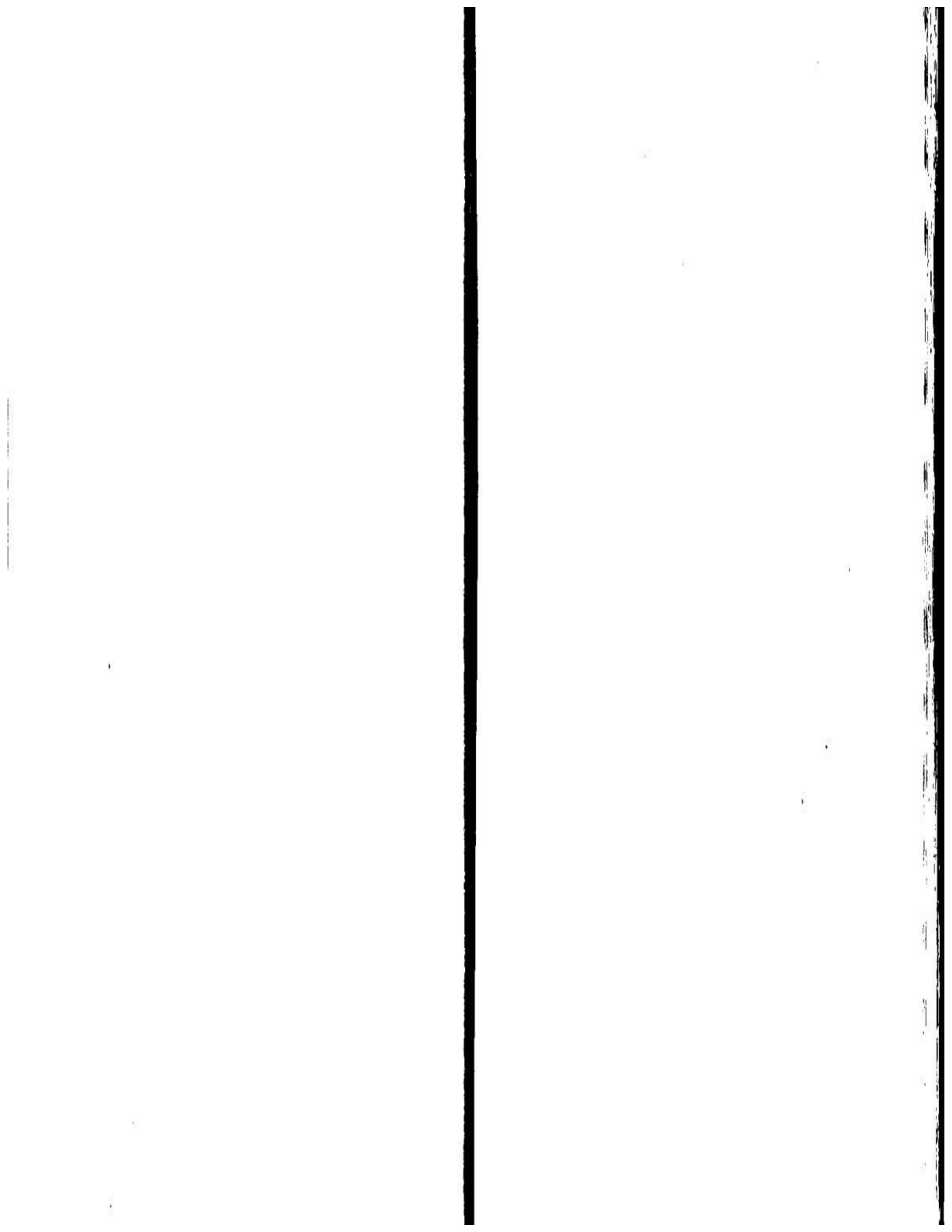
make themselves happy and they talk about love and peace when their unhappy.

Chancellor Harold Binde told a press conference yesterday that he thought the vexed problem of the People's Garden if it was the police it would hang them.

could be solved if the University leased part of the land to

- submitted to *Rumble* by Education student the City of Plotinus for development as a park, incorporating the present arrangements as far as possible.

Plotinus City Council will probably consider the proposal at its next meeting, but Mayor Holmes is known not to favour it. There is doubt, too, whether Governor Duck, an *ex officio* member of the University Council, would allow the 164



lease to be approved, as he is bitterly opposed to any con-5. Changing

cession to the Gardeners.

Meanwhile the latter are making plans for an enormous march through the streets of Plotinus on Memorial Day. It is to be a peaceful, non-violent protest, organizers insist; but local citizens, hearing estimates that 50,000 may converge on Plotinus for the occasion, from places as far away as Madison and New York, are apprehensive.

CA permit for a march has been applied for,' a spokesman

'You don't think it's on the small side?'

confirmed at the City Hall today, ' and is being studied by

' It looks fine to me.'

the appropriate officials.'

'I've been thinking lately it was rather small.'

- *Esseph Chronicle*

'A recent survey showed that ninety per cent of American men think their penises are less than average size.'

'I suppose it's only natural to want to be in the top ten per c e n t . . . '

ICE CUBE DAMAGES ROOF

'They aren't the *top* ten per cent, stupid, they're the ten A block of green ice one cubic foot in size fell through the per cent who aren't worried about it. The point is you can't roof of a house in south Rummidge last night, damaging a have ninety per cent who are less than average.'

room on the top floor. The room was unoccupied and no

'Ah. I never was any good at statistics.'

one was hurt.

'I'm disappointed in you, Philip, really I am. I thought Scientists called in to examine the ice, at first thought to you didn't have a virility hangup. That's what I like about be a freak hailstone, quickly established that it was frozen you.'

urine. It is thought to have been illegally discharged from

'My small penis ?'

an airliner flying at high altitude.

'Your not demanding applause for your potency all the The owner of the house, Dr Brendan O'Shea, said this time. Like with Morris it had to be a four-star fuck every morning, 'I'm flabbergasted. I don't even know if I'm time. If I didn't groan and roll my eyes and foam at the insured against this kind of thing. Some people might say it mouth at climax he would accuse me of going frigid on him,'

was an act of God.'

' Was he one of the ninety per cent too ?'

- *Rummidge Evening Mail*

'Well, no.'

'Ah.'

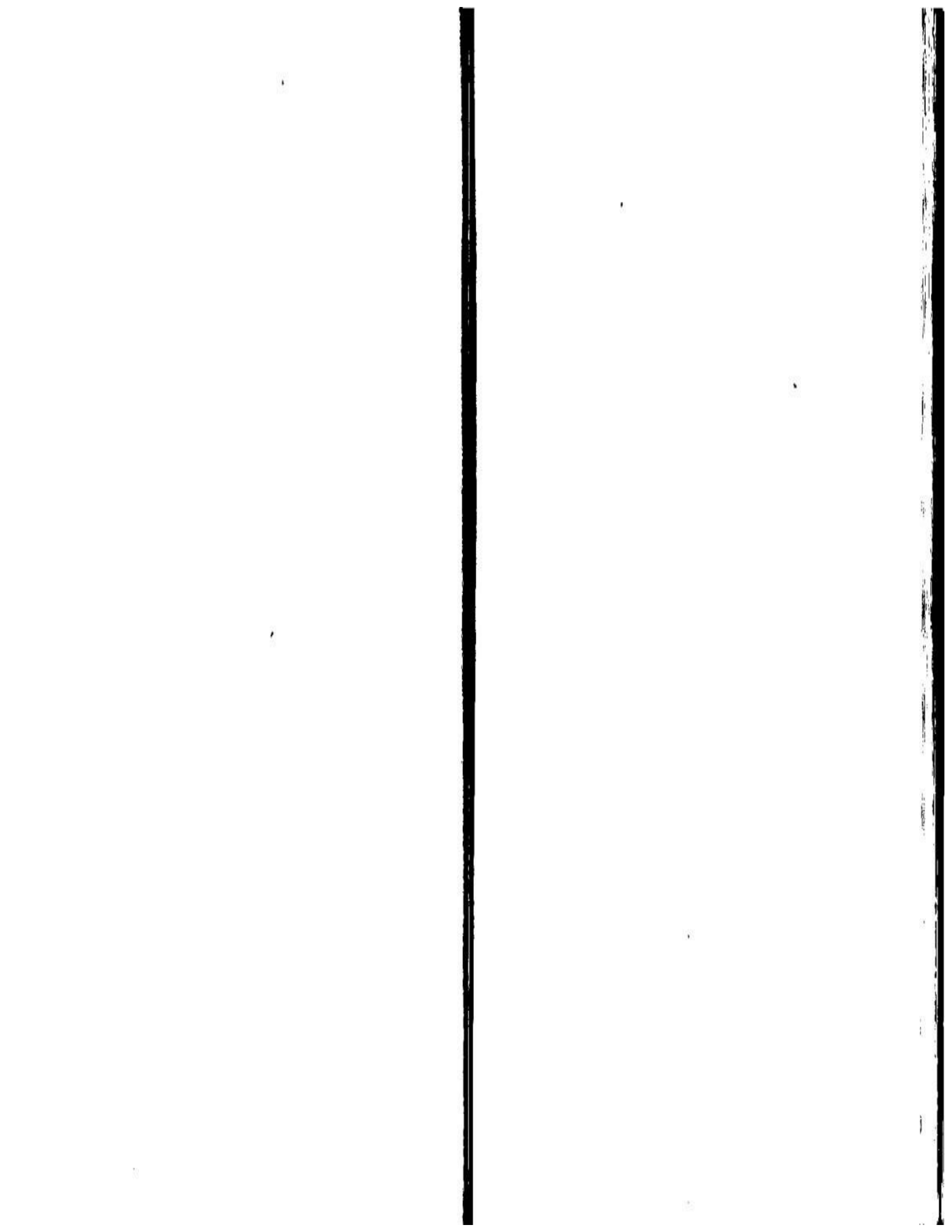
'Anyway, it looks smaller to you, because you're always looking down on it. It gets foreshortened.*

"That's a thought.'

'Go take a look in the mirror.'

'No, I'll take your word for it.'

But the next morning, drying off after his shovrer, Philip stood on a chair to examine his torso in the mirror above the handbasin. It was true that one's normal angle of vision 167



entailed a certain foreshortening effect, though not as much

' I expect you're right.'

as one might have wished. Forty was admittedly a rather

'How would you like it if you had to wear a codpiece all advanced age at which to begin worrying on this score, but it the time?'

was only recently that he had acquired any standards of

• I'd hate it, but I bet you could sell them if you advertised comparison. Not since he was at school, probably, had he in *Euphoric Times**

taken a good look at another male organ until he came to

' Morris was always a big-tit man. I don't know why he Euphoria. Since then penises had been flaunted at him married me. I don't know why I married him. Why do from all sides. First there was Charles Boon, who scorned py-people marry people? Why did you marry Hilary?'

jamais and was often to be encountered walking about the

' I don't know. I was lonely at the time.'

apartment on Pythagoras Drive in a state of nature. Then

'Yes. That's about it. If you ask me, loneliness has a lot the record stores along Cable Avenue began displaying the to answer for.'

John Lennon/Yoko Ono album with the full-frontal nude Philip climbed down from the chair and finished drying photo of the famous couple on the sleeve. There was the off. He rubbed talcum into his skin, feeling with a certain hero of / *am Curious Yellow*, which they had gone to see in narcissistic pleasure the new cushions of tissue that had Esseph, queuing two hours with what D6sir6e had described appeared on his hips and chest. Since giving up smoking he as a couple of hundred other middle-aged voyeurs hoping had begun to put on weight, and he thought it rather suited it would turn them on (which, one had to admit, it did); him. His rib-cage was now covered by a smooth sheath of and the young man in the audience of an *avant-garde* theatre flesh, and his collar-bone no longer stood out with a group who upstaged the actors by"" taking off his clothes be-frightening starkness that suggested he had swallowed a fore they did. These displays had impressed Philip with a coat-hanger.

sense of his own inferiority. Desirde was unsympathetic.

He shrugged on the cotton happi-coat that De'sire'e had

' Now you know what it was like growing up flat-chested in a loaned him. His own bathrobe had been left behind at big-tit culture,' she said.

Pythagoras Drive and Charles Boon had borrowed it so

' I think your chest is very nice.'

often that Philip no longer cared to recover it. If Boon

' What about your wife ?'

wasn't walking about the apartment ostentatiously naked,

•Hilary?'

he was forever pinching your clothes. How much nicer life

' Is she well-stacked ?'

was on Socrates Avenue. How providential, in retrospect,

'A good figure, yes. Mind y o u . . . '

the landslip that had pitched him out of one address and

•What?'

into the other. The happi-coat was patterned in marine

' She couldn't do without a bra, like you.'

shades of blue and green, lined with white towelling and was

'Why not?'

immensely comfortable. It made him look, and even feel,

'Well, you know, it would be flopping about all over the vaguely athletic and masterful, like an oriental wrestler. He place.'

frowned at his reflection in the mirror, narrowing his eyes and dilating his nostrils. He did a lot of looking into mirrors 4 It ? Don't you mean them ?'

lately. Hoping to surprise himself, perhaps, in some re-

'Well, all right, them.'

vealing, explanatory attitude or expression.

•Who says they shouldn't flop? Who says they have to He padded into his bedroom, pulled back the covers on stick out like cantilevered terraces? I'll tell you who, the his bed and dented the pillow a

little. It was his one, vestigial brassiere industry.'

168

169

''

''

gesture towards the conventions: when he slept with Desiree, in the state God left it at the creation. What was that to rise early and come into his room to rumple the bed-passage in *The Great Gatsby*? 'A fresh, green breast of the new clothes. Whom he was supposed to be fooling, he couldn't world... for a transitory enchanted moment man must have imagine. Not the twins, surely, because Desiree, in the held his breath in the presence of this continent. . . ' As Philip terrifying way of progressive American parents, believed in hunted the quotation through his mind the tranquillity of the treating children like adults and had undoubtedly explained morning was shattered by a hideous noise as of a gigantic to them the precise nature of her relationship with himself.

lawn-mower passing overhead, and a dark spidery shadow I wish she would explain it to me, he thought wryly, gazing flashed across the gardens on the hillside. The first heli-into another mirror, I'm damned if I can make head or tail copter of the day swooped down upon the Euphoric State campus.

ofit.

Though not one of Nature's early risers, Philip found it no Philip returned to the house. Elizabeth and Darcy were hardship to be up betimes these sunny mornings in 3462

up. They came into the kitchen in their pyjamas, yawning Socrates. He liked showering in jets of hot water sharp as and rubbing their eyes and pushing back their long matted laser beams, walking about the quiet carpeted house in hair. Not only were they identical twins, but to make things his bare feet, taking possession of the kitchen that was like more difficult Darcy had the more feminine good looks, so the flight deck of some computer-guided spaceship, all that it was on Elizabeth's dental brace that Philip relied to gleaming white and stainless steel, with its dials, gadget sand tell them apart. They were an enigmatic pair. Communi-immense humming fridge. Philip laid breakfast places for eating telepathically with each other, they were un-himself and the twins, mixed a jug of frozen orange juice, commonly sparing in their own use of ordinary language.

put bacon rashers in the electric Grillerette, turned it on Philip found this restful after his own precociously articulate low, and poured boiling water on to a teabag. Shuffling into and tirelessly inquisitive children, but disconcerting too.

a pair of abandoned mules, he took his tea through the patio He often wondered what the twins thought of him, but they into the garden and squatted against a sunny wall to absorb gave nothing away.

the unfailing view. It was a very still, clear morning.

'Good morning!' he greeted them brightly. 'I think it's The waters of the Bay were stretched taut and you could going to be hot.'

almost count the cables on the Silver Span. Down on the

'Hi,' they murmured politely.' Hi, Philip.' They sat down ever-moving Shoreline Freeway, the cars and trucks raced at the breakfast bar and began to munch large quantities of along like Dinky toys, but their noise and fumes did not carry some patent sugar-coated cereal.

this far. Here the air was cool and sweet, perfumed with the

' Would you like some bacon ?'

sub-tropical vegetation that grew luxuriantly in the gardens They shook their heads, mouths full of cereal. He ex-of affluent Plotinus.

tracted the crisp, uniform strips of bacon from the Gril-A silver jet, with engines cut back, planed in from the lereffe and made himself a bacon sandwich and another cup north almost at his eye level, and he followed its lazy proof tea. 'What d'you want for your lunch today?' he in-gress across the cinemascope of the sky. This was a good hour quired. The twins looked at each other.

to arrive in Euphoria. It was almost possible to imagine

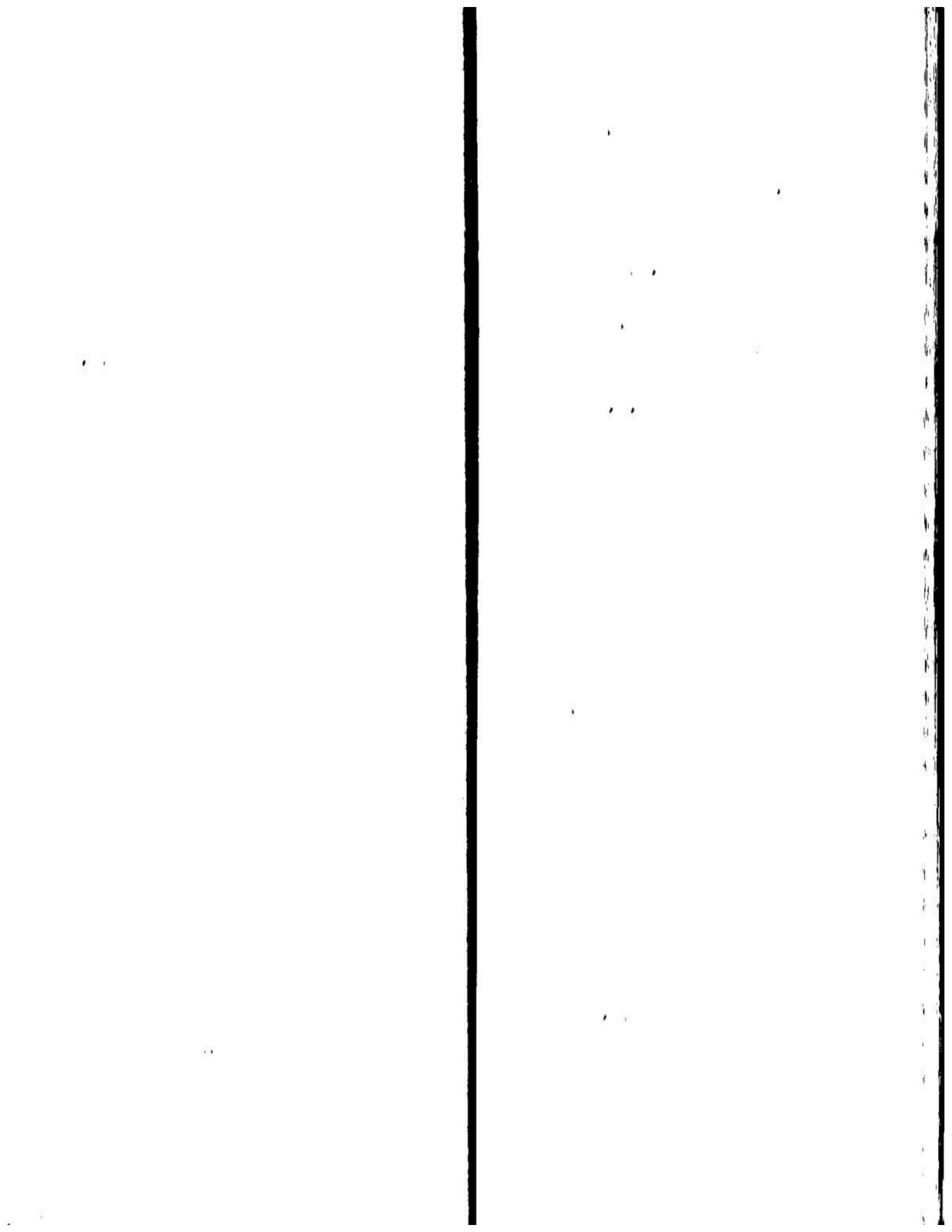
' Peanut butter and jelly,' Darcy said.

what it must have been like for the first mariners who sailed,

'All right. What about you, Elizabeth?' As if he needed probably quite by chance, through the narrow strait now to ask.

bridged by the Silver Span, and found this stupendous bay

'The same, please.'



He made the sandwiches with the ready-sliced, vitamin-The twins reappeared in the kitchen to collect their lunch-enriched, totally tasteless white bread they seemed to like, boxes, looking marginally cleaner and tidier in blue jeans, and packed them with an apple each in their lunch-boxes.

sneakers and faded T-shirts.

The twins took second helpings of cereal. *Euphoric Times*

' Have you said good-bye to your mother ?'

had recently reported an experiment in which rats fed They called perfunctorily, "Bye, D&iree,' as they left the on cornflake packets had proved healthier than rats fed house, and received a muffled shout in reply. Philip put on the cornflakes. He told them about it. They smiled coffee, orange-juice, toasted muffins and honey on a tray politely.

and took it into Decree's bedroom.

' Have you washed ?' he inquired.

' Hi!' she said.' Your timing is terrific'

While they were washing, he put the kettle on to boil for

'It's a beautiful day,' he said, setting down the tray and DesireVs coffee and picked up yesterday's *Chronicle*. 'It is to going to the window. He adjusted the louvres of the be a peaceful, non-violent protest, the organizers insist,' he Venetian blinds so that the sunshine fell across the room in read. 'But local citizens, hearing estimates that 50,000 may long strips. Desiree's red plaits flamed against the saffron converge on Plotinus for the occasion, from places as far pillows of the huge bed.

away as Madison and New York, are apprehensive.' He

'Was that a helicopter nearly took the roof off the house?'

looked out of the window, down to where the helicopter she asked, tucking zestfully into her breakfast.

darted and hovered like a dragonfly over downtown Plo-

'Yes, I was in the garden.'

tinus. Over two thousand troops were in the city, some

' The sonofabitch. Kids get off to school O K ? '

bivouacked in the Garden itself. It was said that they were

'Yes, I made them peanut butter sandwiches. I used up secretly watering the flowers. Certainly the

soldiers often the last of the jar.'

looked as if they would like to throw down their arms and

'Yeah, I must go marketing today. You got anything join the protesting students, especially when the girl sup-planned ?'

porters of the Garden taunted them by stripping to the

'I've got to go into the University this morning. The waist and opposing bare breasts to their bayonets, a juxta-English faculty are holding a vigil on the steps of Dealer.'

position of hardware and software that the photographers of

'A what?'

Euphoric Times found irresistible. Most of the troopers were

'I'm sure it's the wrong word, but that's what they're young men who had only joined the National Guard to get calling it. A vigil is an all-night thing, isn't it? I think we're out of the Viet Nam War anyway, and they looked now just just going to stand on the steps for an hour or two. In silent like the GIs that one saw in Viet Nam on lite television protest.'

newsreels, bewildered and unhappy and, if they were bold

'You think Duck is gonna call off the National Guard just enough, making peace signs to the cameras. In fact the because the English faculty quit talking for a couple of whole episode of the Garden was much like the Viet Nam hours ? I admit it would be quite an achievement, but -'

War in miniature, with the University as the Thieu regime,

'I gather the protest is aimed at Binde. He's got to be the National Guard as the U S Army, the students and hip-pressured into standing up to Duck and O'Keene.'

pies as Viet Cong . . . escalation, overkill, helicopters, de-

'Binde?' Desire"e snorted derisively. 'Chancellor Facing-foliation, guerilla warfare: it all fitted together perfectly. It both-ways.'

would be something to say on the Charles Boon Show. He

'Well, you must admit he's in a difficult position. What couldn't imagine what else he was going to say.

would you do in his position ?'

'I couldn't be in his position. The State University of Hilary, by the way? Or are you hoping another poison-pen Euphoria has never had a woman chancellor in its history.

letter will do the job for you ?'

Are you going to be in tonight, by the way, because we'll

' I don't knpw what to say.' He paced the room, trying, need a baby-sitter if you're not. It's my Karate class.'

for no reason at all, to avoid treading on the strips of sun-

' I shall be out late. I've got to do this wretched broadcast light. Three images of himself converged in the triptych of with Charles Boon.'

mirrors over D6sir6e's dressing-table, and cold-shouldered

' Oh, yeah. What are you talking about ?'

him as he turned to retrace his steps.

'I think I'm supposed to give my impressions of the

'Tell her what's happened and what you plan to do Euphoric scene, from a British point of view.' about it.'

' Sounds like a pushover.'

'But I don't know what I'm going to do about it. I

'But I don't feel British any more. Not as much as I used haven't got any plans.'

to, anyway. Nor American, for that matter. "Wandering

' Isn't your time running out ?'

between two worlds, one lost, the other powerless to be

'I know, I know,' he said despairingly, running fingers born.'"

through his hair. 'But I'm not used to this sort of thing. I've

'You'll have plenty of questions about the Garden, no experience in adultery. I don't know what would be best anyway. As one of its most celebrated supporters.'

for Hilary, the children, for me, for you -'

'That was a complete accident, as you very well know.'

'Don't worry about me,' said Desirée. 'Forget about me.'

'Nothing is completely accidental.'

'How can I?'

'I never felt more than mildly sympathetic to the Garden.'

'I'll just say one thing. I've no intention of marrying I've never even set foot in the place. Now people, complete again. Just in case it had crossed your mind.'

strangers, come up to me and shake my hand, congratulate

'You're going to get a divorce, aren't you?'

me on my commitment. It's most embarrassing.'

'Sure. But from now on I'm a free woman. I stand on my

'There is a tide in the affairs of men, Philip. You've own two feet and without a pair of balls round my neck.'

gotten caught up in the historical process.'

Perhaps he looked hurt, for she continued: 'Nothing per-

'I feel a complete fraud.'

sonal, Philip, you know I like you a lot. We get on fine

'Why are you going on this vigil, then?'

together. The kids like you too.'

'If I don't, it will look as if I've joined the other side, and

'Do they? I often wonder.'

that certainly isn't true. Anyway, I do feel strongly about

'Sure, you take them out to the park and suchlike. Morris getting the troops off campus.'

never did that.'

'Well, take care not to get arrested. It may not be so easy

'Funny, that's one of the things I thought I was getting to bail you out next time.'

away from when I came out here. It must be compulsive.'

Desired finished her muffin, licked her fingers and settled

'You're welcome to stay here as long as you like. Or go.

back into the pillows with a cup of coffee held to her lips.

Feel entirely free to do what you think best.'

'You know,' she said, 'you look really good in that happi-

'I have felt very free these last few weeks,' he said.

coat.'

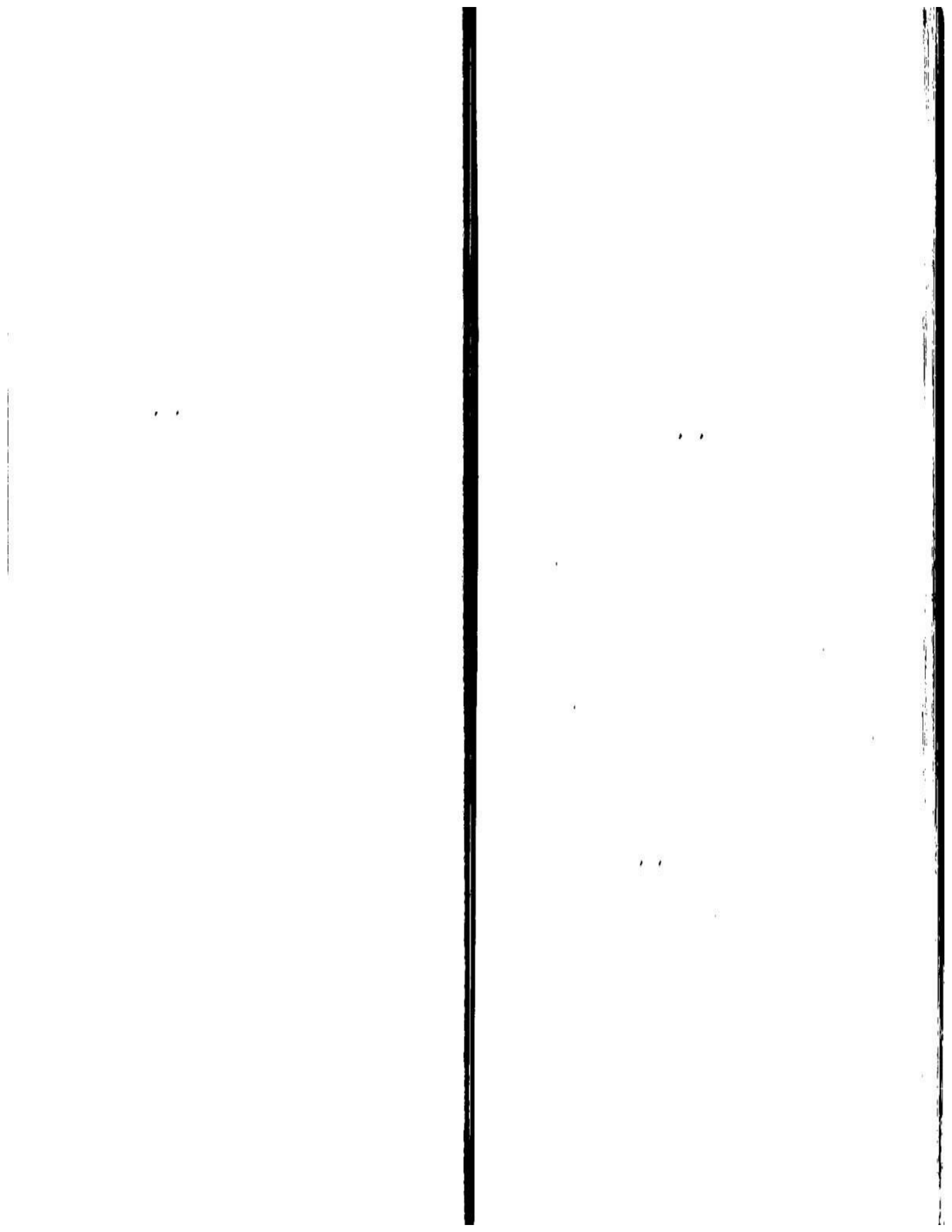
'Freer than I've ever felt in my life.'

'Where can I get one like it?'

Desire flashed him one of her rare smiles. 'That's nice.'

'Keep it. Morris never wore the damn thing. I bought it She got out of bed and scratched herself through her cotton for a Christmas present two years ago. Have you written to nightdress.

»74



'I just wish we could go on like this indefinitely. You and

'Mmm, that's nice.' After a while she said: 'You really me and the twins here. And Hilary and the children quite ought to write home, you know.'

happy and not knowing.'

'Have you told Morris?'

'How much longer d'you have?'

'I don't owe Morris any explanations. Besides, he'd be

'Well, the exchange ends officially in a month's time.'

round to your wife like a shot.'

'Could you stay on at Euphoric State if you wanted to? I

'I hadn't thought of that. Of course, they both know **I've** mean, would they give you a job?'

been staying h e r e'

'Not a hope.'

'But they think Melanie is here too, as chaperone. Or is it

'Somebody told me you got a terrific write-up in the last me who's supposed to be keeping an eye on you and Melanie? I've lost track.'

Course Bulletin.'

•That was just Wily Smith.'

'I lost track weeks ago,' said Philip, rubbing less briskly.

•You're too modest, Philip.' Pulling the nightdress over He was on his knees now, drying her legs.' You know this is rather exciting.'

her head, Desiree walked into the adjoining bathroom.

Philip followed her appreciatively, and sat on the toilet

'Cool it, baby,' said Desiree. 'You have a vigil to **keep**, remember?'

cover while she showered.

'Couldn't you get a job in one of the smaller colleges

Darling,

around here ?' she called through the hiss of hot water.

Many thanks for your last Utter. I'm glad to hear you have got

•Perhaps. But there would be problems about visas. Of

over your cold. I haven't started my hay fever yet and am hoping

course, if I married an American citizen, there* d be no

that I won't be allergic to Euphoric pollen. By the way, I'm having

problem.'

an affair with Mrs Z°PP' I should have mentioned it before but it

' That sounds like blackmail.'

slipped my. . .

' I t wasn't meant to be.' He stood up, and his reflection

Dear Hilary,

rose to face him in the mirror over the handbasin. 'I must shave. This conversation is getting more and more unreal.

Not 'Darling* because I've forfeited the right to that term of

I'll go back in a month's time, of course. Back to Hilary and

endearment. Only a few months after the Melanie affair. ..

the children. Back to Rummidge. Back to England.'

Dearest Hilary,

' Do you want to ?'

You were very perceptive when you said I seemed more relaxed and

'Not in the least.'

cheerful in my last few Utters. Not to put too fine a point on it, I have

'You could work for me if you like.'

been getting laid by Desiree %app three or four times a week lately,

'For you?'

and it's done me the world of good. ..

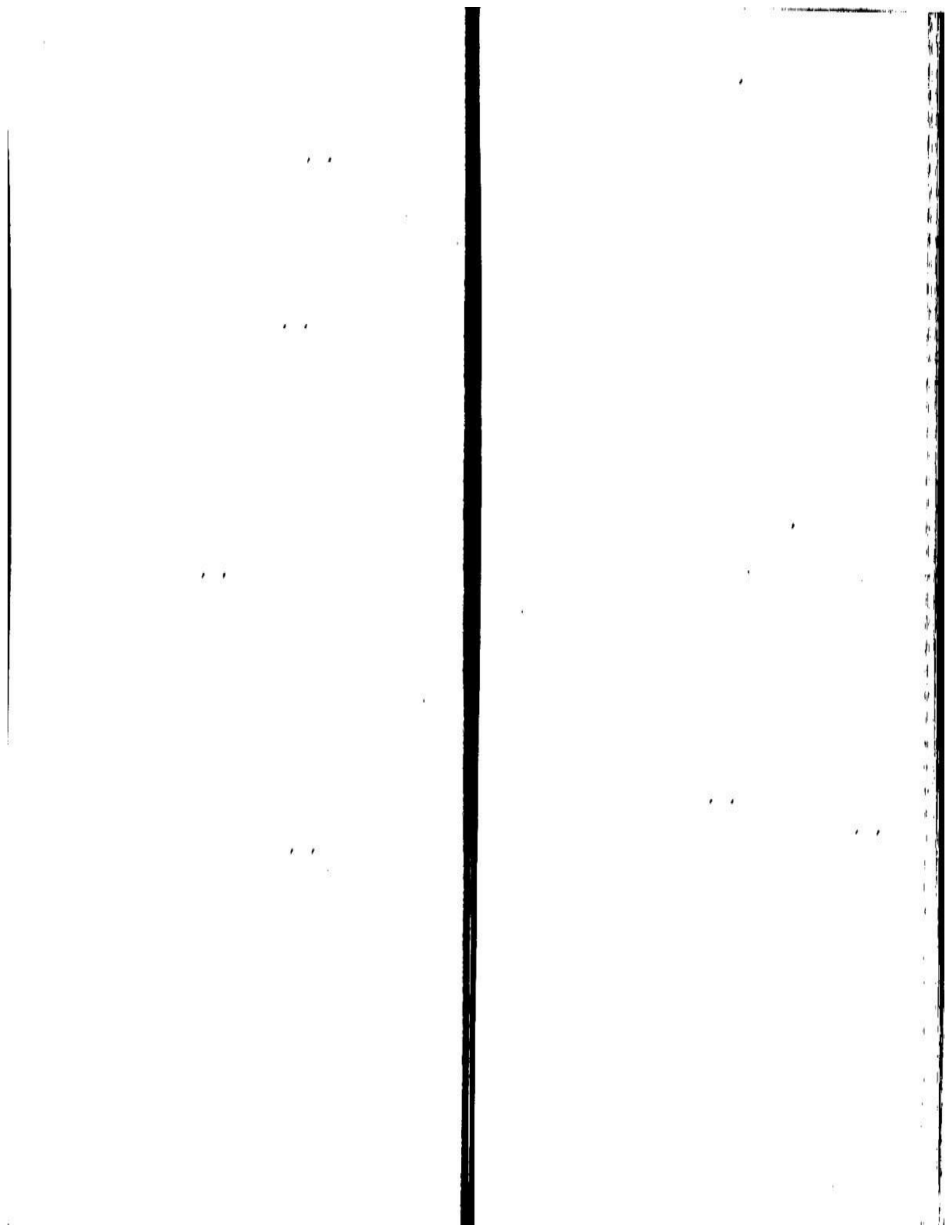
'As a housekeeper. You do it very well. Much better than He composed letters to Hilary in his head all the way to me. I want to go back to work.'

the campus, tearing them up, mentally, almost as soon as he He laughed.' How much would you pay me ?'

had started them. His thoughts seemed to spin out of control,

'Not much. But there'd be no visa problems. Would you into absurdity, sentimentality, obscenity, as soon as he tried get me a towel from the closet, honey?'

to bring into a single frame of reference images of home, He held the towel open as she stepped glistening from the Rummidge, Hilary and the children, and the image of his shower, and began rubbing her down briskly.



present existence. It was difficult to believe that by boarding

'You must be drunk,' said Desiree unsympathetically.

an aeroplane he could be back, within hours, in that grey, Despite her umbrella, she was getting very wet. Philip was damp, sedate environment from which he had come. As easy totally saturated. Furthermore they appeared to be standing to believe that he could step through Desiree's dressing-table in several inches of mud, instead of the garden path.

mirror and find himself back in his own bedroom. If only he

'I'm perfectly sober,' he said, groping in the dark for the could send home, when the time came, some zombie replica porch steps.

of himself, a robot Swallow programmed to wash dishes, take

'Somebody must have moved the house,' she said sarcastically, make mortgage repayments on the 3rd of every tically.

month, while he himself lay low in Euphoria, let his hair Which, in a manner of speaking, was quite true. Round-grow and grooved quietly with Desiree . . . No one would ing a corner of the building in search of the front door, they notice in Rummidge. Whereas if he went back in person, in came upon three terrified girls in mud-stained nightwear -

his present state of mind, they would say he was an impostor.

Melanie, Carol and Deirdre — who had just been jolted out of *Will the real Philip Swallow please stand up?* I should be interes-their beds as the house slewed round in a great arc (lucky ted to meet him myself, Philip thought, steering the Corvair Charles Boon was warm and dry in his snug studio). 'We round the tight bends of Socrates Avenue, tyres squealing thought it was the earthquake,' they said. 'We thought it softly on the smooth tarmac, houses and gardens rotating was the end of the world.'

dizzily in the rear-view mirror. He had ended up driving

'You'd better all come home with me,' Desiree said.

Morris Zapp's car after all. 'You might as well keep the

// was, you see, purely an act of charity, and meant to be a very battery charged,' Desiree had said, a few days after he *temporary arrangement. Just to give us a roof over our heads until we* moved into the house. 'I can't watch you going off to catch *could return to Pythagoras Drive, or make other arrangements . . .*

the bus every morning with that car idle in the garage.'

Carol and Deirdre soon moved on. Melanie set up with *It all started, you see, on the night of the*

Charles Boon in the South Campus area - they had thrown *I had been invited to the same party again, and she offered me a lift* themselves wholeheartedly into the cause of the Garden, and *home, because there was a kind of tropical storm . . . P y t h a g o r a s* wanted to be near the scene of the action. Eventually, of the Drive was like a river in flood. The rain swept in great folds refugees from the landslip, only Philip was left in the Zapps'

across the beam of the headlights, drummed on the roof and house. He hung on, waiting to see if the house on Pythagoras almost overpowered the windscreen wipers. The streetlamps Drive would be made safe: Desiree told him not to worry.

were out, shorted probably. It was like driving on the He began to look desultorily for another apartment: Desiree bottom of the sea. 'Jesus Christ,' Desiree muttered, peering told him to take his time. He didn't feel too bad about im-through the flooded windshield. 'I think I'll sit this out, posing on her because she was often out in the evenings at when I've dropped you.'

meetings and he saved her the trouble of getting baby-sitters.

For politeness' sake he invited her in for a cup of coffee, Also she was a slow riser and appreciated his willingness to and to his surprise she accepted. 'You're going to get make breakfast for the twins and see them off to school.

awfully wet, I'm afraid,' he said.

Imperceptibly they settled into a routine. It was almost like

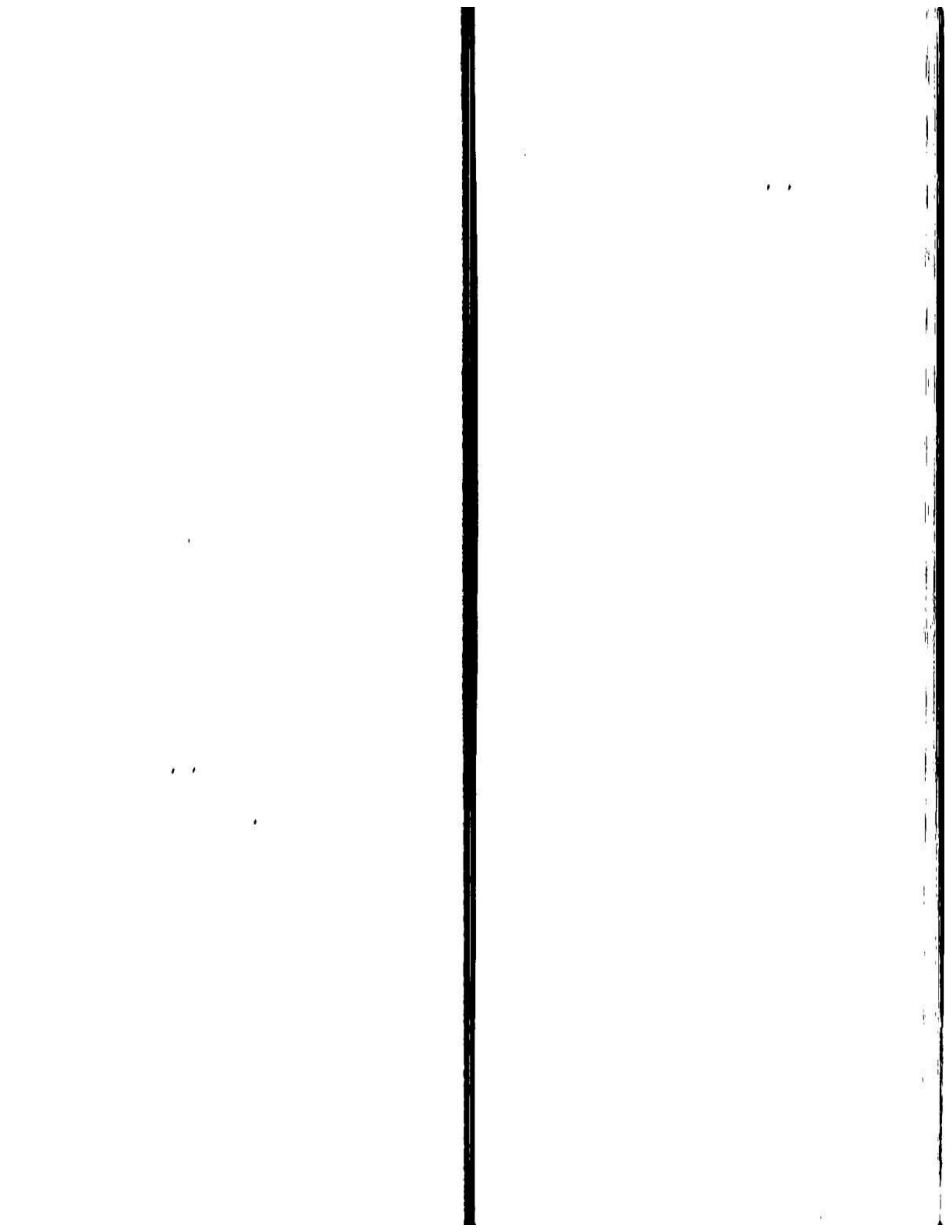
' I've got an umbrella. We can run for it.'

being married. On Sundays he would drive the "twins into They ran for it - straight into the side of the house.

the State Park on the other side of the Plotinus hills and take

'I can't understand it,' he said. 'The front door should them for rambles through the pine-woods. He felt himself be here.'

reverting to a more comfortable, loose-fitting version of his 178



life in England. The interregnum of Pythagoras Drive beer with the meal, and perhaps a Scotch afterwards as they seemed like a drugged dream as it receded into the past.

watched the day's rioting on television. One evening when There had been something unnatural, unhealthy about it, they were doing this he said, 'I found quite a nice apartment after all, something ignoble and ridiculous about the role he today. On Pole Street.'

had played there, a middle-aged parasite on the alternative

'Why don't you stay on here?' Desiree said, without society, hanging around the young folk with a doggy, taking her eyes from the screen.' There's plenty of room.'

ingratiating look, anxious to please, anxious not to offend,

'I can't go on imposing on you.'

hoping for a game that never materialized: the game he had

'You can pay me rent if you like.'

seen developing that first evening in the girls' downstairs

'All right,' he said.' How much ?'

apartment, with the Cowboy and the Confederate Soldier

'How about fifteen dollars a week for the room plus and the black wrestler. They never seemed to play it again, twenty dollars a week for food and liquor plus three dollars or else they took care to play it when he was out. He never heating and lighting that makes thirty-eight dollars a week sniffed the hint of an orgy from that night onwards, though or one hundred and sixty dollars per calendar month ?'

he kept his senses alert for a sign. The nearest he got to

'Goodness me,' said Philip. 'You're very quick off the group sex was reading the swingers' small ads in *Euphoric* mark.'

Times. Perhaps he should have put one in himself. *British*

'I've been thinking about it. It seems like a very con-Professor, not especially well hung, likes Jane Austen, Top of the venient arrangement to me. Are you in tomorrow night, by *Pops, gin and tonic, seeks orgy, suitable beginner*. Or a personal the way? I have a consciousness-raising workshop.'

message. *Melanie. Give me a second chance. I need you but can't* Philip stopped at a red light and wound down his window.

speak. I am awake in my room and waiting for you. Awake and The buzz of a helicopter told him he

was now in the mili-sweating into the darkness, listening to the muffled sounds of tarized zone, though you wouldn't otherwise have guessed her and Charles Boon making love in the next room. It had that there was any trouble at the University on this side of been sick, really. The landslip had swept away a whole the campus, he thought, as he steered the car through the Sodom and Gomorrah of private fantasies and unacted broad entrance on the West perimeter, past lawns and desires. He felt a new man in the calm, initially sexless shrubberies where the spume of rotating water sprinklers atmosphere of Desiree Zapp's luxurious eyrie high up on the rainbowed in the sun and a solitary security man in his peak of Socrates Avenue. He began to eat better, sleep shelter lifted a lazy hand in salute. But as he approached better. Together he and D6siree gave up smoking.' If you'll Dealer, the signs of conflict became more evident: windows throw away that stinking pipe, I'll throw away my stinking smashed and boarded up, leaflets and gas canisters littering cigarettes, is that a deal?' It was the karate that determined the paths, Guardsmen and campus police watchfully her to quit, she said, she felt humiliated gasping for breath patrolling the paths, guarding buildings, muttering into after ten minutes' exercise. Philip found it surprisingly easy walkie-talkies.

and decided that he'd never really liked the pipe anyway. He He found a vacant space in the car park behind Dealer, was glad to be free of the paraphernalia of smoking. Now driving in beside Luke Hogan, just arrived in his big green the days were warm and he could wear lightweight trousers Thunderbird.

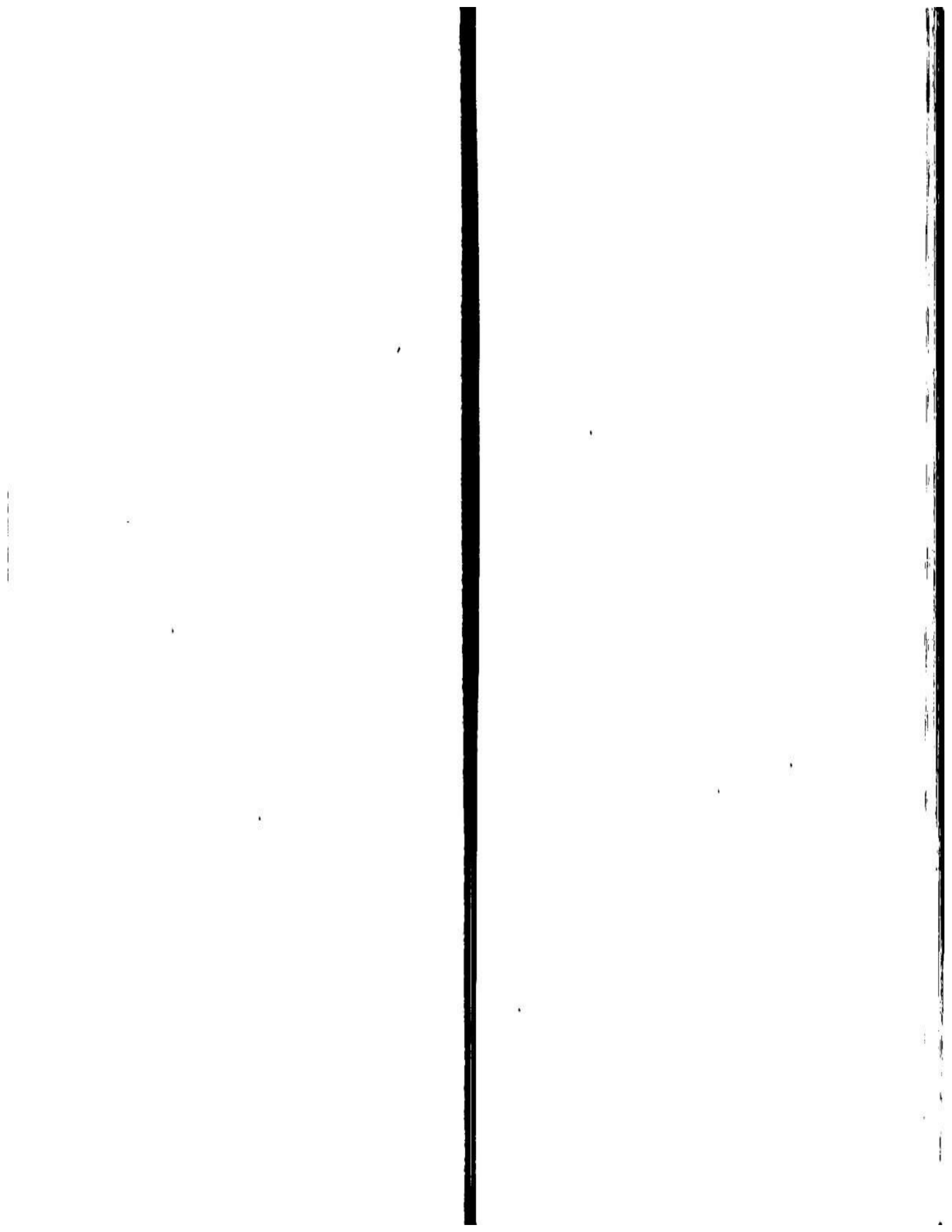
and slimline shirts without displaying unsightly bulges like

'Nice car you've got there, Phil,' said the Chairman.

cysts all over his torso. Admittedly he drank more these days:

'Morris Zapp used to have one just like it.'

usually a couple of gin and tonics before dinner, and wine or Philip shifted the subject of conversation slightly. 'One **180**



thing to be said for the troubles on campus,' he observed,' it hurried in beside them. He was a short, bespectacled man makes parking easier.'

with thinning hair - a disappointingly unheroic figure, Hogan nodded dolefully. The crisis was no fun at all for Philip had thought when he first identified him. He still him, sandwiched between his radical and conservative wore a KEEP KROOP button in his lapel, as a veteran might wear a combat medal. Or perhaps he wore it merely to colleagues.' I'm real sorry, Phil, that you had to visit us at a embarrass Hogan, who had presided over his firing and re-time like this.'

hiring.

' Oh, it's quite interesting really. Perhaps more interesting

'Hi, Luke, hi, Philip,' he greeted them jauntily. 'See you than it ought to be.'

guys on the steps later ?'

'You'll have to come back another year.'

Hogan responded with a sickly smile.' 'Fraid I'm going to

'Supposing I asked you for a permanent job?' Philip be tied up in a committee this morning, Karl.' He leapt out asked, half-seriously, recalling his conversation with Desirfe.

of the lift as soon as it opened, and disappeared into his Hogan's response was entirely serious. An expression of office.

great pain passed over his big, brown face, parched and

'Motherfucking liberal,' Kroop muttered.

eroded like a Western landscape. 'Gee, Phil, I wish I

'Well, I'm a liberal,' Philip demurred.

could...'

'Then I wish,' said Kroop, patting Philip on the back,

' I was only joking.'

'that there were more liberals like you, Philip, prepared to

'Well, that was a mighty fine review you had in the *Course* lay their liberalism on the line, to go to jail for their *Bulletin*... And these days, teaching counts, really counts.'

liberalism. You're coming to the vigil ?'

'I haven't got the publications behind me, I know that.'

'Oh yes,' said Philip, blushing.

'Well, I have to admit P h i l . . .' Luke Hogan sighed. 'To As he entered the Department Office to check his mailbox, make you an offer appropriate to your age and experience, Mabel Lee greeted him. 'Oh, Professor Swallow, Mr Boon we should expect a book or two. Now if you were *black*, of left a note in your mailbox.' She simpered. 'Hear you're course, it would be different. Or better still, Indian. What I going to be on his show tonight. I'll be sure to listen.'

wouldn't give for an indigenous Indian with a PhD,' he

'Oh dear, I wouldn't recommend it.'

murmured wistfully, like a man on a desert island dreaming He took a copy of the *Euphoric State Daily* from the pile on of steak and chips. Part of the settlement of the previous quar-the counter and scanned the front page: RESTRAINING

ter's strike had been an undertaking by the University to **ORDER** ISSUED AGAINCT SHERIFF o'KEENE . . .

employ more Third World faculty, but most other uni-OTHER CAMPUSES PLEDGE SUPPORT . . . PHYSICIANS, versities in the country were pursuing the same quarry, so SCIENTISTS PROBE ALLEGED BLISTER GAS . . . WOMEN

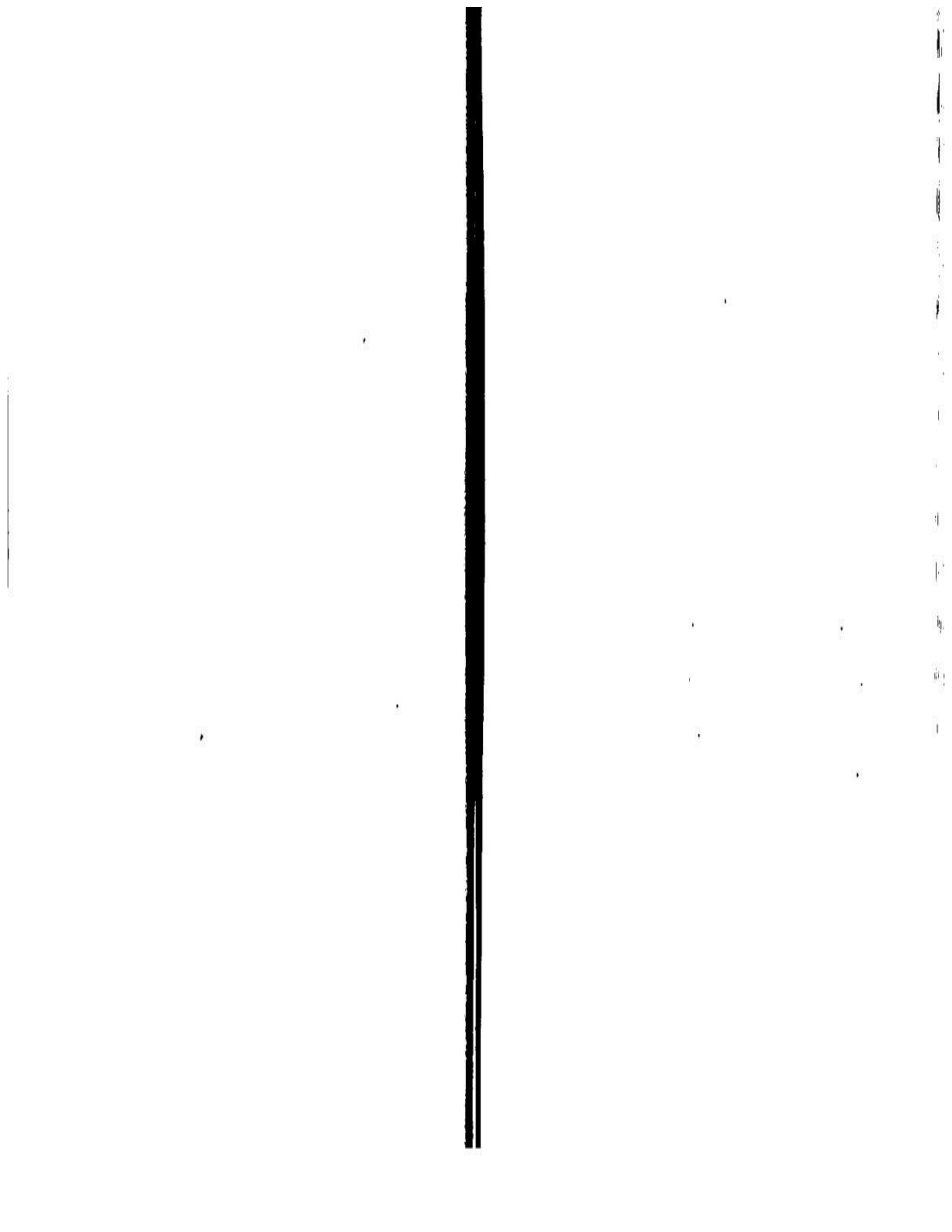
the supply was running short.

AND CHILDREN IN PROTEST MARCH TO GARDEN. There

'That's another thing, I haven't got a PhD,' Philip ob-was a photograph of the Garden, now rapidly reverting to served.

a dusty waste lot, with a few pieces of play equipment and This was a fact known to Hogan but he evidently con-some withered shrubs in one corner, surrounded by the sidered it bad taste on Philip's part to draw attention to it, familiar wire fence. A few stolid soldiers inside, a crowd of for he made no reply. They entered Dealer, and waited for women and children outside, like some surrealistic inversion the lift, in silence. A roughly painted notice on the wall of a concentration camp. Something for the Charles Boon Said, 'ENGLISH FACULTY VIGIL, DEALER STEPS II A.M.'

Show ?' Who, one wonders, are the real prisoners here ? Who As the lift door slid open and they entered, Karl Kroop 183



is inside, and who is outside the fence?' Etc., etc. He lifted had swung through a whole spectrum of feelings - amuse-the flap on what he still called, to the immense amusement ment, annoyance, envy, anger, raging sexual jealousy and of his American colleagues, his pigeonhole. A small, queerly now, all that passion spent, a kind of grudging respect. You shaped package addressed in Hilary's handwriting gave him saw Boon everywhere these days, on the streets and on tele-a moment of queasiness until he saw that it had come by vision, wherever there was a march, or a demonstration, surface mail and had been posted months ago. Mail from conspicuous by a white plaster cast on one arm, as though he outside Euphoria disturbed him these days, reminding him were daring the police to break the other. His nerve, his of his connections and responsibilities beyond its borders; cheek, his self-confidence, knew no bounds; it turned into a especially did he shrink from Hilary's airletters, pale blue, kind of courage. Melanie's infatuation, which showed no wafer-thin missives, the very profile of the Queen in the signs of slackening, had become a little more explicable.

right-hand corner transmitting, to his guilty eye, a pained He crumpled the note and tossed it into the wastepaper disapproval of his conduct. Not that the actual text of basket. The package from England he would open in the Hilary's recent letters had expressed any sense of grievance privacy of his office. On his way there he visited the men's or suspicion. She chatted amiably enough about the chil-room on the fourth floor that had been bombed on his first ren, Mary Makepeace, and Morris Zapp, who seemed to be day - now repaired and repainted. It was said that the view taking quite a leading part in affairs at Rummidge these through the open window above the urinal, straight across days, having successfully sorted out a spot of student bother the Bay to the Silver Span, was the finest obtainable from they seemed to be having there . . . really, he had scarcely such a position anywhere in the world, but today Philip kept taken in her news, skimming the lines of neat, round script as his eyes down. Foreshortened, yes, definitely.

quickly as he could to reassure himself that no rumour of his *Tou must believe me, Hilary, that there was absolutely nothing* infidelity had been wafted to Rummidge to rebound in a cry *sexual in the arrangement at all. On the few occasions we'd met up to* of outrage and anger. It was no secret around Plotinus that *that time we hadn't particularly taken to each other, and in any case* he was living in the Zapps' house, but people seemed too *Disirie was in the first flush of her conversion to this Women's* preoccupied with the Garden troubles to inquire further.

Liberation business and extremely hostile to men in general. In fact, Either that or, as Desir6e maintained, they thought Philip *that was what appealed to her about our arrangement...*

was gay because he had taken Charles Boon into his apart-

'Oh, dear!' Dlsirle sighed after they made love for the ment and that she was a lesbian because of the Women's first time.

Liberation bit, so didn't imagine that the two of them might

•What's the matter?'

be having an affair. Also, Howard Ringbaum, prime suspect

'It was nice while it lasted.'

as author of the poison-pen letter about Melanie (the Cow-

'It was tremendous,' he said. 'Did I come too soon?'

boy, being one of his students, could have been his source of

'I don't mean that, stupid. I mean our chastity was nice information) had left Euphoria, having been offered a job in while it lasted.'

Canada and released at short notice by a relieved Hogan.

'Chastity?'

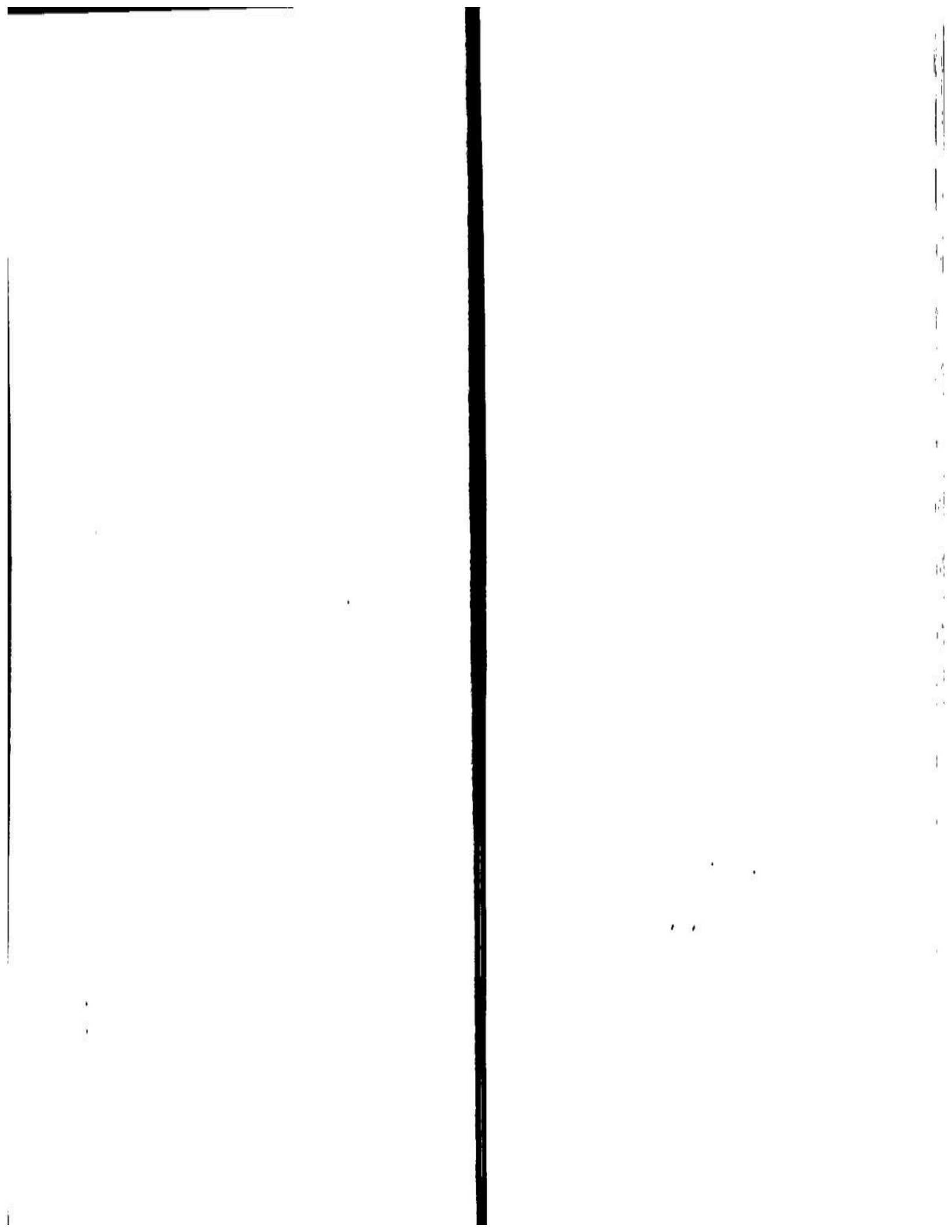
Philip read Charles Boon's note reminding him of the

'I've always wanted to be chaste. It's been so nice these time and place of the broadcast. He recalled their meeting last few weeks, don't you think, living like brother and sister ?

on the plane, it seemed years ago.' Hey, you must come on Now we're having an affair, like everybody else. How banal/

the programme one night . . .' Many things had changed

'You don't have to go on with it if you don't want to,' he since then, including his attitude to Charles Boon, which said.



f 1'

'You can't go back, once you've started. You can only go

"This is supposed to be a *silent* demonstration, folks,' he said. 'And I think it would add dignity to our protest if you forwards.'

didn't smoke during the vigil.'

'Good,' he said, and to make quite sure of the principle,

'Or drink or have sex,' a wag in the back row added. Sy woke her up early the next morning to make love again. It Gootblatt, standing beside Philip, groaned and threw down took a long time to rouse her, but she came in the end in a his cigarette. 'It's all right for you,' he said, 'you've quit.

series of backarching undulations that lifted him clean off Howd'yadoit?'

the bed.

'I compensate with more drink and sex,' Philip replied,

' If I didn't know the vaginal orgasm was a myth,' she smiling. Telling the truth with a jesting air was, he had said afterwards,' you could have fooled me. It was never so discovered, the safest way of protecting your secrets in good with Morris.'

Euphoria.

'I find that hard to believe,' he said. 'But nice of you to

'Yeah, but what about the post-coital cigarette? Doncha say so.'

miss it ?'

' It's true. His technique was terrific, in the old days any-

' I smoked a pipe myself.'

way, but I always felt like an engine on a test-bed. Being,

'And remember,' said Karl Kroop gravely, ' if the cops, what do they call it, tested to destruction ?'

or the troopers try to break this up, just go limp, but don't He went into his office, opened the window and sat down resist. Any pig roughs you up, make sure you get his number, at the desk. The package from Hilary evidently contained a not that the motherfuckers wear their numbers these days.

Any questions ?'

book, and was marked 'DAMAGED BY SEA WATER*' which explained its strange, almost sinister

shape. He peeled the

' Suppose they use gas ?' someone asked.

wrapping paper off to reveal a warped, faded, wrinkled

"Then we're screwed. Just retreat with as much dignity as you can. Walk, don't run.'

volume which he could not immediately identify. The spine Sobriety at last settled on the group. The English Faculty was missing and the pages were stuck together. He managed contained very few genuine radicals, and no would-be to prise it open in the middle, however, and read: 'Flash-martyrs. Karl Kroop's words had reminded them that, in the backs should be used sparingly, if at all. They slow down present volatile atmosphere, they were all, just the tiniest bit, the progress of the story and confuse the reader. Life, after sticking their necks out. Technically they were in violation of all, goes forwards, not backwards.'

Governor Duck's ban on public assemblies on campus.

They assembled self-consciously on the steps of Dealer *It all started with my arrest. If it hadn't been for that, I think Hall, the professors, instructors and teaching assistants of the nothing would have happened. It was Bistre"e,you see, who bailed me* English Department. Karl Kroop bustled round handing out.

out black armbands. There were a few home-made placards

' Hallo, is that you Desiree ?'

in evidence, which declared TROOPS OFF CAMPUS and

'About time! Have you forgotten I'm supposed to be END T H E OCCUPATION NOW. Philip nodded and smiled to going out tonight ?'

friends and acquaintances in the shirtsleeved, summer-

'No, I haven't forgotten.'

frocked throng. It was a nice day for a demonstration. In-

' Where in hell are you ?'

deed, the atmosphere was more like a picnic than a vigiL

' I'm in prison, actually.'

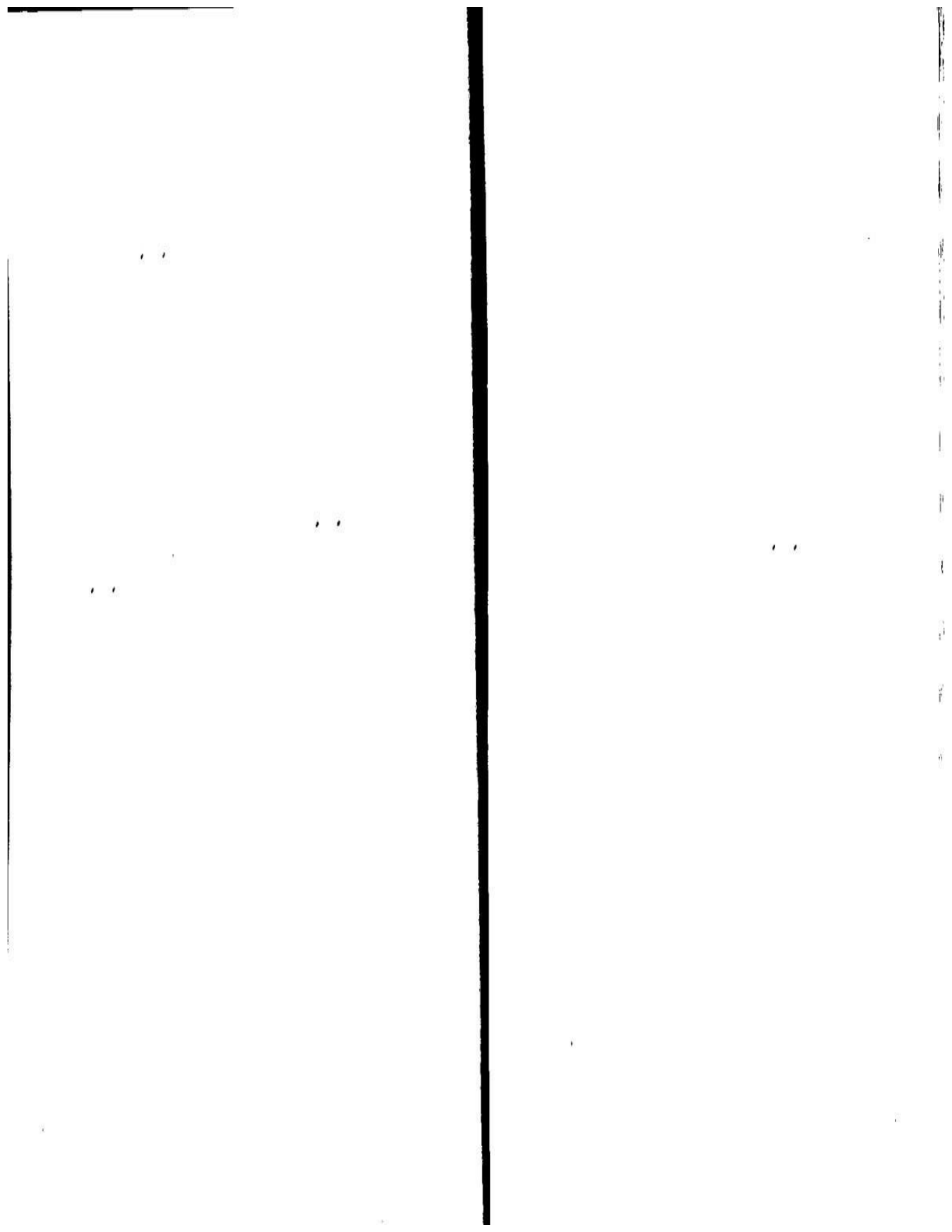
Karl Kroop seemed to think so, too, for he called the com-

'In prison?'

pany to order with a clap of his hands.

187

186



'Stealing bricks.'

' I've been arrested for stealing bricks.'

•Hear that, Al?'

'Jesus. *Did* you steal them ?'

'I heard it, Lou.'

' No, of course not. I mean, I had them in the car, **but** I

' **Like how many bricks, Professor ?'**

didn't steal them . . . It's a long story.'

'Oh, about twenty-five.'

4 Better cut it short, Professor,' said the police officer **who The felons looked wonderingly at each other.** 'Perhaps was standing guard over him.

they was gold bricks,' said one. The other gave a high-

'Look Desiree, can you come down here and try and bail **pitched, wailing laugh.**

me out? They say it will cost about a hundred and fifty

'Any cigarettes, Professor ?'

dollars.'

'I'm sorry, no.' **It was the only time he ever regretted**

' Cash,' said the policeman.

having given up smoking.

'Cash,' he repeated.

"That's a sharp pair of pants the Professor is wearing, Al."

'I don't have that much, and the banks are shut. Will

'Sure is, Lou.'

they accept an American Express credit card ?'

'I like a pair of pants that fits nice and snug around the ass, Al.'

'Do you accept credit cards ?' Philip **asked the** policeman.

'Me too, Lou.'

'No.'

Philip sat down quickly on the wooden bench that ran

'No, they don't.'

round the wall, and didn't move until Desiree bailed him out.

'I'll get the money somehow,' said Desiree.' Don't worry.'

'You came just in time,' he told her as they drove away from

'Oh, I'm not worried,' said Philip miserably. He heard **police headquarters.' I should have been raped if I'd stayed** Desiree hang up, and put his own receiver down.

the night.'

'You're allowed one other phone call,' **said** the policeman.

It was funny in retrospect, but he had no wish to repeat

'I'll save it up,' he said.

the experience. If a posse of cops were to come rushing

'You got to make it now or not at all. And you better not **through Mather Gate right now to arrest them, he thought** count on getting bailed out, leastways not till Monday.

he would probably be among the first to break ranks and You're an alien, see? That can complicate things.'

flee to the sanctuary of his office. Fortunately it was a quiet

' Oh dear. What happens now ?'

day on campus and the vigil seemed unlikely to provoke a

'What happens now is that I lock you up. Too bad the **breach of the peace. Passers-by just stared and smiled.** A misdemeanour cell is full right up widi other folk been taking **few made peace signs or Black Power salutes and shouted** bricks that don't belong to them. I'm gonna have to put you

' **Right on!**' and' **Power to the People!**' A television team, a reporter and his cameraman, toting the heavy equipment in the felons' cell.'

on his back like a bazooka, filmed them for a few minutes,

'Felons?' The word had a dread sound to his ears, and the lens of the **camera slowly traversing along the length of** his misgivings were not allayed by the two powerfully built the steps, **irresistibly recalling the annual school photograph.**

Negroes who sprang to their feet with feral agility as the cell **Sy Gootblatt held a copy of the Euphoric State Daily in front** door was opened.

of his face. 'How do we know they aren't working for the

'This here's a Professor, boys,' said the policeman, propel-FBI?'he explained.

ling Philip firmly inside and locking the door.' So mind you

To begin at the beginning: I was driving through Plotinus one

speak nice to him.'

The felons prowled around him.

' What you busted for, Professor ? '

Saturday afternoon - I'd been shopping downtown - and on the way

'Really? They can't be worth very much, can they? But back I passed the site of a church that was being demolished and I'll take them back to the church right away.'

noticed that lots of people, mostly students, were carrying away the

'Nobody's going to church. You got identification?'

old bricks in wheelbarrows and supermarket trolleys. I overtook a Philip produced his Faculty Identity Card and British group labouring along with a load of bricks in paper sacks and driver's licence. The former provoked a curt homily against shopping baskets, and recognized one of my own students . . . Wily professors encouraging their students to violate property, the Smith. With two black friends from the Ashland ghetto and latter provoked deep but silent suspicion. Both documents a white girl in a kaftan and bare feet. They accepted his offer were confiscated. A second police car drew up beside them of a lift to the Garden with alacrity, loaded the bricks into and the occupants began to unload the bricks from Philip's the boot of the Corvair and jumped into the passenger seats.

car and to transfer them into the police cars. Then they all As Philip drew up at an intersection near the Garden, Wily went to police headquarters.

Smith suddenly yelled 'Pigs!' three of the car's doors flew The room they put him in first was small, windowless and open simultaneously and Philip's passengers fled in four airless. He was strongly cautioned against damaging it or different directions. The two policemen in the car that drew defacing the walls with obscenities, frisked for weapons, and up behind him did not bother to pursue them. They homed left alone for half an hour to meditate on his sins. Then they in on Philip, sitting at the wheel, paralysed with fright. 'Did brought him out and booked him. His faculty identity card I go through a red light or something?' he quavered.

and British driver's licence were scrutinized again. The

'Open up your trunk, please.'

contents of his pockets were itemized and confiscated - a

'It's only got some old bricks in it.'

discomfiting experience, which reminded him of a game

'Just open up the trunk.'

played long ago on Pythagoras Drive. There was much He was so flustered he forgot the Corvair was a rear-amusement around the duty-sergeant's desk at the appear-engined car and opened the engine cowling by mistake.

ance of a marble, belonging to Darcy, in his jacket pocket

'Don't play games with me, Mac, I haven't the time.'

('Ho, ho, you're sure losing your marbles now, hey Pro-

'Terribly sorry!' Philip opened up the luggage compartment?) turning into moral disapproval mingled with prurient envy when it became evident that the car he was partment.

driving and the house he was living in belonged to a woman

' Where'd those bricks come from ?'

other than the wife whose portrait was in his wallet. He was

'The, er, there's a building, a church, being demolished photographed, and his fingerprints taken. After that he was down the road, you must have seen it. Lots of people are allowed his phone call to Desiree and then he was locked up taking the old bricks away.'

with the felons. De'sire'e succeeded in bailing him out at

' You have written permission to take those bricks ?'

seven in the evening, just when he had given up hope of

'Look, officer, / didn't take the bricks. Those students being out before Monday. She was waiting for him in the who were in the car had them. I was just giving them a lobby of the Hall of Justice, cool, crisp and confident in a lift.'

cream-coloured trouser-suit, her red hair drawn back in a

'What are their names and addresses ?'

bun. He fell on her neck.

Philip hesitated. He knew Wily Smith's address, and it was

' De"sir6e... Thank God you came.'

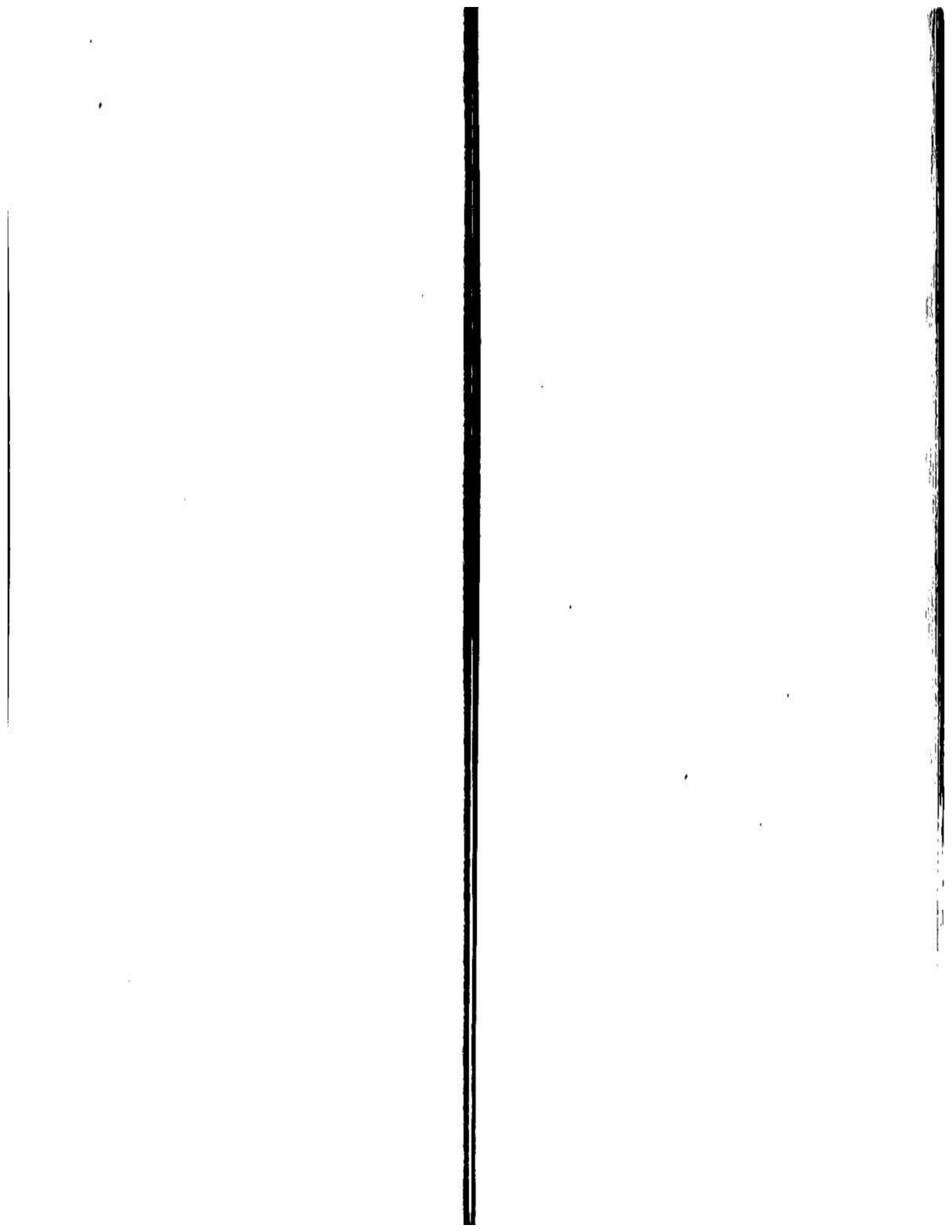
his habit to tell the truth, especially to policemen.

'Hey, you look strung out. They been beating you up or

' I don't know,' he said.' I assumed they had permission.'

something?'

' Nobody had permission. Those bricks are stolen goods.'



'No, no, but it was a . . . upsetting.'

blood to the Viet Cong, obtain leaflets on first-aid in gas. Désirée was gentle, even tender, for the first time in their attacks, sign a petition to legalize pot, and express your acquaintance. She stood on her toes to kiss him on the lips, in a hundred other interesting ways. On the street side of the linked arms and drew him towards the exit. 'Tell me all plaza, a fundamentalist preacher and a group of chanting about it,' she said.

Buddhist monks vied with each other for the souk of those. He told her in rambling, disconnected sentences. It was less committed to the things of this world. It was a relative - wasn't just the shock of relief: as once before, the unexpected ly quiet day in Plotinus. Although there were State Troopers kiss had melted some glacier within him - unsuspected stationed on every intersection along Cable Avenue, emotions and forgotten sensations were suddenly in full directing the traffic, keeping the pavements clear, pre-flood. He wasn't thinking about the arrest any more. He venting people from congregating, there was little tension in was thinking that it was the first time they had touched one the air, and the crowds were patient and good-humoured. It another. And it almost seemed as if Désirée was thinking the was a kind of hiatus between the violence, gassing and blood-same thing. To his disconnected remarks, she gave dis-shed of the recent past and the unpredictable future of the connected answers; driving home, she took her eyes off the Great March. The Gardeners were busy with their pre-road for dangerously long periods to look at him, she laughed parations for that event; and the police, having had some and swore a little hysterically. Observing and interpreting bad publicity for their role in the Garden riots, were keeping these signs he felt still more excited and bewildered. His a low profile. It was business as usual along Cable Avenue, limbs trembled uncontrollably as he got out of the car, and though several windows were shattered and boarded up, and went into the house. 'Where are the twins?' he asked.

there was a strong, peppery smell of gas in the Beta Book-

'Next door,' said Désirée, looking at him strangely. She shop, a favourite gathering-place for radicals into which she shut the front door, and took off her jacket. And her shoes.

police had lobbed so many gas grenades it was said you could And her trousers. And her shirt. And her panties. She didn't tell which students in your class had bought their books wear a bra.

there by the tears streaming down their faces. The more

•Excuse me, Phil,' Sy Gootblatt whispered. 'But I think wholesome and appetizing fumes of hamburger, toasted you're having an erection and it doesn't look nice at a vigil.'

cheese and pastrami, coffee and cigars, seeped into the street from crowded bars and cafes, the record shops were playing. At about 12.30, the vigil came to an uneventful end, and the latest rock-gospel hit *Oh Happy Day* through their ex-the demonstrators dispersed, chattering, for lunch. Philip ternal speakers, the bead curtains rattled in the breeze out-had a shrimp salad sandwich with Sy Gootblatt in the Silver side Indian novelty shops reeking of joss-sticks, and the Steer restaurant on campus. Afterwards, Sy went back to his strains of taped sitar music mingled with the sounds of office to pound out another Hooker article on his electric radios tuned to twenty-five possible stations

in the Bay area typewriter. Philip, too restless to work (he hadn't read a coming from the open windows of cars jammed nose to tail book, not a real book, right through, for weeks) took the air.

in the narrow roadway.

He strolled across Howie Plaza, soaking up the sunshine, Philip snapped up a tiny vacant table at the open window past the booths and stalls of student political groups - a of Pierre's cafe*, ordered himself an ice-cream and Irish kind of ideological fair, this, at which you could join SDS, coffee, and sat back to observe the passing parade: the young buy the literature of the Black Panthers, contribute to the bearded Jesuses and their barefoot Magdalenes in cotton Garden Bail Fund, pledge yourself to Save the Bay, give maxis, Negroes with Afro haircuts like mushroom clouds and 19a

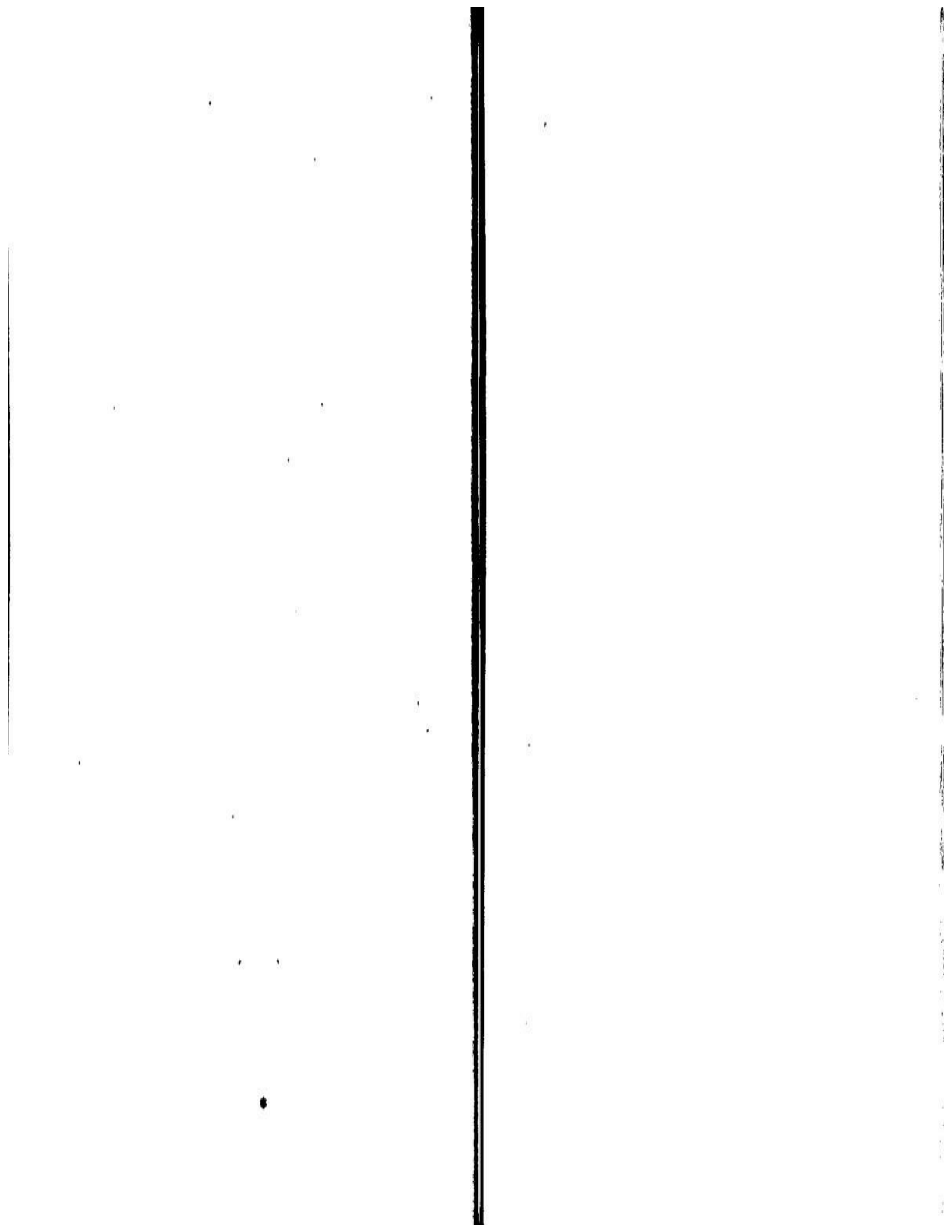
metallic-lensed sunglasses flashing heliographed messages of American literature that the European now looked for a revolution to their brothers across the street, junkies and mirror-image of his quest. He thought of James's *The Am-potheads stoned out of their minds groping their way along* bassadors and Strether's injunction to Little Bilham, in the the kerb or sitting on the pavement with their backs to a Paris garden, to 'Live . . . live all you can; it's a mistake sunny wall, ghetto kids and huckleberry runaways hustling not to,' feeling himself to partake of both characters, the the parking meters, begging dimes from drivers who paid up speaker who had discovered this insight too late, and the for fear of getting their fenders scratched, priests and police-young man who might still profit by it. He thought of Henry men, bill-posters and garbage collectors, a young man dis-Miller sitting over a beer in some scruffy Parisian cafe with tributing, without conviction, leaflets about courses in his notebook on his knee and the smell of cunt still lingering Scientology, hippies in scarred and tattered leather jackets on his fingers and he felt some distant kinship with that toting guitars, and girls, girls of every shape and size and coarse, uneven, priapic imagination. He understood Ameri-description, girls with long straight hair to their waists, girls can Literature for the first time in his life that afternoon, in plaits, girls in curls, girls in short skirts, girls in long sitting in Pierre's on Cable Avenue as the river of Plotinus skirts, girls in jeans, girls in flared trousers, girls in Bermuda life flowed past, understood its prodigality and indecorum, shorts, girls without bras, girls very probably without panties, its yea-saying heterogeneity, understood Walt Whitman girls white, brown, yellow, black, girls in kaftans, saris, who laid end to end words never seen in each other's com-skinny sweaters, bloomers, shifts, muumuus, granny-gowns, pany before outside of a dictionary, and Herman Melville combat jackets, sandals, sneakers, boots, Persian slippers, who split the atom of the traditional novel in the effort to bare feet, girls with beads, flowers, slave bangles, ankle make whaling a universal metaphor and smuggled into a bracelets, earrings, straw boaters, coolie hats, sombreros, book addressed to the most puritanical reading public the Castro caps, girls fat and thin, short and tall, clean and world has ever known a chapter on the whale's foreskin and dirty, girls with big breasts and girls with flat chests, girls got away with it; understood why Mark Twain nearly with tight, supple, arrogant buttocks and girls with loose wrote a sequel to Huckleberry Firm in which Tom Sawyer was globes of pendant flesh wobbling at every step and one girl to sell Huck into slavery, and why Stephen Crane wrote his who particularly caught Philip's attention as she waited at great war-novel first and experienced war afterwards, and the kerb to cross the street, dressed in a crotch-high mini what Gertrude Stein meant when she said that 'anything with long bare white legs and high up one thigh a perfect, one is remembering is a repetition, but existing as a human mouth-shaped bruise.

being, that is being, listening and hearing is never repetition'; Sitting there, taking it all in with the same leisurely relish understood all that, though he couldn't have explained it to as he sucked the fortified black coffee through its filter of his students, some thoughts do often lie too deep for seminars, whipped cream, Philip felt himself finally converted to and understood, too, at last, what it was that he wanted to expatriation; and he saw himself, too, as part of a great his-tell Hilary.

torical process - a reversal of that cultural Gulf Stream which had in the past swept so many Americans to Europe *Because I've changed, Hilary, changed more than I should hem* in search of Experience. Now it was not Europe but the *thought possible. Vve not only, as you know, been lodging with* West Coast of America that was the furthest rim of experi-Disirie ZaPP s^nce *** "^Snt

of the landslip, I've also been sleeping ment in life and art, to which one made one's pilgrimage in *with her quite regularly since the day of my arrest, and to be honest I search of liberation and enlightenment; and so it was to can't seem to work up any guilt or regret about it. I should be very sorry,*

*95



naturally, to cause you any pain, but when I ask myself what injury

'I think one has to accept,' Philip said earnestly into the

have I done to you, what have I taken away from you that you had

Q X Y Z microphone, 'that those who originally conceived

before, I come up with the answer: nothing. It's not my relationship

the Garden were radicals looking for an issue on which to

with Disirie that has been wrong, it seems to me, but our marriage.

confront the Establishment. It was an essentially political

We have poisoned each other totally, but without joy. I suppose, in

act by the radical Left, designed to provoke an extreme

the thirteen years of our married life, this trip of mine to America has

display of force by the law-and-order agencies, thus de-

been the only occasion on which we have been separated for more than

monstrating the revolutionary thesis that this allegedly

a day or two. In all that time I don't suppose there was one hour when

democratic society is in fact totalitarian, repressive and in-

you didn't know, or couldn't guess, what I was doing, and when I

tolerant.'

didn't know, or couldn't guess what you were doing. I think we even

' If I understand you correctly, Professor Swallow,' said

knew, each of us, what the other was thinking, so that it was scarcely

the nasal-voiced caller, 'you're saying that the people who

necessary for us even to talk to each other. Every day was pretty much

started the Garden were ultimately responsible for all the

like the last one, and the next one was sure to be like this one. We

violence that followed.'

knew what we both believed in: industry, thrift, education, modera-

* Is that what you're saying, Phil ?' Boon cut in.

tion. Our marriage - the home, the children — was like a machine

' In a sense, yes. But there's another sense, perhaps a

which we served, and serviced, with the silent economy of two techni-

more important one, in which the thesis has been proved

cians who have worked together for so long that they never have to ask

right. I mean, when you have two thousand troops camped

for the appropriate tool, never bump into each other, never make an

in this small community, helicopters buzzing overhead all

error or have a disagreement and are bored out of their minds by the

day, a curfew at night, people shot in the streets, gassed,

job.

arrested indiscriminately, and all to suppress a little public

I see I've slipped unconsciously into the past tense, I suppose be-

garden, then you have to admit that there does seem to be

cause I can't conceive of returning to that kind of relationship. Which

something wrong with the system. In the same way, the idea

is not to say that I want a divorce or separation, but simply that if we

of the Garden may have been a political stratagem to those

are going to go on together it will have to be on a new basis. Life,

who conceived it, but perhaps it's become an authentic and

after all, should go forwards, not backwards. I'm sure it would be a

valuable idea in the process of being realized. I hope you

good idea if you could come out here for a couple of weeks so that you

don't think I've evaded your question.'

could understand what I'm trying to say in context, so to speak, and

'No,' said the voice in his earphones. 'No. That's very

make your own mind up about it all. I'm not sure I could explain

interesting. Tell me, Professor Swallow, has anything like

myself in Rummidge.

this ever happened at your own University in England ?'

Incidentally, as regards Disirie: she has no claims on me, nor I on

'No,' said Philip.

her. I'll always regard her with affection and gratitude, and nothing

* Thanks for calling,' said Boon.

could make me regret our relationship, but of course I'm not asking

'Thank you,' said the caller.

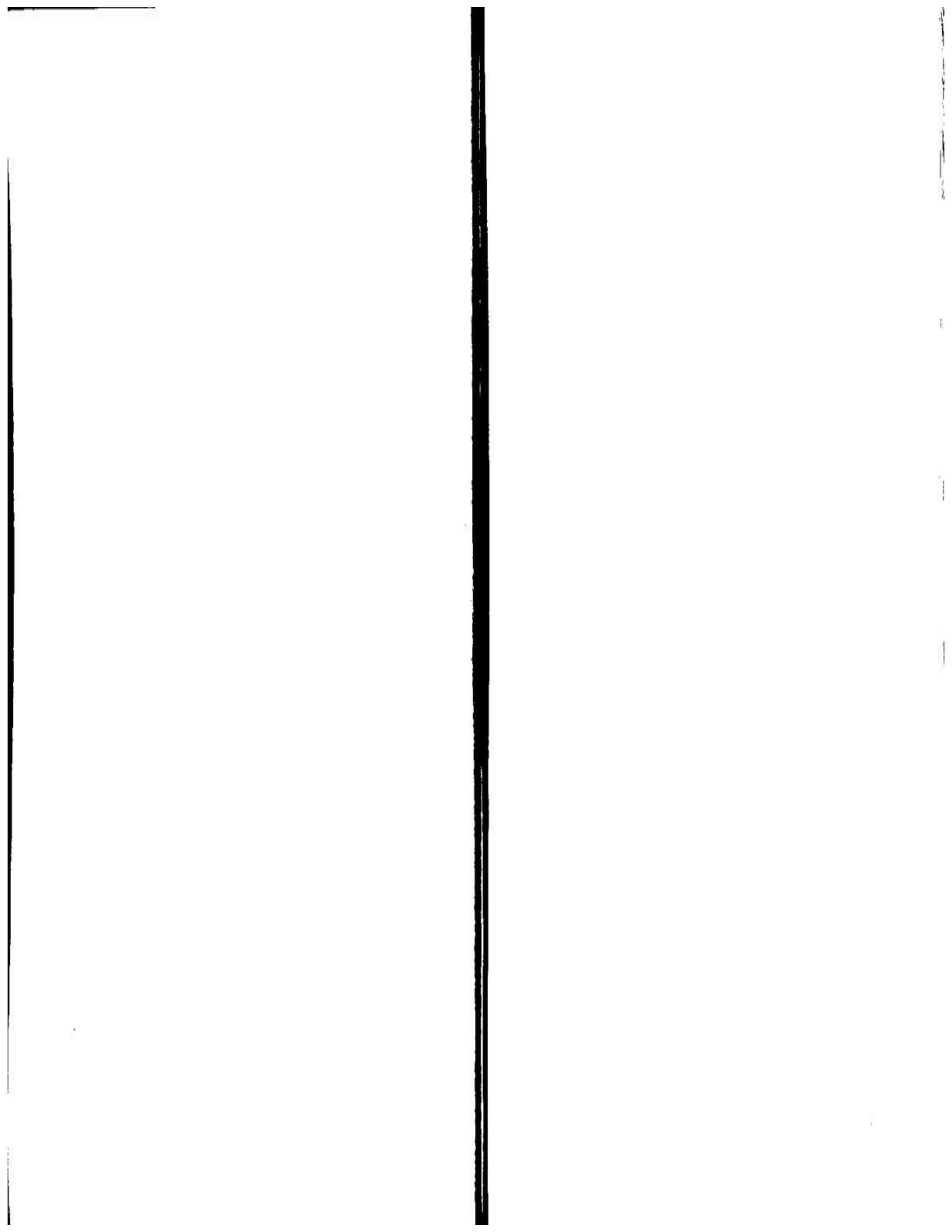
you to come out and join a menage a trois. I'll be moving into my

Boon flicked the switch that controlled the open line and

own apartment soon. ...

intoned his station identification into the mike. His left arm Yes, that should do it, Philip thought, as he paid his bill. I was in plaster and bore the legend, 'Broken by Arcadia won't send it off just yet, but when the time comes, that County Sheriff's Deputies, Saturday May 17th, at Shamrock should do very nicely.

and Addison. Witnesses needed." Uh, we have time for just one or two more calls,' he said. The red light flashed. 'Hallo 196



and good evening. This is Charles Boon, and my guest, flashed again, and he said O K , they would **take one last** Professor Philip Swallow. What's on your mind ?'

call. The voice sounded distant, but quite clear.

This time it was an old lady, evidently a regular caller, for

'Is that you Philip?'

Boon rolled one eye in despair at the sound of her slow,

'Hilary!'

quavering voice.

* 'At last!'

'Don't you think, Professor,' she said, 'that what young

' Good God! Where are you ?'

folks need today is some college courses in self-control and

'At home, of course. You can't imagine the trouble **I've** self-denial ?'

had getting through.'

•Well-'

'You can't speak to me now.'

'It's now or never, Philip.'

'Now, when I was a girl - that was a while ago, I can tell Charles Boon was sitting up tensely in his seat, clutching you, heh heh . . . Would you like to guess how old I am, Pro-his earphones with his free hand as if he had just picked up a fessor?'

conversation from outer space. The engineer behind the Charles Boon cut in ruthlessly: ' O K Grandma, what is it glass screen had stopped yawning and was making frantic you're trying to tell us? A girl's best friend is N-O spells signals.

N O ? '

'This is a private call that's been put through by mistake,'

After a brief silence, the voice quavered, 'Why, bless my Philip said.' Please disconnect it.'

soul Mr Boon, that's exactly what I was going to say.'

'Don't you dare, Philip,' said Hilary. 'I've been trying for

'What about that, Phil?' said Charles Boon. 'You got any a whole hour to get through to you.'

views on N-O spells NO as a panacea for our times?' He

'How in God's name did you get the number?'

took a swig from the Coke bottle in front of him, and gave a

'Mrs Zapp gave it to me.'

practised silent burp. Through the glass panel to Boon's left

'Did she happen to mention that it was the number of a Philip could see the sound engineer yawning over his knobs phone-in programme?'

and dials. The engineer looked, ungratefully, rather bored.

'Eh? She said you were anxious to get in touch with me.'

Philip wasn't in the least bored. He had enjoyed the broad- Was it about my birthday?'

cast enormously. For nearly two hours he had been dis-

'My God, I forgot all about that.'

pensing liberal wisdom to the audience of the Charles Boon

'It doesn't matter in the least.'

Show on every conceivable subject - the Garden, drugs, law

'Look, Hilary, you must get off this line.' He leaned and order, academic standards, Viet Nam, the environment, across the green baize table to reach the control switch, but nuclear testing, abortion, encounter groups, the Under-Boon, grinning demonically, fended him off with his plaster ground press, the death of the novel, and even now he had cast and made signals to the engineer to turn up the volume.

enough energy and enthusiasm left to find a word on the His vagrant eye was shooting in all directions with excite-Sexual Revolution for the old lady.

ment. 'What is it you want, Hilary?' Philip asked anguish-

'Well,' he said, 'sexual morality has, of course, always edly.

been a bone of contention between the generations. But

'You've got to come home at once, Philip, if you want to there's more honesty, less hypocrisy about these matters than save our marriage.'

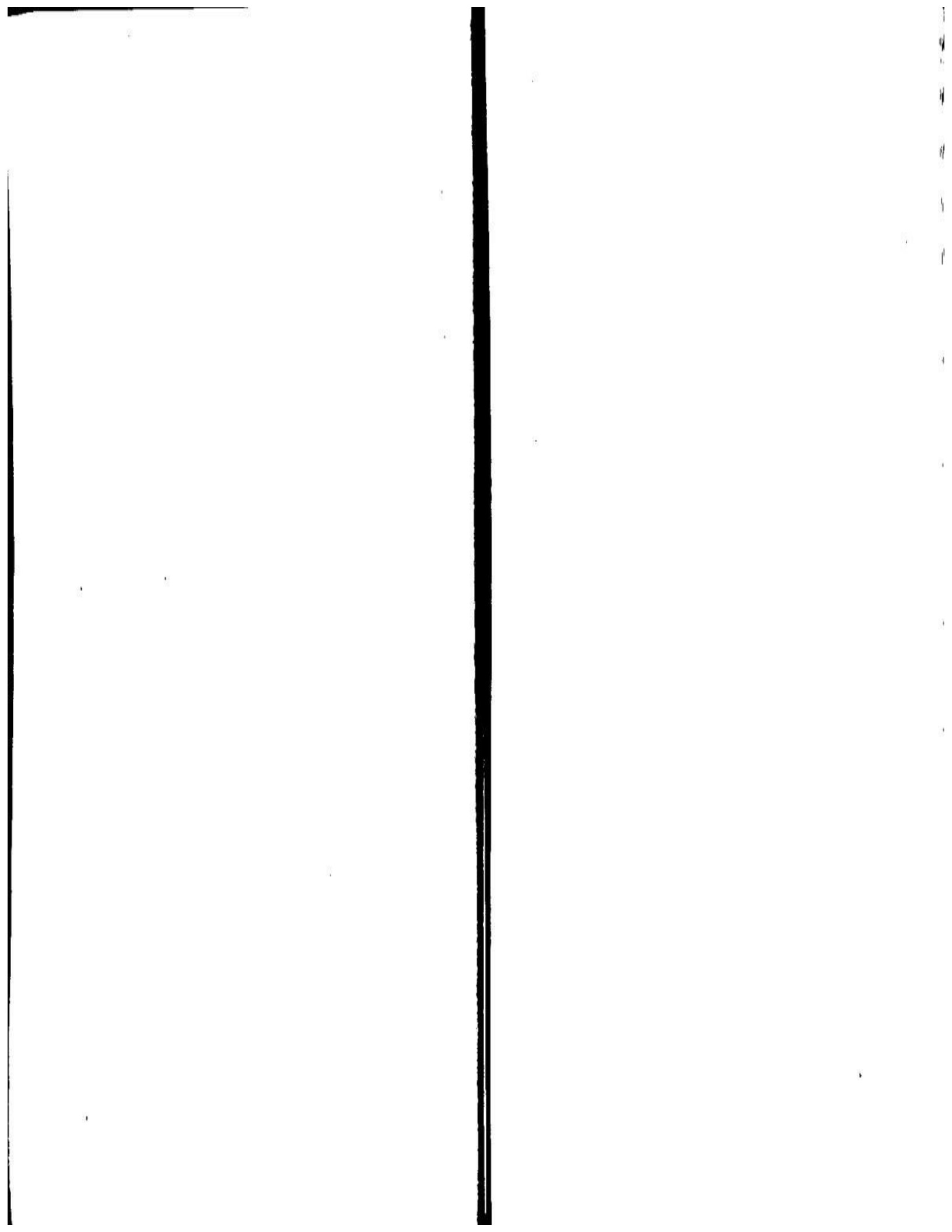
there used to be, and I think that must be a good thing.'

Philip laughed, briefly and hysterically.

Charles Boon couldn't stand any more of this. He cut off

' Why do you laugh ?'

the old lady and started to wind up the show. The red light 198



' I was writing to tell you more or less the same thing.*

with a prolonged fart that nearly lifted him off the mattress.

' I'm not joking, Philip.'

It was his customary salute to the dawn; something about

'Neither am I. By the way, have you any idea how many Rummidge, the water probably, gave him terrible wind.

people are listening to this conversation ?'

His ears twitched at the sound of a footfall on the landing.

Hilary? He leapt out of bed, rushed to the window, flung

' I don't know what you're talking about.'

it open and furiously flapped the bedclothes.

' Exactly, so will you kindly get off the bloody phone.'

'If that's the way you feel about it . . . I just hope you All wasted effort. The feet belonged to Mary Makepeace: understand that I'm very probably going to have an affair.'

he recognized her heavy pregnant tread. For a moment he'd thought Hilary had relented and was going to slip into his

' I ' m having one already!' he cried. 'But I don't want to room for a quick roll in the hay before reveille. He slammed tell the whole world about it.'

the window shut and hopped shivering back to bed. How That finally stopped Hilary. There was a gasp, a silence close, actually, he'd come to getting into the sack with and a click.

Hilary last night.

'Terrific,' Charles Boon said, when the red and green She'd been blue because it was her birthday and Swallow lights went out and the mike was dead at last. 'Terrific.

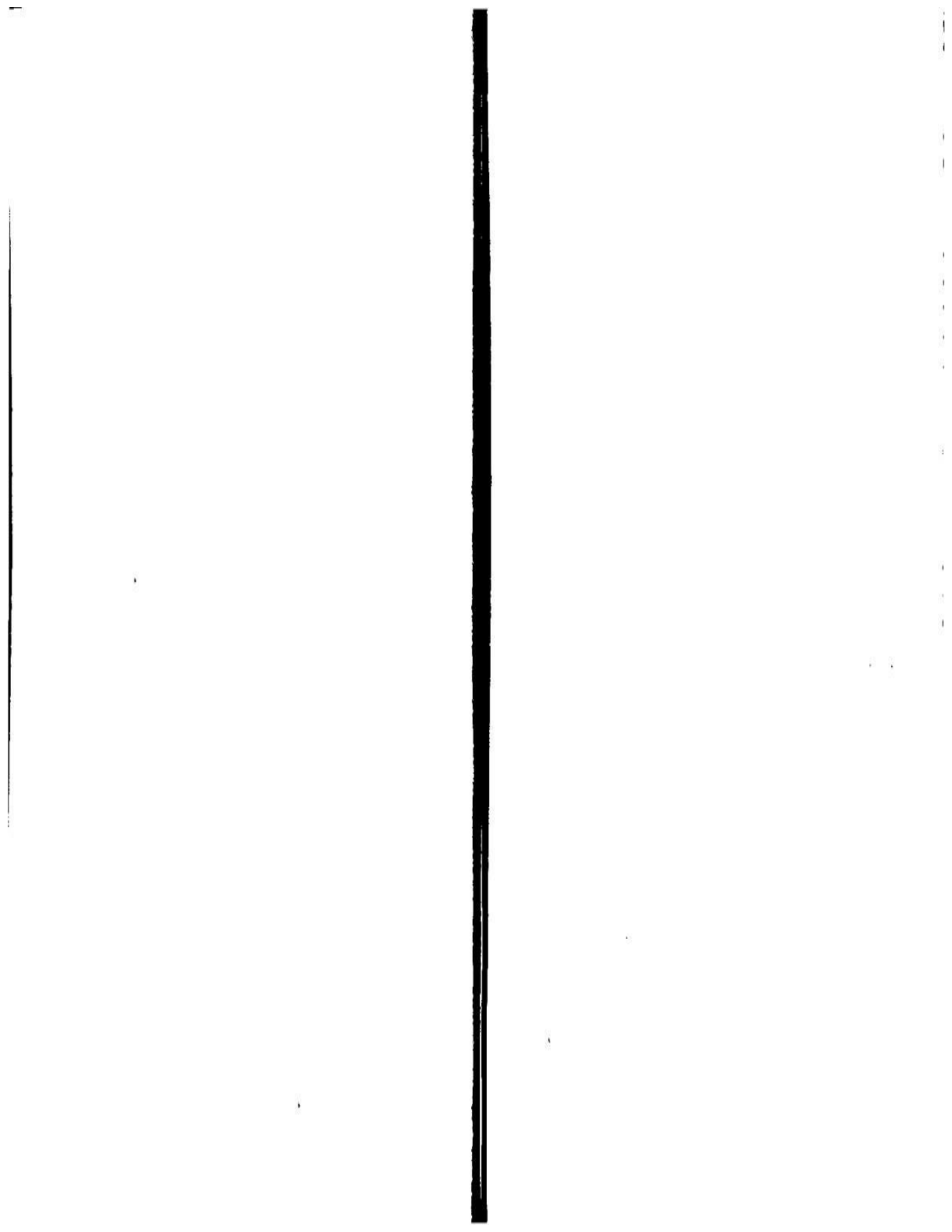
hadn't sent her a gift, not even a goddam card. 'When I Sensational. Fantastic radio.'

don't want them he sends me roses by Interflora, then he The weather forecast had predicted sunny spells, and the goes and forgets my birthday,' she complained with a first of them woke Morris early, shining straight on to his crooked smile. 'He's hopeless about things like that. Usually face through the thin cotton drapes. Sunny spells. 'Who is the children remind him.' To cheer her up, Morris invited casting these sunny spells?' he used to ask his Rummidge her out for a meal. She .demurred. He

pressed. Mary sup-acquaintances.' What kind of a witch wastes her time casting ported him, also Amanda. Hilary allowed herself to be *sunny* spells?' Nobody else seemed to think it was funny, persuaded. Took a shower, washed her hair, and changed however, and now even he was getting used to the quaint into a fetching black maxi that he hadn't seen before, with a meteorological idiom. 'Temperature about the seasonal low-cut neckline that showed off the smooth creamy texture average.' 'Rather cool.' 'Scattered showers and bright of her shoulders and bosom.' Hey, you look terrific,' he said periods.' The imprecision of these terms no longer bothered sincerely, and she blushed right down to her cleavage. She him. He accepted that, like so much British usage, it was a kept fiddling with her shoulder straps and hitching a shawl language of evasion and compromise, designed to take the round her shoulders until she'd had a second dry martini, drama out of the weather. No talk of 'lows' or 'highs' here: after which she leaned negligently forward across the res-all was moderate, qualified, temperate.

restaurant table and didn't seem to mind his taking long appreHe lay on his back for a while, eyes closed against the ciative looks down inside her dress.

sunlight, and against the almost equally blinding floral He took her to the one tolerable trattoria in Rummidge, wallpaper adorning the walls of the Swallows' guest room, and afterwards to Petronella's, a small club in a basement listening to the house rousing itself for a new day, the whole near the station where they usually had decent music and structure stretching and groaning like a flophouse full of old the clientele were not too oppressively adolescent. This men. The floorboards creaked, the plumbing whined and evening the entertainment was provided by a so-so folk-throbbled, doorhinges squeaked and windows rattled in their blues group called Morte D'Arthur with a wistful girl frames. The noise was deafening. Morris added his quota singer who sang pastiches of recordings by Joan Baez and **SOI**



other vocalists of that ilk; but it could have been worse, a

'I'll be glad to see the twins again. But it may be the last heavy rock band for instance which Hilary wouldn't have time. You know Ddsir^e wants a divorce.'

liked at all. She seemed to enjoy herself, anyway, looking Hilary's eyes filled with ginny tears.' I'm sorry,' she said.

round at the Tudor-adobe decor wonderingly, and ap-He shrugged and put on his stoical, weary, Humphrey plauding enthusiastically after each song, saying, 'I never Bogart expression. There was a rose-tinted mirror behind knew there were places like this in Rummidge, however did Hilary's head in which he was able to make small, un-you discover it?' He didn't like to point out that Petronel-obtrusive adjustments to his face when he wasn't occupied in la's and a dozen places like it were advertised every evening looking down Hilary's neckline.

in the local paper, it would have seemed like a put-down,

'Isn't there a chance of a reconciliation ?' she asked.

but it was a fact that Hilary and her peer group simply

'I was hoping this trip of mine would swing it. But by the didn't see most of what was happening in the city around way she's been writing, her mind's made up.'

them. There was, believe it or not, a Rummidge scene of

'I'm sorry,' she said again.

sorts, though you had to search quite hard for parts of it -

The girl in Morte D'Arthur was singing 'Who Knows the gay clubs, for instance, or the West Indian dives in the Where The Time Goes?' in a very passable imitation of Arbury ghetto - but there were other parts, almost as Judy Collins.c You and Philip ever have a n y . . . problems ?'

interesting, that were accessible enough. For instance, the he risked asking.

cocktail bar of the Ritz, Rummidge's best hotel, on a Satur-

'Oh, no, never. Well, I say never -' She stopped, em-day night, when the car-workers gathered with their wives barrased.

and girl friends for the conspicuous consumption of alcohol.

He reached across the table and covered her hand with However high the hotel pegged its prices in an effort to his.' I know about Melanie, you know.'

maintain a classy atmosphere, the car-workers could match

'I know.' She stared at his big, brown hand, hair luxu-them. They gathered round the tables or perched at the riant on the knuckles. It looked like a bear's paw, De'sire'e bar, the women balancing their huge beehive wigs, towering used to say, but Hilary didn't flinch. 'That was the first like cumulus cloud above their stocky, broad-shouldered time,' she said.

escorts who sat stiffly, calloused horny hands sticking out of

'How do you know ?'

their sharp new suits, ordering round after round of dai-

'Oh, I know.' She looked up at him. 'I'm sorry it'had to quiris, whisky-sours, White Ladies, Orange Blossoms, and be your daughter.'

special inventions of Harold, the prize-winning barman -

If there was a correct formula for accepting this kind of Mushroom Cloud, Supercharger, Fireball and Rummidge apology, Morris couldn't think of it. He shrugged again.

D e w . . . 'I'll take you there some time,' he promised Hilary.

'And you've forgiven him for that ?' he said.

'Goodness, you do seem terribly *aufait* with everything,

* Oh yes. Well, I think so.'

Morris. Anyone would think you'd lived in Rummidge for

'I wish De'sire'e was as understanding as you,' he sighed.

years.'

'Perhaps she has more to forgive ?' she said timidly.

'Sometimes it feels like that,' he joked mildly.

He grinned rakishly. 'Perhaps.'

'You must be looking forward to going back to Euphoria.'

The girl vocalist had been joined by the lead and bass

'Well, I don't know. I'll be sorry to miss the first Rum-guitars and they were singing 'Puff the Magic Dragon' in midge Grand Prix.'

imitation of Peter, Paul and Mary. The lead guitar was the

'Surely the climate... and your family?'

weak link in the ensemble, Morris decided. Perhaps he was **aoa**

Arthur. In which case the group's name was a consummation

'Where else? When else? Tomorrow I go back to devoutly to be wished. 'Shall we move on to some other O'Shea's. The roof is fixed.'

place?' he said. Now that the pubs were shut, Petronella's

' I know. I'm sorry Morris.'

was filling up with less refined customers, heavy drinkers

'Come on, Hilary, let yourself go. Relax. You're all and the odd hooker. Any minute now Morte D'Arthur tensed up. Let me give you a little massage.' He moved up would finish their set, and a rowdy disco would begin. There behind her, and placed his hands on the back of her neck.

was a roadhouse Morris knew that had a juke box loaded He began to work his fingers into Hilary's shoulder muscle.

exclusively with forties swing records.

But she did not relax, held her head rigid and averted, so

' I think we should be going home,' Hilary said.

that in the mirror they resembled a tableau of a strangler He glanced at his watch. 'What's the hurry? Mary is and his victim. ' I ' m sorry, Morris, I just couldn't,' she baby-sitting.'

murmured.

' Even so. I'm getting drowsier and drowsier. I'm not used

' O K , ' he said coldly, and left her, immobile before the to drinking this much in an evening.'

mirror.

In the Lotus, she let her head fall back against the headA few minutes later they met again on the landing, coming restraint and closed her eyes. 'It's been a lovely evening, and going between their bedrooms and the bathroom.

Morris. Thank you so much.'

Hilary was in nightdress and dressing-gown, her face shiny

'It's my pleasure.' He leaned across and kissed her with face-cream. He must have looked grim and resentful, experimentally on the lips. She put her arms round his neck because she put a hand on his arm as he passed.

and responded with relaxed enjoyment. Morris decided to

' Morris, I'm sorry,' she whispered.

take her home after all.

'Forget it.'

The household was asleep when they got back, and they

' I wish I could . . . I wish . . . You've been so kind.' She tiptoed around without speaking. While Hilary was laying swayed against him. He caught and kissed her, slipped his the breakfast table ready for the next morning, Morris hand under her gown and was going great when a floor-went to the bathroom, briskly washed his private parts and board creaked somewhere nearby and she tore herself brushed his teeth, changed into clean pyjamas and silk away from him and rushed back into her room. Nobody was kimono, and waited expectantly in his room until she around, of course. It was just the goddam house talking to mounted the stairs. He gave her a few minutes, then quietly itself as usual. Hilary said it was the central heating that crossed the landing and entered the bedroom. Hilary was caused the ancient wood to shrink and expand. Could be.

sitting at the dressing-table in her slip, brushing her hair.

There were huge gaps between the floorboards in the guest-She turned round, startled.

room, through which a delicious aroma of bacon and coffee

'What is it, Morris?'

now began to percolate from the kitchen below. Morris

'I thought maybe I would sleep in here tonight. Isn't decided it was time to get up.

that what you had in mind ?'

He found Mary Makepeace cooking breakfast for the She shook her head, aghast.' Oh no, I couldn't.'

three children in one of Hilary's button-through overalls that scarcely met across her bulging stomach.

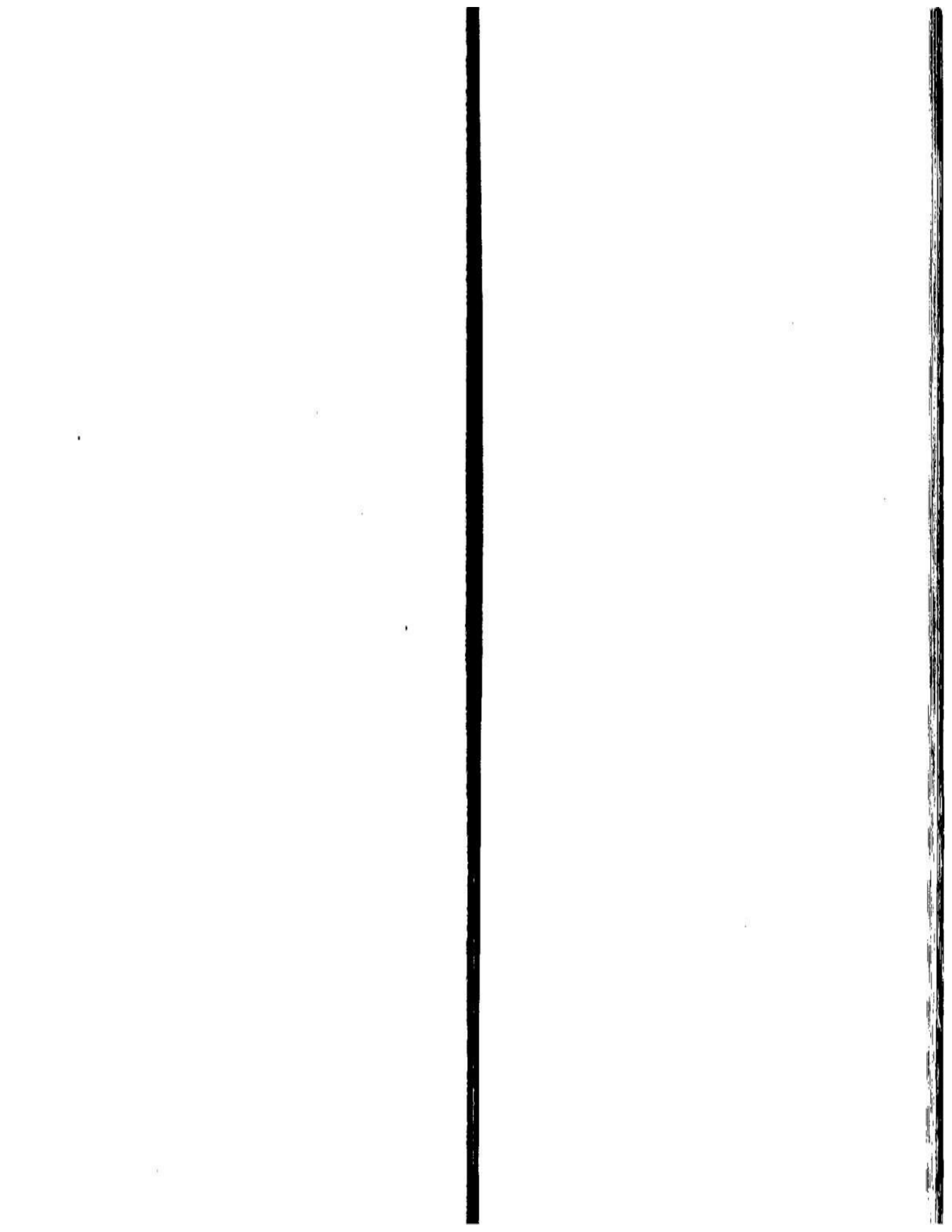
•Why not?'

' What did you do to Hilary last night ?' she greeted him.

'Not here. Not with all the children in the house. And

' What d'you mean?'

Mary.'



c No sign of her this morning. You fill her up with liquor ?'

Amanda appeared at the door, arrayed in her school

'Just a couple of martinis.'

uniform - dark maroon blazer, white shirt and tie, grey

' Eggs with your bacon ?'

skirt. The students of Rummidge High School for Girls

' Uh, I'll have two, scrambled.'

wore their skirts very, very short indeed, so that they re-

'What d'you think this is, Howard Johnson's?'

sembled mythical biform creatures like mermaids or cen-

'Yeah, and let me have a side order of golden-crisp turs, all prim austerity above the waist, all bare forked ranch-fried potatoes.' He winked at Matthew, open-anim below. The bus stops in the neighbourhood were a mouthed over his bowl of cornflakes. The young Swallows nympholept's paradise at this time of the morning. Amanda were not used to adult repartee over the breakfast table, blushed under Morris's scrutiny.' I'm off, Mary,' she said.

'Morris, could you possibly take me to the railroad

'Just run upstairs first, Mandy, and ask your mother if station on your way to work this morning ?'

she'd like a cup of tea or something, would you ?'

' Sure. Taking a trip somewhere ?'

' Mummy's not upstairs. She's in Daddy's study.'

'You remember I told you I was going to visit my

'Really? I must tell her about the meal tonight.5 Mary family's grave in County Durham ?'

bustled out.

' Isn't that a long way from here ?'

' I see the Bee Gees are giving a concert in town the week

' I'll stay overnight in Durham. Be back tomorrow.'

after next,' Morris said to Amanda.' Shall I get tickets ?'

Morris sighed. 'I shan't be here. O'Shea has fixed his Amanda's eyes gleamed.' Oh, yes please!

roof, so I'll be going back to the apartment. I'm going to

'Perhaps Mary will come with us, or even your mother.

miss the cooking here.'

D'you dig the Bee Gees ?' he asked Mary, who had returned.

'Aren't you scared to go back to that place ?'

'Can't stand them. Amanda, you'd better be on your

'Oh, well, you know what they say: a lump of frozen way. Your mother's tied up on the telephone.'

urine never strikes in the same place twice.'

Hilary was still on the phone when it was time for Mary to

'Hey kids, hurry up, or you'll be late for school.' Mary leave. She scribbled a note for Hilary while Morris backed put a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon in front of Morris the Lotus into the road, its exhaust booming in a deep and he tucked in appreciatively.

baritone that rattled the house windows in their frames.

'You know, Mary,' he said when the children had left the

'What time is your train?' he asked as Mary, manoeu-room, 'your talents are wasted as an unmarried mother.

vering her belly with care, lowered herself into the passenger Why don't you persuade that priest of yours to become a seat.

Protestant ? Then you could make an honest man of him.'

' Eight-fifty. Will we make it ?'

'Funny you should say that,' she replied, taking an air-

'Sure.'

mail envelope from her pocket and wagging it in the air.

' This car wasn't built for pregnant women, was it ?'

'He just wrote to say he's been laicized.'

'The seat reclines. How's that?'

'Great! He wants to marry you?'

'That's great. Mind if I practise my relaxation?'

'He wants to shack up with me anyway.*'

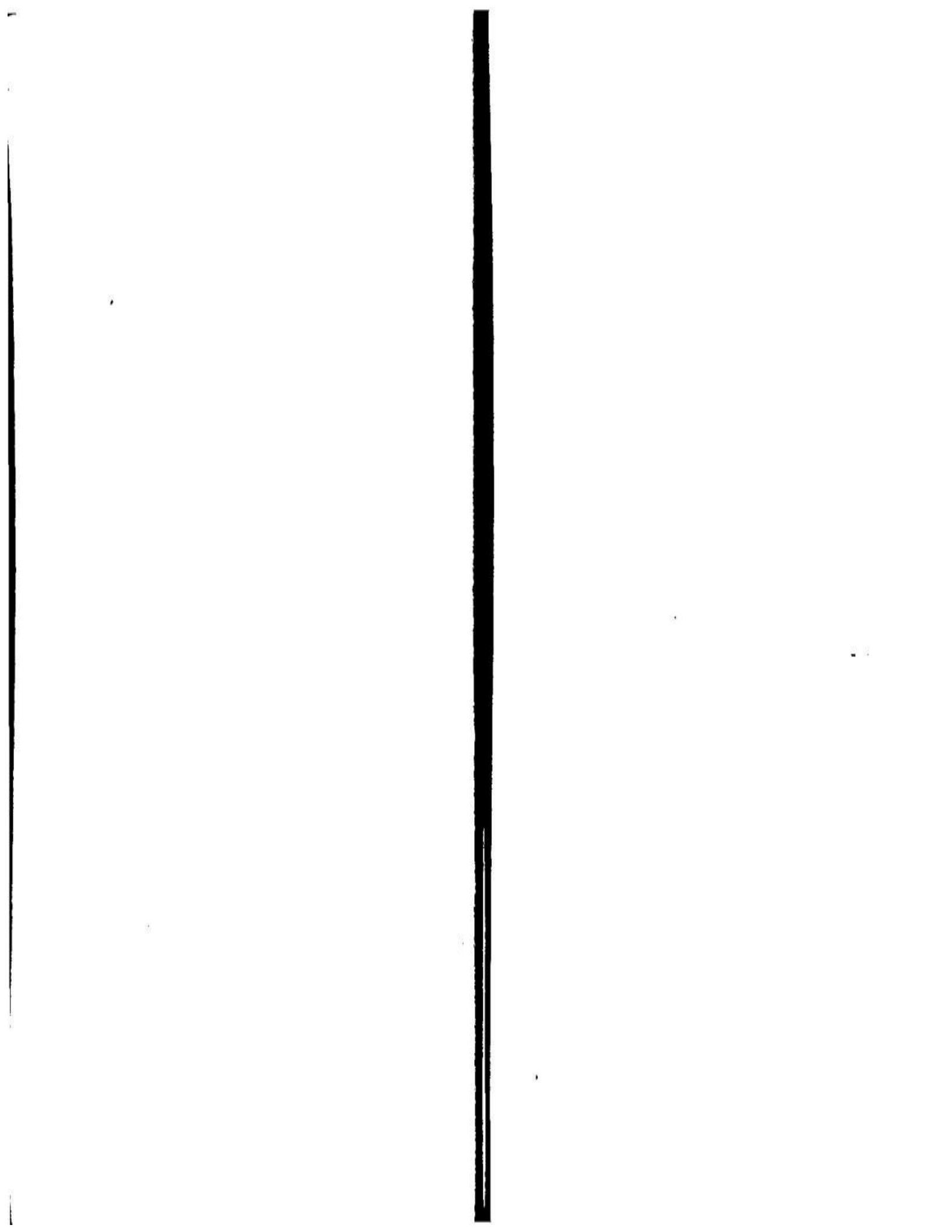
'Go ahead.'

'What are you going to do?'

Almost at once they hit a tailback of rush-hour traffic in

'I'm thinking about it. I wonder what's the matter with the Midland Road. A line of people waiting at a bus stop Hilary? There are some things I have to tell her before I gazed curiously at Mary Makepeace practising shallow leave.'

breathing in the bucket seat of the Lotus.



'What's that all about ?' Morris inquired.

'Anyway, she kept glowering at me from out of the corner

'Psychoprophylaxis. Painless childbirth to you. Hilary's of the room like a wild animal. I don't know, perhaps she teaching me.'

was smiling at me and it just looked like a snarl.'

'You believe in it ?'

'She wasn't smiling, Mary. I should keep out of Berna-

'Of course. The Russians have been using it for years.'

dette's way if I were you. She's jealous.'

'Only because they can't afford anaesthetics, I'll bet.'

'Jealous of me?'

'Who wants anaesthetics at the most important moment

'She thinks I knocked you up.'

of a woman's life ?'

'Good Lord!'

'Desire wanted the hospital to put her out for the whole

'Don't sound so surprised. I'm perfectly capable of it.

goddam nine months.'

What time did you say your train was ? Eight-fifty ?'

'She was brainwashed, if you'll pardon the expression.

'That's right.'

The medical profession has succeeded in persuading women

'We're going to have to break the law a little bit'

that pregnancy is a kind of illness that only doctors know

'Take it easy, Morris. It's not that important.'

how to cure.'

The traffic appeared to be backed up for nearly a mile

' What does O'Shea think about it all ?'

from the intersection with the Inner Ring. Morris pulled out

'He just believes in old-fashioned pain.'

and varoomed down the wrong side of the road, scandalized

'That figures. You know, Mary, I can't understand why drivers honking protest in his wake. Just before he reached you put yourself in that guy's hands. He looks like the kind the Inner Ring an invalid carriage, as they were called of doctor who used to take bullets out of gangsters in old (more like euthanasia on wheels, he would have said, a

"B" pictures.'

frontwheel blowout in one of those crazy boxed-in tricycles

'It's the system here. You have to register with a local and you were a gonner) handily stalled and gave him space doctor to get referred to the hospital. O'Shea was the only to get the Lotus back into line.

doctor I knew.'

'How about that?' he said elatedly. But unfortunately a

' I don't like to think of him examining y o u . . . I mean, he cop on traffic duty had observed the manner of Morris's has dirt under his fingernails!'

arrival. He came across, unbuttoning his tunic pocket.

'Oh, he leaves that kind of thing to the hospital. He only

'Oh dear,' said Mary Makepeace. 'Now you're going to gave me a pre-natal once and it seemed to embarrass hell out get a ticket.'

of him. He fixed his eyes on this hideous picture of the Sacred

'Would you mind going back into that quick-breathing Heart on the wall and kept muttering under his breath like routine?'

he was praying.'

The policeman had to bend almost double to peer into Morris laughed. "That's O'Shea.'

the car. Morris gestured with his thumb at Mary Makepeace

' It was a kind of spooky occasion all round. There was panting for all she was worth, her eyes closed and her this nurse of his -'

tongue hanging out like a dog's, hands clasping her belly.

•Nurse?'

'Emergency, officer. This young lady's going to have a

'A black-haired girl with no teeth -'

baby.'

'That's no nurse, that's Bernadette, the Irish slavey.'

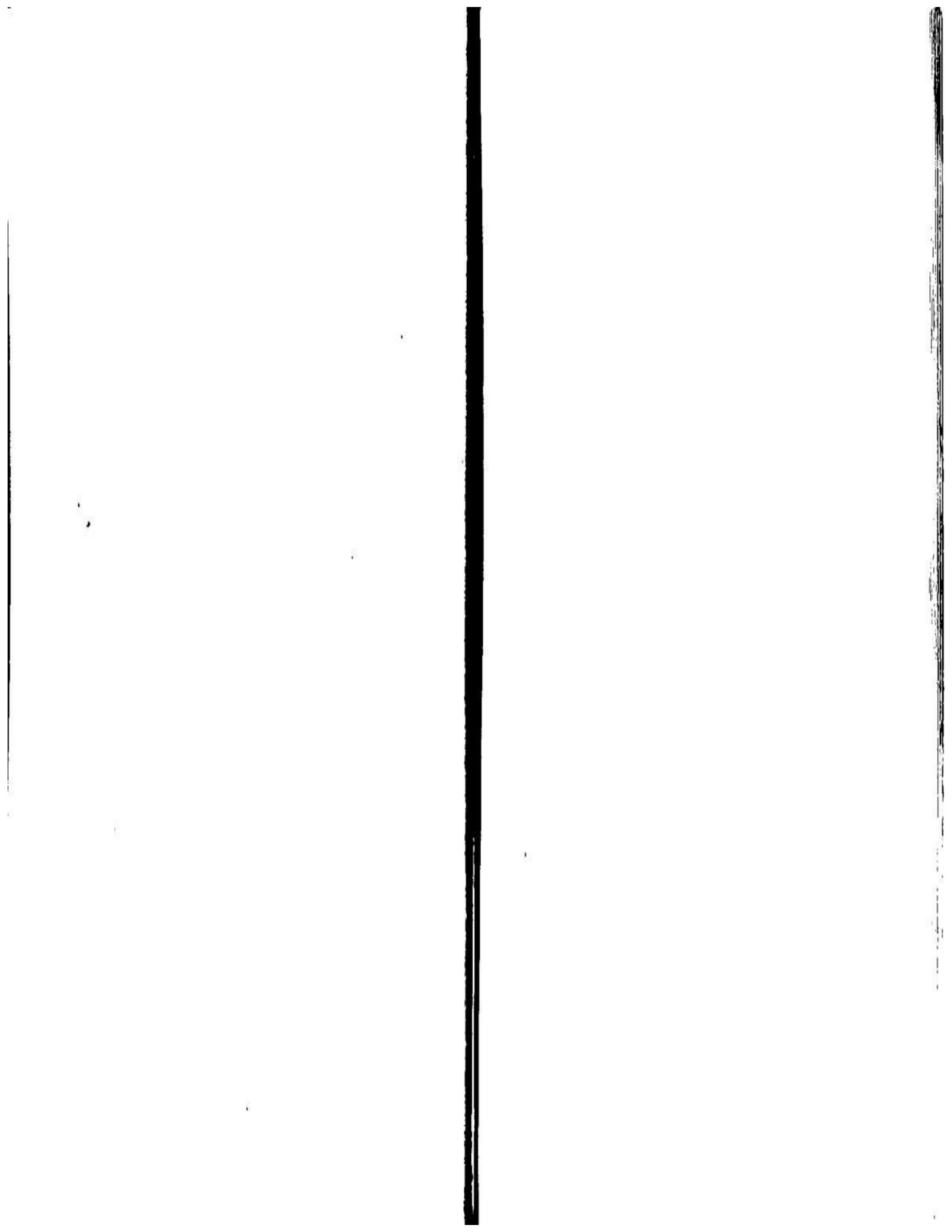
'Oh,' said the cop. 'Well, all right, but drive more care-

'Well, she was wearing a nurse's uniform.'

fully or you'll both end up in hospital.' Smiling at his own

'A con trick. O'Shea is just saving money.'

joke, he held up the traffic for them to proceed against the to8



lights. Morris waved his thanks. He got Mary Makepeace to timetable clashes, but the real problem was their reluctance the station with five minutes to spare.

to teach before ten o'clock in the morning or after four in the afternoon or in the lunch period or on Wednesday after-Driving back to the University, Morris took the newly noons or any time at weekends. That scarcely left them time opened section of the Inner Ring, an exhilarating complex of to open their mail, let alone teach. Unaware of this gentle-tunnels and flyovers that was part of the proposed Grand manly tradition, Morris had fixed one of his tutorials at Prix circuit. He leaned back in the bucket seat and drove nine am, much to the disgust of the students concerned, and with straight, extended arms in the style of a professional it was to meet this group that he now stepped out to his racing driver. In the longest tunnel, safe from police ob-office — not with excessive haste, for they were invariably servation, he put his foot down and heard with satisfaction late.

the din of the Lotus's exhaust reverberating from the walls.

The English Department had changed its quarters since He came out of the tunnel like a bullet, into a long canted his arrival at Rummidge. It was now situated on the eighth curve elevated above roof level. From here you got a floor of a newly built hexagonal block, one of those he had panorama of the whole city and the sun came out at that surveyed from the Inner Ring. The changeover had taken moment, shining like floodlighting on the pale concrete place in the Easter vacation amid much wailing and gnashing facades of the recent construction work, tower blocks and of teeth. Oy, oy, Exodus was nothing in comparison. With a freeways, throwing them into relief against the sombre mass characteristically whacky, yet somehow endearing tender-of nineteenth-century slums and decayed factories. Seen ness for individual liberty over logic and efficiency, the from this perspective, it looked as though the seeds of a whole Administration had allowed each faculty member to decide twentieth-century city had been planted under the ground a which items of furniture he would like transferred from his long time ago and were now beginning to shoot up into the old accommodation to the new, and which he would like light, bursting through the caked, exhausted topsoil of replaced. The resulting permutations were totally confusing Victorian architecture. Morris found it an oddly stirring to the men carrying out the work and innumerable errors sight, for the city that was springing up was unmistakably were made. For days two caravans of porters could be seen American in style - indeed that was what the local blimps tottering from one building to the other, carrying almost as were always beefing about - and he had the strange feeling many tables, chairs and filing cabinets out of the new one as of having stumbled upon a new American frontier in the they carried into it. For a new building, the Hexagon had most unexpected place.

already acquired quite a mythology. It was built on a pre-But one thing was for sure, they had a long way to catch fabricated principle and confidence in the soundness of the up in music on radio. The clock in the campanile was striking structure had been undermined by hastily issued restrictions nine and one godawful disc jockey was handing over to on the weight of books each faculty member was allowed on another on Radio One as he swept through the main gates his bookshelves. The more conscientious members of staff of the University. The security man saluted smartly: since were to be observed in the first weeks of their occupation his success in ending the sit-in Morris had become a well-resentfully weighing their books on kitchen or bathroom known and respected man-about-campus, and the orange scales and adding up long columns of figures on pieces of Lotus made him

instantly identifiable. There was, naturally, paper. There were also restrictions on the number of persons no difficulty in finding parking space this early in the allowed into each office and classroom, and it was alleged morning. The Rummidge faculty liked to complain about that the windows on the West side were sealed up because if **910**

all the occupants of those rooms were to lean out at the same the top and bottom and rising or dropping into the light time the building would fall over. The exterior had been again, perpetual motion readily symbolizing all systems and faced with glazed ceramic tiles guaranteed to resist the cosmologies based on the principle of eternal recurrence, corrosion of the Rummidge atmosphere for five hundred vegetation myths, death and rebirth archetypes, cyclic years, but they had been attached with an inferior adhesive theories of history, metempsychosis and Northrop Frye's material and were already beginning to fall off here and theory of literary modes.

there. Notices bearing the motto 'Beware of Falling Tiles'

This morning, however, he contented himself with a decorated the approach to the new building. These warnings direct journey to the eighth floor. His tutorial students were were not superfluous: a tile fell in fragments at Morris's already waiting, slumped against the wall beside the door of feet just as he mounted the steps at the entrance.

his office, yawning and scratching themselves. He greeted All in all, it was hardly surprising that the move was the them and unlocked the door, which bore his name on a slip subject of bitter complaint by members of the English De-of paper pasted over the nameplate of Gordon Masters. As partment; but there was one feature of the new building soon as he got inside, the communicating door opposite that entirely redeemed it in Morris's eyes at least. This was a opened and Alice Slade inched her way apologetically into type of elevator which he had never seen before, quaintly the room, clutching a large stack of files.

named a paternoster, that consisted of an endless belt of

'Oh,' she said, 'are you teaching, Professor Zapp? I open compartments moving up and down two shafts. The wanted to ask you about these postgraduate applications.'

movement was slower, naturally, than that of a normal ele-

'Yeah, teaching till ten, Alice, O K ? Why don't you ask vator, since the belt never stopped and one had to step into Rupert Sutcliffe about it ?'

it while it was moving, but the system eliminated all tedious

' Oh, all right. Sorry I disturbed you.' She backed out.

waiting. It also imparted to the ordinary, quotidian action of

'Siddown,' he said to the students, thinking to himself taking an elevator a certain existential edge of drama, for that he would have to move back into Swallow's room. On one had to time one's leap into and out of the moving com-accepting the job of mediator between the Administration partment with finesse and positive commitment. Indeed for and the students he'd asked for secretarial assistance and an the elderly and infirm the paternoster constituted a for-outside telephone line - requests which had been promptly midable challenge, and most of them preferred to labour and economically satisfied by moving him into the office made up and down the staircase. Admittedly the notice pasted vacant by

the abrupt departure of Gordon Masters. You beside the red-painted Emergency device on every floor did could still tell from the marks on the walls where the hunt-not inspire confidence: ' In case of emergency, pull the red ring trophies had hung. Although his work as mediator was lever downwards. Do not attempt to free persons trapped in virtually finished, it hardly seemed worthwhile moving back the paternoster or its machinery. The maintenance staff will into Swallow's room, but in the meantime the Departmental attend to malfunctions at the earliest possible opportunity.'

Secretary, conditioned to refer all problems, inquiries and One day there would be a conventional elevator as well, but decisions to Masters, had begun to bring them, as though as yet it wasn't in operation. Morris didn't complain: he compelled by a deep-seated homing instinct, to him, Morris loved the paternoster. Perhaps it was a throwback to his Zapp, although Rupert Sutcliffe was supposed to be the childhood delight in fairground carousels and suchlike; but Acting Head of the Department. In fact Sutcliffe himself he also found it a profoundly poetic machine, especially if one was inclined to come to Morris with oblique appeals for stayed on for the round trip, disappearing into darkness at advice and approval, and other members of staff too.

Suddenly freed from Masters* despotic rule after thirty **thought she loved. Readers of Jane Austen, he emphasized,** years, the Rummidge English Department was stunned and gesturing freely with his cigar, should not be misled by the frightened by its own liberty, it was going round and round absence of overt reference to physical sexuality in her fiction in circles like a rudderless ship, no, more like a ship whose into supposing that she was indifferent or hostile to it. On tyrannical captain had unexpectedly fallen overboard one the contrary, she invariably came down on the side of Eros dark night, taking with him sealed instructions about the against Agape - on the side, that is, of the private com-ship's ultimate destination. The crew kept coming out of munion of lovers over against the public communion of habit to the bridge for orders, and were only too glad to take social events and gatherings which invariably caused pain them from anyone who happened to be occupying the and distress (think for instance of the disastrous nature of captain's seat.

group expeditions, to Sotherton in *Mansfield Park*, to Box Admittedly it was a comfortable seat - a padded, tip-Hill in *Emma*, to Lyme Regis in *Persuasion*). Getting into his back, executive's swivel chair — and for that reason alone stride, Morris demonstrated that Mr Elton was obviously Morris was reluctant to move back into Philip Swallow's implied to be impotent because there was no lead in the room. He leaned back into it, put his feet on the desk and lit pencil that Harriet Smith took from him; and the moment in a cigar. 'Well now,' he said to the three dejected-looking *Persuasion* when Captain Wentworth lifted the little brat students.' What are you bursting to discuss this morning ?'

Walter off Anne Elliot's shoulders . . . He snatched up the

'Jane Austen,' mumbled the boy with the beard, shuffling text and read with feeling:

some sheets of foolscap covered with evil-looking hand-

' ". . . *she found herself in the state of being released from writing.*

him . . . Before she realized that Captain Wentworth had

' Oh yeah. What was the topic ?'

done it . . . he was resolutely borne away . . . Her sensations on

' I've done it on Jane Austen's moral awareness.'

the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not even

' That doesn't sound like my style.'

thank him. She could only hang over little Charles with the

'I couldn't understand the title you gave me, Professor *most disordered feelings.*" How about that?' he concluded Zapp.'

reverently. 'If that isn't an *orgasm*, what is i t ? ' He looked

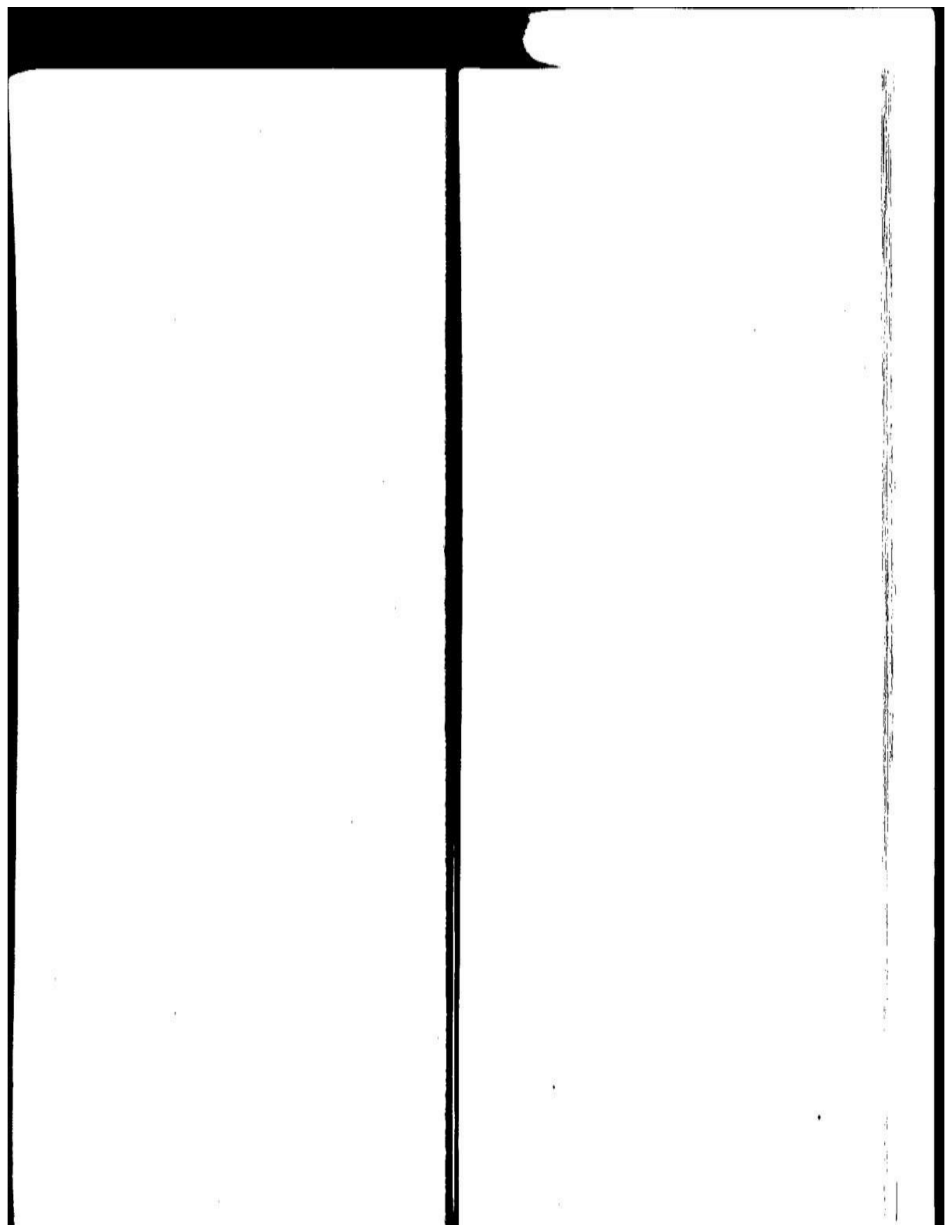
'Eros and Agape in the later novels, wasn't it? What was up into three flabbergasted faces. The internal telephone the problem?'

rang.

The student hung his head. Morris felt in the mood for a It was the Vice-Chancellor's secretary, asking if Morris little display of high-powered exposition. Agape, he ex-would be free to see the VC some time that morning. Was plained, was a feast through which the early Christians ex-the President of the Student Council quibbling about repre-pressed their love for one another, it symbolized non-sexual, sentation on the Promotions and Appointments Committee, non-individualized love, it was represented in Jane Austen's Morris inquired. The secretary didn't know, but Morris was novels by social events that confirmed the solidarity of willing to take a bet he was right. He'd always been surprised middle-class agrarian capitalist communities or welcomed by the readiness with which the Student President had new members into those communities — balls and dinner waived representation on Promotions and Appointments: parties and sight-seeing expeditions and so on. Eros was of no doubt his militant henchmen had been leaning on him to course sexual love and was represented in Jane Austen by raise the issue again. Morris smiled knowingly to himself as courtship scenes, tete-a-tetes, walking in pairs - any en-he scribbled an appointment for 10.30 in his desk diary.

counter between the heroine and the man she loved, or Mediating between the two sides in this dispute at Rum-214

213



midge he often felt like a grandmaster of chess overlooking a

'Sure. Delighted.'

match between two novices - able to predict the entire

•Lovely.'

pattern of the game while they sweated over every move. To There was a pause, in which he could hear Hilary breath-the Rummidge faculty his prescience seemed uncanny, his ing.

expertise in chairing negotiations amazing. They didn't

' Is that O K, then ?' he asked.

realize that he had seen so many campus disturbances in

'Yes. Morris...'

Euphoria that he knew the basic scenario by heart.

•Yeah?'

• Where were we ?' he said.

'Are you going back to your flat today ?'

'Persuasion. ...'

'Yeah. I'll come round to pick up my bag this evening.'

•Oh, yeah.1

'I was going to say, you could stay another night if you The telephone rang again. 'An outside call for you,' said wanted to.'

Alice Slade.

' W e l l '

'Alice,' Morris sighed. 'Please don't put any calls through

•Mary's away tonight. Sometimes I get scared in the until this class is over.'

night, in the house on my own.'

' Sorry. Shall I ask her to call back ?'

•Sure. I'll stay.'

'Who is it?'

' You're sure it's no trouble ?'

'Mrs Swallow.'

'No, no. That's fine.'

'Put her on.'

'All right. See you this evening, then.' She hung up

' Morris ?' Hilary's voice sounded trembly.

abruptly. Morris swung round in his chair to replace the

•Hi.'

receiver and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

'Are you teaching or something ?'

' Shall I read my paper or not ?' said the bearded student,

*No, no, not really.' He covered the mouthpiece with one with a trace of impatience.

hand and said to the students, 'Just read through that scene

•What? Oh, yeah. Read it. Read it.'

in *Persuasion* will you and try to analyse how it builds up to a While the boy drawled on about Jane Austen's moral climax. In every sense of the word.' He leered at them en-awaredness, Morris pondered the implications of Hilary's couragingly, and resumed his conversation with Hilary.

surprising call. Could she possibly mean what he thought

'What's new?'

she meant ? He found it difficult to concentrate on the paper,

' I just wanted to apologize for last night.'

and was relieved when the clock in the campanile struck

'Honey, it's me that should apologize,' said Morris, taken ten. As the students shuffled out through the door, Rupert by surprise.

Sutcliffe shuffled in, a tall, stooped, melancholy figure, with

' No, I behaved like a silly young girl. Leading you on and ill-fitting glasses that kept slipping to the end of his nose.

then backing away in a panic. After all, it's nothing to make Sutcliffe was the Department Romantics man, but he was a fuss about, is it ?'

short on joy, and being made Acting Head on Masters'

' No, no.' Morris swung round in his chair to turn his back departure hadn't apparently raised his spirits.

on the students, and spoke in a low voice.' What isn't ?'

' Oh, Zapp. Could you spare a minute ?'

'Anyway, I haven't had such a nice evening for years.'

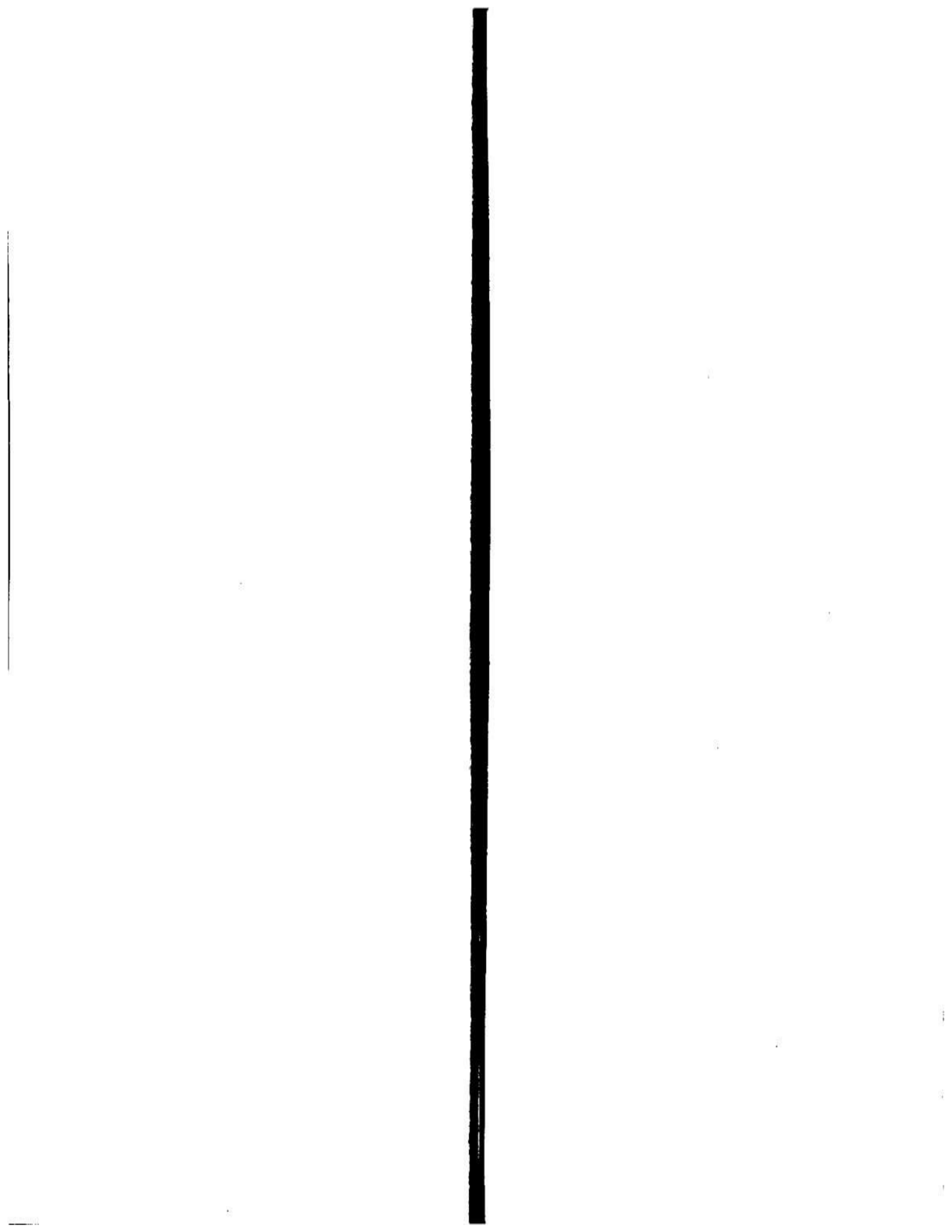
' Can we discuss it over a cup of coffee ?'

'Let's do it again. Soon.'

' I ' m afraid not. Not in the Senior Common Room. It's

' Gould you bear it?'

a rather delicate matter.' He closed the door conspiratorially 216



behind him and tip-toed towards Morris. 'These post-hand on the doorknob. 'By the way, will you be coming to graduate applications -' He placed a stack of files (the same the Departmental Meeting this morning ?'

that Alice Slade had brought in earlier) on to Morris's desk.

'Can't be sure, Rupert,' said Morris, rising from his

'We've got to decide which ones to put forward for approval executive's chair and shrugging on his jacket. 'I have an by the Faculty Committee.'

appointment with the VC at ten thirty.'

'Yeah?'

'That's unfortunate. I was hoping you would chair the

'Well, one of them is from Hilary Swallow. Swallow's meeting. We've got to discuss next session's lecture pro-wife, you know.'

gramme, and there's bound to be a lot of disagreement. They

'Yes, I know. I'm one of her referees.'

will argue so, since Masters left...'

'God bless my soul, are you really? I hadn't noticed. You He drifted out. Morris followed him and was locking the know all about it then ?'

door of his office when Bob Busby came running down the

'Well, something. What's the problem? She was halfway corridor, money and keys jingling in his pockets.

through a Master's course when she got married and quit.

'Morris!' he panted. 'Glad I caught you. You're coming Now her kids are growing up and she'd like to get back into to the meeting ?'

research.'

Morris explained that he probably wouldn't be able to

'That's all very well, but it puts us in a rather awkward make it. Busby looked glum. 'That's too bad. Sutcliffe will position. I mean, the wife of a colleague...'

take the chair, and he's hopeless. I'm afraid Dempsey is He was a bachelor, Sutcliffe, a genuine old-

fashioned going to try and force through some proposal about com-bachelor, as distinct from being gay or hip - and women pulsory linguistics.'

scared him to death. The two on the Department staff he

'Is that bad?'

treated as honorary men. If his colleagues had to have Busby stared. 'Well, of course it's bad. I thought from the wives, he intimated, the least they could do was to keep way you tore into Dempsey's paper at the staff seminar...'

them at home in decent obscurity. 'I think Swallow might

'I was attacking his paper, not his discipline. I have at least have discussed the matter with us before letting his nothing against linguistics as such.'

wife make a formal application,' he sighed.

' Well, for practical purposes Dempsey *is* linguistics around

'I don't think he knows anything about it,' said Morris here,' said Busby. 'Compulsory linguistics means com-carelessly.

pulsory Dempsey for the students and I don't think even Sutcliffe's glasses nearly jumped off his nose.

'You mean -

they deserve that.'

she's *deceiving* him ?'

'You may have something there, Bob,' said Morris. He

'No, no. She wants to be considered on her own merits, had ambivalent feelings about Robin Dempsey. In one sense without any favouritism.'

he was the nearest thing the Department had to a recog-Sutcliffe looked doubtful. 'That's all very well,' he nizable professional academic. He was industrious, am-grumbled.' But who's to supervise her, if she does come ?'

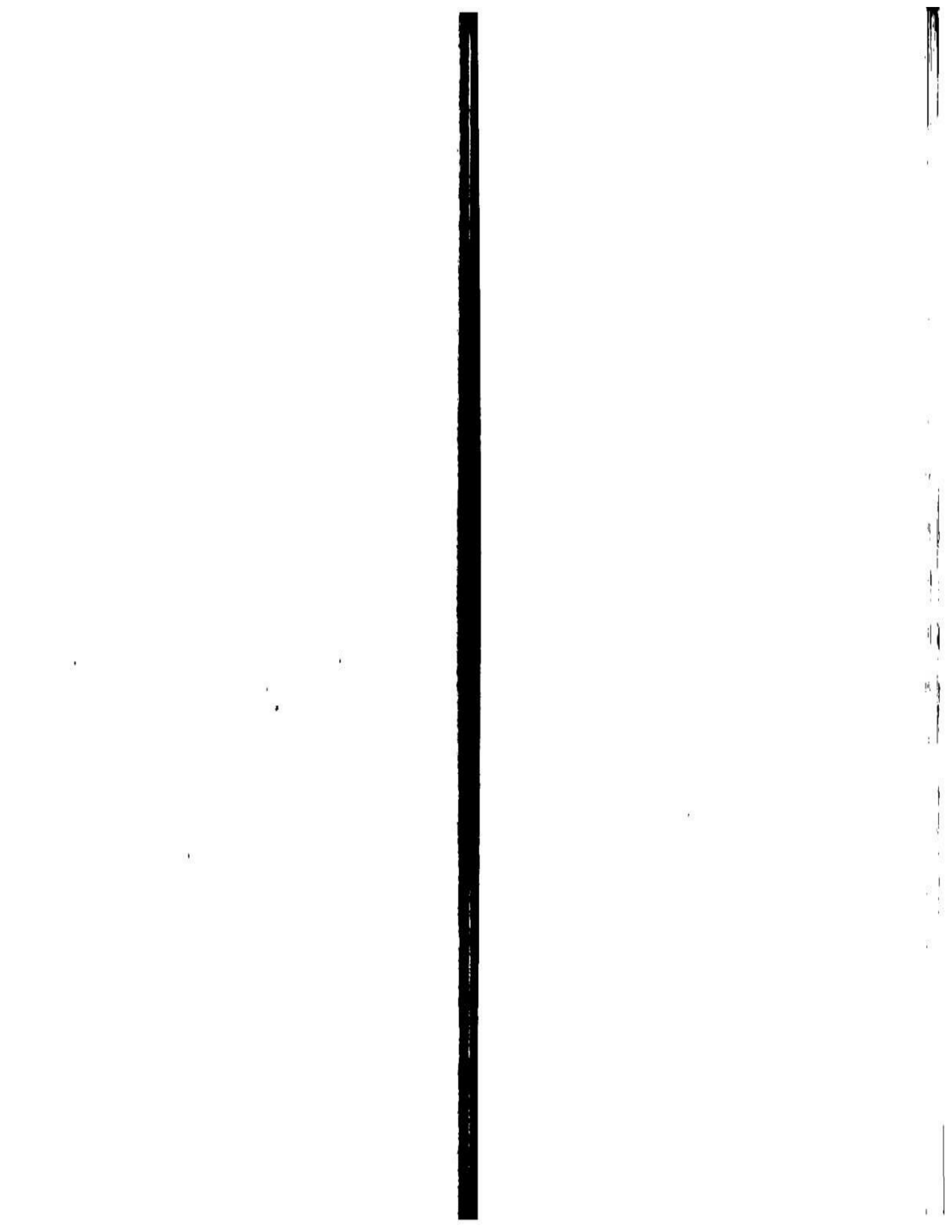
bitious and hard-headed. He had no quirks or crotchets. He

'I think she was rather hoping you would, Rupert,'

was, apart from being necessarily less brilliant, very much Morris said mischievously.

what Morris himself had been at the same age, and indeed

' God forbid!' Sutcliffe picked up the files and made for had made some overtures of friendship, or at least collusion, the door, as if fearing that Hilary might jump out of a cup-with Morris in the course of his visit. Morris, however, had board at him and demand a supervision. He paused with his found these advances surprisingly resistible. He did not fee]



inclined to join Dempsey in patronizing the rest of the

'Cigarette?' He made a feeble attempt to push a wooden Rummidge faculty. Even if they were in many respects a cigarette box across his desk in Morris's direction.

bunch of freaks, he found them easy to get along with. Never

'I'll have a cigar, if you don't mind. Will you join me?'

in his academic career had he felt less threatened than in the

'No, no, no.' The VC smiled and shook his head wearily.

last five months. 'Look, Bob,' he said. 'I've got an appoint-

'I want to ask your advice concerning one or two little ment with the V C

problems.' He propped his elbows on the arms of his chair

'Yes, I must be on my way, too,' said Busby. He jog-and, by interlacing his fingers, formed a shelf on which to trotted off in the direction of the Senior Common Room.

rest his chin.

'Get to the meeting if you can!' he shouted over his

'Promotions and Appointments?' Morris queried.

shoulder. Morris had no intention of attending the meeting The shelf collapsed, and the VC's jaw sagged momen-if he could possibly avoid it. Staff meetings at Rummidge tarily. 'How did you know?'

had been bad enough under Masters' whimsically despotic

'I guessed the students wouldn't let you get away with regime. Since his departure they made the Mad Hatter's excluding them from that committee.'

Tea Party seem like a paradigm of positive decision-making.

Stroud's face cleared. 'Oh, it's nothing to do with the He stepped with a lithe, well-timed movement into the *students*, dear fellow.' He permitted himself an almost paternoster and subsided gently to the ground floor. As he vigorous gesture of dismissal. 'All that unpleasantness is over emerged into the bright air (another sunny spell was in and done with, thanks to you. No, this is something exclusive-progress) the clock in the campanile struck the half hour ly concerning academic staff, and absolutely confidential.

and he accelerated his pace. It was as well he did so, for I have here -' he nodded at a manilla file

reposing on his another tile sprang from the wall above his head with a otherwise immaculate desk - 'a list of nominations from the resounding crack like a bullet ricocheting and scattered in various Faculties for Senior Lectureships, due to come before fragments just behind him. This isn't even funny any more, the Promotions and Appointments Committee this after-he thought looking up at the facade of the building, now noon. There are two names from the English Department.

beginning to look like a gigantic crossword puzzle. Before Robin Dempsey, whom you probably know, and your long somebody was going to get seriously killed and sue the opposite number, now in Euphoria.'

University for a million dollars. He made a mental note to

'Philip Swallow?'

mention it to the Vice-Chancellor.

'Precisely. The problem is that we have fewer Senior Lectureships to play with than we thought, and one of these

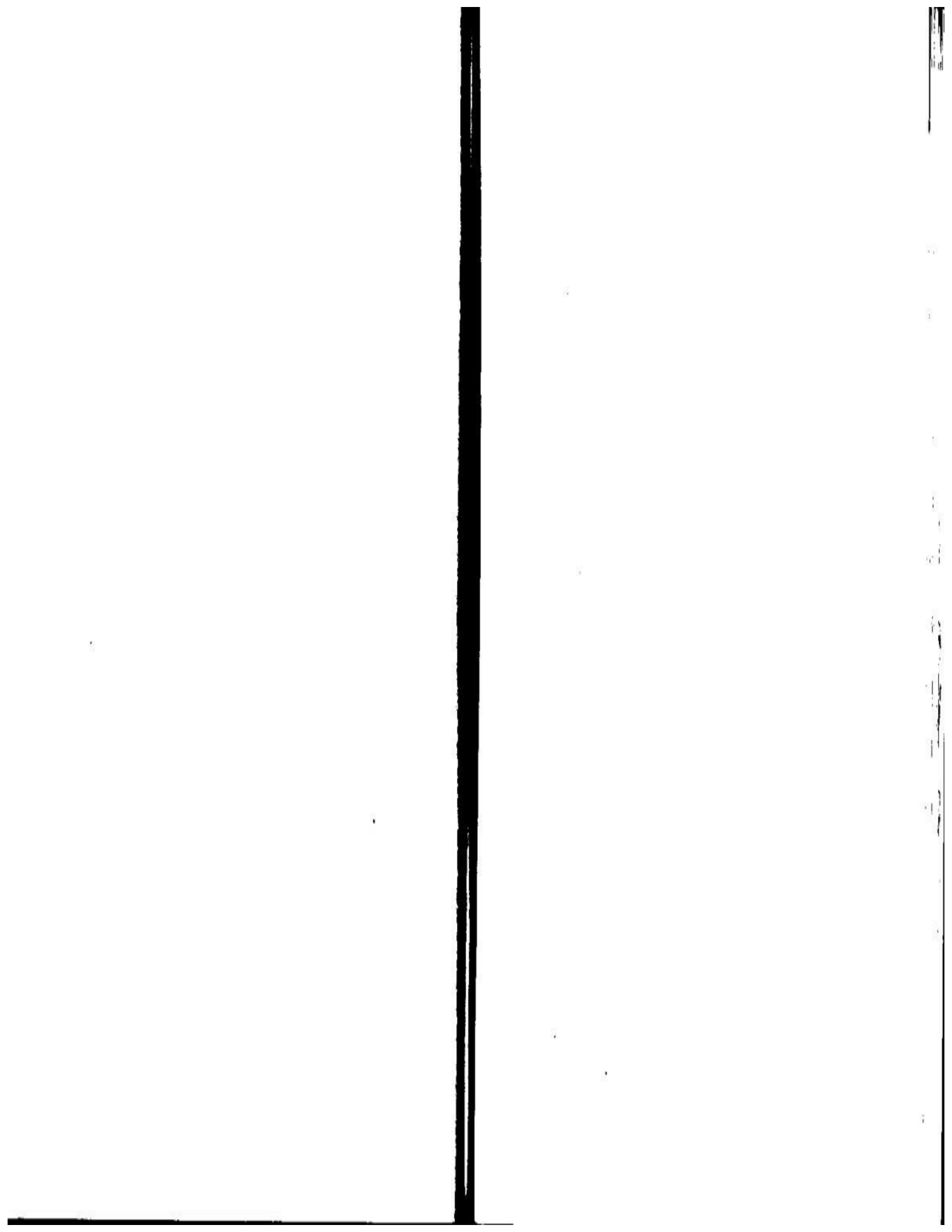
'Ah, Zapp! Awfully good of you to drop in,' the Vice-men will have to be unlucky. The question is, which one?

Chancellor murmured, half-rising from his desk as Morris Who is the more deserving? I'd like to have your opinion, was ushered in. Morris waded through the deep-pile Zapp. I'd really value your opinion on this ticklish ques-carpeting and shook the hand limply extended to him.

tion. ' Stroud slumped back in his seat and closed his eyes in Stewart Stroud was a tall, powerfully built man whr fatigue after this uncharacteristically long speech. 'Do have affected a manner of extreme languor and debility. Ke a look at the file, old chap, if that would help,' he murmured.

seldom spoke above a whisper, and moved abou' with the The file merely confirmed what Morris knew already: caution of an elderly invalid. Now he sank back into his that Dempsey was much the stronger candidate on grounds chair as if the effort of rising and shaking hands had ex-of research and publication, while Swallow's claim was hausted him. 'Do pull up a chair, old man,' he said.

based on seniority and general service to the University. As **880**



teachers there was no evidence on which to discriminate

'Very true, I'm sure,' Stroud murmured, making a tiny, between them. Normally, Morris wouldn't have hesitated to fatal stroke on the list of names with his gold fountain pen.

back brains and recommend Dempsey. Service, after all,

'I'm much obliged to you, my dear fellow.'

was cheap. The laws of academic *Rtalpolitik* indicated that if

'You're welcome,' said Morris, getting to his feet.

Dempsey didn't get quick promotion, he might leave,

'Don't go yet, old chap. There's something else I wanted whereas Swallow would stay on, doing his job in the same t o - '

dull, conscientious way whether he got promoted or not.

The VG broke off and stared indignantly at the door Furthermore, if Morris had no great personal warmth for which connected with his secretary's office and had sudden-Dempsey, he had several good reasons for positively dis-ly opened. The secretary hovered timidly at the threshold.

liking Philip Swallow, who had screwed his daughter,

'Yes? What is it, Helen? I said I was not to be disturbed.'

butchered his work in the *TLS* and, for all he knew, filled Irritation made his manner almost brisk.

that cupboard with empty cans as a booby trap. It was a

'I'm sorry Vice-Chancellor. But there are two gentle-strange and should have been a satisfying twist of circum-men . . . and Mr Biggs of Security. It's very important, they stance that had placed the fate of this man in his hands. Yet say.'

Morris, mentally fingering the executioner's axe and study-

' If you would just ask them to wait until Professor Zapp ing the bared neck of Philip Swallow held out on the block has left-'

before him, hesitated. It wasn't, after all, only Swallow's

'But it's Professor Zapp they want to see. A matter of life happiness and prosperity that were at stake here. Hilary and and death, they said.'

the children were also involved, and for their welfare he felt Stroud lifted an eyebrow in Morris's

direction. Morris a warm concern. A rise for Swallow meant more bread for shrugged his incomprehension, but felt a twinge of apprehension the whole family. And, he couldn't help thinking, whatever hension. Had Mary Makepeace given birth on the 8.50

it was that Hilary had meant to imply by the invitation to to Durham ?

stay an extra night, her welcome could only be made warmer

'Oh, very well, you'd better let them come in,' said the by the news that Philip was to get a promotion partly Vice-Chancellor.

through his (Morris's) influence, right? Right.

Three men entered the room. One was the superinten-

'I'd say, promote Swallow,' Morris said, handing back dent of the campus security force. The other two introduced the file.

themselves as a doctor and a male nurse from a private

'Really?' Stroud drawled. 'I thought you'd favour the psychiatric clinic somewhere in the sticks. They came other man. He seems the better scholar.'

quickly to the point of their intrusion. Professor Masters had

'Dempsey's publications are OK, but they've more show escaped from their care the night before and it was thought than substance. He's never gonna really make it in lin-that he would probably make for the University. Unfor-guistics. The senior class at M I T could run rings round tunately, there was reason to believe that he might be in-him.'

tending violence to certain parties, in particular Professor

'Is that so?'

Zapp.

'Also, he's not popular in the Department. If he gets

'M e ? ' Morris exclaimed. 'Why me? What have I ever promoted over so many older people, all hell will break out.

done to the old guy ?'

The Department is already drifting into collective paranoia.

'I t appears from notes made by one of our staff,' said the No point in making things worse.'

doctor, looking curiously at Morris,' that he associated you **229**

with certain recent disturbances at the University. He feels and never once heard a shot fired in anger. I come over here that you conspired with the students to weaken the authority and what happens?' He became aware that he was shouting.

of the senior staff.*

'Steady on, Zapp,' the VC murmured.

'You was a Quisling, was how he put it, sir,' said the male

'Sorry,' Morris mumbled. 'It's just the shock of dis-nurse, with a friendly grin. 'Said you plotted to get him recovering that you've been near death without knowing it.'

moved.'

'Quite natural I'm sure,' said Stroud. 'Why don't you go

'That's ridiculous! He resigned of his own fire will,*

straight home and stay safely indoors until this little problem Morris exclaimed, looking appealingly to Stroud, who is solved?'

coughed and lowered his eyei.

'I think that's the wisest thing you could do,' said the

'Well, we did have to use a little persuasion,' he mur-doctor.

mured.

'You talked me into it,' said Morris, making for the door.

'Professor Masters is of course a sick man,' said the doc-He slowed down when he realized that he was not being tor. ' Subject to delusions. But I noticed, Professor Zapp -

accompanied, and turned. The four men, grouped around we looked for you in the English Department first - that the desk, smiled encouragingly at him. Too proud to ask for you're occupying Professor Masters' old room-

an escort, Morris made a gesture of farewell, stalked pur-

'That's just chance!'

posefully out through the secretary's office, and only as he

'Quite so. But just the sort of thing to confirm Professor descended the stairs of the Administration Block remembered Masters in his delusion, should he discover it.'

that he had left his car keys in his office and would have to

' I'll move back into my old room directly.'

return to the Hexagon before leaving the University. He

' I think, Professor Zapp, for your own safety, you should made a complicated detour which kept cover between stay away from the University altogether until Professor himself and die campanile, and entered the Hexagon from Masters is traced and safely returned to the clinic. You see, the rear at the lower ground floor. He boarded the pater-we're afraid he may have obtained a weapon...'

noster, here at its lowest accessible point, and was borne

'Oh, come now, doctor,' said the Vice-Chancellor.

silently aloft to the eighth floor. As he stepped out on to the

'Don't let's be too alarmist.'

landing, the first thing he saw was Gordon Masters ripping

'Well, it is alarming, sir,' said the Superintendent of from his office door the temporary paper slip bearing Security, speaking for the first time. 'After all, Professor Morris's name. Morris froze. Masters looked up from Masters is an old soldier, and a sportsman. A crack shot, I grinding the paper under his heel and stared at Morris with was always given to understand.'

puzzled half-recognition: both his eyes were bright with

•Jesus,' said Morris, trembling with backdated fear.

lunacy. He took a pace forward, gnawing and tugging at his

"Those tiles.'

unkempt moustache. Morris retreated rapidly into the

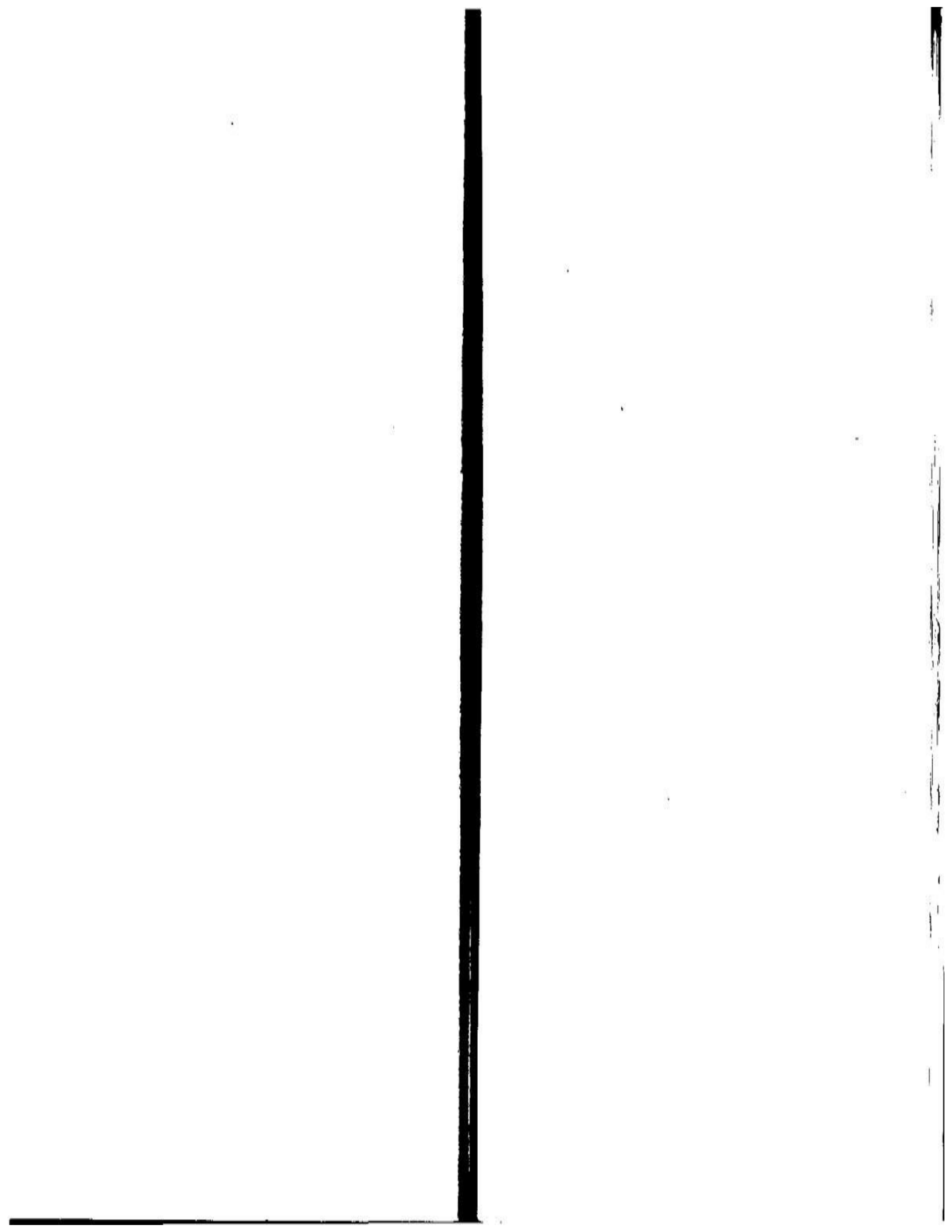
' What tiles ?' said the VC.

paternoster and was borne upwards. He could hear Masters

'Twice today I've been shot at and I didn't realize. I galloping up the staircase that spiralled round the shaft of thought it was just your lousy new building shedding tiles.

the paternoster. Each time Masters arrived on a landing, Jesus, I might have been killed. That crazy old man's been Morris was just moving out of sight. On the eleventh floor sniping ai me, you dig? I'll bet he's been up on the clock Morris, thinking to trick his pursuer, jumped out of the tower with telescopic sights. I thought this was supposed to elevator and boarded a downward-moving

compartment, be a peaceful country 1 I've lived forty years in the States but not before Masters
glimpsed the manoeuvre. Morris



heard a heavy thump above his head as Masters leapt into looking into the shaft of the upward-moving side of the the next compartment. On the fifth floor Morris hopped out paternoster. With a hard, well-aimed thrust, Morris and boarded a rising compartment. He was preparing to get bundled him into the paternoster and he was borne aloft out at the eighth floor again when he saw Masters' feet into limbo. As Masters' feet disappeared from view, Morris coming into view, upon which he quickly turned to face the broke the seal on the safety device embedded in the wall and rear wall and continued his upwards journey. Numb with pulled the red lever. The moving chain of compartments fright he passed the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth floors suddenly jerked to a halt, and a bell began to ring shrilly.

and then entered the limbo of grinding machinery and Very faintly, muffled shouts and the hammering of fists flashing lights that was at the top of the shaft. The cabin he could be heard coining from the top of the shaft was in lurched sideways and then began its descent. Morris hopped out at the twelfth floor to meditate his next move.

Hilary wore a preoccupied frown as she opened the door.

As he stood pondering on the landing Masters appeared When she recognized Morris she went pale, then blushed.

before him moving slowly downwards, standing on his head.

'Oh,' she said faintly. 'It's you. I was just going to phone They gazed at each other in mutual puzzlement until you.'

Masters sank from Morris's sight. It was only much later

•Again?

that Morris deduced that Masters, having been carried up-She let him in and closed the door. 'What have you come wards beyond the top floor of the paternoster's circuit, and for?'

being under the impression that the compartment turned

'I don't know, what are you offering?' He wagged his over to make its descent, had performed a handstand in eyebrows like Groucho Marx.

the belief that he would drop harmlessly from ceiling to Hilary looked distressed. 'Aren't you teaching today?'

floor when his compartment was inverted.

•It's a long story. D'you want to hear it in the lobby or Now Morris could hear him running indefatigably up the shall we sit down?' Hilary was still lingering by the front stairs towards the twelfth floor. Morris jumped into the door.

paternoster on the down side. As he passed the tenth floor,

'I was going to say that after all I don't think it would be Masters whizzed past on foot, glimpsed him out of the cora good idea for you to stay the night.' She spoke very quick-ner of his eyes, skidded to a halt, and jumped into the com-ly, averting her eyes from his.

partment above Morris. Morris went down to the sixth

'O h? Why's that?'

floor, crossed the landing and travelled up to the ninth,

• I just don't think it would be a good idea.'

walked across, went down past the eighth checking that the

'O K. If that's the way you want it. I'll take my bag round coast was clear, decided that it was, and got out on the to O'Shea's now.' He moved towards the stairs.

seventh floor to re-ascend. Leaping across the landing to

'I'm sorry.'

board the paternoster going up, he brushed against Masters

'Hilary,' Morris said, in a tone of fatigue, stopping on the agilely transferring himself in the opposite direction.

first stair, but not turning round. 'If you don't want to sleep Morris went up to the ninth floor, across and down to the with me, that's your privilege, but for Christ's sake don't sixth, up to the tenth, down to the ninth, up to the eleventh, keep saying you're sorry.'

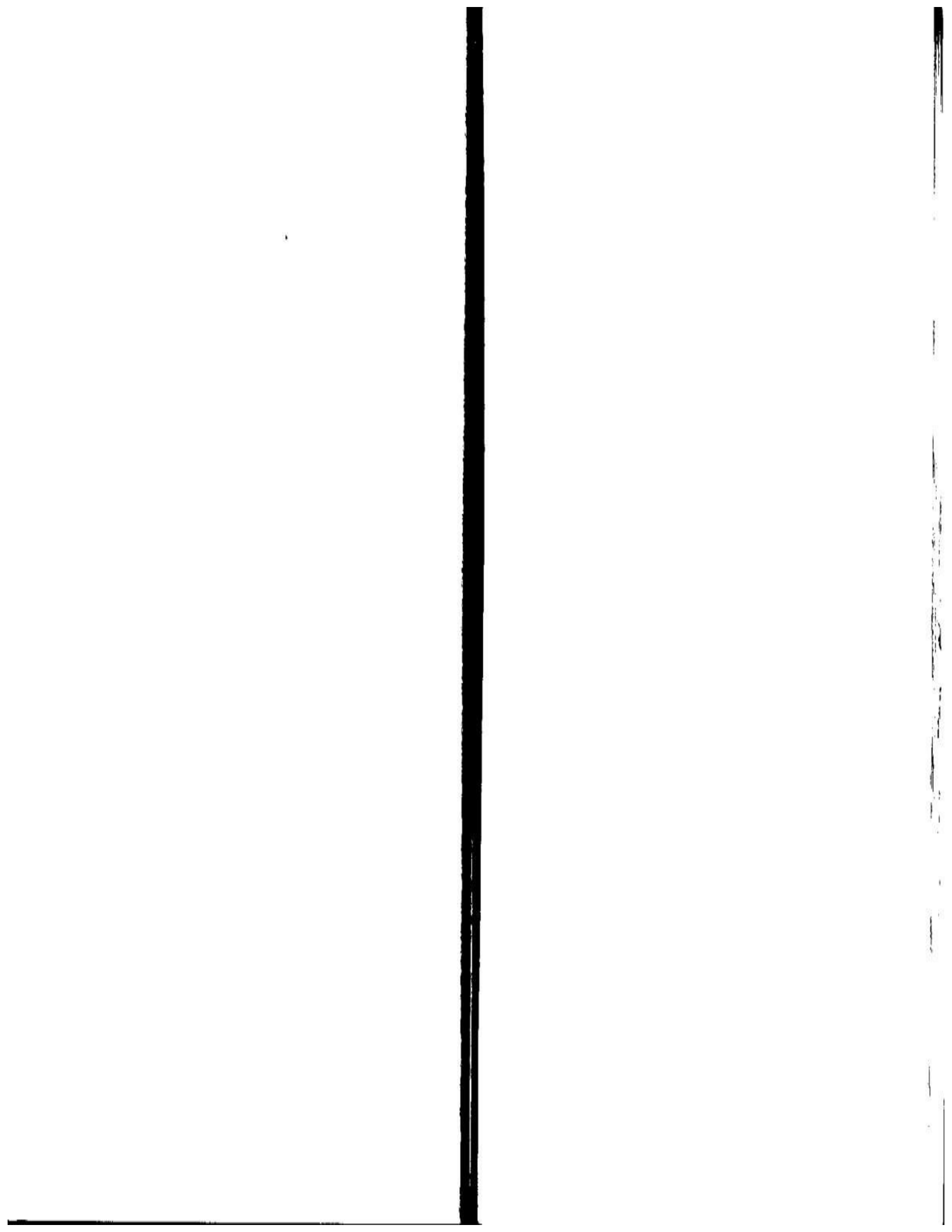
down to the eighth, up to the eleventh, down to the tenth, up

'I'm -' She choked back the word. 'Have you had and over the top, and got out on the twelfth, going down.

lunch?' 7

Masters was standing there, with his back to Morris,

'No.'



'There's nothing in the house, I'm afraid. I should have Morris modestly. ' I just gave Stroud a nudge in the right gone shopping this morning. I could open a tin of soup.'

direction.'

'Don't bother.'

' I think it's perfectly foul.'

'It's no bother.'

'What?'

He went up to the guest room to get his suitcase. When he

'It's corrupt. To think that people's careers can be made came downstairs, Hilary was in the kitchen, stirring cream of or marred like that.'

asparagus soup in a saucepan and frying croutons. They ate Morris dropped his spoon with a deliberate clatter, and at the kitchen table. Morris recounted his adventures with appealed to the kitchen walls. 'Well, that's gratitude—'

Masters, to which Hilary reacted with a suprising lack of

'Gratitude? Am I supposed to feel grateful, then? It's excitement - indeed she scarcely seemed to be listening, like the films, what do they call it, the casting couch. Do politely murmuring, 'Really?' 'Goodness me,' and 'How you have a promotions couch in your office in America?'

terrifying,'just a little late on cue.

Hilary was on the verge of tears.

' Do you believe what I'm telling you ?' he said at last.' Or

'What's gotten into you, Hilary?' Morris expostulated.

d'you think I'm making it all up ?'

'How many times have you said that Philip would have

'Are you making it up ?'

done better in his career if only he'd pushed, like Robin

•No.'

Dempsey ? Well, I pushed for him.'

'Then of course I believe you, Morris. What happened

'Bully for you. I just hope it's not wasted effort.'

next?'

' What d'you mean ?'

'You seem to be taking it pretty coolly. Anyone would

' Suppose he doesn't come back to Rummidge ?'

think this kind of thing happened every week. I don't know

'What are you talking about? He's got to come back, what happened next. I phoned security to tell them Masters hasn't he?'

was trapped in the top of the paternoster and got the hell out

'I don't know.' Hilary was crying now, great big tears of the place . . . Hey, this is good.' He slurped the soup that plopped into her soup like raindrops into a puddle.

greedily. 'By the way,' he said, 'your husband is going to get Morris got up and went round to the other side of the promoted.'

table. He put a hand on each of her shoulders and shook

' What?' Hilary laid down her soup spoon.

her gently. 'What is this all about, for Chrissake?'

'Your husband is going to get a Senior Lectureship.'

'I phoned Philip this morning. After last night . . . I

'Philip?'

wanted him to come home. Straight away. He was horrible.

•That's right.'

He said he was having an affair -'

'But why ? He doesn't deserve it.'

'WithMelanie?'

'I'm inclined to agree with you, but I thought you'd be

'I don't know. I don't care who it is. I felt such a fool.

pleased.'

There I was, tortured with guilt because I kissed you last

'How do you know?'

night, because I wanted to sleep with you —'

Morris explained.

'Did you, Hilary?'

'So really,' said Hilary slowly, 'you fiddled this for

'Of course I did.'

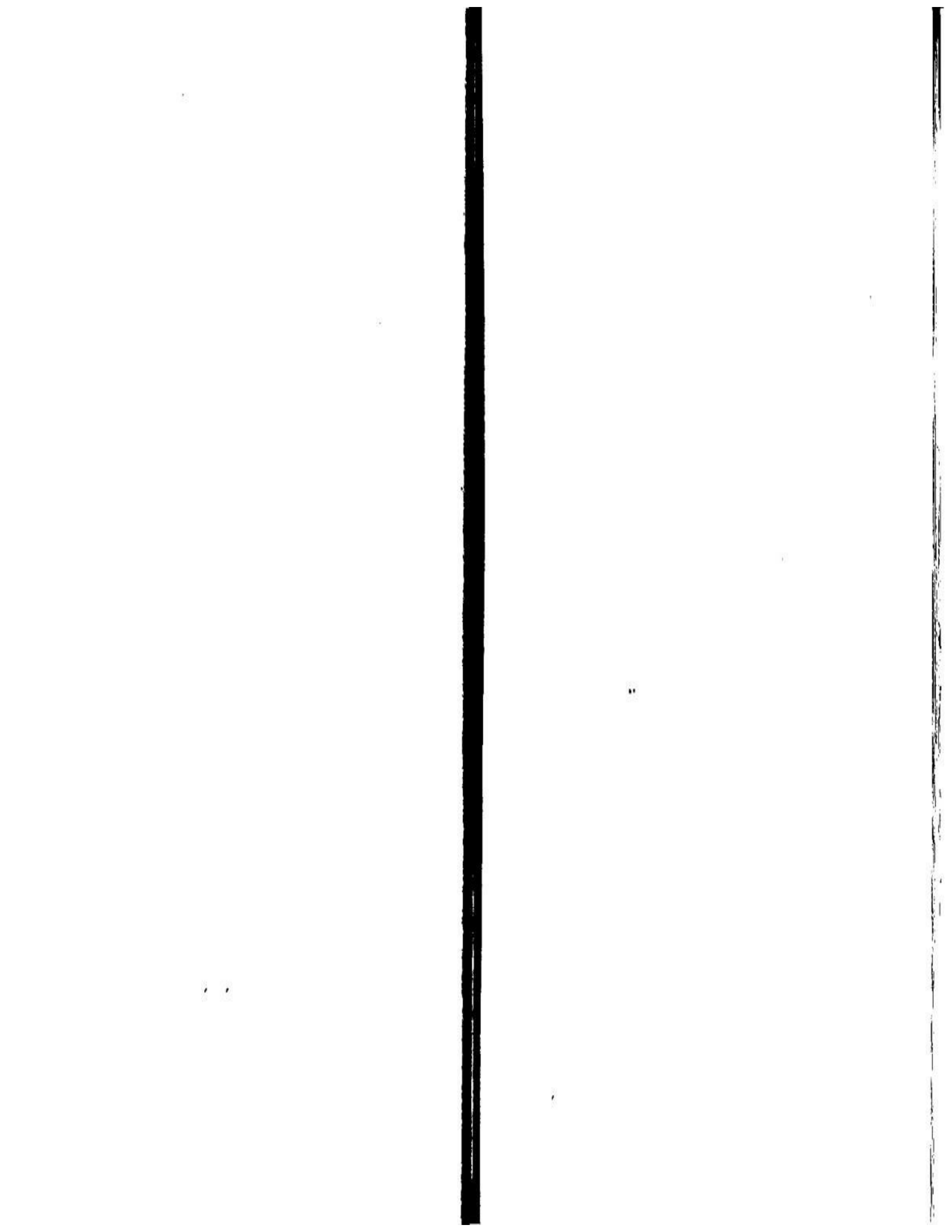
Philip.'

'Then what are we waiting for?' Morris tried to pull her

'Well, I wouldn't say it was entirely my doing,' said to her feet, but she shook her head and clung to the chair.

928

329



' No, I don't feel like it now.'

* No, Morris!' she protested, struggling feebly. 'The child-

' Why not ? What did you ask me to stay over for anyway ?'

ren will be home soon.'

Hilary blew her nose on a Kleenex.' I changed my mind.'

•There's plenty of time,' he replied, delighted to find

' Change it again. Seize the moment. We have the house himself capable of making love again. The telephone began to ourselves. Come on, Hilary, we both need some loving.'

to ring downstairs in the hall.

He was standing behind her now, gently kneading the

'Telephone,' Hilary moaned.

muscles of her neck and shoulders, as he had offered to do

'Let it ring.'

the night before. This time she did not resist, but leaned But Hilary wrenched herself free. 'If something had back against him and closed her eyes. He unfastened the happened to the children, I'd never forgive myself;' she buttons of her blouse and slid his hands down over her said.

breasts.

'Be quick.'

'All right,' said Hilary.' Let's go upstairs.'

Hilary soon returned, her eyes wide with surprise.

* It's for you,' she said.' It's the Vice-Chancellor.'

'Morris,' said Hilary, shaking him by the shoulder.

Morris took the call standing in the hall in his underpants.

'Wake up.'

'Ah, Zapp. Terribly sorry to bother you,' the VC mur-Morris opened his eyes. Hilary, rosy-complexioned and mured. ' How are you feeling after your adventures ?'

demure in a pink dressing-gown, was sitting on the edge of

'I'm feeling terrific right now. What happened to the bed. Two cups steamed on the bedside table. He de-Masters?'

tached a wiry pubic hair from his lower lip. 'What time is

' Professor Masters, I'm glad to say, is back in the care of it?'he said.

his doctors.'

'Gone three. I've made a cup of tea.'

' I'm glad to hear that.'

Morris sat up and sipped the scalding tea. He met Hilary's

'Remarkably quick thinking on your part, old man, to eyes over the rim of the cup and she blushed. 'Hey,' he said trap him in the aft. Very neat. Allow me to congratulate softly.' That was terrific. I feel great. How about you ?'

you.'

' It was lovely.'

'Thanks.'

'You're lovely.'

'Reverting to our conversation of this morning: I've just Hilary smiled. 'Don't overdo it, Morris.'

come from the Promotions and Appointments Committee.

'I'm serious. You are one lovely piece of ass, you know Swallow's Senior Lectureship went through without a that?'

hitch, you'll be glad to know.'

'I'm fat and forty.'

' U h u h /

' Nothing wrong with that. So am I.'

'And you may remember that I was on the point of asking

' I'm sorry I hit you about the head when you started, you you something *else* when we were interrupted by Doctor know, that kissing stuff. Not very sophisticated, you see.'

Smithers.'

I like that. Now Desiree -'

'Yeah?'

Hilary lost a little of her radiance. ' Could we not talk

' You haven't guessed what it is ?'

about your wife, please ? Or Philip. Not just now.'

'No.'

' O K , ' said Morris. 'Let's neck instead.' He pulled her

' Quite simply, I've been wondering whether you've given down on to the bed.

any thought to applying for the Chair of English.'

230

231

* You mean the Chair here?'

in special cases. I'm sure this would be regarded as a very

'Precisely.'

special case.'

'Well, no. It never crossed my mind. You wouldn't want Morris tracked Hilary down in the bathroom. She was an American as Head of the Department. The staff wouldn't lying in the huge, claw-footed Victorian tub and, as he stand for it -'

burst in, covered her breasts and pubis with washcloth and

'On the contrary, my dear fellow, all the members of the loofah.

English Department who have been sounded out on the

' Come, come!' he said.' This is no time for prudery. Move subject suggested your name. I don't say there may not be up and I'll get in behind you.'

something of the better-the-devil-you-know attitude behind

' Don't be absurd, Morris. What did the VC want ?'

it, but obviously you've impressed them as someone capable

'I'll scrub your back.' He slipped off his underpants and of running the Department efficiently. I need hardly say climbed into the tub. The water rose dangerously high and that, after your part in resolving the crisis over the sit-in, began to run out of the overflow outlet.

you would be highly acceptable to the University com-

' Morris! You're mad. I'm getting out.'

munity at large, staff and students alike. And personally I But she didn't get out. She leaned forward and wriggled should be delighted. Not to put too fine a point on it, old her shoulders ecstatically as he scrubbed.

friend, if you want the job, it's yours.'

'Did Philip ever borrow books from Gordon Masters?'

' Thank you very much,' said Morris.' I'm very honoured.

he asked.

But I'd never sleep easy. Supposing Masters escaped again?

•All the time. Why?'

He might well think his suspicions of me had been justified.'

'It doesn't matter.'

'I shouldn't let that worry you, old man,' Stroud murmured. He pulled her back between his knees and began to soap her soothingly. 'I think you must have imagined that her big melon-shaped breasts.

Masters was shooting at you today. There was no evidence

'Oh, Lord,' she moaned. 'How are we ever going to get that he'd been armed, or that he was intending any violence out of this before the children come home?'

to you personally.'

'Relax. There's plenty of time.'

'What was he chasing me all over the Hexagon for, then? *

'What did the VC want?'

Morris demanded. 'To kiss me on both cheeks?'

'He offered me the Chair of English.'

'He wanted to talk to you.'

Trying to turn round to look at him, Hilary skidded on

'Talk to me?'

the bottom of the bar and nearly went under the water.

'It appears that a long time ago he reviewed one of your

'What - Gordon Masters' Chair?'

books very unfavourably in *The Times Literary Supplement*, and

'That's right.'

he thought you might have found out about it and be bearing

'And what did you say?'

a grudge. Does that make any kind of sense?'

' I said I'd think about it.'

'I guess it does, yes. Look, Vice-Chancellor, I'll think Hilary rinsed herself and climbed out of the tub.
'What an about the Chair.'

extraordinary thing. Could you face settling in England ?'

' Yes, do, my dear fellow. Take your time.'

'Right now, the idea has great attractions,' he said mean-

' What would the salary be ?'

ingfully.

'Well, that is open to negotiation. The University has

' Don't be silly, Morris.' She covered herself modestly with funds at its disposal for discretionary supplementary awards a bath towel.' You know very well this is just an episode.'

«33

'What makes you say that?'

ver, and pulled the plug out by its chain with his big toe.

She shot him a shrewd glance. 'How many women have The waters gradually receded, making islands, archipelagos (here been in your life?'

and then continents of his knees, belly, cock, chest and He stirred uncomfortably in the tepid water, and ran shoulders. As regards his domestic life, he had nothing to some more into the tub. 'That's an unfair question. At a lose by staying in England. If D&rsir&fe insisted on leaving certain age a man can find satisfaction in one woman alone.

him and taking the twins with her, Rummidge, after all, was He needs stability.'

no further from New York than Euphoria. Possibly she

'Besides, Philip will be coming back soon.'

might even be coaxed into giving their marriage another

'I thought you said he wasn't?'

chance in Europe. Not that Rummidge was exactly what

'Oh, that won't last. He'll be back, with his tail between D&ire'e had in mind when she thought of Europe, but still, *his* legs. Now *there's* someone who really does need stability.'

you could fly to Paris in fifty minutes from Rummidge air-

'Maybe we could fix him up with D&6sir&6e,' Morris joked.

port if you wanted to . . .

'Poor Ddsire'e. Hasn't she suffered enough?' The tele-The last water gurgled away, tugging at the hairs on his phone began to ring. 'Please hurry up and get dressed, legs and buttocks, and he lay on the bottom of the tub, damp Morris.' She pulled on her dressing-gown and went out.

and naked, like a stranded castaway. Gulliver. Crusoe. A Morris lay half-floating in the deep tub, fondling his new life?

genitals and pondering Hilary's question. *Could* he face Hilary came in.

settling in England? Six months ago, the question would

'O K , O R , ' he said. 'I'm getting out.' Then he noticed have been absurd, the answer instantaneous. But now he she was looking at him strangely.' 'What's the matter?'

wasn't so sure . . . It would be a solution, of sorts, to the

"That phone call . . ."

problem of what to do with his career. Rummidge wasn't

' Yeah, who was it ? The VC had second thoughts ?'

the greatest university in the world, agreed, but the set-up

•It was Desire^.'

was wide open to a man with energy and ideas. Few Ameri-

'DSSirie! Why didn't you fetch me ?' He leaped out of the car as professors wielded the absolute power of a Head of bath and grabbed a towel.

Department at Rummidge. Once in the driver's seat, you

' She didn't want to speak to you,' said Hilary.' She wanted could do whatever you liked. With his expertise, energy and to speak to me.'

international contacts, he could really put Rummidge on

" You ? What did she say, then ?'

the map, and that would be kind of fun . . . Morris began to

'The woman Philip has been having an affair with . . .'

project a Napoleonic future for himself at Rummidge:

'Yeah?'

sweeping away the English Department's ramshackle Gothic

'Isher.De'sire'e.'

syllabus and substituting an immaculately logical course-

•You're kidding.'

system that took some account of developments in the sub-

'No.'

ject since 1900; setting up a postgraduate Centre for Jane

'I don't believe it.'

Austen Studies; making the use of typewriters by students

•Why not?'

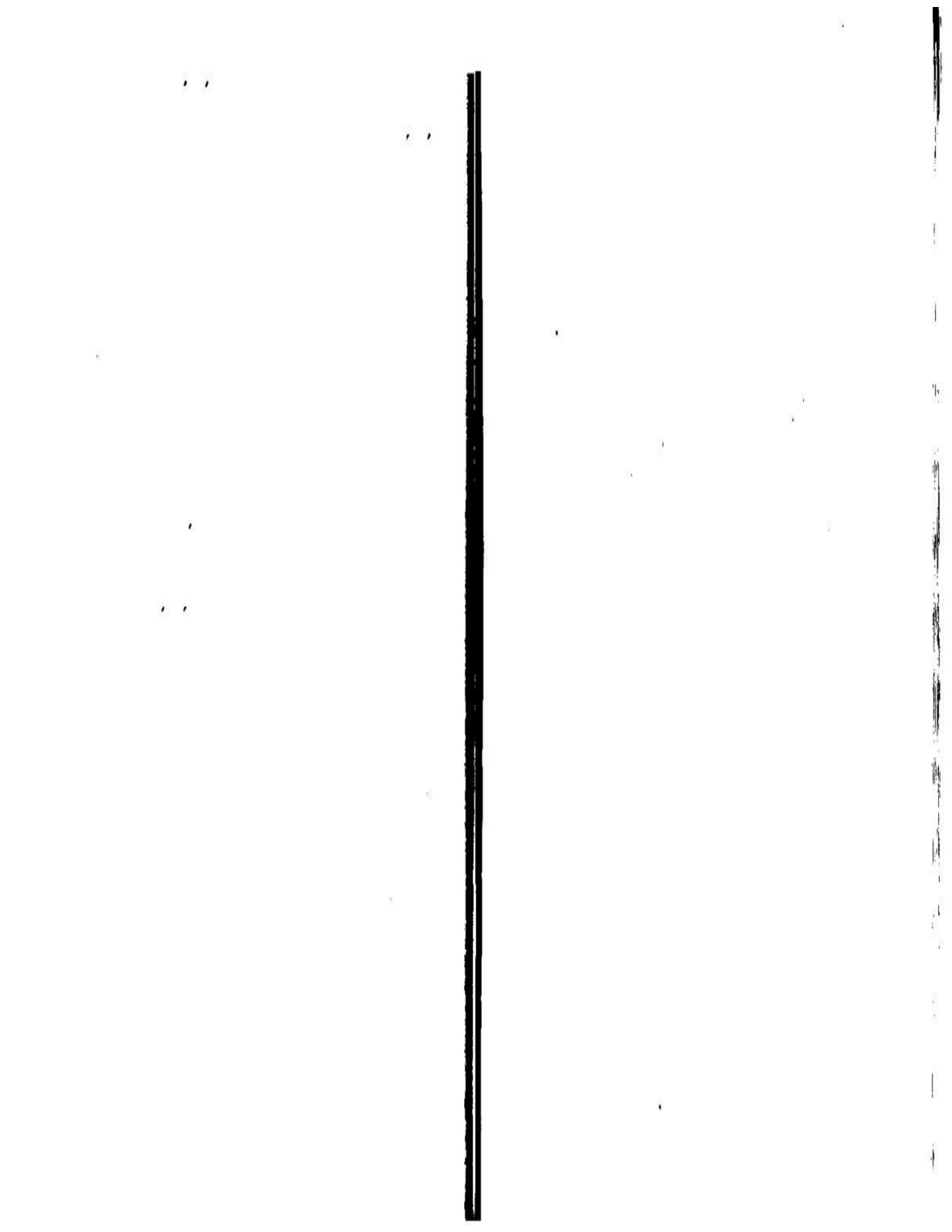
obligatory; hiring bright American academic refugees from

'Why not? I know De'sire'e. She hates men. Especially student revolutions at home; staging conferences, starting a weak-kneed men like your husband.'

new j o u r n a l . . .

' How do you know he's weak-kneed ?' Hilary demanded, He heard a tinkle as Hilary replaced the telephone recd-with some irritation.

235



I

'I just know. Desiree is a ball-breaker. She eats men like 6. Ending your husband for breakfast.'

'Philip can be very gentle, and tender. Perhaps Desiree likes that for a change,' Hilary said stiffly.

"The bitch!" Morris exclaimed, slapping the side of the tub with his towel. 'The double-crossing bitch.'

'I thought she was being remarkably straightforward, myself. She said she heard my conversation with Philip this

Exterior: BO AC VC10 flying from left to right across screen -

morning — I don't know quite how, because when I phoned

afternoon, clear sly. Sound: jet engines.

your house she gave me a different number... But anyway,

Cut to:

she knew all about it, and she thought it only fair to put me

Interior : VC 10- afternoon.

in the picture, since Philip hasn't had the courage to tell me

Angle on

what's been going on. Naturally I felt I had to be equally **MORRIS and HILARY** *seated halfway down cabin.*

Sound: muted noise of jet engines.

honest.'

HILARY is turning pages of *Harper's*, nervously and

'You mean you told her a b o u t . . . this afternoon ?'

inattentively, MORRIS yawns, looks out of window.

'Of course. I particularly wanted Philip to know.'

^pom through window. Shot: eastern seaboard of America.

'What did Desiree say ?' he asked almost fearfully.

Long Island, Manhattan.

' She said,' Hilary replied,' that perhaps we ought to meet

Cut to:

somewhere to talk the situation over.'

Exterior: TWA Boeing 707 flying from right to left across

•You and Desiree?'

screen - afternoon, clear sky. Sound: noise of jet engines.

'All of us. Philip too. A sort of summit conference, she

Cut to:

said.'

Interior: TWA Boeing 707 - afternoon. Sound: cool instru-

mental version of These Foolish Things'.

Close-up: PHILIP , asleep, wearing headphones, his mouth slightly open. *Draw back* to reveal D
£ S I R £ B

sitting next to him, reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. D E S I R E looks out of the window, then at her wristwatch, then at P H I L I P . She twists the knob above his head which controls the in-flight entertainment. *Sound changes abruptly to narration of 'The Three*

Bears'.

RECORDED VOICE : And the Daddy Bear said, 'Who's been sleeping in MY bed ?' and the Mummy Bear said, ' Who's b e e n - '

P H I L I P wakes with a guilty start, tears off his earphones.

Sound: muted noise of jet engines.

D E S I R E : *(smiles)* Wake up, we're nearly there.

B R I T I S H C A P T A I N : *(coolly into microphone)* Hello Kennedy PHILIP : New York ?
Already?

Flight Control. This is BO AC Whisky Sugar Eight. I D E S I R E : Of course, you never know how long you're have to report an air miss.

going to be stacked at this time of the year.

Cut to:

Cut to:

Interior: Flight deck, Boeing yoy — afternoon.

Interior: VCio-afternoon.

A M E R I C A N C A P T A I N : *(enraged, into microphone)* What the MORRIS : *(To HILARY)*
I hope to hell we aren't stacked for fuck do you think you guys are doing down there ?

hours over Kennedy.

Cut to:

Cut to:

Interior: VC 10 passengers' cabin - afternoon. Sound:

Exterior: VC io - afternoon. We see the plant head-on. It

babble of conversation - 'Didyou see that?' 'Must have missed

begins to lose height. Sound: jet engines changing note.

us by inches', ' Sure was a near thing' etc.

Cut to:

MORRIS : *(mopping his brow)* I always said, if God had meant

Exterior: Boeing yoy — afternoon. We see the plane head-on.

us to fly he'd have given me guts.

It begins to bank to the right. Sound: jet engines changing note.

HILARY : I feel sick.

Cut to:

Cut to:

Interior: Flight deck, VC io - afternoon. BRITISH GAP-

Interior: Boeing yoy passengers' cabin - afternoon. Sound?

TAIN, scanning the sky, looks to his right. *Close-up:*

babble of conversation.

BRITISH CAPTAIN registers alarm.

D £ S I R £ E : (*shakily, to P H I L I P*) What was that?

Cut to:

P H I L I P : I think we nearly collided with another plane.

Interior: Flight deck, Boeing yoy - afternoon. Close-up:

D £ S I R £ E : Jesus Christ!

AMERICAN CAPTAIN registers horror.

Fade out.

Cut to:

Fade in on interior: hotel room in mid-town Manhattan, blue

Interior: Flight deck, VC 10 - afternoon. Looking over the

decor - late afternoon. Sound: TV commentary on baseball

BRITISH CAPTAIN'S shoulder we see the Boeing 707, *game, turned low*. There are two suitcases open, but terrifyingly near, cross the path of the VG 10, banking not unpacked. HILARY is lying, fully dressed but in an effort to avoid collision. The BRITISH CAPTAIN

without her shoes, on one of the twin beds, her manipulates the controls to bank in the opposite eyes closed, MORRIS, in shirt sleeves, is crouched in direction.

front of the TV, watching a ball game, drinking

Cut to:

Scotch on the rocks which he has fixed from a tray

Interior: Boeing joy, passengers cabin - afternoon. Alarm* with bottle, ice, glasses etc. on the dressing table.

and confusion among passengers as the plane tilts There is a knock on the door. *Shot: HILARY'S eyes flick violently. Sound: screams, cries etc.*

open.

Cut to:

MORRIS : Yeah? Come in.

Interior: VC 10 passengers' cabin - afternoon. Alarm and D £ S I R £ E : (entering, followed by P H I L I P) Morris?

confusion among passengers as the plane tilts violently.

HILARY sits up quickly, swings her feet to the floor.

Sound: screams, cries etc.

MORRIS : D6sire"e! *(sets down his drink, comes to door with open*

Cut to:

arms) Honey!

Interior : Flight deck, VC 10-afternoon.

D £ S I R £ E catches MORRIS'S wrists deftly and brings him **238**

to a dead stop. She kisses him demurely on the cheek, MORRIS : But we escaped. Perhaps God isn't angry with us then releases him.

after all.

DESIREE : Hallo, Morris.

PHILIP : Who says he is?

MORRIS: (*rubbing his wrists*) Hey, you've gotten awfully strong.

MORRIS : Well, Hilary...

DESIREE : I've been taking karate lessons.

PHILIP : (*TO HILARY*) Do you?

MORRIS : Ve-ry good! You should go into the Park tonight HILARY : (*defensive*) Of course not. It's Morris who's afraid and practise on the rapists. (*He extends hand to PHILIP*) of God, only he won't admit it. I just want to get things You must be Philip.

sorted out.

Shot: PHILIP staring, speechless, across the room at DESIREE : Sure. That's what we're here for.

HILARY. Zoom in on HILARY, sitting bolt upright on PHILIP : (7b HILARY) How are the children?

the bed, staring across at PHILIP.

HILARY: They're all right. Mary is looking after them.

MORRIS: Well, if you're *not* Philip, things are even more You've put on weight, Philip.

complicated than I thought they were. (*He takes*

PHILIP : Yes, a little.

PHILIP'S *hand and shakes it*)

HILARY : It suits you.

PHILIP : Sorry! How do you do. (*PHILIP looks back at*

MORRIS : (*To DESIREE*) I like the pants suit. How are the HILARY)

twins?

HILARY : (*faintly*) Hello, Philip.

DESIREE : They're fine. How about a drink for the rest of us ?

PHILIP : Hello, Hilary.

MORRIS: Sure, (*hastens to pour drinks*) Hilary ? Philip ? Scotch ?

DESIREE : (*walks across to HILARY*) Hilary - I'm Desiree.

HILARY : No thanks, Morris.

(*HILARY rises*) Don't get up.

MORRIS: About rooms. Shall Desiree and I take this one ?

HILARY : (*apologetically, putting on her shoes*) I was just lying DESIREE : Who says I'm

sharing with you?

down...

MORRIS: *(shrugs)* OK, honey. You and Philip have the HILARY and DESIREE shake hands.
other room. We'll stay here.

DESIREE : How was your flight?

HILARY : Either way, isn't it rather prejudging the issue ?

MORRIS : Great! We nearly collided with another plane.

MORRIS: *(spreads hands)* O K. What do you suggest ?

DESIREE : *(wheels round)* So did we!

Cut to:

MORRIS : *(gapes)* You nearly collided... ?

Interior: blue hotel room - night.

PHILIP : Yes, just coming into New York. One wonders how PHILIP and MORRIS are in the twin beds, PHILIP, often it happens.

wearing pyjamas, is apparently asleep, MORRIS, bare-MORRIS : *(soberly)* I think it can only have happened once chested, is awake, one hand behind his head, the other this afternoon.

under his sheet.

PHILIP : You mean . . . ?

MORRIS : We shouldn't have let them get away with it.

MORRIS : *(nods)* We were nearly introduced in mid-air.

(pause)

P H I L I P : Phew!

It's ridiculous.

HILARY : *(sits down quickly on the bed)* How frightful!

(pause)

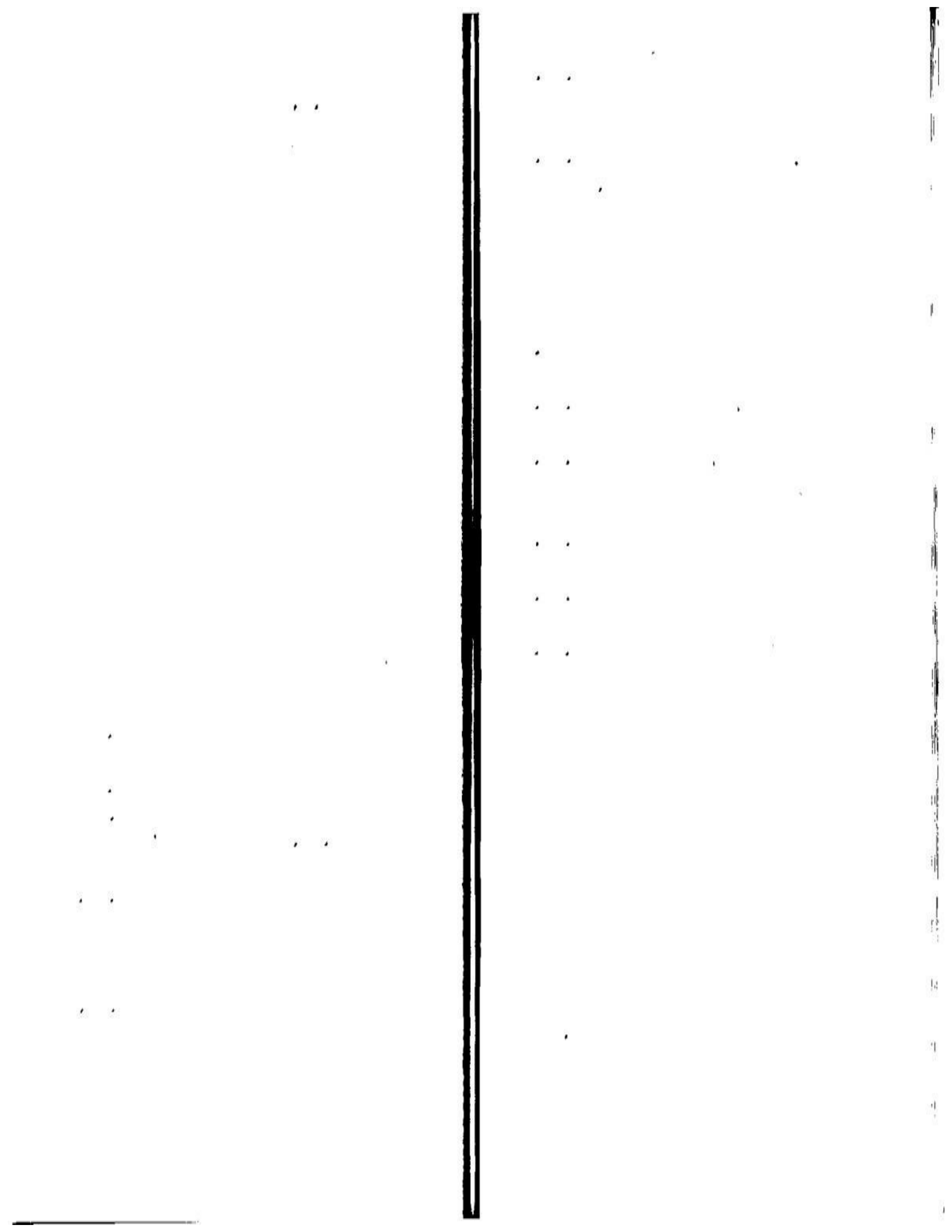
DESIRES: It would have solved a lot of problems, of course, I get so goddam horny in hotel rooms.

A spectacular finale to our little drama.

(pause)

HILARY : Oh don't!

Philip.



P H I L I P : Mmm?

DESIREE : You mean *either* of us? With either of you? You MORRIS : How d'ya make out with Desiree?

don't have any preference ?

P H I L I P : Very nice.

MORRIS : (*laughs uneasily*) We leave it to you.

MORRIS : I mean, in the sack.

DESIREE : You're despicable. (*Puts down rtcewtr*) P H I L I P : Very nice.

MORRIS : Desir6e!

MORRIS : Hard work, though, isn't it?

MORRIS rattles the receiver.

P H I L I P : I wouldn't have said so.

(gloomily) Bitch!

{pause}

Cut to:

MORRIS : Uh, ever get her to, uh, blow you?

Interior : pink hotel room - night.

P H I L I P : NO.

H I L A R Y : Who was that?

MORRIS : (*sighs*) Neither did I.

D E S I R £ E : Morris.

{pause}

H I L A R Y : What did he want ?

P H I L I P : I never thought of asking.

D E S I R E E : Either of us. He wasn't fussy.

{pause}

HILARY : What?

PHILIP sits up suddenly, wide awake.

DESIREE : Philip too. I'm afraid Morris is a bad influ-
ence.
PHILIP : Did you ever ask Hilary?

MORRIS : Sure.

HILARY : *(sits up)* I'd like to talk to Philip.

PHILIP : What happened?

DESIREE : *Now?*

MORRIS : Nothing.

HILARY : I'm wide awake.

PHILIP relaxes, sinks back on to the bed, closes eyes.

DESIREE : Please yourself, *(turns over)*

{pause}

HILARY : Don't you want to talk to Morris on your own?

MORRIS : She didn't know what I was talking about.

DESIREE : No!

Cut to:

Cut to:

Interior: hotel room, pink decor — night.

Interior: hotel corridor - night.

DESIREE and HILARY asleep in the twin beds. Telephone rings.
HILARY, in dressing-gown, emerges from door on left, phone on bedside table between them.

DESIREE leaving it ajar, crosses corridor and knocks on door to DESIREE gropes, picks up receiver.

DESIREE : *(half asleep)* Hallo.

short interval, door on right opens and MORRIS, in *Intercut close-ups* O/MORRIS <WU/DESIREE.

dressing-gown, comes out, closes door behind him, M O R R I S : Hallo, sweetheart.

crosses corridor, enters door left, closes it behind him.

DESIREE : (*annoyed*) What do you want? I was asleep.

Cut to:

MORRIS : Uh . . . Philip and I were wondering (*looks across at*

Interior: blue hotel room — night.

Philip) if we couldn't come to some more comfortable HILARY : (*nervously*) I only came in here to talk, Philip.

arrangement...

Cut to:

DESIREE : Like what?

Interior: pink hotel room - night. Sound: door clicks shut.

MORRIS : Like if one of you girls would like to change places D £ S I R E E : (*Uvelly*) You lay a finger on me, Zapp, and you'll with one of u s . . .

regret it.

BLACKOUT

MORRIS : Or you could take Desiree to Rummidge, and I'd

Cut to:

go back to Euphoria with Hilary.

Interior: blue room - early morning.

HILARY rises to her feet.

PHILIP and HILARY asleep in each other's arms in one Where are you going ?

of the beds.

HILARY : I don't wish to listen to this childish conversation.

Cut to:

PHILIP : What's wrong? You started it.

Interior: pink room - early morning.

HILARY : This is not what I meant by a serious talk. You Pan slowly round room, which is in a mess - chairs sound like a couple of scriptwriters discussing how to wind overturned, lamps knocked over, bedclothes ripped up a play.

from beds etc. There is no sign of MORRIS and DE-MORRIS : Hilary, honey! There are choices to be made. We SIREE until they are discovered on the floor between must be aware of all the possibilities.

the two twin beds, naked, tangled together in a heap HILARY : (*sitting down*) All right, then. Have you considered of pillows and bedclothes. They are fast asleep.

the possibility that D6siree and I might divorce you two

Cut to:

and *not* remarry ?

Interior: coffee-shop in hotel - morning.

DESIREE : Right on!

MORRIS, DESIREE, PHILIP and HILARY are MORRIS : (*thoughtfully*) True. Another possibility is group finishing breakfast. They are sitting in a booth, men on marriage. You know? Two couples live together in one one side of the table, women on the other.

house and pool their resources. Everything is common MORRIS: Well, what are we going to do this morning?

property.

Shall we show these two hicks the town, Dcsirce ?

PHILIP : Including, e r . . .

DESIREE : It's gonna be hot. In the nineties, the radio said.

MORRIS : Including that, naturally.

HILARY : Shouldn't we have a serious talk? I mean, that's HILARY : What about the children ?

what we've come all this way for. What are we going to MORRIS : It's great for children. They amuse each other, do ? About the future.

while the parents...

MORRIS: Let's consider the options. *Coolly, (prepares to*

DESIREE : Screw each other.

light cigar) **First:** we could return to our respective homes **HILARY :** I never heard of anything so immoral in my with our respective spouses.

life.

MORRIS lights cigar, and examines the tip. HILARY

MORRIS : Oh, come on Hilary! The four of us already hold looks at PHILIP, PHILIP looks at DESIREE, DESIRES

the world record for long-distance wife-swapping. Why looks at MORRIS,

not do it under one roof? That way you get domestic DESIREE : Next option.

stability plus sexual variety. Isn't that what all of us MORRIS : We could all get divorced and remarry each other.

want ? I don't know how you two made out last night, but If you follow me.

D6siree and I really had a -

PHILIP : Where would we live?

DESIREE : OK, OK, that's enough of that MORRIS : I could take the Chair at Rummidge, settle down PHILIP : I must say it's an intriguing idea.

there. I guess you could get a job in Euphoria . . .

DESIREB : In theory I'm sympathetic— I mean as a first step PHILIP : I'm not so sure.

towards getting rid of the nuclear family, it has possibili-844

ties. But if Morris is in favour there must be a twist in it P H I L I P : It's still morning in Euphoria. Pacific time.

somewhere.

D £ S I R £ E : That's right! (to HILARY) Have you heard HILARY : {sardonically, to MORRIS} As a matter of academic about the trouble at Plotinus? Over the People's interest: in this so-called group marriage, what happens if Garden?

the two men both fancy the same woman at the same H I L A R Y : O h that. You missed a lot of excitement af time?

Rummidge this term, you know, Philip. The sit-in and DESIREE : Or the two women want to sleep with the same everything.

man?

P H I L I P : Somehow I can't think of anything seriously

{Pause} MORRIS rubs his chin thoughtfully.

revolutionary happening at Rummidge.

P H I L I P : {grins} I know. The one who's left out watches the HILARY : I hope you're not going to turn into one of these other three.

violence snobs, who think that nothing's important unless MORRIS and D £ S I R £ E crack up laughing. HiLARYj'oins people are getting killed.

in despite herself.

DESIREE : ' Violence snobs', I like t h a t . . .

HILARY : But can't we be serious for a moment? Where is P H I L I P : Well, as a matter of fact people *could* be killed this all going to *end*?

today in Plotinus, quite easily.

Cut to:

DESIREE : You have to make allowances, Hilary. Philip got *Interior: blue hotel room — afternoon.*

very involved with the Garden and all that. He even The door opens and in come MORRIS, DESIREE, went to jail.

HILARY and P H I L I P . They carry packages and carrier HILARY : Good God! You never told me, Philip.

bags with Manhattan store names on them. They look P H I L I P : *{crouching over set as it begins to warm up}* It was only hot and sweaty, but relaxed. They flop down on chairs, for a few hours. I was going to write to you about it b u t . . .

beds.

it was connected with other things.

MORRIS : We made it.

HILARY : Oh.

DESIREE : Jesus, I'd forgotten what a New York heatwave A Western film comes up on the T V screen, P H I L I P

was like.

switches channels until he hits the transmission of the P H I L I P : Thank God for air conditioning.

Plotinus March.

MORRIS : I'll go get some ice.

P H I L I P : A h ! *{tunes TV. Sound: chanting, cheers, bands etc.}* MORRIS goes out. P H I L I P sits up suddenly.

MORRIS enters with ice and soft drinks.

P H I L I P : Desiree.

MORRIS : What's that?

D £ S I R £ E : What?

D £ S I R £ B : The big March at Plotinus.

P H I L I P : D'you realize what day this is . . . The day of the MORRIS : No kidding?

March!

VOICE O F COMMENTATOR: And it certainly looks as DESIREE : The march ? Oh, yeah, the March.

though the great March is going to pass off peacefully H I L A R Y : What's that?

after a l l . . .

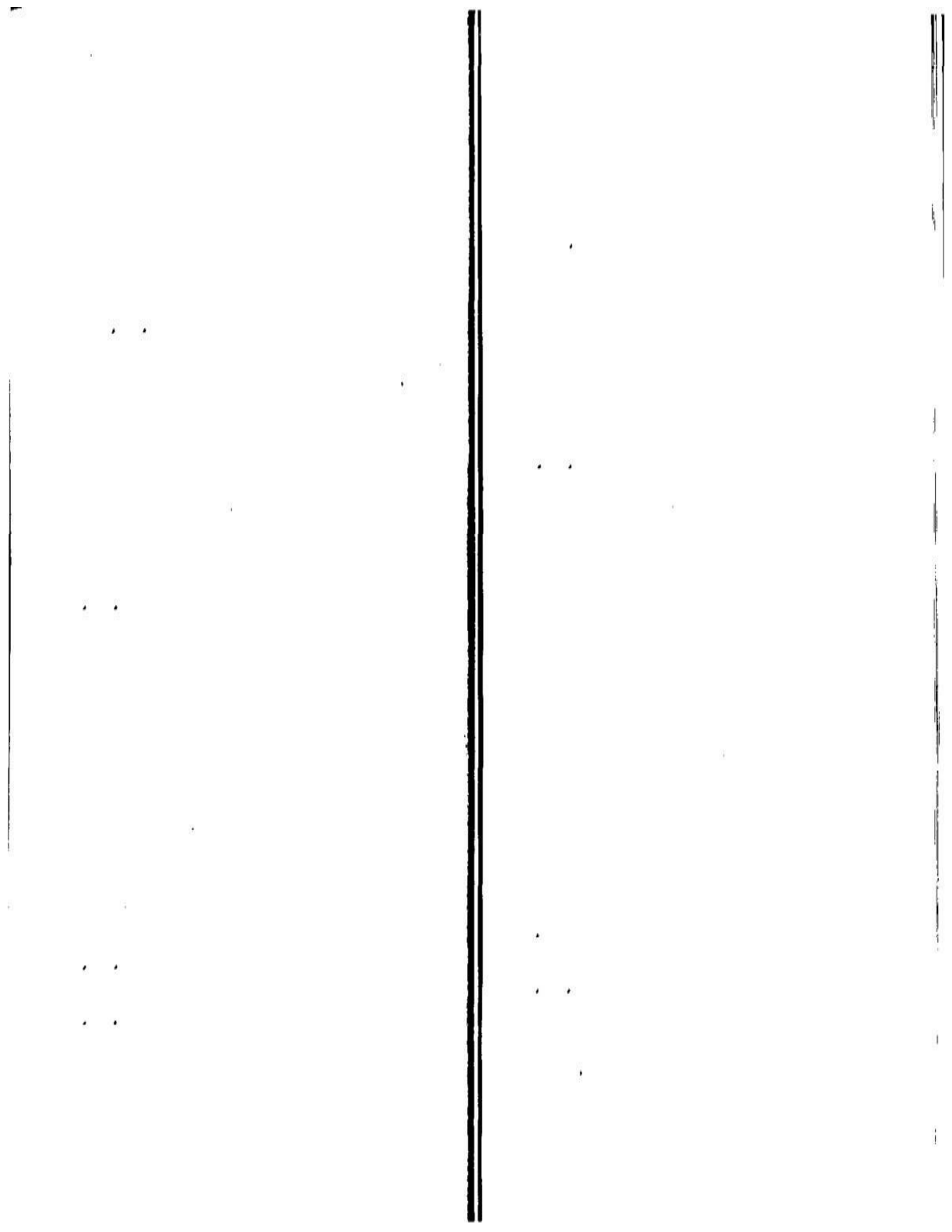
P H I L I P : *{excitedly}* The educational network is carrying it.

MORRIS watches with interest as he prepares the drinks.

P H I L I P goes over to TV , turns it on.

Close-up of TV screen. We see the column of marchers D £ S I R E E : It was this morning, wasn't it?
It's all over by passing the fenced-in Garden. It is a warm sunny now.

morning in Plotinus. The crowd is festive, good-246



humoured. The marchers carry banners, flags, flowers P H I L I P : And there's the Cowboy and the Confederate and sod. Inside the fence, National Guardsmen stand at Soldier 1 Everybody in Plotinus must be on this march.

ease. The camera zooms in on various sections of the VOICE OF COMMENTATOR : I think these pictures say it crowd. We see trucks with rock bands and topless all.

dancers performing on them, people dancing in the HILARY : *(a little wistfully)* You sound as if you wish you spray from hosepipes, marching arm-in-arm etc. We can were there yourself, Philip.

recognize various familiar faces among the marchers.

DESIREE : You bet he does.

Over these pictures, the voice of the COMMENTATOR

P H I L I P : No, not really.

and the comments of MORRIS, P H I L I P , HILARY and P H I L I P turns down the volume of the T V but leaves DESIREE.

the vision on. *Draw back* to reveal the four of them VOICE OF COMMENTATOR : A lot of people feared blood gathered round the T V , drinks in hand.

would run in the streets of Plotinus today, but so far the P H I L I P : "That is no country for old m e n"

vibrations are good . . . The marchers are throwing MORRIS : Come now, Philip, let's have no defeatism.

flowers instead of rocks . . . they're weaving flowers into P H I L I P : I'd be an imposter there.

the mesh of the hurricane fence . . . they're planting sod DESIREE : Explain yourself.

on the sidewalk outside the Garden . . . that's how they're P H I L I P : Those young people *(gestures at TV screen)* really making their p o i n t . . .

care about the Garden. It's like a love affair for them.

P H I L I P : I say, there's Charles Boon. And Melanie!

Take Charles Boon and Melanie. I could never feel like MORRIS : Melanie? Where?

that about any public issue. Sometimes I wish I could.

DESIREE : Next to that guy with his arm in plaster.

For me, if I'm honest, politics is background, news, al-HILARY : She's very pretty.

most entertainment. Something you switch on and off, VOICE OF COMMENTATOR: SO far, nobody has tried to like the TV. What I really worry about, what I can't scale the fence. The guardsmen, as you can see, are switch off at will is, oh, sex, or dying or losing my hair.

standing at ease. Some of them have been waving to the Private things. We're private people, aren't we, our marchers...

generation? We make a clear distinction between private P H I L I P : And there's Wily Smith! D'you remember, Hilary, and public life; and the important things, the things that I told you about him. In the corner of the picture in the make us happy or unhappy are private. Love is private.

baseball cap. He was in my writing class. Never wrote me Property is private. Parts are private. That's why the young a single word.

radicals call for fucking in the streets. It's not just a cheap VOICE OF COMMENTATOR : Sheriff O'Keene and his men, shock-tactic. It's a serious revolutionary proposition. You the blue meanies as the students call them, are well out of know that Beatles' song, ' Let's Do It In The R o a d ' . . . ?

sight...

D E S I R E E : Bullshit.

DESIREE : Hey, look at the topless dancers!

P H I L I P : Eh?

P H I L I P : That's Carol and Deirdre, surely?

D E S I R E E : Absolute bullshit, Philip. You've been brain-D E si R E E : I think you're right.

washed by the Plotinus Underground. You've been VOICE OF COMMENTATOR: The column has been going reading too many copies of *Euphoric Times*. Who's going past for about thirty minutes now, and I still can't see the to get fucked in the streets when the revolution comes, tell end of it.

me that?

948

349

..

.

..

.

..

.

..

..

.

P H I L I P : Who?

essentially the same whatever the medium. Words or DESIREE : Women, that's who, whether they like it or not.

images, it makes no difference at the structural level.

Listen, there are girls getting raped every night down at D E S I R E E : 'Th e structural level', 'paradigms'. How they the Garden, only *Euphoric Times* doesn't recognize the love those abstract words.' Historicism!

word rape, so you'd never know it. Any girl who goes P H I L I P : (TO MORRIS) I don't think that's entirely true. I down to help with the Garden is caught in a sexual trap.

mean, take the question of endings.

If she won't put out the men will accuse her of being DESIREE : Yeah, let's take it!

bourgeois and uptight and if she complains to the cops P H I L I P : You remember that passage in *Northanger Abbey* they'll tell her she deserves everything she gets by simply where Jane Austen says she's afraid that her readers will be there. And if the girls aren't being screwed against have guessed that a happy ending is coming up at any their will, they're slaving over the stewpot or washing moment.

dishes or looking after kids, while the men sit around M O R R I S : (*nods*) Quote, 'Seeing in the tell-tale compression rapping about politics. Call that a revolution? Don't of the pages before them that we are all hastening to-make me laugh.

gether to perfect felicity.' Unquote.

H I L A R Y : Hear, hear!

P H I L I P : That's it. Well, that's something the novelist can't P H I L I P : Well, you may be right, Desiree. All I'm saying is help giving away, isn't it, that his book is shortly coming that there *is* a generation gap, and I think it revolves to an end ? It may not be a happy ending, nowadays, but around this public/private thing. Our generation - we he can't disguise the tell-tale compression of the pages.

subscribe to the old liberal doctrine of the inviolate self.

HILARY and DESIREE begin to listen to what P H I L I P

It's the great tradition of realistic fiction, it's what novels is saying, and he becomes the focal point of attention.

are all about. The private life in the foreground, history a I mean, mentally you brace yourself for the ending of a distant rumble of gunfire, somewhere offstage. In Jane novel. As you're reading, you're aware of the fact that Austen not even a rumble. Well, the novel is dying, and us there's only a page or

two left in the book, and you get with it. No wonder I could never get anything out of my ready to close it. But with a film there's no way of telling, novel-writing class at Euphoric State. It's an unnatural especially nowadays, when films are much more loosely medium for their experience. Those kids {*gestures at* structured, much more ambivalent, than they used to be.

screen) are living a film, not a novel.

There's no way of telling which frame is going to be the M O R R I S : Oh, come on, Philip! You've been listening to last. The film is going along, just as life goes along, people Karl Kroop.

are behaving, doing things, drinking, talking, and we're P H I L I P : Well, he makes a lot of sense.

watching them, and at any point the director chooses, without warning, without anything being resolved, or MORRIS : It's a very crude kind of historicism he's peddling, surely ? And bad aesthetics.

explained, or wound up, it can j u s t . . . end.

H I L A R Y : This is all very fascinating, I'm sure, but could P H I L I P shrugs. The camera stops, freezing him in mid-we discuss something a little more practical ? Like what gesture.

the four of us are going to do in the immediate future ?

DESIREE : It's no use, Hilary. Don't you recognize the sound **THE END**

of men talking?

M O R R I S : (*T O P H I L I P*) The paradigms of fiction are 250

Table of Contents

[Penguin Books](#)