

THERE'S NO CLOCK IN THE FOREST, A *COMEDY IN TWO PARTS*

PART I: SEE YOU LATER ALLOCATOR / PART II: AT THE ROUND TABLE

WRITTEN BY JULIAN SCUTTS IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH JOHN
HOLLAND LAURENTIUS

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FOREWORD by Julian Scutts

If I were a professor with the task of devising a syllabus for a course of studies in literature, I would make the writing of a drama an obligatory assignment, though not in the expectation of brilliant results, happy though I would be if these came about. My purpose would be to expose students to the experience of writing a drama, in itself a very good and rewarding mental exercise. Any failure to meet this challenge would at least enhance one's respect and admiration for those who had achieved it. I suppose I would have to stipulate a minimum length for the dramas to be written. I have reason to believe that matters become truly interesting as from the writing of the fiftieth page, from which point things take off and the play begins to write itself, so to speak. The density of association by then accumulated will tend to generate spontaneous connections within the work as a whole. All this I contend on the basis of personal experience. Let me explain.

Until quite recently it had long been my wish to write a drama about university life, but it was only a few weeks ago that I got round to finishing one. I repeat *finishing one*. I had often begun fresh attempts to write a drama, latterly in collaboration with my long-time friend and colleague John Holland, now Holland-Laurentius. In fact, we managed to submit a script of sorts to various agencies and editors, and this proposed a series of episodes combining serious discourse on matters of topical interest with sitcom-style entertainment, repartee and satire. For reasons I cannot go into at the moment, we did not persist in such efforts to enter the very competitive and guarded area of scriptwriting for television, film or the theatre. However, the urge to participate in the worldwide debate on the role of higher education in today's world lived on. In view of this compunction I have composed a drama based on notes from the days Mr. John Holland and I worked on the script mentioned above, making considerable additions and revisions, in the form of a book (or a book in the form of a drama) to be read in the privacy of a study or living room, in a park or garden without any concession or claim to writing a drama for the stage or screen. John Milton, for all his Puritan aversion towards the theatre, did write one play, albeit a verse or closet drama, *Samson Agonistes*. He justified this excursion into (for him) inhospitable territory with the argument that true drama lies in the contention between ideas, principles, and arguments without needing the supports and props of a theatrical stage in any form. I would not go quite so far as Milton did when making this assertion. Perhaps the long period of time between Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw, during which notable dramas were written somewhat sporadically, is attributable in large part to Puritan inhibitions regarding the

theatre, inhibitions affecting even those who had no attachment to Puritan theology. I stray no further from my chief purpose in writing this foreword

I call my drama a comedy in two parts, which begs a further question: what is comedy? A commonplace statement asserts that only a wafer-thin line separates comedy and tragedy. A commonplace or no, this is true. Consider the case of Moliere's *L'Avare*. In Act IV, vi the miser descends into despair in the belief that his treasures have been stolen. Lying prostrate on the ground, he moans "C'en est fait, je n'en puis plus; je me meurs," ("It is over. I cannot go on, I am dying"). These words taken in isolation should properly belong to a tragic hero, or should they? The words that follow tell a different story: "je suis mort, je suis enterré." ("I am dead. I am buried.") The tragic has become the absurd and the comical. In much the same way the words "Thus die I (stabs himself) / Now I am dead" evoke laughter from the audience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, being spoken by Bottom in the role of Pyramus during a very amateurish performance of a play based on the tragic story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The story itself may be tragic but the wide context in which the play is presented by the Athenian artisans is set within a comedy, which overrides its tragic import.

These observations bid me put in a word in defence of my decision to include the reading of two short stories in the final act of my play. I must admit that in order to balance the second part with the first I needed to plug a gap necessitating the addition of ten or so pages. I could plead in furtherance of my defence that I was following a precedent laid down by Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In retrospect I recognized that the additional stories complemented the rest of the play, and *vice versa*, in unforeseen ways. This outcome should not have surprised me as one who in various articles had noted that Wilhelm Müller's poem "Das Wandern ist des Müllers Lust" is both celebrated as a jaunty folksong about the joys of going a-wandering in the countryside and also as an omen of death. The way one interprets the song depends on how one views the context in which it is set. Viewed as a part of *Die Schöne Müllerin*, the cycle of songs it introduces, the song intimates the wanderer's tragic death by drowning in the very stream the motions of which he praises in rapturous song.

Comedy does not avoid issues that impinge on the dark side of human life. In the play the list of such issues is somber and long, including: the intrusion of computer-guided snooping into the private domain of the individual even in the tranquil ivory towers of the university campus; an insidious attempt to undermine the much vaunted intellectual freedom of academia enjoyed by the priesthood of those running its temple devoted to "knowledge for its own sake" and excellence; the forces of Mammon in modern civilization; the insidious manipulation of the media in public life,

and so on. Optimism and pessimism are not settled philosophies issuing self-fulfilling prophecies. To be joyful is to triumph regardless of surrounding circumstances and the actions spurred by such joy militate against the forces that threaten us with the worst, be this understood as Doomsday, Armageddon or ecological collapse.

There's nothing like a bit of romance to spice up contentious socio-economic issues, and the rivalry between two upcoming members of the department of English shows that opposed attitudes to literature may coincide with rival claims to the heart of a young woman.

The setting of this play is close to Glastonbury, a place to which William Blake alluded in the famous poem and hymn entitled "Jerusalem." The Book of Revelation, for all its bloodcurdling descriptions of the Beast, the Harlot of Babylon and devastating worldwide plagues, ends with the vision of the New Heavenly Jerusalem. Jerusalem happens to be the city where I live and where I am writing this Foreword. For all its present troubles it is still the Holy City for the religions that all together account for one half of humanity and nurtures a promise that is meant for all regardless of creed.

MAIN CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

MERLIN. A speaker who is not involved in the action of the play but serves rather as an introducer, commentator and guide with a bird's eye view of the scenes below.

PROFESSOR JONATHAN MERLYN. The chief coordinator of an international cultural and educational project which has the aim of establishing a model international university campus in the west of England. The similarity between his name and that of Merlin cited above is coincidental, officially at least, though subject to interpretation. In a theatre of film production a director is free to decide whether or not the two roles should be played by the same actor.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON. The head of the department of sociology at Camford University. He is greatly troubled by the state of university education on moral as well as on pragmatic grounds.

LEON AND JOE (JOSEPHINE). New students who join the program of the sociology department. Leon takes a keen interest in gnostic theology and the history of the Early Church.

JACK AND MABEL: A genial married couple who run "The Holy Grail," a pub much frequented by students, even faculty members and young agricultural workers in the vicinity.

DR. PETER PANHURST. A lecturer in the department of English especially interested in the poetry of the Romantic period. He might be described as a leftie but he is certainly no conformist, which arouses the suspicions of colleagues with traditional and conservative leanings. He is an expert on the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, whose chief attributes he seems to have incorporated into his own personality.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY. The rival and antagonist of Dr. Peter Panhurst in the private and public domains. Their main object of contention is winning the heart of the same young lady but also their standpoints on literature and on the principles of literary criticism are diametrically opposed.

MISS MARY ELLIS BECKFORD. Daughter of the head of the English department and a student of English herself. It is she for

whose affections Dr. Peter Panhurst and Dr. Dominic Crawley so forcefully contend.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD. The head of the English department, whose conservation outlook makes him suspicious of some of Dr. Peter Panhurst's more outspoken and unorthodox views.

BROTHER TODD. An enigmatic figure who wanders around the Glastonbury area in a friar's habit and strikes most people as creepy though not dangerous.

ANGELA. A folksy local poetess very much involved in the cultural scene in Camford, though not a student herself.

PART I: SEE YOU LATER ALLOCATOR

ACT I

SCENE 1: INDETERMINATE AND TIMELESS BACKGROUND

MERLIN

Let me transport you, your minds, a into the future, perhaps a few more years. We are still in a period affected by the great upheavals of the year 2008 when the markets, like the banks, almost collapsed, when the world seemed to be on the brink of an abyss. Through astute policies the economic world was saved from falling into this abyss but that crisis left a deep impression, - on politicians, on everybody, and I think it made many people reflect on the value of anything - on money in particular, on assets, and how the world could avoid a similar crisis in the future. Many people concluded that the way ahead lay investment in education, in educating people not only to improve their mental faculties and afford them vocational opportunities but to engender a new global consciousness. It became apparent to the international community that there should be a massive joint effort in education at every level. So now we are going over to a scene where a high minister in London's Whitehall is conferring with educationalists from around the world with a view to establishing a new international university that is adequate to meet the needs of the new age.

SCENE 2: IN THE OFFICE OF DR. JONATHAN MERLYN IN A MINISTRY BUILDING IN WHITEHALL LONDON. AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD ARE PRESENT.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

In the name of Her Majesty's Government and the special commission on world education may I welcome you all.. My name is Jonathan Merlyn, ending L – Y – N and no relation to the magician, (*laughter*) chief coordinator of this international cultural and educational project. Perhaps you would kindly introduce yourselves in alphabetical order, which means we begin with Dr. Rudolph Albrecht from Cologne Germany representing the European Commission's educational authority, I believe.

DR. RUDOLPH ALBRECHT

Indeed, that is zo. Ladies and gentlemen I am here to represent the European commission on the very urgent matters before us.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

Professor Chow Lee Wong from Hong Kong representing the People's Republic of China.

PROFESSOR CHOW LEE WONG

I am velly pleased to be here to plesent my government's position on the questions before us.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Husseini from Egypt but supported by Dubai Education Ministry.

SHEIKH ABDUL AZIZ HUSSEINI

I look forward to our discussion of a most important matter Ahalan wa sa ahalan..

PROFESSOR MERLYN

Madame Indira Sarma

MADAME INDIRA SARMA

I am greatly delighted to meet you all while feeling daunted in no small degree by the veritable enormity of the issues facing us.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

Monsignor Alfonso Vicenti from the Vatican.

MONSIGNOR ALFONSO VICENTI

I wish a to confirma that the Holy Father lends hisa full support to thisa internationale effort towards stability and peace.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

And finally, Mr. Samuel Wolffson from Washington DC .represents the United States government.

MR> SAMUEL WOLFFSON

Pleased to meet you all. My friends just call me Sam but for now I'll be British and formal as best I can. We sure got a bunch of issues to deal with.

PROFESSOR MERLYN

Thank you . Taken together we represent a very large portion of humanity with its diversity of cultures, histories, religions and political orientations and yet we are here to make common cause by demonstrating solidarity among the world's nations and peoples in the face of what is emerging as the worst global economic crisis since the Great Depression or so we are to believe. This time the world's government will not repeat the mistakes of the thirties when nations regarded only their own narrow economic interests at the expense of the world as a whole. In line with resolutions passed by the United Nations, the main political and economic blocs have committed themselves to joint efforts to establish global prosperity by a massive investment in education, meaning the building, expansion and development of schools, polytechnics and universities. We here are specialists in the field of university education and will pursue the aim of expanding and revitalizing university institutions by collaborating in a number of pilot schemes. I know that in certain cases your recommendations will loosen the purse strings of ministries and sovereign funding in furtherance of our common aims. First we will zero in on a number of promising university campuses and examine their present standards and facilities before considering ways of enhancing their excellence, effectiveness and productivity with special regard to their contribution to global communications and financial as well as general well-being. In England the government has chosen the University of Camford in the west of England near the ancient site of Glastonbury. We will be inspecting Camford next month to assess its performance and potential.

PROFESSOR CHOU LEE WONG

What methods will we use? Shall we enter the lecture halls and tutorial rooms in person?

PROFESSOR MERLYN

In view of the shortage of time and other matters we shall survey teaching sessions with the aid of video cameras.

DR. RUDOLPH ALBRECHT

Isn't that somewhat inhibiting or impersonal, even suggestive of prisons and Orwellian snooping.

PROFESSOR CHOU LEE WONG

Lenin say: Confidence good, control better.. *(After awkward silence)*
Only joking. *(Polite laughter betraying an element of nervousness)*

PROFESSOR MERLYN

I can assure you that both staff and students will be well aware of the use to be made of video cameras and students will be free not to attend classes on the days in question if they so wish. I shall be visiting the campus in a few days to see how preparations are progressing. I see it's time for a break. May I invite you to some refreshments in the adjoining hall?

SCENE 3: A RETURN TO MERLIN IN THE CLOUDS, AS IT WERE

MERLIN

Hello, It's me again. We have just heard that the University of Camford was chosen to fulfil its role in the project of the global commission on education. Now Camford is very close to Glastonbury, which prompts me to quote a portion of the Preface to William Blake's long poem Milton:

"The stolen and perverted writings of Homer and Ovid, of Plato and Cicero, which all men ought to contemn, are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible; but when the New Age is at leisure to pronounce, all will be set right, and those grand works of the more ancient, and consciously and professedly Inspired men will hold their proper rank, and the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakespeare and Milton were both curb'd by the general malady and infection from the silly Greek and Latin slaves of the sword.

Rouse up, O Young Men of the New Age! Set your foreheads against the ignorant hirelings! For we have hirelings in the Camp, the Court, and the University, who would, if they could, for ever depress mental, and prolong corporeal war. Painters! on you I call. Sculptors! Architects! suffer not the fashionable fools to depress

your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works, or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works: believe Christ and His Apostles that there is a class of men whose whole delight is in destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just and true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever, in Jesus our Lord.

*AND did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?*

*And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?*

*Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!*

*I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

In this poem William Blake refers to the legend according to which Jesus as a boy or lad visited southern Britain and the site of Glastonbury in the company of Joseph of Arimathea. Of course, even if we do not give credence to this story, the very idea has lent Glastonbury a certain aura or mystique which was later enhanced by the legend of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere who are said to be buried within the precincts of Glastonbury Abbey, now a magnificent ruin left over from the time of the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries. It is interesting to note that William Blake referred to a New Age, a term which remains current to this day as shown by those who were inspired by the ideal of a new age to found the university of Camford in a project to integrate ancient wisdom and modern science. I would like you to imagine that you are now standing in the foyer of the university.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CAMPUS AND SURROUNDINGS

You see a variety of pictures and diagrams left over from the last semester when professors were engaged in what one might term an interdisciplinary project, integrating modern insights in matters concerning history, sociology, with architecture and various forms of symbolism. One of the leading lights in this project was a certain gentleman professor Andrew Johnson, coincidentally a name familiar to students of American history. The pictures and other exhibits portray the great tectonic structures of antiquity, Greek temples, Roman viaducts and amphitheatres to be treated not just as buildings but as symbols of dynamic forces working within nature. Gothic cathedrals likewise evince an undeniable affinity with the spirit of a great forest with its tall trees whose aspect of verticality seems to express an aspiration to unite heaven and earth. Not all pictures and exhibits point to ancient times and lofty ideals. Some picture show scenes in contemporary life, and not all of them carry a positive message. We see tokens of ravaged nature, environmental depletion and even views of the less salubrious locations near Glastonbury where acts of vandalism and antisocial behavior were recently perpetrated, it seems by disaffected and unemployed youths, and underpaid agricultural workers, described by some of the mainly bourgeois students at Camford as “yobos” or “bumpkins.” Not all icons of sanctity associated with the Bible and Arthurian romance receive reverential treatment. We see a picture of a local pub with the name “The Holy Grail.” We are a week or so away from the beginning of the new semester and the next two scenes present the interior domain of Professor Johnson’s home, and from this glimpse we gather that a professor’s life is not all violets and roses in view of the stresses of dealing with unruly children, students and even less than pliant and friendly colleagues. In another scene we witness the meeting of two prospective students at Camford.

SCENE 4: AT PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON’S HOME

Professor Johnson opens the front door looking rather tired. He enters the drawing room. His daughter, elder son and two school-friends are playing a game of monopoly.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Hi kids.

CHILDREN

Hi Dad.. / Hello Professor Johnson

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Where's Mum?

ALISON (DAUGHTER).

I think she's in the garden clipping the hedges or something..

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

O.K. Enjoy your game. I have to work on the text of an important speech for a while.

ENTER *Mrs. Johnson from the French windows.*

MRS. JOHNSON

Hello, darling. Had a good day at the university? I'll get you a nice strong cup of coffee.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Hello precious. Work? Very mixed, even before the semester starts.. The usual grind of administrative duties. I'm afraid this global downturn thing will have serious repercussions for every department at Camford, the Sociology department included although we are normally considered "progressive" as a subject.

MRS. JOHNSON

Never mind, dear. I'm sure we'll survive.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

For sure. I'll be working on a speech for a bit. You know at the inaugural debate. One's got to make an initial good impression on the freshers. Professors and lecturers compete for customers as they choose their courses.

DAVID (SON)

How much will it cost to place a hotel on Park Lane?

SANDRA (SCHOOL FRIEND)

You've already got four houses on it so you have to pay an extra thousand pounds.

DAVID

It's a lot but one of you will land there and there'll be loads to pay me. I can bleed you dry!

ALISON

Greedy guts.

Godfrey (friend)

You bloodsucking Dracula!

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Quietly to his wife: Monopoly doesn't seem to bring out the best in kids, does it?

MRS. JOHNSON

You mean it encourages acquisitiveness, to put it mildly. We adults hardly set them a good example on that score.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

How right you are. Look at the mess we're in.

MRS. JOHNSON

Here's your coffee, darling.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Thanks. It'll help to keep me awake.

Professor Johnson enters study. He sits down at his desk and looks at a print out. He is about to switch on his audio-conversion to written text facility when he says to himself:

PROFESSOR JOHNSON

Now, where was I? (*reads through part of his speech completed aloud*) :Though I work in the field of sociology considered by some – unfairly I think - to be a harebrained, irrelevant subject – I often draw inspiration and valuable insights from great works of literature. The question before us is the present state of university education as a symptom of the global economic crisis. The question is how do we value life, people and how we fit these generalities into group dynamics. At the beginning of *Faust Part I* by Goethe we find Faust in a remarkably similar situation to our own. He was at the end of his tether, like we are. In his own opinion. he had achieved little apart from pulling unmotivated

student along by their noses. He had plumbed all the conventional wisdom of his age but not even his studies of the theology of the New Testament, he regretted, offered him a respite from his dissatisfaction or relieved his gloom. In sheer despair he turned to the black arts and the Devil.’ So here I restart (*switches on voice to text software*):

I venture to suggest – that we today face the same kind of challenge as Faust did and –um – have resorted to – much the same strategy in our attempt to find a remedy. This is not to say that we invoke the Devil at Black Sabbaths – or –engage in voodoo or play loud “techno music”. This might be a way to clean the Soul just as Carnival was a way to go back to roots without grinding culture to nothing. The Devil has delegated most of his routine dirty work to his minions in the guise of the seven deadly sins, which cavort around in Christopher Marlow’s Dr. Faustus. I name them: Pride, Greed, Anger, Sloth, Lust, Envy and Gluttony. It was Greed and Pride in particular to which we must attribute the economic and moral catastrophe of 2008 and its long aftermath reaching to the present time. In some ways the remedies chosen to combat this malady have proved as bad as the disease. I mean more controls, snooping, government interference and bureaucracy and still our major institutions, not least our educational systems, remain weakened and partially paralysed. In our age we have the added problem of combating the Devil without believing in his existence, though we certainly are in the devil of a mess. (*shouting in adjacent room*).

DAVID:

Pay up, you loser. That will be seven thousand, on the nail if you please. Don’t say I didn’t warn you when I bought the hotel. If you can’t pay it all in cash I’ll take your Trafalgar Square and Liverpool Street Station.

Professor Andrew Johnson stops recording.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

What the blue blazes is going on over there? I told you I was doing work on a speech. I need some peace and quiet here, you know.

MRS. JOHNSON

Don’t get worked up, dear. Kids will be kids. You were one yourself once, weren’t you?

*Little Tom a toddler walks up to his father with a smile on his smutty face.
A.J. has to relent.*

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Sorry, I didn't mean to go off the handle. But do try and be a little quieter, will you? - for the next half hour or so. *(To himself)* Where was I again? Ah, yes. I could squeeze in a good quote from Dylan Thomas.

A copy of poetry is on the adjacent desk and a bookmark allows Professor to locate the words he has in mind. He switches on voice-text recorder:

PROFESSOR JOHNSON

As Dylan Thomas so aptly put it in a poem entitled 'we have made the fairy tales by heart':

"Death and evil are twin specters
What shall destruction count if these are fixtures?
Why blot the pictures
Of elves and satyrs
If these two gnomes remained unmoved by strictures?"

Our much-vaunted pragmatism has banished any sense of absolute values. Values are deemed to be relative, conditional, subject to accidents and change. In fact the measure of all things has long become narrow self-interest, that is perceived but not real self-interest.. Like Marley in Dickens' A Christmas Carol we have got chained down by our self-forged fetters, our complex financial instruments, which immediately became so complex that not even their inventors could understand them. But are there not eternal verities that stare us in the face, verities ever present in eternal symbols and signs which our forebears comprehended but which we choose to ignore? We so-called educators, at least, should teach and guide our contemporaries; that's what we're here for - but are we not the chief of sinners, the blind leading the blind? ..(Stops recorder, slumps on desk cupping face in his hands, then moans loudly before saying: They'll accuse me of preachifying again. I'm indulging in unscientific waffle, they'll say.

MRS. JOHNSON

Everything all right, dear? Did you call for something?

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Nothing, dear. Everything's fine over here. *(To himself)* Let's give this another try then: I am not a Luddite. I am not against science and

technology themselves, the technology I use every day such as when I prepare a speech like the one I now wish to deliver. However, I discern great dangers in relegating to technology activities which we should subject to our conscience, our sense of right and wrong. Let me give an example. Every doctor begins his or her service by making the solemn oath to protect and prolong human life. No doctor can therefore legally perform a lethal injection on any fellow human, which means in the case of certain executions that medical orderlies set the scene for supposedly self-activating death-machines and these do the dirty work that no doctor's hand may directly accomplish. What is our justification for speaking of the law of gravity? We recognize that the force of gravity attracts all physical bodies on the earth's surface towards the ground and when a feather or balloon resists this force we understand that some countervailing force is in operation, but we have no direct or absolute knowledge of what makes the force of gravity necessary. Of course, it is convenient and meaningful to speak of natural laws if we refer to statistical probabilities and assumptions based on experience, but in the field of quantum physics we cannot even make safe predictions based on statistical verification. Science then is based on the recognition of self-repeating patterns from which we abstract a working hypothesis, and thus we 'explain' phenomena quote-unquote. But there are phenomena which we cannot readily 'explain', for the patterns they present fit no established hypothesis that the scientific community will accept and here we enter the realm of UFOs, ghosts, miracles, crop circles, astrology, anomalies, striking quirks and coincidences such as those linking the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. The pure rationalist will tend to ignore even frequently recurrent patterns if there is no scientific hypothesis to explain them. Is this science or doing what ostriches do when they hide their heads in the sand? Referring back to the so-called credit crunch and its aftermath, I point to a phenomenon that the experts and pundits failed to foresee, forestall or adequately respond to, and so I humbly ask whether we should not seek its causes and cure in terms that science today cannot circumscribe. *(stops recording)* That's enough for today. But demolishing the rationalist position isn't enough. What are these eternal symbols and signs? I'll have to sleep on all that. Could do with a drink of that liqueur I got for my birthday.

Professor Johnson pours himself a glass, drinks and slumps back into an armchair.

THIS DREAM SEQUENCE FOLLOWS:

FIRST SCENARIO

In a candle-lit chamber four sinister figures are playing a game involving the throwing of dice. Dali's painting of the crucified Jesus hangs on the wall. The game bears some resemblance to monopoly, except that real assets like goldmines, factories and oilfields and banks are placed as bets. They place chips that resemble sacred symbols such as the Cross, the Star of David, the crescent moon and the signs of the Zodiac. Some look like chessmen, others like discs with images representing banks and goldmines. The players gleefully chuckle and gloat over gains until some argument blows up about the value to be assigned to one of these values. In another corner two men in monk's garbs are playing chess. Suddenly one of the monopoly-style game players (*revealing the face of one who will be recognized as Dominic Crawley*) looks at Professor Johnson as if to say "And who have we here? Not one of us! Get him". Grabbing a trident he chases Johnson away to the exit but not before Johnson has taken hold of a handful of the symbolic tokens closest to him.

THE SECOND SCENARIO

Johnson finds himself outside the gambler's den in a grimy Dickensian looking slum. He's outside an oriental carpet shop. A carpet lies fully outstretched beside him and he walks onto it. It then rises into the air. Johnson holds on for dear life.

Above the clouds he reaches the open Pearly Gates with St Peter standing in a forecourt. Johnson 'lands' and seeks to enter Paradise through its gates but grim-faced Peter slams them to and folds his arms. Crestfallen A.J. mounts the carpet as the sky suddenly darkens.

He sees the signs of the Zodiac pass before him (these are the 12 sacred values from the game). He tries to approach them but they seem to take evasive action. As the sky become lighter he sees a desert landscape below. (he is expected to take a personal stance to one of the values so it "enlightens", revealing its meaning naturally...)

THE THIRD SCENARIO

Johnson lands in a *wadi* where a trickle of water is flowing. He sees an Arab fishing in a pool. He notices large crabs nearby. He walks towards a hill and suddenly sees a lion approach and so retreats. An arrow whizzes past him and he sees a group of Saracen or Parthian horsemen aiming at him. He runs down the slope of a dune and tumbles into a pit infested with scorpions. In despair he looks for his carpet. With great difficulty he scrambles out of this using the sacred

value he chose (life's Inspiration) as the ladder opens before him. A young woman dressed in a blue sari beckons to him at the top of the ladder. In front of her is the carpet. As he kneels in front of her on the carpet, she fades like a vision. The carpet rises .He passes over a man sitting on a pile of gold who offers to exchange his gold for a flask of water.

THE FOURTH SCENARIO

Johnson seems to travel through past time and sees industrial landscapes, battles, gladiatorial games the slaves of Egypt pulling stone blocks to the pyramids and finally a patriarch like Abraham standing in front of his tent. The carpet lands. Cattle and goats are grazing. A terrible thirst overcomes him and a water-bearer bring a large jar of water. The professor collapses and the water bearer pours water over him. It is the Life's inspiration ... water... as the carrier of enlightenment...He feels he is drowning and the scene changes to an interrogation camp where he is undergoing water-boarding. He wishes the hell out and his inspiration reveals his family...

A.J. Professor Johnson *wakes up clutching his throat and spluttering. Back in his office his wife and children look at him with great concern showing on their faces.*

SCENE 5: LEON MEETS JOE AT A CAFÉ NEAR PADDINGTON STATION, LONDON

At one table a girl is sitting perusing a brochure. A young man enters and looks around. On noticing this girl he approaches her.

LEON

Excuse me. Are you Miss Josephine Abbot?

JOE

And you must be Leon. Please take a seat.

Leon sits down

LEON

I recognized you from the video clip you sent me on You tube.com. Pleasure to meet you in the flesh - .er, in person.

JOE

The pleasure is mine. I gather from your emails that you are interested in studying at Camford University, like me. I was just perusing this prospectus. Like you, I'm considering Architecture as my major. Perhaps you'd like to look through this prospectus. It gives an outline of the syllabus in all the main subjects including Architecture.

LEON

Actually I've read it already. By the way, may I order you another coffee. I see you've almost finished the cup you're having. (*signals to waitress*)

WAITRESS

May I help you, sir.

Leon:

Two coffees please. White, Joe?

JOE

Please:

LEON

Two white coffees then waitress.

WAITRESS

Yes sir.

JOE

That's very kind. Please call me Joe. I prefer the short form despite its masculine associations. The full name always reminds me of that song 'Not tonight Josephine.'

LEON

Oh, I like both the long and short forms of your name. What's in a name anyway?

JOE

Your name's nice. Sort of .. distinguished

LEON

Thank you. I have a middle name too. Adam. It's usually represented simply as A in the name Leon A Chesterfield.

JOE

Do you think one's own name influences one psychologically. You know – *nomen est omen*?

LEON

Most likely so. *Leon* lends me a kind of Spanish aura, being as it is a province in Spain. The name Adam obviously conjures up the Bible, Paradise and all mankind.

JOE

That's an awful lot of cultural associations.

LEON

True. So you think Camford offers us fledgling architects the best deal going?

JOE

Other colleges are probably equally good if not even better. It's the setting of the place that intrigues me.

Leon takes out a copy of the Nag Hammadi Gospels...and places it on the table.

LEON

You mean the romantic ruins of Glastonbury and its religious associations with Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene, not to mention the Arthurian legend. . The proximity of Wells with its beautiful gem of a cathedral.

JOE

All that of course. I think being in Camford will afford me the chance to be inspired by the great architectural heritage of the Middle Ages.

Waitress brings two coffees.

LEON

Thank you. In my case it's not only the aspect of architecture that determines my choice. As you know, we have to take a subsidiary

subject and I'm particularly interested in the History of Religion. The syllabus for that seems to be very promising.

JOE

That's good for you. I have a problem though. You see, I'm very much interested in medical science and psychology. There doesn't seem to be a way of combining these with my main field, Architecture. In fact in my view the combination opportunities offered by Camford are too rigid and ..what's the word.

LEON

Compartmentalized?

JOE

Yes, I suppose so. Maybe I'm hankering after some impossible ideal, universality rather than the university as a very limited institution. (sips coffee with far-off look. To change the subject: you being interested in religious topics must have an insight into the issue of the so-called *Da Vinci code*?)

LEON

On that subject I can hardly speak with any kind of authority. Most specialists in the field regard as spurious the talk of Jesus and Mary Magdalene being a married couple and thus any idea of a blood line going back to Jesus is usually rejected out of hand. I personally am open-minded on this and other –let us say – controversial matters. Whatever the case the seeds of controversy were sown very early, even in New Testament times.

JOE

What do we really know about Mary Magdalene? Didn't she anoint Jesus' feet just before the Crucifixion?

LEON

No, actually that was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, according to St. John's gospel, that is. The idea that Mary Magdalene had once been a prostitute or adulteress seems to have suggested itself from an episode in St Luke's gospel which bears a strong resemblance to the accounts in the other gospels about a woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany just before the Crucifixion. However, the setting was different. Jesus in St. Luke's account was the guest of a Pharisee when a woman anointed his feet and dried them

with her hair. It was remarked by some there that Jesus could not be a prophet for a prophet would have known about this woman's sinful past.

JOE

Then why was this woman identified with Mary Magdalene?*(Intense look while sipping coffee).*

LEON

Good question. According to Mark Jesus had cast out seven devils from her, but it is difficult to link Mary with notions of sexual misconduct on that basis alone. More probably it was more her status as the first person to witness the empty tomb on Easter Sunday that was responsible for her identification with the woman who anointed Jesus before the Crucifixion.. Am I boring you?

JOE

Not at all. I'm fascinated. As I remember Jesus wanted the woman who anointed Jesus before the Crucifixion to be honoured by all subsequent generations of believers.

LEON

A good point. In Luke a similar honour is conferred on the Virgin Mary alone, as Luke makes no mention of a woman anointing Jesus before the Crucifixion.

JOE

But you mentioned the fact that Luke did include the story of a woman who anointed Jesus.

LEON

But that must have been a quite separate incident from the one involving a woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany unless you suppose that Luke remoulded that story in a different setting.

JOE

Oh dear, it's all very complicated.

LEON

What appears evident is that in the early days of Christianity up to the time the Nag Hammadi gospels were written Mary Magdalene (*Leon thumbs the book on the table*). This assumed a powerful role as a

disciple of Jesus with a status to equal that of the Apostles possibly an even greater one. Paul with his strictures about the role of women in the church did not even mention Mary as the star witness to the Resurrection in a long list of the men who did so. Another coffee?

JOE

No thanks. I'm already hyped on the stuff. You're obviously very much into the New Testament. I have to be moving soon and we can resume our conversations at our leisure, for it seems we are both going to be students at Camford University.

LEON

I'm sure that's the right decision for us despite minor misgivings . Let us hope for salad days and the Garden of Eden.

JOE

Serpents and all?

LEON.

Yes, serpents and all. (fixing Joe with a look of amusement and irony)
Waitress, the bill please.

Camera moves only to show Joe's reaction indicative of incomprehension and infatuation.

LEON

I would like to state that the Bible stories are in fact a description of natural states as in nature based on human endeavours as in particle physics. Even these far-flung ideas have to be used by looking carefully at our beliefs. So we should make existence conscious and then valuable...! This happens through natural development if we allow ourselves to be open ...

JOE

This is very ethereal ... let's see ... in love everything is possible

Fade out

ACT II

SCENE 1: THE DEBATING CHAMBER OF CAMFORD UNIVERSITY

The chairperson assigned to this debate opens the session to applause and clapping from the audience.

THE CHAIRPERSON

Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, I have pleasure in opening the inaugural annual debate sponsored by the Socratic Society.

The motion before us today is:

“In the face of the present global crisis with all its financial and moral ramifications this house rejects woolly romantic and liberal wandering in favour of a return to hardcore conservative values supported by a commitment to our European religious traditions.”

The speaker proposing of this motion is our university chaplain and faculty member the Very Reverend Canon Anthony Smythe-Higgins, a noted specialist in New Testament exegesis. (*Canon rises from seat and bows to applause and clapping*). It will be opposed by Dr. Peter Panhurst, a research fellow in the Department of English, a distinguished expert in Robert Browning studies with a particular interest in the figure of motif of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. (*Panhurst rises and mimes a flute player to laughter and clapping*).

In keeping with this society’s longstanding practice I trust that our speakers will sweeten their earnest contention for truth with a modicum of humour and *bonhomie* (*clapping, cheers*).

CANON ANTHONY SMYTHE HIGGINS

If a prophet of old were to return to our present time, he would no doubt declare that the tribulations of this age – need I name them – global warming, environmental pollution, the “credit crunch,” blind irrational hatred masquerading even as religious zeal, – are the symptoms of a deep moral sickness, the sins – yes, I use the word “sins” without apology – of greed, arrogance, lust and idolatry, particularly in the form of the worship of Mammon. In Milton’s *Paradise Lost* Mammon seems less concerned with Satan’s project of a vengeful frontal assault against God in Heaven than with exploiting the mineral resources of Hell and developing infernal real estate, perhaps offering it in subprime packages. (*laughter from the audience*). The Puritans were of course staunch opponents of gambling, which they viewed as the Devil’s parody of faith devised to mock established religion and ruin irresponsible risk-takers and innocents alike by the former’s mad jumps. In our age, irresponsible financiers have outdone any excesses one might witness in Monte Carlo by gambling away other people’s wealth, indeed obliterating vast amounts of public money, measured not in millions but in mind-boggling billions, without regard for the value that money is supposed to represent. Aye, what is money without that value without regard to its function of rewarding honest labour and allowing the fruits of that labour to be shared equitably? Just bits of paper that are neither decorative nor useful for any practical purpose. At least paper tissues serve our daily needs, not to mention certain rolls of paper which the discreet French refer to as ‘indispensable’ (*audience laughter*). That prophet of old would remind the people of the world that there is a universal and timeless source of all value, without which – or should I say “without Whom” – all things are valueless, vanity of vanity, all is vanity. This kind of preaching is old-fashioned, fuddy-duddy, not “in,” so say our intellectual pundits. When did the rot set in? With the Renaissance humanists who forsook the austere and sober piety of Saints Augustine, Anselm and Thomas À Kempis? Or with the Romantics’ rejection of the truth concerning original sin to embrace Rousseau’s woolly notions of the noble savage uncorrupted by society and a naïve belief in the innocence of childhood. There is no call of a latter-day piper to what is? lead the young astray. (*laughter, sniggering and ‘boos’, a wry expression on Dr Panhurst’s face*). Any parent of bawling infants or rebellious teenagers is not likely to fall for that one. Though I deeply admire the best of Wordsworth’s poetry, I do not share his desire to extol the sublime virtues of England’s weather. (*laughter*). Or with reductive economic theories from the time of Adam Smith to the that of John Maynard Keynes, turning us away from the lessons of the Bible about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel? Like Cain the modern world has

wandered from the straight and narrow, the essential idea that right is right, truth is plain, from verities such as “as you have sown, so shall you reap”. Instead, many intellectuals wander like clouds, following nebulous concepts of “enlightened progress” for this or that liberal utopia, some secular paradise. Instead we got Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin. Let us rather as Christian soldiers march onwards “as to war”-er, in the moral, if not quite the military, sense of war – with due respect to our boys in Iraq and Afghanistan. (*Some applause, otherwise heckling*). In short, let’s learn again to be content with what we have. Let’s not covet our neighbour’s ass, in modern terms, his BMW, you know what I mean. John the Baptist told an enquiring soldier not to complain about his wages. “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done”. That’s what my grandma and grandpa always said, and that’s what I reaffirm now! (*Clapping*).

CHAIRPERSON

Thank you, Canon. I now call on Dr. Peter Panhurst, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English to oppose the motion. Thank you. (*Applause, clapping*).

DR. PETER PANHURST

With great respect to my learned colleague’s grandparents (*laughter*), I beg to differ from him on several counts. I question his contention that religious orthodoxy alone has proved to be the mainstay of our much vaunted system of western values throughout history. I also reject his one-sided criticism of secular rationalism and science. I certainly do not share his aversion to ‘wandering’. In this connection may I remind my audience of the outdoor summer festival under the wing of the Arts Faculty together with the Students’ Union. (Heckler: “no crafty advertising spots please”.) As to “wandering”, allow me to quote from Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*.

My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning.

If writing badly organized papers were so grievous a crime, no small number of students and, might I add, learned colleagues, would now be behind bars. (*Laughter*) Law and authority breed lawbreakers and rebels because too many are looking for trouble and for every little flaw around them, but who is really to judge? Who is fit to cast the first stone in terms of an incident at the end of St John’s Gospel.?. or

not? (*uproar in the house*). My very reverend colleague has taken us back to the Garden of Eden. Let us linger there. The Lord forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. What about all the other fruit-trees in the garden? What was so special about the taste in this knowledge if not the desire to explore and discover the unknown !... They enjoyed an endless supply of bananas, oranges, mangos, avocados, you name it. To no avail. Forbidden fruit is irresistible. Let's go on to Sinai. Down came Moses holding the tables of the Law fresh from Horeb's summit when the ink had barely dried, only to find his people prancing round the golden calf. They had forgotten how to sense the symbols that are holy because the knowledge is "new" and had to be found at all costs.. More than a thousand years later, Jesus proclaimed a new covenant and preached that riches blocked the way to heaven, . But we prefer to stay put with what we have and get lumbered down instead of enjoying the freedom promised by Heaven!... But today US leaders say "God bless America" with the aside "and my bank account". Are we much better on this side of the Atlantic, Canon?... All this was no mystery to an elderly black sage I once met in a shanty town in Alabama. He used to say "Dem rich whites must love us, coz dey send up all dat cash to the sky in dem shuttles, soz we stays poor and goes to heaven.." (*laughter*). History is a repetition of cycles formed when rebels overthrow tyrants only to become tyrants in their turn, but moral progress is possible if we understand history as a painfully slow process of education which adds skin, flesh and muscle to the bare bones of material existence ending in death! . This we should know, we who enjoy here in Camford College near Glastonbury the benefits of a most promising academic institution (*cheers*) .. dedicated to recovering the Holy Grail of higher knowledge, which as yet eludes us because we fail to understand the very symbols of the beliefs on which our civilization is grounded, and only when we grasp these will we be able to share knowledge and insights with those of other cultures which possess valid symbols of their own. ... We are welding the heritage of tradition with the forces of modernity striving to discover new insights and truths, to secure values that allow us to exchange our talents, our services and material goods on the basis of mutual consent and respect - free of exploitation, intimidation, hoodwinking and brainwashing and neoconservative or even neo-liberal humbug (*cheers, boos*).. If we become rigid, inflexible and complaisant, content with the role of providing a luscious and leafy playground for poor little rich boys waiting to join the modern rat-race by securing a plum job in finance or the law and no less for poor little rich girls waiting for Mr. Rockefeller, be sure that some Pied Piper will arrive on the scene to steal away our youth and vigour and shake the

foundations of an establishment that has outlived its usefulness and forfeited any grounds that might justify its continued existence. Let us therefore seek that new land , that Promised Land, which Martin Luther King and others less well-known have seen in the realm of the spirit and then perhaps we shall perceive the very seats we are sitting on and all the other things we take for granted, without our senses being dulled by gross materialism.. (*clapping*).

My learned colleague will affirm the principal “the first shall be last” and I will reaffirm this principle by quoting those final lines in Bob Dylan’s song “The times they are a changing”:

“Come mothers and fathers all over this land
And don't criticize what you can't understand
Your sons and your daughter are beyond your command
Your old role is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend a hand
For the times they are a changing.”

“The line, it is drawn, the curse, it is cast
The slow one will later be fast
And the present now will soon be the past
The order is rapidly fading
The first one now will later be last
For the times, they are a changing.”

Clapping as Panhurst returns to seat miming the motions of a piper. Andrew Johnson jumps to his feet and wishes to play “middleman” or one might say pig in the middle... hopefully he will not be shot at... His arguments take from both camps it appears but he seems to form a new camp.

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

My learned colleagues are rowing their boats with one oar, be this the oar of religious orthodoxy or the oar of rationalism. Experience shows that boats rowed by one oar turn in endless circles. How do we row our boat with both oars? That is the question. Sure, both oars are needed, but the rower himself must be able to coordinate the movements of his arms and body so as to move his boat forwards or, when appropriate to left or right. Then he can reach a destination, or different destinations, in accordance with his inner purpose. For the businessman reaching one particular goal is the important thing. For the wanderer all locations visited are of equal value; the enjoyment of the entire journey

is what counts. In the present-day world we are neither attaining our business goals nor enjoying the journey of life itself. Why? We have lost our sense of the togetherness of all things. . Let me draw a parallel between the metaphor of rowing and the bicameral structure of our brains, which, if they should ever be unblocked, will revive us using nature's own mechanism and its power to awaken interest even in the common things around us and create a sense of wonder. As matters stand we allow the common objects around us to clutter our minds, as without a valid value system and an understanding how it works we have no scale by which to evaluate the importance of one thing in relation to another and thus we tend to make sweeping judgements which throw out the baby and the bath water. So a sense grounded intuition and emotion as much as in reason and certainly not in the attempt to subordinate the infinite variety of the universe to a single ambition or craving that deadens the sympathy between our spiritual-mental powers and rhythms and the world of tangible reality. (*Heckling*: "Get to the point")

We have lost our ability to appreciate the intrinsic value of things and people as individuals, for a house is a place to live in rather than a means of enhancing capital, or so it seemed until the housing bubble finally broke. A worker is a person supporting his or her family rather than a dispensable cost factor in an investment company's balance sheet. I, like my colleague in the English department, recognize in the piper a symbol of great significance, but not as only some social revolutionary but as one who leads us out of ourselves, our petty and possessive fortresses of selfhood to wherever, to the sacred wood, the promised land, to Merlin's magic world of Avalon, to the stars which have so long filled human minds in awe, not because of the immeasurable distances separating them by mind-boggling light years but by the feeling and knowledge that they are intimately a part of human experience, interwoven in the very fabric of life, inspiring us by their harmony and their subtle and soft influence. I offer no program here, no road map but I do exhort you to engage your divinely bestowed senses, listen, behold, feel, scent, imagine. Each of us has a limited part to play in this world but together we can pull the wagon out of the present sludge to its proper place on the road leading not only to bare survival but also to true prosperity, but only if we think and act outside the category of short-sighted self-interest will we see our role as part of a group effort to free nature as we perceive it from the status of a slave to that of a working partner, and only then shall we experience harmony for ourselves and in the world of nature around us ... The question is making ourselves open to this.

Applause, fade out

SCENE 2: EXTRAORDINARY MEETING IN THE CONFERENCE HALL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMFORD

An Extraordinary Public Meeting organized by the Faculty-Student Liaison Committee has been called in response to rumours that a video surveillance system will be installed to monitor lectures and tutorials.

DR. WAYNE FOSTER

Our university faces serious challenges, perhaps the most serious since its foundation only five years ago as a seat of learning devoted to liberal and humanitarian values and a commitment to the most scrupulous standards of objectivity and voracity. It has become renowned worldwide for academic excellence and its cutting edge research activity. I have no doubt that we will preserve and defend our reputation and standards against all comers, but the dragon we must fight today is not some basilisk straight out of a Harry Potter film but a monster nonetheless, and one with a mighty power to crunch (laughter) .I can tell from your reactions, ladies and gentlemen, that you know what I mean: Yes, the ever-worsening financial crisis affecting the world economy and every major industrial and commercial organization that depends on it! Even here in our august halls of learning we sense uneasily that all is not well in the surrounding forecourt, as though Grendel or his mother were prowling around in the shadows of the night. (*werewolf howl from the audience then laughter*). No more fun tangents please! The raft of problems we now face comprises the following issues:

Fewer private students can afford our tuition fees and their own maintenance expenses.

Our stock market assets and equity have shrunk as a result of turmoil in the world of banking.

Consequently, unless effective countermeasures are now taken, we may soon lack the resources to finance our ambitious research programs, invest in state-of-the-art computer systems and even maintain the present numbers of courses offered to our students, which inevitably would have implications for our capacity to increase - or even sustain - the numbers of staff employed. (*Expressions of unrest from the audience*).

No, I do not mean to unsettle any of you or spread alarm and despondency. We can – we must – we will – face all present and potential threats to our present very strong position, and in cooperation with some of my fellow members of the central control committee I will outline our strategy to combat the dangers of the present time. The lines of defence we propose can be identified under the following headings: Patronage, reallocation of resources, orientation to the future.

May I now introduce my first expert, the forward planner, Dr. Frieda Goldsmith.

DR. FRIEDA GOLDSMITH

Ladies and Gentleman, Let me get to the point, not being one to beat about the bush! One way to meet the shortfall in our budget is to invite and accept funding from financially strong benefactors and organizations supporting educational and social advance. As to the supply of offers I see every reason to be sanguine. We enjoy the prospect of considerable assistance in the form of donations, interest-free loans, and generous scholarships and student support schemes from various sources. Details will be made public in due course.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

Name them now!

A SECOND VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

He who pays the piper calls the tune.

A THIRD VOICE

No strings attached, really?

DR. FRIEDA GOLDSMITH

As I said, details will be made in due course. Thank you.

THE CHAIRPERSON

Thank you Dr. Goldsmith for your precise and honest statement, which gave no cause for the impertinent interruptions it incurred. It is not appropriate here to raise the specter of Big Brother. Every university is grateful to those generous and disinterested donors that play an integral part in modern university education. Our next speaker is Dr. Dominic Crawley, our resource allocation specialist, who will clarify some other points under discussion.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

See you later allocator.

(Laughter, some jeering, slow clapping. Hammer thud on chairperson's table).

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, members of faculty and students, I gather from the utterances of some present that not everyone understands the nature of the tasks and responsibilities of the university allocation commission, tasks which complement and strengthen all efforts made to present a glowing yet faithful image of our university to the world in general and potential beneficiaries and benefactors in particular.

The position of a modern forward-looking university such as ours is in some ways better off in this period of economic recession than it might have been otherwise. Education, particularly university education, is one of the few fields likely to derive immense benefit from government-sponsored stimulus packages, for, as we all know, there is no better way to invest in future prosperity than to cultivate learning and research. However, there is a vital caveat to consider.

Governments and quasi-governmental authorities such as the supervisors of sovereign funds will scrutinize most carefully all institutes of learning as to whether they fulfil certain criteria. Are they using their resources efficiently? Are they striving to satisfy the expectations of their students and their benefactors? Do they tolerate wastage, perhaps by supporting the interests of tiny unproductive minorities? Do they condone frivolous and unseemly activities? In this connection I might refer to the fact that a former member of the English department spent several weeks in New York on a university-sponsored research grant promoting studies in the poetry of Dylan Thomas - only to spend most of his time at the White Horse Tavern in Greenwich Village drinking whiskey shots and beer, apparently to 'empathize' with the great poet, who did indeed frequent that place during the last year of his life and it was there that he guzzled those final 18 shots which led to his death in St. Vincent's Hospital only a block away.

In the coming weeks representatives of sponsoring organizations will be inspecting many lectures, seminars and tutorials. So as to facilitate the smooth running of events, these inspectors will observe tutors and students with the help of close circuit television cameras.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE

At least you can afford *them*!

DR> DOMINIC CRAWLEY

I assure you that there is no definite plan to install this surveillance system permanently, however advantageous that might prove in the long term.

VOICE

The thin end of the wedge, you mean!

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY (*outwardly unperturbed*)

However, as far as the immediate review is concerned, our sponsors are unlikely to be long-haired loonies or spinners of fanciful esoteric theories, so I advise caution on the part of our lecturers and tutors that they avoid controversial topics that might offend the sensibilities of those representing major political parties, churches and corporations. May I remind you that in the face of financial difficulties the university's cost effective experts now consider axing courses attracting less than 15 student participants, meaning most probably that only mainstream concerns and subjects will be given priority. These are hard times, ladies and gentlemen.

Clapping from some quarters, booing and hissing from others.

CHORUS OF STUDENTS

See you later allocator! See you later allocator!

SCENE 3: A STUDENT PROTEST GATHERING AT A PUB CALLED "THE BLACK HORSE"

MALE STUDENT 1

The bloody cheek! Video surveillance. We can't take this lying down, can we?

MALE STUDENT 2

Not on your nelly, mate. This is an intrusion into our basic rights! Why should our opinions concern snoopers from outside?

MALE STUDENT 3

You bet, our views can be recorded, filed and held against us.

MALE STUDENT 2

That creepy-crawly guy is behind it all, I'll be bound!

MALE STUDENT 1

He's just a henchman. It's the beginning of 1984, you know, thought control by dark forces in government, the Illuminati, for all we know.

FEMALE STUDENT

So what do we do, guys?

MALE STUDENT 3

Boycott the campus when these snoopers turn up?

MALE STUDENT 1

That's risky. You can bet your bottom dollar that the usual nerds, lapdogs and spoilt princesses won't join in, and without solidarity the authorities will divide and rule.

MALE STUDENT 2

But we can't let this go unanswered.

FEMALE STUDENT

No way! Couldn't we organize some kind of alternative ... like a rally or something?

STUDENTS 1:

Hmm, but not near the campus as they might accuse us of trespassing or worse.

MALE STUDENT 3

Say, I've an idea.

STUDENTS

What? / Out with it! / How do we fight Big Brother?

MALE STUDENT 3

What about organizing an outing to the woods?

MALE STUDENT 2.

Some kind of teddy bears' picnic?

MALE STUDENT 3

No, seriously. There's been a lot of talk about some kind of open-air event with music, poetry readings, open mike sessions, even plays or sketches. There's that open space near the Abbey ruins and the surrounding wooded knoll.

MALE STUDENT 2

Year, why not, fellas, gals. Can't you see it billed all over? Glastonbury festival number 2?

MALE STUDENT 1

Listen up, folks. Let's call a students' union meeting and invite societies and student clubs to put on shows. The dramatic society for example. They've got a lot of gear at their disposal, costumes and the like.

GIRL STUDENT

The same goes for the various cultural societies. Let's make it a multi-culti affair and maybe engage the Chinese students. They can do their dragon parade like they did for the Chinese new year.

MALE STUDENT 2

Sounds great, but who'll bear the costs? The union has funds at its disposal for cultural events, or otherwise we can organize a whip-round, and some of the staff will sympathize, I'm sure.

MALE STUDENT 1

Let's go for it folks! I'll get straight onto the union and others who can help. Let's drink to our new project, the teddy bears' picnic.

MALE STUDENT 2

No, to Sherwood Forest. Get out your Lincoln green!

GIRL STUDENT

And we can add in the forest of Arden with the help of the English drama society. No clocks or video camera in the green wood. Paul, I'll have a cider please.

SCENE 4: LEON AND JOE OUTSIDE THE HOLY GRAIL INN AND SUBSEQUENTLY INSIDE

LEON

Let's try this place, Joe.

JOE

Looks okay to me.

Enter: Bar empty except for bartender in sixties.

JACK PERKINS(BARTENDER)

Hello squire! Hello young lady! Good afternoon. May I help you?

LEON

Good afternoon. *To Joe* What are you having?

JOE

What about the draught cider? Half a pint for me.

LEON

And for me. Maybe a pint.

JACK.

Right you are, squire. A good choice, if I may say. It's our local brew, you know.

LEON

Really.

JACK (*pulling lever of cider cask*)

New here are you?

JOE

Yes, we've registered at Camford College.

JACK

Freshers, eh? Isn't that the word for new students?

LEON

Yes, freshers, freshman. It varies.

JACK (*topping up glasses of cider*).

As you can probably tell from my London accent we're not true locals ourselves. Mabel and I came to this area several years ago. Actually it was just before the campus opened. On retirement I decided to move here and run a pub. We both loved the west country, 'having enjoyed many holidays here.

Enter Mabel

MABEL

Hello, I'm Mabel. I'm always pleased when young brainy people like yourselves grace us with your presence.

JOE

Oh, really. It's our pleasure to be here and enjoy this place, which so romantic and .. It must be very historic. Tudor by the look of those beams and the windows.

JACK

So right. Apparently it was built around 1588 at the time of the Invincible Armada.

LEON

Is that so? By the way, Joe and I are going to study architecture at Camford.

MABEL

I 'm not surprised you knowing this place goes back to Tutor times like that?.

JACK

And talking about the Armada, we Brits may have kept the Spaniards at bay but with Camford coming and all, the natives will soon be in a minority. Not that it's such a bad thing, mind you. All this globalization and that. I mean the world's changin', ain't it? Here's your cider then. (*Places slip on the counter*). Separately?

LEON

No, both on me:

MABEL

'Is that not so?' is the proper way to talk, Jack.

JACK

Me better half's always keeps me on the mark. Gotta mind me Ps and Qs round 'ere, you know. Mind you, we can't complain about you students. You make up a large proportion of our clientele. Is that the word, Mabel?

MABEL

You've got to talk la-di-dah with all these high-powered whiz-kids around.

JOE

Oh really, Madam. We're human like any one else.

MABEL

Course you are, love! Call us Jack and Mabel. We cater for the locals too. Here being a largely agricultural area we get a lot of farm workers. They usually come in after working in the fields. Just now they tend to be quite late, it coming up to harvest and all. You students and university people come at the weekends mainly.

LEON

Do the locals and students mix socially?

JACK

Actually not much. There was a time when there was a lot of animus-whatever

MABEL

"Animosity" I think you mean.

JACK

Jar "animosity" between the local young'ns and the students. It was the 'yobos' versus the 'snooties'. But I think more recently both sides have learned to tolerate each other. Live and let live eh?

MABEL

There are still flare-ups now and again, mind you?

JACK

Specially when those smooth continentals try it on with the local girls? You know, girls go for all that finesse, watcher call it.

MABEL

And some of them are rich, or at least their parents are. The Chinese send lots on government grants.

JACK

I mean the Chinks are taking the world over, aren't they? They got the Yanks by the short and..

MABEL

Mind your grammar, Jack.

JACK

I mean over a barrel. No, that's the Ay-rabs. Get it (winking)?

JOE

I suppose one might say that in the present world we are all very much interdependent on each other.

JACK

Yuss, come to think, I suppose we are.

MABEL

Such a nice way to put it. Soon we can expect more visitors. I think you should fetch another barrel of lager, dear before the rush starts. It's usually quiet between lunch and five thirty. Look, if it isn't Professor Johnson and a group of students. What can I get you, Professor?

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

My usual please. A pint of bitter.

MABEL

Right you are. And you gentlemen?

DR. HEINRICHS

A moment please. Herr Jansen, was hätten Sie gerne?

HERR JANSEN

Ein kühles deutsches Bier. Lager geht auch. Nix von dem lauwarmen englischen Zeug.

DR. HEINRICHS

Two pints of Lager, please. (*To Dr. Jansen*) Wir sind in einer Kneipe mit dem Namen Zum heiligen Kelch. Sie sind ja Parzival-Spezialist. Sie müssten sich eigentlich hier wohl fühlen.

MABEL

From Germany are you, sir?

DR. HEINRICHS

Yes, we are. Excuse me talking German but my friend's English needs

improvement. I was telling him that this place is the Holy Grail and he should be happy because he knows a lot about Sir Percival. He was a knight who looked for this sacred object.

MABEL

Oh, how interesting. They say it's hidden somewhere around these parts. There are even some relics on show which are supposed to be the true grail. You could fill a cupboard with them all.

Jack fixes new barrel.

DR. HEINRICHS

Like there's enough relics of the Cross to build a ship, I suppose.

Fade out

ACT III

SCENE 1: IN A CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE UNIVERSITY WHERE DR. PETER PANHURST IS HOLDING A TUTORIAL ON ROMANTIC POETRY

DR. PETER PANHURST

Our theme Wandering in English romantic poetry may seem rather diffuse, not to say woolly, to those needing precise definitions. Sometimes in life as in art we witness a phenomenon in recognizing the recurrence of patterns which we may or may not find an explanation for. If we can, fair enough, we construct a theory. If not, what then? Sometimes we ignore the recurrent patterns and pass them off as mere coincidences, but sometimes the recurrence is so insistent that we must stretch our minds and imaginations to accommodate the unexplained data in some way. In German poetry the word wander appears in the titles of famous poems by Goethe and the Romantics, notably "Wandrer's Nachtlied," "Wandrer's Sturmlied" or Hölderlin's "Der Wanderer." As we noted last week the verb "to wander" rather than the noun "wanderer" in English poetry where it appears significantly in well-known poems. Verbs are somehow less conspicuous than nouns for some reason that perhaps a linguist could explain. I asked you last week to do a little private research on Wordsworth's celebrated poem

beginning I wandered lonely as a cloud and so I propose to hold an open quiz on this subject.

DAGMAR.

Did Wordsworth read German poetry himself?

DR. PETER PANHURST

A good question, Dagmar. . Probably not very much, but his close friend Samuel T. Coleridge did and in fact he and Wordsworth visited Germany in 1799. Goethe's influence on Wordsworth is most apparent in *The Excursion* and the figure of the Wanderer who appears in it. Goethe's linkage of the Wanderer with the questions of the poet's nature and identity arguably influence "I wandered lonely as a cloud." Now to my questions:
My first question is: When was the poem written and which strophe was added later?

JOHN (STUDENT)

In 1804. It was first published in 1807. The second stanza was added later but I'm not sure when exactly.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good, John. Was it based on a real event in Wordsworth's life?

GIRL STUDENT

Yes, on a walk with his sister Dorothy beside the western banks of Ullswater? Dorothy recorded this event in her diary on April 15 1802.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Ah, so we note that despite being prompted by a real experience the poem diverges from the factual events in an important respect, namely?

MARY (BECKFORD)

Mary – (*dreamily*) lonely, I mean the speaker in the poem is alone.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Yes, Mary. To anyone who has compared the poem and Dorothy's entry, what other differences are there?

MICHAEL (STUDENT)

In Dorothy's description the weather was not as clement as the poem suggests. According to her it was blustery and overcast.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good point and what change of words betrays this difference? ...

Silence.

DR. PETER PANHURST

'Breeze', the word 'breeze' replaces the word wind in Dorothy's diary.

STEPHEN (STUDENT)

Isn't that just hairsplitting? I mean what's the great difference between a wind or breeze.

JOCK (STUDENT)

Ask your doctor. (tittering)

MARY

Oh there is. They evoke different moods.

DR. PETER PANHURST

True, and another point, in poetry one often correlates uses of the same word in different poems. Where else does the word occur in Wordsworth's poetry?

MARY

In the opening passage of the Prelude.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good, good. And we know that Milton's *Paradise Lost* served as the foil to several of the long epic poems written by the Romantics. The reference to the breeze in *The Prelude* echoes Milton's evocation of the Holy Muse or Spirit in *Paradise Lost*. Another question though. What do the daffodils described in the poem symbolize?

VIOLET (STUDENT)

Just nice pretty flowers, no more.

ANGELA (STUDENT)

What about all the descriptions of nice pretty flowers over the garden fence.? Nobody bothers with them.

DR. PETER PANHURST

What you mean is the inclusion of references to common things in

poetry elevates them somehow. They join a tradition.

MARY

I read an article saying that daffodils recall the myth of Narcissus.

DAGMAR

Ja, ve say 'gelbe Narzissen' in Dzerman. Yellow Narcissus.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I know the article Mary mentioned , by Frederick Pottle. Fine, so the poem has a link with classical mythology. What about Biblical and Christian traditions?

JANET (STUDENT)

Housman used the word Lenten lily to describe a daffodil in a poem of his.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good point, and as it happens, the walk Dorothy and William made together when they we saw an impressive cluster of daffodils was on green Thursday, the day preceding Good Friday.

DAGMAR

In Dzerman ve call daffodils 'Osterglocken' – Easter bells.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Ah, interesting.. So we might conclude that the poems at least subconsciously welds classical and biblical strands. But to return to our chief question. What does the word 'wandered' contribute to the poem?

MARY

The words suggests to my mind a spiritual quest, like the biblical journey of the wandering Israelites to the Promised Land. The work I'm doing on my term paper emphasizes the religious connotations of "wandering".

DR. PETER PANHURST

Not all positive. What about Cain?

VERA (STUDENT)

Yes, the word is very – er – ambivalent. Its positive or negative connotations depend on its context, even in terms of the seasons.

DR. PETER PANHURST

A very good point. In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Puck is the "merry wanderer of the night." In the 18th Sonnet the line "thou wand'rest in death's vale" draws a parallel with the late chills that follow winter. Well, I have to close today's session a little early today to attend a department conference. So we'll continue this discussion next time. Oh, and prepare notes on Blake's poem London. We'll certainly find the negative aspects of wandering there. Thank you.

Students disperse.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, Miss Beckham., er Mary Could I have a word with you?

MARY

Yes, Dr. Panhurst. Please call me Mary.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Yes, Mary, you know about this inspection coming up in two weeks. I find your contributions today show that you have some very interesting insights into our topic and Romantic poetry in general. I was wondering if you could give a talk on Romantic wandering in two weeks. It will be reviewed by video and could impress our potential benefactors.

MARY

Well, I feel honored but there are still a few points I'm unsure of.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Perhaps we could discuss them. Er, would you object if I asked to meet you for coffee somewhere?

MARY

Not at all, doctor. What about that nice quiet place near the ruined priory?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh I know the one ...

Fade out

SCENE 2: DR. PANHURST AND MARY AT A CAFÉ NEAR A RUINED PRIORY

Panhurst is sitting at a table and looks at watch in a state of tension or anxiety.

Mary enters.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Mary, I'm here. So glad you could make it.

MARY

Hi, sorry I'm late. Something cropped up at the last moment.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, nothing untoward, I hope?

MARY

No, somebody phoned and wanted a long talk, but didn't take the hint when I said I had a meeting.

DR. PETER PANHURST

A meeting? yes, you could put it like that. Anyway, can I invite you to a coffee? They have a good selection of cakes or 'gateaux' as they call them.

MARY

Thank you, but I'm supposed to be on a diet.

DR. PETER PANHURST

You'll forgive me if I say you seem to have your calorie intake well under control.

MARY

Okay, maybe that fruity cake on the left then.

Dr. Panhurst orders.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I'm so glad you agreed to deliver your paper on wandering and Romanticism.

MARY

How long should it be?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Half an hour, or so with fifteen minutes for questions and discussion.

MARY

Fine, about what I expected. Here's a summary for you to read.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, thanks, (*peruses*) Interesting, interesting. So to 'wander' goes back to an ancient Germanic root signifying to turn and change under the power and influence of divinities or spiritual powers, here the naming of Odin as the wanderer. Under Christian influences the word became linked to motifs like Cain, the Israelites in the wilderness and pilgrims to the Promised Land. Yes, that fits. Ill read this through and make a few notes and additions, though hardly corrects. Perhaps we could talk about more general themes.

MARY

Such as?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Us..er, I mean the way things are going on the campus and this inspection thing.

MARY

Dominic thinks the inspection will be good for the university. He says some slackers will have to pull up their socks.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Dominic, not Dominic ..

MARY

Yes, Dominic Crawley. He's become very chummy with Dad recently, coming round to the house for high tea and things.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Things?

MARY

Well, er. Yes, to engage me in intellectual conversations, his etchings, you know.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Really? I only know him as a fellow tutor and I have never considered him in any other.. capacity.

MARY

You mean, as a suitor?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, it's no concern of mine. I don't wish to intrude into your personal affairs , er matters.

MARY

Oh. I am disappointed. We're not engaged or anything. I was impressed by his brilliant mind, his intellect, his sardonic wit, his poise, whatever. I'm not so much smitten with all that now. I'm more concerned about him, his personal qualities, and I haven't made up my mind about those.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I see. Of course, one has to be sure on the point of 'personal qualities'. But back to the subject of university matters.

MARY

You're right. Oh. it was him who phoned be when I was leaving to meet you. His voice turned funny once I had told him I was going out.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Funny ha ha or funny peculiar?

MARY

Definitely the latter? Almost caustic. He asked outright: "Who are you going to see?" I answered "Oh, somebody I can discuss my paper with." "Who could help you better than I?" said he and added. "Have a nice outing then?" Very odd. Almost as though he suspected..

DR. PETER PANHURST

If you'll allow me an observation, he seems to think he can monopolize your time and allegiance?

MARY

To put it mildly. Ah, here comes the cake. Looks scrumptious.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Shall we have a look at the priory ruins after leaving here? It looks like we'll have a golden sunset too.

MARY

Good idea! Do you believe the legends surrounding the abbey, you know, about the Holy Grail, Mary Magdalene, King Arthur and Merlin?

DR. PETER PANHURST

I would find life very boring not to believe in them, especially in your company.

MARY

If only Dominic would say that sort of thing

DR. PETER PANHURST

I can only speak for myself, Mary.

MARY

Look, Peter. Who's that?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Who's what? Sorry.

MARY

Look out of the window. On the other side of the road walking towards the priory? A monk I think.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh him! That's 'Brother Todd' according to the locals. He's not a real friar. Some kind of weirdo who likes wearing clerical robes. They say he is a dropout from the flower power days. Maybe he really was a friar once. Most people round here think he's a harmless nutcase who likes wandering around and muttering to himself.

MARY

He looks a bit sinister to me. Gives me the jimjams

A siren sounds in the distance.

Mary:

An ambulance speeding to the scene of an accident or medical emergency. Sirens always make me think of poor uncle Harry and his fatal heart attack. Am I being maudlin?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Not at all, just pensive. How's the cake, Mary.

MARY

Oh just delightful

Fade out.

SCENE 3: IN PROFESSOR E. BECKFORD'S (THE HEAD OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT) OFFICE IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Peter, A very good morning to you. Please take a seat. I liked your debating style at the inaugural. Didn't always agree with you though, but gentlemen agree to differ.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good morning, Professor. And thank you for your compliment. You wanted to discuss something with me?

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Oh yes. It's this inspection thing, you know. We'd better work out an overall plan for the English department's approach to the three-day evaluation phase as they call it. Then we can brief staff members and request outlines and summaries of course material to be dealt with.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Couldn't tutors and lecturers just carry on normally?-

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Normally?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Yes, normally. Every member of the department is conscientious, I think and we shouldn't convey the impression that we are putting on a show. The students would smell a rat ..

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

You would know a lot about rats, Peter, you being an 'expert' on the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Forgive the jibe . I simply couldn't resist.

DR. PETER PANHURST

(With polite laugh) I'm hardly an expert, sir, though I freely admit the theme intrigues me more than most. I mean the visitors should get a feel of our daily routine and the congenial atmosphere that fosters student participation and freedom of expression.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

I've got nothing against freedom in principle, Peter, but it would be very embarrassing if one of those more vociferous hotheads started spouting about the evils of capitalism, gay rights, the Dalai Lama ..I mean, just think of it. The Chinese inspector won't want to hear that name, will he? Routine stuff, that's okay as long as it's something technical or formal like translating *Beowulf* passages into modern English, that kind of thing ...What have you in mind for your own seminars?

DR. PETER PANHURST

I could continue my lecture on symbolism in Browning's poetry.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

As long as you don't lay on all that esoteric stuff too thick. I was reading your article on "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" the other day. You write very well and you argue cogently, I grant you that, but from my boyhood I've always enjoyed that poem as a rattling good account of three horsemen , jackboots and all, rollicking through the night to deliver some urgent message. It had never occurred to me that the poem holds cryptic allusions to the Resurrection, issues of time and eternity, what have you. Same again with your view that "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" conceals some equally profound message. Didn't Browning himself call the poem "a child's story"?

DR. PETER PANHURST

But who said something to the effect: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of God"?

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Point taken. The poem does cite several biblical verses, I'll grant you. But why go so far as to claim the line "He never can cross that mighty top" alludes to mount Calvary?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, the earliest sources of the story.....

A phone rings.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKHAM

Excuse me for a moment, Peter (*lifts receiver*) English speaking!

Buzz on other line for about 20 seconds

Well, after receiving your memo, Mr. Steele, I made a rough assessment of our possible needs for next academic year, but a lot depends on the funding we hope to receive from this commission Yes, they will be here in two weeks

Only in the worst case scenario but I hope not. Perhaps we had better discuss this later, you know, *in camera*.

..... Yes, I'll make a note of the time and date..... Till then, goodbye.

Sorry, Peter. Where were we? Oh yes, Browning's poetry. All I meant to say is: when those snoopers, sorry (*winking*) inspectors come, do what you think fit. I'm the last person to muzzle's expressions of opinion, but don't forget that a leading cleric is a member of the inspection team .. I think you know what I mean. Oh, to change the subject, I gather my daughter is attending your seminar on Romantic poetry. How's she doing?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, yes. At first she was very quiet but now she makes some very pertinent contributions to discussions. I look forward to reading her paper on "the poetic wanderer."

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

"Wanderer, eh? All sounds a bit vague to me. It can't be easy to define that word, not in my dictionary, at least.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Surely, that's what makes the word so resonant and interesting.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Er yes, I suppose so. Well, um..

A knock on the door

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Come in.

Enter Dr. Crawley.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

(Sounding a bit like Kenneth Williams) Excuse me, Professor, I hope I'm not intruding.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Goodness, no, Dominic.Peter, I think that's all we need to discuss for today. Perhaps we can work out the details of that schedule tomorrow after the break.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Of course, Professor. I'll sort out my ideas on that subject.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Good man! Good bye.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Good bye, Professor. Good day, Dr. Crawley.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

And a very good day to you, Dr. Panhurst. ..

Dr. Panhurst leaves.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Take a seat, Dominic. By the way, my daughter sends her best wishes and wants you to phone her about 6 this evening.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

With great pleasure, Professor.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

As I was saying to Dr. Panhurst. we need to get our act together on this three-day visit by the financial support section of global commission on educational. He thinks there will be no need to issue directives to staff on tightening up on subject matter and the scope for discussion and spontaneous contributions from students.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

In my humble opinion, Professor, his free rein approach would be most inadvisable and hazardous in view of the sensitive and controversial issues that could well get aired, not least by Dr. Panhurst himself.

PROF. JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Well, to be frank, Dominic, that's what I felt.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Professor, have you heard rumours that some students want to boycott the regular courses during the inspection period and organize some outdoor event themselves, a sort of academic hippy Woodstock, it seems?

PROF. JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

No, really. What's the world coming to....

SCENE 4: IN THE DRAWING ROOM OF PROFESSOR ELLIS BECKFORD'S HOUSE

The front door bell rings.

MARY

I'll get it, Mum.

MRS. E. BECKFORD

Thank you, dear.

She opens the door. Dominic Crawley enters.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Mary, I'm so glad to see you. I was expecting a call yesterday but .. I suppose you were busy.

MARY

O Dominic, nice to see you too. Actually, I was rather busy. Papers you know. (*looks awkward, smiles nervously*)

They enter the drawing room.

MRS. E. BECKFORD

So nice to see you again. Would you like a cup of tea? As it happens a pot is just about ready.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Good afternoon, Mrs. Beckford. I'd love one.

Mrs. Beckford. Mother leaves looks at Mary. Mary tries to avoid eye contact.

Professor Ellis Beckford enters.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Good afternoon, Dominic.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Good afternoon Professor. I hope my visit is convenient.

PROFESSOR ELLIS BECKFORD

I'm so glad you have come. Actually I'd like to have a word with you in my office. I'll be in my study, so bring in your tea when you're ready.

Mary's cell phone rings. She shows signs of embarrassment.

MARY

Please excuse me for a moment. (*exits via French window*)

D.C. Following her intently with his eyes. About to motion to the window.

MRS. E. BECKFORD

Dominic your tea. Was it one lump or two?

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Two actually, Mrs. Beckford. Perhaps I should join the Professor in his study. I believe he is expecting me

MRS. E. BECKFORD

Please do. I'm sure you and Mary can have a chat with you afterwards.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Oh, come in Dominic. Take a seat and feel at home.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Thank you, professor.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

How's everything down your way? I expect you must be very busy with the preparations for the forthcoming visit.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Indeed. In that connection one of the inspection team wrote me this letter. (*hands it to the professor*)

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFOED

Ah. Interesting.from Sam, eh. (*fifteen second silence*) ...objective criteria – intrinsic qualities .. I get his general drift. What do you make of it yourself..

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

In order to clarify certain points I contacted him by phone. Outwardly he is genial enough but basically he is a tough cookie, as some Americans say. He's against all this woolly subjectivity that he finds is all too typical of current literary and textual criticism. When I mentioned the alternative academy of the fields and woods to be put on by some students aided and abetted by members of our staff, he complained he didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He also suggested that some of the conservative donors he represented might look askance at what he termed a neo-pagan bias in a recent article by one of our faculty members.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Did he say who ..?

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Not by name but he mentioned something about Robert Browning and the Pied Piper.

PROFESSOR ELLIS BECKFORD

Peter Panhurst, must be.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

He didn't mention any particular name.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Between you, me and the doorpost, Dominic. The outlook for the department is bleaker than we supposed even a fortnight ago. One of the department's major sponsors has dropped out and the stock value of our equity fund has fallen dramatically as it seems impossible to gauge the extent of the toxic portions of our portfolio. Bottom line, we may have to cut courses and even shed members of faculty next year.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

That's most disconcerting.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Please don't get the wind up, Dominic. You personally have nothing to worry about. Oh, I gather you and Mary enjoyed a walk to the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere last Sunday.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Unfortunately I have not yet enjoyed that pleasure but hope to make up for it at an early opportunity.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Really, that surprises me. Professor Hugh Bentley of the History Department said he saw you out together himself, but he is getting on and his eyesight isn't all it used to be. Been feeling a little below par, myself recently. Get twinges now and again in the chest and dizzy spells in the morning usually.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Professor, I trust you have consulted a doctor. If there's anything can do to reduce your load of administrative or other duties, please do not hesitate to ..

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

That's very kind of you Dominic. I'll get round to seeing Dr. Atkins some time . soon. Well, let's return to the living room. I'm sure you would like to spend a little time with Mary.

The Professor and Dr. Crawley leave the study.

MRS E. BECKFORD

Another tea, Dominic? Oh, Mary's just left. She didn't say when she would be back.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

No thank you, Mrs. Beckford. I .. I suppose I'd better be on my way then.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

It was very nice seeing you Dominic. Sorry Mary had to leave like that.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

I'm sure she had a good reason for leaving. I'll see her tomorrow anyway.

MRS E. BECKFORD

Good. Hope we see you soon.

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

You're always welcome Dominic. Keep up the good work. Watch out for werewolves. It's Halloween, you know.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Any self-respecting werewolf would not go for me. I'm pretty indigestible. Good bye, Mrs. Beckford, Good bye Professor.

PROFESSOR E. BECKFORD AND HIS WIFE

Good bye Dominic.

Exit Dominic

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

Rather inconsiderate of Mary to leave like that. She must have known that Dominic wanted to talk to her.

MRS. E. BECKFORD

Yes, dear. It's not like her to do that. Until very recently she showed him great affection, to say the least. Do you think her feelings toward him have cooled?

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

It's just a hunch, but she talks about that Panhurst fellow in glowing terms, as her tutor, mind you. Her head is full of his theories of the collective unconscious, the mystery of inspiration and the visionary aspect of poetry, everything the proponents of objective criticism abhor and we'll have some of them on the team of inspectors. Dominic mentioned one of them a moment ago.

MRS. E. BECKFORD

Dear me. Is this Panhurst a bad influence then?

PROFESSOR JAMES ELLIS BECKFORD

I hadn't thought of him in quite those terms but in some sense he could be, I suppose..

Fade out

.....

SCENE 5: A HALLOWEEN PARTY AT THE HOLY GRAIL.

Music background: The Monster Mash:

Crowded room: Frankenstein's Monster dances with witch. Main with nail through head dances with vampirette. Zombie and Warlock chat over a beer. At bar Mabel as Marsh Queen serves beverages which exude white clouds (i.e. effect of liquefied carbon dioxide). At entrance two girl dressed as nuns sell tickets. A figure in a monk's robes joins the queue. It is Brother Todd.

GIRL TICKET VENDOR

Sir, do you want in?

BROTHER TODD

Why else would I be here?

Hands her a bank note.

GIRL TICKET VENDOR

Sorry, I thought for a moment, you were on your way to a church...

BROTHER TODD

It's rather late for church. Did you mean to a church yard? (*funny laugh*).

GIRCH TICKET VENDOR

I suppose being spooky suits the occasion, sorry, sir. Here's your change:

Scream from bar.

MABEL

Jack! Jack! Jack's having a bad turn.

MEDICAL STUDENT

Has your husband had attacks like this before?

MABEL

Not like this, he hasn't. Just dizzy spells like. The doctor said he had high- somethin' or other.

MEDICAL STUDENT (*over his cell phone*)

Looks like severe hypertension. Send an ambulance for the Holy Grail, Wells Road, Glastonbury. Urgent. A grave risk (*voice lower*)of cardiac failure.

Fade out

SCENE 6: DR. PANHURST AND MARY AT ROMEO'S PIZZA PALACE AT THE SAME TIME

Peter Panhurst and Mary are sitting at a table. Both look sullen, Mary particularly so. After a pause conversation resumes.

DR. PETER PANHURST

What are you eating Mary?

MARY

Haven't much appetite really? (*looks at menu dreamily*)

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, I'll have a fungi. What about a drink?

MARY

A coffee, I suppose.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Perhaps I should have asked: "What's eating you?" Maybe the mood Halloween is weighing on your mind.

MARY

Do you want me to be frank?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, of course.

MARY

It's my father and ..it's you.

WAITER

May I take your orders?

DR. PETER PANHURST

A beer and a coffee for the moment, thanks. Maybe we'll order something else later.

{To Mary}: It's awkward eating alone. Sure you don't want anything to eat? As you were saying you have a problem with your father and me?

MARY

Really I mean me, Mary Beckford. I've got a lot on my plate at the moment.

DR. PETER PANHURST

And you haven't even ordered:

MARY

Ha, ha! Very funny.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Sorry, please excuse what I think was only a harmless pun. I'm beginning to see that something is troubling you deeply, and that concerns me – deeply. What was that about your father and me.

MARY(*hesitantly and ponderously*)

My father hasn't been well of late. He complains of pains in the chest and has – I don't know – dizzy spells – and – from what I can judge – fits of depression.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I'm very sorry. Has he seen a doctor?

MARY

Yes, a doctor once made a house visit – just to check blood pressure, pulse, reflexes – that kind of thing apparently. But father can be very secretive at times, you know. He's not letting on that he's suffering from anything serious. I know him though. I've a feeling it's more than just being "a little below par."

DR. PETER PANHURST

Then you said you had an issue with me. (*Waiter brings coffee and a glass of beer*)

WAITER

Your drinks, sir. Did you want to order now?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well actually, we'll just keep to the drinks for the mo. Perhaps we'll return later for a proper meal. If we could pay the bill?

WAITER

Certainly sir. (*Using electronic device, he produces a slip*).

DR. PETER PANHURST(*paying from his wallet*)

Oh, here you are. Keep the change.

WAITER

Thank you sir.

MARY

You asked if I had an issue with you. Not so much with you personally, if you get my meaning. I like you very much. (*Panhurst winces on hearing 'like'*) It's you and Dad together and resulting negative vibes He never took to you, I'm afraid.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh we don't see eye to eye on a number of literary and aesthetic principles. Academics rarely do, at least in our field. We can agree to differ, though, like gentlemen.

MARY

While I believe he has nothing against you as a person, so to speak, he evidently feels that you pose some kind of a threat – not least to me! (*sips coffee*).

A moment of silence as Dr. Panhurst looks subdued while imbibing his beer

DR. PETER PANHURST

And your mother, does she share your father's feelings?

MARY

Mother admires you, your depth of knowledge and 'brilliance' to use her own words. Probably wishing to placate father, she did remark that despite all your virtues you were 'unsuitable' as a close friend of mine.

She thought Domi..(*hesitating and showing involuntarily that she had said something off her guard*)

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, Dominic Crawly, I presume.

MARY

If you must know, at Father's instigation, he came round to discuss the paper I'm to give on Romantic poetry.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh yes, we've discussed some aspects of that subject already, remember, Wordsworth's "daffodils," as I recall.

MARY

Funny you should mention them. When he read the part about the influence on Wordsworth from Goethe and Milton he chirped almost triumphantly that all that was 'pure speculation.' He called the reference to Easter bells trivial and specious the grounding of the poem in an actual walk the day before Good Friday. He said the poem owed nothing to the fact that Wordsworth once saw a crowd of daffodils. It merely served as helpful prompt. Yes, he 'rejected all that positivist pseudo-religious eyewash' he found in my – basically your interpretation. According to him a poem was an independent aesthetic object, he stressed, requiring no buttressing by information of interest to a historian or biographers perhaps but of decidedly no interest at all to the critic of literature.

DR. PETER PANHURST

In other words he was regurgitating the usual *spiel* promoted by the advocates of New Criticism, as it is termed. They rinse everything of personal or historic moment out of a work and pretend that the desiccated result is a 'true aesthetic object' like a sculpture. They forget that perception of any object is a never a purely automatic impersonal event, a one-way transfer of mental machinery, whereas in truth all such acts of perception and appreciation create a kind of inter-subjective dialogue between the author and the cooperating observer, both sharing in the common life of humanity.

MARY

I'm not saying that Dominic is right and that you are wrong, but I love and revere my father, and my mother naturally. Sometimes one has to make difficult choices. I think under the circumstances it would be best if you didn't visit me at home and – as I've a lot 'on my plate' so to speak' I won't have much chance to see you outside the tutorial, and that's ending in two weeks in any case.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I see.

The phone rings.

MARY

Hello, Mother. I'm at *Romeo's Pizza Palace* just off the Campus. Oh no, what? At the general hospital. I'll go straight there. Yes, we'll meet there. If you get there before me tell him I love him and everything will be all right. ... Yes, .. yes. Till then, Mother. (*she cups her hands around her face. And cries ..*)

DR. PETER PANHURST

What happened, Mary?

MARY(*pressing cell phone buttons*)

Father suffered from an attack, maybe a heart attack. Only last Sunday afternoon, after you'd left, we.-

Hello, taxi, from *Romeo's Pizza Palace*, King Street to the general hospital please. As soon as possible It's urgent. –Thank you.

(*To Dr. Panhurst*) Mother, Father, and myself, went for a spin in the car and then decided to go for a walk in the field near the ruins of the Abbey. Suddenly that spooky figure appeared – that Brother something – and just then Father began to feel unwell.

DR. PETER PANHURST

You must mean Brother Todd. Certain superstitious people in the area think he represents some kind of bad influence, an omen of ..misfortune.

MARY

God forbid! I'll wait for the taxi outside. Thank you for the coffee. Naturally I'll call you to tell you how Father is. Don't phone me in the meantime , if you would. I'm sorry it had to turn out this way.

DR. PETER PANHURST

My thoughts are with you and your father. I mean that sincerely.

MARY

I know, I know. (*Sobbing*)

DR. PETER PANHURST

I'd gladly drive you but the car is parked a little way away.

MARY

Don't worry. I think I need to be alone until the taxi comes, to compose myself.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Of course.

Mary leaves. Dr. Panhurst sits rigidly in his seat and slowly shakes his head.

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PART II: AT THE ROUND TABLE

ACT I

SCENE 1: MERLIN'S LOCATION OUTSIDE KNOWN TIME AND SPACE

MERLIN

Me again. It's now coming up to the Christmas break and the end of the first semester. Which means it's Brains Trust Time at the Forum for Ecumenical Understanding when a panel of those representing the major faith communities in the world response to questions posed by the student body.

SCENE 2: AT THE PODIUM OF "THE ROUND TABLE BRAINS TRUST" IN THE FOYER OF CAMFORD UNIVERSITY

CHAIRPERSON

Welcome to the Round Table brains trust. Anyone with a smattering of knowledge about King Arthur's connection with Glastonbury will appreciate the pertinence of the round table as a meeting of minds and to give this term a modern connotation it is a fitting symbol of today's interest in all that is global whether we speak of globalization or the global village. The villagers in today's brains trust are: Bishop Martha Agaja from Nigeria. (*clapping*) This time the panel consists of a female Anglican bishop from Nigeria, Rabbi Iakov Schlesinger from Jerusalem, (*clapping*) our guest Imam Sheikh Ibrahim Husseini has just informed us that he is unable to attend this session but Walid Ashabiki, the president of the Muslim students association on this campus, has gallantly agreed to fill the breach at short notice, (*clapping*) and finally Brother Todd, a local celebrity, represents global spirituality without affiliation to an established faith group, though he aspires to unite all of them in his own one-man religious philosophy (*clapping*). The trust represents the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions of the world and Brother Todd will fill any gaps left over in the

aegis of religious belief. I must emphasize that the ecumenical movement for global understanding which sponsor this session lays no claim to all moral author and sincerely respects those who do not share a belief in theism or the role of the supernatural in the world. Before sorting out all belief and philosophic issues, those who profess commitment to religion have enough to straighten out among themselves. So each of the members of this panel will introduce herself or himself before the questioning begins.

BISHOP MIRIAM (AGAJA)

I am daunted by the prospect of representing Christianity making up a third of the world, though the Anglican church represents about five percent of the Christian world as against the Roman Catholic church which is roughly half the Christian population on the other hand, as a woman I represent half the world's population and, for whatever reason, the monotheistic religions have recognized rather late in the day that the role of women in religious life should reflect their importance as equals of men. (*clapping, applause*). Not to forget that in the Early Church the role of women was better recognized than at any time since.

CHAIRPERSON

Rabbi Schlesinger

RABBI IAKOV SCHLESINGER

In percentage terms the Jewish population poses a mere fraction of one percent of the world's population, yet without the religion of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the two great monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam could never have taken shape in the way they did. The Ten Commandments have never been abrogated or superseded by any other code of moral precepts, and in one way at least Judaism is more accepting of those who belong to other faith groups than its offspring for according to Judaism a righteous Gentile can earn the favour of God to no lesser degree than a righteous Jew. Atheists and not only they may ask "Where was God during the terrible atrocities and catastrophes that have befallen humanity over time?" And none was worse than the Shiur or the Holocaust that extinguished the lives of six million Jews in the twentieth century, and if anyone had a right to complain to God it was surely those Jews who suffered death and bereavement in their time of darkness and yet many still are resolute in their faithfulness to the God of their fathers. (*Subdued applause*).

WALID (HAHABIKI)

My religion is being maligned in an unprecedented way in modern history as quintessentially evil, violent and intolerant. Its most virulent detractors take radical groups such as *Daish* or *Isis* to be representative of one and a half billion Moslems worldwide, who lead peaceful and constructive lives. I do not wish to participate in a numbers game but on present trends Islam will soon claim as many adherents as Christianity. In any case Islam as a historical reality is now in the fifteenth century according to its own calendar and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era, the most horrible treatment was inflicted on women, Jews, so-called heretics and others in the name of Christianity. In fact Mohammed respected Jews and Christians as those who revered the books of holy scripture and forbade their forcible conversion. While the first Crusaders massacred the Jews and Moslems of Jerusalem Saladin graciously allowed Christians access to Jerusalem and the freedom to restore a Christian presence. Once it was Islam which led the way in science and medicine and inaugurated the poetry of romantic love. Foreign intervention and the tyranny of their own despots has for the time being at least reduced the Arab and Moslem nations to their present state of degradation but not necessarily for times to come. *(Applause from a portion of the audience).*

CHAIRMAN

And finally Brother Todd..

BROTHER TODD

(After looking at his audience with a penetrating and unsettling eye) I am no enemy of established religions yet the universal force of Nature is greater than any one system can enclose. I recall the lines that introduce a poem by Charles Baudelaire entitled "Correspondences," which refer to Nature as a temple and to tall tree as the pillars of that temple. Even Solomon never denied this truth for he said that no building constructed by human hands could contain the glory of God. Jesus saw in a humble lily more splendor than even the splendor of Solomon's temple. Man has sought to master Nature by means of the might of his technology but to no avail, so let us return to Nature, our mother and mistress. We are mere mortals, sons and daughters of the dust, but even this dust should teach us the brotherhood and sisterhood we all share. *(guarded applause)*

CHAIRPERSON

It seems to me that the opening statements of the panel have prompted some of the questions. Anyway, let's start. Here is a question from a student of political science, Tim Atkins: Why has religious fervor caused so many wars and so much panic over the centuries until now? Bishop?

BISHOP MIRIAM

Maybe it all has to do with the fact that women have not had much of a look in in politics and government until recently. On a serious note, religion has always been part and parcel of all that has to do with human needs, ambitions any other aspect of human activity you may care to mention. The highest religious ideals as expressed for example in the millennial vision of Isaiah foreseeing the time when the lion and the lamb will live together or those pronounced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount reveal that peace is at the heart of true unadulterated religion. The advent of secularism has not brought peace either.

WALID

The Prophet Mohammed sought true peace no less. The most usual greeting in the Moslem world is *Salaam akeikum*, with the response *Wa aleikum salaam*.

RABBI

That is a Jewish greeting too, especially at the blessing of the moon after the Sabbath. *Shalom Aleichem*.

BROTHER TODD

As one who is not bound by submission to any major religion I endorse the statements of my fellow members of this panel. In any case religion is so wide and undifferentiating a term. I think we can get to the core of what is doubtless a central question on the basis of more specific question.

Hums of agreement

CHAIRPERSON

Good, I sense general agreement on this point. Now for a question from a young lady studying Architecture Miss Josephine or Joe Willoughby. I think Bishop Agaji has broached this issue. "Why are women so greatly underrepresented by the institutions of all major religions?"

BISHOP MIRIAM

The issue is rooted in the very language we use. There are only three pronouns in the third person singular in English – HE, SHE, and IT. As we know, for whatever reason HE is the commonly accepted pronoun referring to God, and in the Christian Trinity two persons are male in accord with the words FATHER and SON. The gender of the Holy Spirit is more open to discussion. Unless one would return to the Great Mother or Universal Goddess who was worshipped at the dawn of known history, SHE does not sound quite right, and IT seems to me to be very impersonal. My Roman Catholic brothers and sisters deeply revere the Virgin Mary whose status as Co-Redemptrix, the New Eve, brings her into the closest association with THE SON. However, any concern with God is inseparable from the Female aspect of the bride and mother.

RABBI SCHLESINGER

That is strongly evident in the Jewish belief that the bond between *HaShem*, a reference to the divine name I prefer to use in discussions and Israel is a marriage with all its mutual privileges and responsibilities. I agree with the Bishop that the limitations of human thought and language cannot convey the full truth of Hashem's nature. The Hebrew Bible concedes female, particularly maternal attributes of *HaShem*, one of Whose names is *el Shaddai*, which in other contexts actually means *breast*.

CHAIRPERSON

Walid, many in the West speak of the repression of women in the Islamic world.

WALID

I do not share the attitude to women's dress code of many co-religionists, nor do many other who share my point of view, and they will point out that while modesty in dress was always required, the full head covering is based on customs not doctrine. Islam revere womankind to the highest degree, and Arab and Persian poetry lay the foundation for the troubadours and later romantic poetry in general.

BROTHER TODD

I have not the least compunction about according the female principle full equality with its male counterpoint. The very structure of our thoughts rooted in the unconscious enclose the animus and the anima in the closest interdependent relationship. The female empathy with the cycle of nature, the phases of the moon and tides, the realm of night aroused that fear which gave rise to witch hunts and all their horrors,

and even now there is a residual distrust of female influence but that is breaking down.

BISHOP MIRIAM

In the Early Church women exercised greater influence and commanded greater reverence than now. Who anointed Jesus, the Messiah and Christ, the Anointed One, if not a woman, implicitly a priestess, as only one with a priest role could anoint a king. Some say that Luke and Paul backpedaled on this issue for Luke and even John only accorded a female the right to anoint the feet of Jesus, though Tatian, who tried to harmonize all the gospel narratives in the second half of the second century, was consistent in depicting an anointing of both Jesus's head and feet. By the way, Rabbi, did Moses marry a black woman for the Book of Numbers refers to a Cushite, an Ethiopian woman in this connection?

RABBI SCHLESINGER

Opinion is somewhat divided. Some say the reference to the Cushite wife applies to his first and only wife Zipporah, a Medianite. There are difficulties with this view. According to rabbinic rules of exegesis there are four levels of meaning to be drawn from a text and the literal or apparent meaning needs to be viewed in the light of its deeper allegorical significance. Some do take the meaning of "Cushite" literally and even say that Miriam had a short dose of leprosy that made her go white as a punishment for racial prejudice.

BISHOP MIRIAM

How interesting. Perhaps we can talk further about this over coffee. Kosher coffee, I mean

RABBI SCHLESINGER

Even if the coffee is kosher, I still have to be careful about the cup it's in. We'll arrange something, I'm sure. I'm very much for ecumenical dialog. (*both smile*)

CHAIRPERSON

And now a question that is particularly relevant to all of us here. From Abigail Woods from the Physics department. In view of the warning in the Book of Revelation pertaining to the number 666, how should we view the recently installed surveillance system in this university?

BISHOP MIRIAM

I would be very wary of applying prophetic wards so specifically to a matter of science and technology. All knowledge all potentiality themselves are neither good or evil in themselves. It is in human intentions that good and evil reside.

BROTHER TODD

I have heard it said thought that www corresponds to 666 as *vav* the Hebrew equivalent of W is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

RABBI SCHLESINGER

This correlation of letters and numbers underlies the *Gematria*, a form of mystical interpretation, but all the 666 talk is not a matter that lies in my department. The spread of knowledge is good but in the biblical view the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

WALID

Two learned gentlemen were disputing how the world was to be saved. One stated that salvation would come when humanity saw the light of reason. The other protested that salvation would come only as a result of divine intervention. A third entered the dispute saying. You are both right. You are saying exactly the same thing.

Laughter, Fade out.

SCENE 2: AT THE CONTROL CENTRE OF THE RECENTLY INSTALLED VIDEO SURVEILLANCE FACILITY, THE “BEAST”

PROFESSOR BENJAMIN MERLYN

Thank you for joining me once again to discuss these so very important educational proposals which we saw last time...

I am aware that there are some tensions because there are aspects in the new approach which some have stated are unacceptable...

As we have seen we are opening up new perspectives and not cans of worms which will destroy the very creative approach we are proposing please....

It is time for us to gauge what progress we have achieved in our purpose of promoting global education. By the beginning of spring semester this year the video surveillance system we spoke of at the first conference was fully in place, well, at least fully operative to all intents and purposes. I would like you to hear a progress report from Mr. Hugh Watkins, the director of the Centre for Balanced Evaluation

through Advanced Systemic Technology (BEAST for short) who will provide an overview of the centre's achievements so far followed by a demonstration of the system in action in real time. Mr. Watkins.

MR. HUGH WATKINS

Hello, ladies and gentleman. I have great it gives me great pleasure to introduce "the Beast" to you, a beast very much in the service of humanity's progress.

As you will know already most rooms in the university have video cameras installed in them and in a certain number there are a raft of very interesting technical features. Pease come this way. You see here a good number of cubicles which any authorized person may use in order to make useless and necessary assessments and provide the basis for important decisions.

DR. RUDOLPH ALBRECHT

Who is an authorized person in this case?

MR. HUGH WATKINS

Any member of faculty with tenure. Lecturers and other non-tenured staff may use the centre if granted special permission by the control committee.

DR. RUDOLPH ALBRECHT

Er, thank you.

MR. HUGH WATKINS

A pleasure, sir. Students have been issued with electronic tags which they wear on their wrists in a manner similar to a watch. As they enter a tutorial room or lecture hall their identity and other information is recorded. As a byproduct, so to speak, this procedure allows those concerned to keep tabs on attendance and punctuality, which provides an enhanced incentive to the students to make optimum use of the opportunities available to them. (*Raised eyebrows*). Of course evaluations based on resultant statistics are essentially quantitative. What about quality control then? In lectures, applause is measures by decibels in ratio to the number of attendees. Extraneous noises are also recorded and evaluated by experts. In tutorials student participation is recorded and assessed in terms of the number of verbal contributions. Of course the system evaluates the performance of the teachers too, here in terms of relevance and the so-called CDQ, the *Conformity or Deviation Quotient*. If for example, the subject is a Shakespeare play and an inordinate number of words such as "Marxist," "revolution,"

“nightclub” or “beer” is registered, it becomes clear that the *deviation quotient* is too high.

MADAME SARMA

What about students who feel this is survey is a denial of privacy rights?

MR. HUGH WATKINS

I should add, no student is forced to wear a personal tag, though a recording is made of total number of attendees as they enter into the room. However, the fact that they do not fully participated is not overlooked. Full participation greatly assists forward planning. If we measure great enthusiasm with tag wearers whose socio-economic rating is high, investors in educational programs will have a clearer idea where to place their money, and I don't only mean private investors but also institutions, banks and governments and charitable organizations. Enough words, join me ladies and gentleman for a tour of this facility. In each cubicle a you will see a list of lectures and tutorials currently being held with names of instructors and the number of student attendees. You can zero in on any location and subject of interest to you

MONSIGNOR ALFONSO VINCENTI

What a pity the Inquisition didn't hava this facility in the sixteenth century. The Church authorities could hava weeded out heresy before the needa for more drastic and painful measures was ever needed.

PROFESSOR CHOW LEE WONG

Prevention is better that cure.

MR. SAMUEL WOLFSSON

Times have changed. Now we are after Islamic extremists and the like.

MR. HUGH WATKINS

Please use the cubicles yourselves, ladies and gentle we have twenty minutes before the next plenary session.

Dr. Albrecht enters a cubicle, chooses a channel and switches to it.

VOICE FROM CHANNEL

I now recite lines in *As You Like It* to show you what I mean

- **Rosalind.** [*Aside to CELIA*] I will speak to him like a saucy lackey, and under that habit play the knave with him.- Do you hear, forester?
- **Orlando.** Very well; what would you?
- **Rosalind.** I pray you, what is't o'clock?
- **Orlando.** You should ask me what time o' day; there's no clock in the forest.
- **Rosalind.** Then there is no true lover in the forest, else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock.
- **Orlando.** And why not the swift foot of Time? Had not that been as proper?
- **Rosalind.** By no means, sir. Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.
- **Orlando.** I prithee, who doth he trot withal?

Long before Bergson made the famous distinction between *temps* and *durée*, time measure by the clock and the time experiences by human beings that varies with mood, expectation, fear hope and enjoyment, We know from the sonnets how fascinated even obsessed Shakespeare was with time. And the transience of human life. Time was mysterious and self-existent it was Emanuel Kant who first proposed that time as such does not exist outside the mind and its proclivity to impose the category of time and space.....

Switches to another channel

VOICE

My thesis that the great battles of the First World War should be regarded in the context of history in its entirety. Take the battle of Verdun where the armies of France and Germany tried to grind the enemy into power . it was the Treaty of Verdun which resulted in the fragmentation of Charlemagne empire that had united the kingdom of the Franks in the west, when France derives its name and the Franco-Saxon portion of the empire in the east. In fact the treaty led to a three-

way partition with a middle kingdom separating east and west in a strip that included lands that later evolved into the Netherlands, Alsace Lorraine, the Rhineland and northern Italy, areas of fierce contention throughout European history until the end of second world war, and the first to unite in the early the initial basis of the European union. Sedan also played a pivotal role,...

He switches again

VOICE

The legacy of Galileo fell to Newton as later Einstein built on the foundation of Maxwell, who had established the electromagnetic waves and light travelled at the same constant velocity

Chow taps Dr. Albrecht on the shoulder.

PROFESSOR CHOW LEE WONG

Not snooping, I hope?

DR. ALBRECHT

No, just broadening my horizons..

Both laugh.

Fade out

SCENE 3: PROFESSOR EDWIN PEARCE IS GIVING A LECTURE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE WITH SLIDES

PROFESSOR PEARCE

This seminar is open to all students interested in the theme Church architecture as a mirror of historical developments. I suppose it will primarily interest students of history and those of architecture as the credits to be awarded will help towards meeting the course work demands for a degree in those subjects. I don't like very large numbers of participants as in such a case I cannot deal with the progress of each student as closely as I would like. Those studying other subjects are welcome as long as they have only auditor status and there are enough seats for participants in the two departments I mentioned. So please write your names on the attendance list and specify your department and whether you want grades for course credit

or whether you just want to audit. Only during our next session can I tell non-specialists if they can stay.

So I have specified a number of interesting cases to study. Those wishing to write a term paper can start considering which cathedral or church could interest them. I will accept group work provided that it is made clear who wrote what and that the length of the paper increases in proportion to the number of writers. Thus if one person writes a paper of fifteen to twenty pages two working together should manage thirty to forty. I hope you will be able to decide on your subject by next time and place a cross against the themes on offer. Good. For today let us consider how a church or cathedral reflects social and political conditions of the time – of the stretch of time – during which it was built. Perhaps we could look at a number of slides. Feel free to suggest the reason a cathedral is the way it is in terms of size, appearance and setting. The first picture is of Ely cathedral just north of Cambridge, *20 seconds viewing time*, the second is Durham cathedral in the North of England – (*twenty seconds*) – the third Chartres Cathedral in France (*twenty seconds*) – the next Cologne Cathedral on the Rhine – then and finally today the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Barcelona in Spain. Any comments? Here we see them together. What about Ely, for example?

STUDENT

It looks like a fortress.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Yes, in a way.

FEMALE STUDENT

So does Durham.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Those magnificent twin towers certainly make it impressive and daunting. The masons and builders of the Middle Ages sought to build an edifice to glorify God, that is to serve a religious purpose, but does that exclude other motives?

STUDENT

A fortress is a military term. Perhaps it served a military purpose.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Probably. Ely is to this day a small market town in the Fens of East Anglia.. Why place such a huge monument there precisely? In Norman times the Isle of Ely was an island surrounded by swamps and rivers almost impossible for all but local people to capture.

STUDENT

In fact, Ely was a retreat for Hereward the Wake, who held out against the Norman invaders.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Good, so what's the connection between the imposing size and structure of Ely and the time of its building?

STUDENT

To show who was boss.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

And what about Cologne Cathedral? That's very imposing too. For the same reason. Who knows something about the Cathedral in relation to German history?

HANS

I come from Cologne. It was begun in the thirteenth century and finished only in 1880.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Interesting. What was the historical situation in 1880?

HANS

Germany was unified at last. The second German empire was established in 1871 as a result of the Franco-Prussian war.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Hans, could you tell us what part of the Cathedral was finished last.

HANS

Yes, indeed. It was the towers.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Good. Let's look at this picture showing the state of the Cathedral as late as 1780. Not only are the towers not there. The middle section of the nave is missing too. The cathedral looks a bit like a ruin, and when French troops occupied Cologne in the wake of the French revolution

the cathedral served as a stable for the French cavalry. A similar fate befell the old cathedral of Saint Paul's under the rule of Oliver Cromwell. It was only as from 1841 when there was a strong political and patriotic motive to complete the cathedral as a symbol of German political and national unity.

HANS

In 1841 the German national anthem, the *Deutschlandlied.*, was composed:

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Precisely. No doubt a religious aspiration was the main driving force but we have to remember that the political direction of the movement to complete the Cathedral came from Prussia, which was a predominantly Lutheran part of Germany. By the way, as you probably know, we will be in the spotlight soon when a number of inspectors will follow our seminar by video cameras. Who wants to become world famous?

JOE

Couldn't somebody give a talk on Glastonbury Abbey, seeing that it's on our doorstep – or what remains of it.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Good idea. It's not on the list of options, but come to think there's no reason why it shouldn't be. But it's an odd case, as a ruin, I mean.

LEON

There was a historical reason why it became one.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Good point. You mean the reformation and secularization. Even in Catholic France the great abbey of Cluny suffered the same fate as Glastonbury.

JOE

Apart from that, I'd be interested to know what it looked like.

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Well, there you are. Do some original research on this question.

JOE

Me and my friend Leon?

PROFESSOR PEARCE

Fine, good teamwork then.

LEON gives Joe a hug and kiss

ROBOTIC VOICE FROM A LOUDSPEAKER

PLEASE observe etiquette compatible with this place of learning. Here is no place for any display of personal affection or intimacy between members male and female students. In the interests of propriety please refrain from such displays in public. You have sufficient opportunities for them in the private arena. Thank you for your understanding.

Fade out

SCENE 4: AT THE STAGE OF THE CAMPUS THEATRE

ADRIAN FOSTER:

We'll have to break off this rehearsal of *As You Like IT* Listen up folks. There's plenty of other work to do, plenty! I've just been to the Students' Union's coordination committee where it was agreed that student societies should do their own thing for the coming outdoor event. We in the English Drama society invite suggestions as to what we should put on of the three days we've got. Should we stage a play? If so, what play? Something light in keeping with the spirit of the event. Well, any ideas?

STUDENT 1

As You Like It? We are preparing for it anyway.

STUDENT 2

Charlie's Aunt.

STUDENT 3

An open mike poetry session?

ADRIAN FOSTER

I like the idea of a poetry session. It could include a bit of stand up comedy and music.

GIRL STUDENT

Why not have both an open mike session and a play.

ADRIAN FOSTER

The trouble with a full-length play is: can we rustle up enough actors able to have the parts ready... unless we put on a play we've already done? That would be a bit stale though.

GIRL STUDENT

Why not have a kind of fancy dress show based on Shakespeare's dramas. Jim would make a good Caliban, for sure.

Jim beats breast uttering uh..uh sound. laughs

ADRIAN FOSTER

As long as they recite an appropriate passage from Shakespeare. And interact with other character spontaneously, sort of.

JOE (*to a fiend*)

Let's go and Rosalind and Orlando.

STUDENT 1 (*looking out of the window*):

Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look.

STUDENT 2

Oh dear, it's Dr. creepy-crawly snooping around. He's very much opposed to the very idea of this outdoor event. He can't bug the trees and bushes, I suppose. (*Jeers*)

MARY

Will interested members of staff be able to join in?

ADRIAN FOSTER

Don't see why not. Let's vote on it.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY (*enters surreptiously*)

I don't mean to intrude or eavesdrop. Did I overhear some mention of an open mike session in the woods? What an interesting idea! Very novel, I'm sure.

Fade out

**SCENE 5 : DR. PANHURST MEETS MARY IN THE CAMPUS GARDEN
PATH IN THE CAMPUS GARDENS**

DR. PETER PANHURST

Hello stranger.

MARY

Hello, Peter. I've been meaning to contact you for some time.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, now spring is here. The daffodils will soon be out. You've a lot on your plate. Best regards to your father.. When you last phoned me just before New Year's Eve you said he was out of danger. I gather he's at home now after a course of treatment in Bristol. .

MARY

Yes, he's been home for a fortnight now. . That's another reason I haven't been in touch. So much to arrange at home to support Mother and now Dad's back, I try my best to relieve him of some office work. If only he would relax mentally instead of trying to bear all the burdens of the world. By the way, you heard that Jack the owner of the Holy Grail passed away. Funny he suffered an attack during the night of Halloween, just like my father did.

DR. PETER PANHURST

I had heard. He was such a friendly and cheerful person. The students will miss him a lot.

MARY

And how are you keeping yourself?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, since you ask, I'm not so sure I'll remain here much longer. I got a letter from the University board warning that my contract may not be renewed in view of drastic financial cuts.

MARY

Oh, no. I learned from Dominic that the general outlook was pretty dismal. But added that his position is secure.

DR. PETER PANHURST

That's the impression I get too. He sometimes acts as though he is running the department single-handed.

MARY

I've something to tell you, Peter. Dominic evinced a great measure of solicitude towards Father and myself at a difficult time. I've begun to appreciate his good qualities and he does have some you know. (*ause for ten seconds*) He has asked me to be his wife.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Whaat' I, mean Really. And you have accepted?

MARY

Not with a plain yes, not yet, but I told him that I needed a little time to collect my feelings after so much has happened but he had reason to hope that I would make my decision in his favour.

PP:

I had noted a spring in his steps recently, and he's evidently undergone a complete change of mind on the question of the outdoor festival. Apparently he wants to play his full part in its preparation. Strange. When I asked if he was going to wear a costume, he archly remarked that he would probably turn up as Malvoleo.

MARY

Sure that wasn't your idea.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Oh, no. I can assure you. If I don't dress up as Orlando, I'll be the Pied Piper. I hope to see you there. First, there will be that inspection thing to get over. Are you going to take a prominent part in it?

Mary:

Yes, you'll see.

DR. PETER PANHURST

A secret eh? By the way, I had a stroll in the abbey precinct the other day. The first daffodils are out. Why not go and have a look for yourself.

Crawling happen to pass by but on seeing them darts behind a tree.

MARY

I will. And please stay. Don't forsake all those students who like –even adore – you.

DR. PETER PANHURST

Well, we'll see. Till the next time. At the latest at the congress in the woods

Oh you mean the poetry and arts day in the woods in protest against *the Beast*.

Yes.

MARY

Till the next time.

DR. PETER PANHURST

aside?

Funny. What in heaven's name is Dominic Crawley up to now? He always has the knack of turning up when you least expect to see him.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLER (*to Mary*)

Dominic Crawl oh, what charming company you keep these days, Mary.

MARY (*Mary approaches Dr. Crawley and speaks in a low voice*)

What concern is that of yours? I hadn't met Dr. Panhurst for weeks, and so it was a good chance to catch up.

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

I fully understand, Mary. I'll phone you tonight. Tara.

(*Close up, aside*) It's high time I put paid to any lingering emotional influence this Pied Piper seems to assert on Mary. I'll be working on this one. Congress of the woods, eh?

A child runs past, slip up and falls into a pool of mud. Dr. Crawley grins and chortles in a sinister way.

ACT II

SCENE 1: A SOCIOLOGY SESSION IN THE LECTURE HALL

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

I am asking you then to apply theory to practice, general principles to specifics, the abstract to the world around us. How do the findings of sociology relate to the people in our area and our community? Our university is plonk in the middle of Somerset, a county known for its reliance on agriculture, the excellence of its cider and apple liqueurs, which many of you have most probably savoured, its sense of tradition and history, its mysteries shrouded in legends that have it once Jesus as a boy and Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury, that the first church in Britain was founded here, that the King Arthur is buried here, and so I could go on. Now in the closing weeks of the spring semester this is time for some field work, so I am asking you to work on that well-tried instrument of sociological research – the questionnaire – to discover what young people in the local area make of ideas and concepts so familiar to us in our ivory tower of higher education. . How you formulate this questionnaire is your own business. The important thing is to record the reactions of those questioned objectively and adequately, perhaps aided by recording equipment as well as questionnaire forms and multiple choice sheets. We should have enough time to evaluate the data we collect in time to present our main findings to the inspectors in June just before the academic year closes. I suggest you concentrate on people of your own age and so visit schools, training centres and even local public houses for those who venture where angels fear to tread:

SCENE 2: AT THE HOLY GRAIL ONE EVENING

ERNIE

I ‘ve abought me another hoss.

CUTHBERT

Aw Ah!

ERNIE

I war in Taunton on zaturdie, zo I dort I'll have me onother avour the winter com. I zee theez a-empt thy glass. Mabel, two beers, please. Gee I zum crubbin too.

MABEL

We've been here some time but I still don't always understand your local dialect – I mean form of English. I think crummin would be bread and cheese.

ANGELA

. Yes that's correct. If there's any trouble, I can always help as interpreter.

Mabel.

Thanks, love. I can always rely on you.

Enter students with questionnaires.

LOCAL YOUTH

Haytytayti

ERNIE

Begummers. It be they students. I callem bibblers livin at uz taxpayer'z expense.

CUTHBERT

Gree.

RICHARD (STUDENT)

Excuse me We would like you to answer a few questions? We have brought some questionnaires with us or if you like we can record your answers to certain prompts.

ERNIE

G' on: jist for a lark then.

RICHARD

A moment. Ready, Paul.

(To local youths) Section one general culture. What do you say in response to:

'To be or not to be'.

CUTHBERT

Zat be a charriter called Hamlet by William Shakespeare, zat be.

RICHARD

Good. A work by Ariosto?

LOCAL YOUTH

Harry oo?

ANGELA

That were a good un. I'll use that in a poem.

Enter Dominic Crawley, who keeps in the background.

RICHARD

Let's go on to logical associations: What is to cow as a goose is to gander or a witch is to warlock?

ERNIE

Ow ar, I gree. Ow ar, I don't go for all that spookay stuff eether

RICHARD

French songs: *Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment Chagrin D'amour.*

LOCAL YOUTH

I know that'n. Amour meanz *love* in French, If a girl do ee wrong, , zo *chagrin d'amme.*

Guffaws from local youths.

ERNIE

May I aks ee a question or two?

RICHARD

Why not. This should be a two-way cultural exchange.

ERNIE

Nou Let me ask ee zomat- what's the price o a sack o turnips. they week?

RICHARD

Wouldn't know –

CUTHBERT (*derisively*) Ee wuden last long on the farm, wudee?.

LOCAL YOUTH

Ow ar. I' gee he a day at most.

CUTHBERT

How many eggs do an 'hen lay a week?

RICHARD

I just buy eggs in packets of six.

I'll have to do more work on this. Excuse. We'll leave these questionnaires. at the bar and we'll call for them tomorrow.

Exeunt Richard and Paul.

CUTHBERT

That war quick. (*making a paper dart*).

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

May I introduce myself? Though I must admit to being from the University I speak a universal language when I say: a round for everyone present.

ERNIE

Hurry. He's got zum gumption.

Youths start placing orders.

.

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

The students of the university are running an outdoor event at the end of May, to which you as members of the local community are most cordially invited. There'll be plenty of ale, beer and cider on tap.

LOCAL YOUTH

Zoundz grit..

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

There be plenty of chance for having some fun. Music, dancing, comedy shows, poetry readings.

CUTHBERT (to Angela)

There's your chance, Songstress. She's a grit won for poetry.

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Brilliant, splendid. Take a full part in our open mike event.

ERNIE

Oi'll cum gladly if there's booze.

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Booze galore! Oh, another thing. The students have a tradition that somebody should get thrown into water, a stream or pond maybe.

CUTHBERT

Oh, thee mean duckpondin' That's a sacred rite from the olden days. Once ye's decided to duckpond, ee gotta gon dru wiz it, or ..the boogy man will getcha.

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Don't worry on that score. We'll go through with it. 'Duckponding', eh?. Could three or four of you tough lads help. There will be a financial reward for this honouring of an age-old student tradition.

ERNIE

Money? Ow much?

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Say twenty-five – no thirty no fifty pounds a person.

BURLY YOUTH

Hu do we knoe oo to duckpond.?

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

According to this ancient tradition I will say to the person in question. "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" I will then blow a kiss to the person concerned.

ERNIE

Get thee Ducky. When do we git the money?

DOMINIC CRAWLEY

We'll meet here at 6.30 on Saturday the 30th. I'll pay in advance.

YOUTHS

Adun.

Dominic Crawley shakes on it with four youths.

.Drinks handed round.

DOMINIC CRAWLEY.

Let's drink to student traditions, the ancient rite of duckponding and the honourable part you'll play in it.

Youths sing "Old uncle Tom Cobbley and all."

SCENE 3: AT THE OPEN MIKE SESSION IN THE WOODS

COMPERE

Folks, all you hidden talents, you voices in the wilderness, all you unrecognized geniuses, now's your chance to shame the world for not recognizing your greatness. Rousseau, we honour thee. 'Back to Nature' is our watchword too. Back to the green wood celebrated in Shakespeare's *As you like it*. Away from the dark and stuffy study. There is no saviour in dark secret chambers. Here is true democracy with no censorship, no snotty experts to belittle you, no rejection slips. Broadcast to humanity, to the universe, show 'em where it's at in the great cosmic scheme of things. This is open mike. Ah, our first poet is a local poetess, Angela Phillips, the celebrated cider-swiggling Sappho of the west.

Clapping – "Our Angie comes up from zomerzet where the zoider apples grow"

ANGELA (*with a west country accent*)

Another poetaster or a budding Baudelaire?
No one takes much notice, no one seems to care.
He writes his contributions yet knows deep down within
Another terse rejection slip is what's awaiting him.
Enclosed within an envelope the editor's regrets,
Another sprig of poetry returned with due respects.
But why does he continue, knowing every rhyme
Like bread cast on the waters returns – before its time?

Perhaps it is perversity that makes him not give in,
Perhaps he is a hero who knows he cannot win.
Perhaps he's writing doggerel that hides a gem or two.
Perhaps Apollo's sunbeams - though so rarely - do shine through.
Perhaps - - he is a genius born long before his hour.
It is this thought which most of all provides his staying power.
"Those academic high-ups who deny my hidden talent
Shall one day crave my pardon when its greatness is apparent".

Cheers amid jocular shouts of "we love you Angie."

A STUDENT POET (*Gesturing in a romantic fashion to Angela, A musician clad like the Pied Piper plays the flute*)

Angela, sweep hence these leaden clouds.
Music, they say, can cheer the saddest heart.
Euterpe bids her frowning father smile,
so let her now reveal her powers to me.

And yet you play a doleful Orphic strain.
O let me hear a light and happy air. But no,
for that would, mocking, only chide : "So sad?"
The bat, the mole, must shun the sudden light.
The slave, surprised, may fear his broken chains.
Your chords reach down to find my sunless pit.
When pity salts, sympathy salves, the wound.
A song of love can melt the strongest bars.

Raised by strong cords I scale my dungeon walls.
Soon shall I feel the firm earth under foot,
soon shall I ply my worldly trade again.
Yet you play on! Your healing task is done.
I paid the piper, so let me call the tune.
Rising too high, I fear a greater fall.

As sweet as cane the melody you play.
The solid world dissolves into the air.
Of Heaven's gate you hold the golden key.
Let me but linger at the Temple's door.
Entering, I bid the earth adieu. Content
once to have heard the bells of burning gold,

once to have stood before celestial walls.
Then back to earth, but never to the same.
For Heaven's tones, once heard, can never die.

Oh, when the scales have fallen,
we see, we hear, we know
our element is boundless,
like water and like air.

Com. Thank you for that 'gem'. We now have Jim Stokes well known to the English department as 'Lucky Jim'.

JIM

Once there was a boy
Whose chief delight it ever was
to roam wherever fancy led,
to verdant mead or secret glade,
some copse or gently sloping hill,
where seated on his mossy throne,
he might survey his Arcady
and spy far-off spires and towers.
As if bound by a fairy's spell
he heard melodies so strange
and saw yet stranger sights.
Sometimes he awoke to shouts
as loud as any thunder-clap
that fells the mighty oak.
Rousing from his drowsy dreams one day
he saw standing there a figure,
more elf than man, goatish, small,
whose laughing eyes spelt
mischief but no harm.
"Hello," he said. "I'm Pan.
Learn of me, and I shall teach
the names of shrubs and trees,
the alder, hawthorn, bay, rowan,
the blackthorn, birch and ash.
Learn of me the songs birds sing,
of chaffinch, thrush, tit, piper,
the buzzard, rook and jay.
Learn of me what creeping things
there are, what life is found

in burrow, pond and stream.
Learn what games fox-cubs do play,
how weasels hunt and rabbits sport,
and I shall teach you how to tease
 little girls by a pulling of their plaits,
and bigger ones, well I'll come to that.
I'll teach much more, but for the while,
just listen to this pipe I play.”
So sweet the strain that bade me muse
on things from Fancy's store purloined,
on changing scenes and what they told
of elves in grottoes, nixies coy
that bathed in streams by woody dells,
of golden fields and reapers gladsome,
yet unmindful of their toil,
of pastures lush where shepherds danced,
their gold-fleeced flocks untended grazed,
for wolves, it seemed, were kindly then.
A voice bade me return to that same spot
to learn new wonders and explore new lands.
The vision over, sadly I homeward stepped,
Cheered only by the promise I had heard.

Mine was this sorrow, for yes, I was that boy.
I came again and waited there for Pan.
I waited though the wind was cold
and clouds, like zealous sentinels,
would let no sunbeams pass.
Pan never came, but one came in his stead.,
a little man, in stature only like to Pan.
His clothes were black, as black as sin.
his hat was black and very tall.
Black were his shoes and mirror-shiny, too.
All was black, in fact, save silver buckles
on hat and shoe, his silver hair,
his haggard dead-pan face.
He also had a black sack on his back
and a spade held fast by a black strap.
He placed the black sack and spade
on the ground and glowered at me.
“Now I shall teach you, boy”, he said,
producing a little black book
from a pocket in his black coat.

He opened the black book at chapter one,
and read it to me. This done, he read on
the second chapter, then the third,
the fourth, until the final chapter came,
and this also he read aloud to me.
He taught me words both new and long,
which soon would haunt me in my sleep,
and gross moral turpentine, and more words,
jussive subjunkthings, ablative ablutions,
speculative Antinomianism, unclear warheads,
overkill, collateral damage, infernal combustion,
and finally words proving inconclusively
that all but a few must perish in perdition,
or, in keeping with this rational age,
a thermonuclear holocaust.
He made me carry the black sack
up to a hill and then handed me his spade.
with which I had to dig a hole.
“Why?” I asked. “Because I say!” said he,
“and because I want to bury that black sack.”
I dared not ask what that sack contained.
My task accomplished, I ran back
my homeward way, surmising as I did
what that sack might have contained.

Pan, I fancied, or else perchance, a boy.

Clapping, applause.

COMPERE

Thank you for that Jim. Was the little man with the black hat a reference to any of our professors? We now have the pleasure of hearing none other than the Pied Piper in residence, Dr. Peter Panhurst.

Cheers: Sock it to ‘em lover boy!

DR. PETER PANHURST

Taking Coleridge at his word,
I hied me to a rural scene
To leave behind the madding herd
For where Titania reigns the queen.

Ah! 'Tis hard to wax romantic,
Though bees hum and boughs do sway,
To close the mind to all the frantic
Things that jostle us each day.

No more the gentle rustic peasant,
No more the green wood wild and free.
This national park, however pleasant,
Some how's a substitute to me.

What the elm, the oak, the fir,
O what yon flowery slopes to win,
And all that Nature's beauties stir
Is marred by that blooming Cola tin.

These eyes absorbing and receptive
Scan the prospect domed with blue,
Yet that discarded pardon me
Does little to enhance the view.

(Titters from the crowd)

And though you find your Eldorado
By some far-off golden shore,
Whiles yet you munch your avocado
Above the chartered Jumbos roar.

Back then to the grind of duty,
Congested roads, polluted air.
From such as these fashion beauty.
New Millennial Baudelaire.

(Clapping, applause): Enter Dr. Dominic Crawley and some young agricultural workers, who keep in the background)

COMPERE

Thank you Dr. Panhurst, if not the new laureate then the new millennial Baudelaire! And now who else but Jonny - alias Rambo - Sikes - known for his decidedly fruity rural excursions.

JONNY RAMBO SYKES

Hi ho mi dear-i-os, here's a ditty 'bout Rambling Fred":

Excuse my rambling on so,
but my style ought to be
consonant with the theme of these lines
a tramp called rambling Fred.
Knowing where all roads lead eventually,
takes time to enjoy the splendour
more than Solomon's in field and hedge-row.
Sleeping in ditches, he can claim the best

of precedents, but what does he do for sex?
Every choice involves some sacrifice,
that every heroic high-powered executive
doth know, but perhaps he's some kind of priest
or friar belonging to the Grand Order of
Human Kind. To him, whether he says so or no,
nature is a temple with trunks for pillars.
Does that make him a symbolist like Baudelaire?
Do you think he's heard of Ariosto?
"Arry 'oo? No use asking me, mate.
Never 'ad an eddy-cation! Spare 50P?"
Yet, despite it all, he's rich
on survival and a cuppa char.

For social security purposes
he's got a permanent address in Hitchin,
but still prefers to do odd jobs
or cadge off friends in St. Albans.

Then hasn't he 'dropped (or 'opted') out'?
True, his productivity is low, but
economists take note - he is a pioneer
in low consumption. His example may thus
help us overcome the world energy crisis.

What does he do when caught in a storm?
Though fast cars splash dirty water
in his face, something a churchman
might call grace, sustains him.
Swish-! That was
The Lordship's Rolls.

Thoughts of revenge?
No, they are far behind,
for if you really believe
wisdom can stand
on its own seven feet
there's little inclination left
to expend your energies on anything less
than the quest for life's true meaning.

Time is a butler
who never quite
loses track of the household accounts.
Even lords and ladies
must eventually
muck in with the queen bee
and worker ant.

Clapping, applause

COMPERE

I think the final note of “Rambling Fred” offers a cue to the next contributor, who is none other than the ever present and enigmatic Brother Todd.

Cheers mixes with “woo – woo” sounds like those in a song by *the Rolling Stones*.

BROTHER TODD

Having a good time, everybody? That’s fine, just fine, but the story of the Great White Ship should keep you on your guard. It’s on “True Brotherhood.”

The helmsman sings a merry song:
Haec est vera fraternas,
and downs a cup of something strong,
Hick, vera, hick, fraternas.

The sailors dance a lusty jig,
forsaking sails, crow's nest and rig.
Young princes and their ladies fair
join in the drunken helmsman's air:
Haec est vera fraternas.

Commoners with nobles prance.
Friars and laymen, how they dance!
The jester sports a broken lance,
a trophy from the fields of France.
"To Henry!" sounds the raucous toast.
Hear the young knights, how they boast
of conquests on and off the field,
when foemen or coy maidens yield.
While Fitzroy strokes a wench's leg,
the boatswain opes yet one more keg.
See their chains of gleaming gold,
but feel the wind grown strangely cold.

William the atheling alone,
to the marrow of each bone
feels what sorrows must atone
for the sins of court and throne.

Woe to the ship, woe to the realm,
where none is mindful of the helm.
Woe to the king who ne'er shall smile,
woe to those bereft of child.

Gone is that day and gone that night,
gone that ship so ghostly white,
gone the prince who bravely sought
to save his sister, deed ill bought!

If, one night by Barfleur's shore,
you may hear that song once more:
Haec est vera fraternas,
et hic est aeternitas.

Now let us repair to the deserts of Arabia.

Sheikh Maut

What was that?
The passing of a cat's shadow by moonlight?
Or what was that which scudded out of sight?
A cloud?
Or the pale horse of Sheikh Maut,
Of him who rides,
Who rides at dead of night?

So told this tale a desert pilgrim to his son:
"That day the sun was like a fearsome brand,
my feet were scalded as by liquid gold.
I, but for Allah's mercy, that day had died,
Where of my knees I fell,
My head fixed in an upward stare
Towards a high dune.
There a figure like none I ever saw
Stood black against the glaring sky.
Was this Sheikh Maut
Of whom once Abdul spake in fearful tone:
'The night my infant brother died,
an angel-shape did lower
over the cradle where he lay,
and snatched, methought, his very breath away?'
And many more have told such tales.
Some say in white,
Some say in black,
Some say in garbs of gold and purple stripe,
Sheikh Maut appears in palaces,
Or where the beggar rasping cries:
'For Allah, and God's mercy's sake, a coin, a coin!'"
I heard no voice save that of wind and sand:
'Here all is one, the endless sea of land,
but not to mock, he preaches to the deaf and blind,
it is to teach the brotherhood of man.'"

Dr. Peter Panhurst sees Mary in the company of Dr. Dominic Crawley, who indicates to her that he has some business to transact. He seems more sheepish and dithering than usual.

COMPERE

And now for a little dramatic dialogue about lost property with a mention of Romeo's Pizza Palace, if I am informed correctly. Mary starts with surprise on hearing this announcement. All eyes turn to the stage. A man wearing an official looking cap sit at a table on which there is a telephone. A young man, whose wild gestures indicate agitation and vexation appears holding a cell phone.

RETRIEVING A LOST HEART

Distraught youth

Ere to Lethe's brook the woeful way I take, one final phone call shall I,
O wretch, now make.

Lost property officer

Do-dee-dum-diddle-do. Good afternoon, Matcham Junction Lost Property Office. Can I help you... sir ...madam? (aside) Oho, we have a right one here, I fear, from the sighs and deep breathing, it would at least appear. Sir, this is not "Counsel for the Despairing." Their number ends 2190. Ours ends 2191. As you might expect, these numbers often get confused. I repeat, this is the Matcham Junction Lost Property Office.

Distraught youth

O noble counsellor, wise comforter.

You speak so soon the quintessential truth!

What spirit-mentor whispers in your ear that you speak of lost things?

Aye, there's the rub!

How great, how irretrievable the loss,

how sanctified to memory is the lost,

how miserable, how wretched is the loser,

I withal!

Lost property officer

Oh, very well, sir. If you insist on me helping out, I'll try my best for you. In fact, I've become something of a professional - both in my capacity as an LPO and as a "counsellor" - for want of a better word. Sir, could you give me a description of this lost article, this 'ere heart that appears to be missing?

Distraught youth

Describe the heart!

What man has art enough for that i' faith?

Is depth so deep that ne'er the heart shall plumb it?

Is height so high, the heart ne'er reach its summit?

In length so long, the heart

Lost property officer

Sir, sir, I do get your point, sir. The heart is indeed an incommensherubble thing? Silly of me ask. Let's try another tack. Could you give me an account of the circumstances under what you lost this article - like, time, place and that?

Distraught youth

Speak not of circumstance,

but speak to me of fate!

Star-crossed am I like Romeo,

betrayed like Samson,

Cupid's arrow hath hit the mark,

it hath laid me low.

Lost property officer

Just as I thought, sir, just as I thought. Some young lady has had a part to play in the matter of this loss.

Distraught youth

A young lady you call her!
You are too kind and moderate.
A vixen, I say, a Jezebel, a Celimène
and Delilah on top of it.

Lost property officer

Oh, really, sir. Never mind. But perhaps you could give me a
description of this young -er - vixen-cum-celery of yours, in as far as
she has tangible assets, that is, sir, if you see what I mean.

Distraught youth

The locks that lap her temples were woven on the loom of dawn.

Lost property officer

I see, sir, er - honey-blonde. Could you continue your description?

Distraught youth

How can poor words describe the gilded dawn,
the taste of honey-melon, the scent of morning rose?
She walks on high where angels walk,
she talks in tongues that angels talk.
The fairest of ten thousand she, unto what compared is she, the one
who daily tortures me?

Lost property officer

Surely you can tell me the colour of her eyes, sir.

Distraught youth

Her eyes, choice sapphires of the rarest hue!

Lost property officer

I take it. sir, her eyes are blue.

Distraught youth

O man of prose, write what you will - write "blue".
To see her eyes glister like diamonds,
or of Venus the star when eve's purple o'erlays the gold of the
Hesperides!

Lost property officer

oh, very well, sir: Blue under normal lighting conditions, otherwise
there's no telling. Any other characteristics?

Distraught youth

More seductive than Salome at dance, she could wheedle from Herod
his kingdom all, or tempt Joseph more sorely than the wife of
Potiphar?

Lost property officer

A good-looker, eh, sir?

Distraught youth

She gambles on the mount of Lebanon like the doe, she is supple of
foot, she is nimble of toe.

Lost property officer

Got something of a middle eastern or Levantine allure with it, sir, has
she? Hmm. It's only a hunch, but I've got the feeling that this - er -
vixen-cum-celery of yours called by at this office the other day. Funny,
she was also complaining of the shaggrins damm'er, too.

Distraught youth

Compare my deep woes to those of some cheap girl! You do me a great
injury, sir! No one but me has felt so inwardly deep the turning knife,

the bitter gall of love. I'll brook no trifling with the common herd, for sorrows like theirs are two a penny.

Lost property officer

Well, sir, all I can say is that she did rather fit your description, though I only saw her eyes under normal lighting conditions - fluorescent tube to be precise. She complained of losing her heart under circumstances not altogether different to them under what you lost yours. She had apparently lost her heart to ..

Distraught youth

To whom?

Lost property officer

Well, sir, to quote her words: "to a rather non-descript young gentleman who insisted on flopping all over the place like some latter-day Lord Byron".

Distraught youth

Aye, that's her all right. None but she has so cutting, so malign a tongue.

Lost property officer

Reading from my notes, sir, I gather that the young gentleman in question had forsaken her for another.

Distraught youth

Has some Iago whispered falsehoods in her ear? For whom, pray?

Lost property officer

Apparently for a very enticing young lady quite outside of this world. I quote, sir: "She walks on high where angels walk, she talks in tongues as angels talk."

Distraught youth

Enough! She mocks me. Oh, cruelle!
O drag me to the highest cliff,
O cast me in the deepest sea,
to a great millstone fasten me,
and toss me awf the wind-tossed skiff!

Lost property officer

Far be it from me, sir, to put me off your stroke just as you're really getting going, like, but I wouldn't advise you to do anything extreme. She tagged on a message.

Distraught youth

More vitriol! To Lethe yet I come.

Lost property officer

I'd stay around, personally, sir, if I were you. I'll read the message to you if I may. Here goes: "If the ubiquitously flopping latter-day Lord Byron should turn up some time in the day on Thursday the 22nd of this month" - which is today's date, sir, is it not? - " Would he pick me up at the Bricklayers' Arms around 7 p.m. There's a good horror film on at the Odeon. Then we can go to Kwei Fu's in Station Road for take-away chop suey or have a pizza at Romeo's place." No, that's all right, sir, quite all right. Don't mention it. Quite, quite. I couldn't agree more. You're a very lucky young man. Well, I was young once, you know. That's going back a bit, mind you. Anyway, have to be getting back to work, sir. Glad to have been able to help out there, Tara then.....**Replacing the receiver:** Another satisfied customer.

Applause, Mary smiles volumes at Dr. Peter Panhurst. But then Mary walks over to Dr. Peter Panhurst and they are about to embrace. Dominic Crawley strides up to Peter Panhurst with group of four "yobos."

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

“Yobos” seize Dr. Peter Panhurst and carry him to a pond.

ANGELA AS PORTIA

By what right do ye now execute this man?

DT. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

I possess a contract to duckpond this man. According to an ancient law no contract to duckpond a man may be rescinded. Is that right lads?

CUTHBERT

Aye. Tis zo. If this man be not throwed into the pool, there shall be a curse on viels (fields) and bease (cattle) for zeven vull year.

ANGELA AS PORTIA

I do not doubt that, a contract bein' made, a man must indeed be throwed into this pond.

Dom. Crawly.

Aye, lads, go to't. What hinders now the execution of this writ?

ANGELA AS PORTIA

The pool demands its victim. This is true. But there is a law that no innocent man be consigned without his consent to be throwed into the pond. It iz evident that he do not consent. Lads, what titles have ye to throw this man into the pond?

CUTHBERT

One Dominic Crawley told uz that a man muss be throwed into a pond to satizfoi a custom accordin to a tradition upholden by students from time of yore.

ANGELA AS PORTIA

What tradition.? Who knows of this tradition? Let im now speak?
Silence None speaks. The premise that this man be thrown into the pond is void. Whu must then take his place? There iz an ancient lore gown back to Moses that he who has another suffer with no jist reason must himself submit unto the punishment or ordeal that he would cause another man. Therefore I decree that one Dominic Crawley be throwed into the pond. What say thee in thy defence?

DR. DOMINIC CRAWLEY

I paid these men and their acceptance of my bounty seals the contract.

“Yobos” hand money to Portia:

ANGELA AS PORTIA

These lads have renounced the money thee has given them. Here take thy dirty silver pieces.

Let the execution now be done agin Dominic Crawley.

SCENE 4: ON THE SITE OF THE WOODLAND FESTIVAL ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING

MARY

To think I saw anything in that man. Was I blind?

DR. PETER PANHURST

Bewitched, bewildered? Who cares? We have found each other, and that’s all that matters now.

MARY

But why did he do such a mean and unnecessary thing? Unnecessary even from his own standpoint. Up to last night everything was going his way. He was well placed to be second-in-command in the English Department. You had been edged out and were about to hand in your resignation. I, fool that I was, contemplated marrying him.

DR. PETER PANHURST

For that matter, why did President Nixon sanction the Waterhouse break-in when everything was in the bag? Insecurity? Dirty tricks are a part of political intrigue but even Machiavelli prescribed them only in the case of need.

SECURITY WARDEN

Who’s that in the field over there with a pair of binoculars hanging from his neck and what seems to be a video camera in his hands?

STUDENT

No, it can't be. It's Dominic Crawly snooping around – maybe to garner evidence for a law suit or something. But look over there.

MARY

Where? Goodness, it's a bull. It seems to have designs on Crawley?

SECURITY WARDEN WITH A MEGAPHONE

Sir, you're in a bull field. Get out. Retreat slowly towards the fence. Only run if the bull advances and looks like being about to charge.

Speaking in the urgent manner of a horserace commentator.

Crawley is retreating from the bull. Taurus looks threatening. He is lowering his head for what looks like a massive charge. Crawley is quickening his pace, peeking backwards for a few seconds to see where the bull has got to. The bull is now advancing towards his target at a trot. Crawley's picking up speed. The gap between Crawley and the bull is narrowing. Can Crawley make it to the fence and, if so, can he negotiate it before the bull reaches him? He stands a good chance if he picks up a bit more speed. The bull is charging at Crawley at full tempo. . Crawley is sprinting now. Only about ten seconds to the fence. I think he'll make it. Oh, no Crawley seems to be slipping on something, a cow-pancake perhaps. He's falling, no he's retrieved his balance but lost speed. Impact can now be only a few seconds away. Crawley is making a final dash to the fence. Can he make it after all? Oh no, bull's eye! The bull's got him. What a biff! Crawley is now airborne. Yes, he's flying over the fence and heading for a haystack. The bull is glowering at the haystack and snorting in triumph. Is Crawley all right? A medical team is driving to the stack. This will be a day to remember in the annals of ..of what seems to be a revolutionary new form of animal on human sport.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

The pity of it. Poor man.

CTHBERT

"E "ad a cumin.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

But I feel right sorry for 'm. Truly I do."e's human, i'n'ee?

ACT III

SCENE IN MERLIN'S TIMELESS ABODE

MERLIN

All's well that ends well. The inspectors, who were not overmuch impressed by the official lectures and seminars put on for their benefit, had such a good time at the open-air event organized by dissident students that they recommended that the authorities and governments they represented should generously support Camford in financial and other ways. There is no longer a threat of a financial meltdown affecting the future of the English Department or any other. Peter Panhurst has been asked to stay on as second in command of the English Department. Dr. Crawley is on the mat, or will be once he's recovered enough to answer some pertinent questions concerning his performance at the outdoor festival. My task is over. Let me transport your mind once more to another scene. It is a year later, and three couples have decided to tie the knot in a ceremony that share much in common with a wedding but with a difference. It is more readily comparable to a betrothal, a declaration of a sincere commitment. Its symbol is not a ring but a cord which binds the hands of the couple to be united. I take you to the meal shared by the guests of this ceremony. Three of them have been asked to read a story of their own composition on a theme that directly or indirectly impinges on (*Turning around*) At the ecumenical BETROTHAL services held beside the ruined Abbey at Glastonbury our story ends, and I bid you well. Adieu until a day I hope we meet again..

SCENE TWO: IN A MARQUEE IN THE COUNTYSIDE

PROFESSOR ANDREW JOHNSON

Many of you will know me as the head of the sociology department. I am personally acquainted with one of the couples here and my story carries a warning. Once I had a nightmare. I dreamt I was in a place like hell where demons were casting dice in a game that more some resemblance with monopoly but the their stakes were real enough and the ay the game was played involved misery for millions of innocent

sufferers. Every aspect of life can be seen as something of a gamble, not least when a man and a woman decide to marry, so here is my cautionary tale "Don't let computers come between you and your family.

Watkins was an odd sort of fellow. I say "was" assuming he is no longer alive, which brings me to the moot-point of this private (and recently concluded) investigation, for want of a better term: his apparent disappearance about seven months ago. I can't really say that I knew the man. We chatted now again over a beer - or something stronger - at the local. To be perfectly honest, I enjoyed his company with mixed pleasure. He used to come up to the bar, slap you on the back and say something like: "You're a better man. than I am Gunga Din" or crack an insipid joke. I tried to laugh convincingly, though I now think I needn't have gone to the bother. He hardly needed confirmation that he was the wittiest man on earth. He called himself a 'City man', and offered insider tips on forthcoming issues. He said he wasn't averse to a spot of gambling, usually on the horses, but sometimes on the dogs, hence one of his common phrases: "Going to the dogs, you know."

One of his expressions didn't seem to fit his character: "Gambling is the Devil's parody of faith, " though he did once remark that he had been through a religious phase in his early adolescence. It had left him with a keen interest in the occult, witches and black magic. Oh, he did develop another interest: computers. "If you can't break 'em, join 'em" was something he said in connection with the effect computers were having on the stock markets after the 'Big Bang'. There was something about him I couldn't quite fathom. To put a phrase on it, he was something of a 'dark horse'. I wasn't the only one to sense it either.

At some point or other he started going downhill. For one thing, his appearance became more dishevelled. There were awkward silences in the flow of conversation, and he started to mutter words under his breath. As he had previously spoken about his wife in civil terms, I was surprised when he started to use rather an odd word in apposition to references to her sounding something like "itch, " though I wouldn't swear to the absence of a preceding consonant. Then the word "damned" assumed a considerable magnitude in his current range of vocabulary, usually in connection with competitors on the stock exchange, politicians and financial obligations related to Ascot and Epsom.

When the Internet came along, his visits to the pub became less frequent. The only time you could bet on his frequenting The Red Dragon was Saturday night. "Damned intriguing the Internet. Spend hours at it. The perfect research tool." He divulged that he had been "dabbling again" without actually referring to the object of his investigation, though I inferred it had to do with paranormal phenomena. About a year ago he became strangely taciturn, his eyes sort of glassy.

About half a year ago I suddenly realized that I had not seen Watkins for a whole month, not even of a Saturday night. So I asked Ted the barman whether Watkins had been around. To my question, Ted replied:

You didn't 'ear, guv? Big mystery. Done the bunk, or somefin'. The police came rarnd askin' when 'e was last in." In my youth I had tried my hand as a reporter. I found out his address. Armed with a pocket recorder, I went to his house, a semi-detached on the Surrey London border. There was a FOR SALE sign in the front garden. The woman who opened the door did not at first want to unfasten the safety chain. Through the open slit between door and doorpost I asked for information about her husband. The lady, his wife as it later transpired, said she was indisposed, but just as I was on the point of leaving she unexpectedly invited me in. Here is a transcript from part of the ensuing interview.

"I can't figure it out, I don't have a clue what happened."

"Do you have any suspicions as to his present whereabouts" (my voice).

"Odd things had been happening before his final disappearance. In the three months leading up to that event, he became very funny. Just came in from work, gave me and little Debby a perfunctory kiss, went straight to his PC and locked himself in for hours. 'What about me? What about Debby?' I asked, but he didn't even react. On the night he disappeared, I went to bed early. I couldn't sleep properly, and just as I was about to drop off I felt a terrible presence in the bedroom attended by a kind of paralysis of all my limbs. I was kind of awake but could not even raise a little finger. Once this strange feeling had worn off, I mustered the strength to get up and call out 'Harry, Harry.' As I approached the study, I felt goose pimples all over. I somehow knew something was wrong -- sobbing -- and there was a funny smell too - like bad eggs. When I finally did have the nerve to open the door, I

discovered an empty room and a thin layer of some kind of bluish haze. When the police team came round, all they ascertained a small sooty smudge on the wall. Could have been anything."

Apparently the only other evidence was a note with some kind of formula on it with an message tagged on: "Download me if you dare." I noted the letters. Believe it or not, the following strange event took place. In cavalier mood I intended to take up the challenge. I was only three letters away from typing in the letters I had written down. The room I was in turned horribly chill. I fancied I saw blue smoke issuing from my PC. There was a funny smell like - bad eggs. I saw a face on the screen for just a split second. What I think I saw was too hideous for words.

All things considered I decided not to type in any further letters and discontinued my attempt to get to the bottom of Watkins' disappearance.

Applause. Brother Todd comes forward.

BROTHER TODD

My name is Brother Todd, in case you do not know me. *(Laughter)* I have an obligation to settle and one person here will recognize what I mean. It is set not far from here in the West Country.

Chipping Bumpstead is a small and rather insignificant market town somewhere in the West of England. It is the sort of place that might get a brief mention in a motorist's guide: "Tucked away in a pleasant rural area, this unassuming little place seems to capture the soul of Merry Old England."

For centuries nothing ever happened there - nothing, that is, apart from what always happens everywhere with people being born, people growing up, people marrying and having families, people eating and drinking, people dying, people being people.

The notice read:

"Is death the end?"

Come to the Town Community Centre at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, and find out."

Next day a further notice was attached to the first, and this read:

"If you wish to communicate with a loved one, a close relative or dear friend, who has passed away leaving this world of tears and toll, then bring something of great sentimental value to that person with you, anything from an old photograph to a diamond ring."

Some people, naturally enough, raised their eyebrows at all this, while others treated the whole thing as a joke, hardly a joke in very good taste either.

On Wednesday night the hall was packed. As the church clock struck eight, a middle-aged lady dressed in black entered and made for a large chair placed prominently at the front of the hall. Before sitting down she addressed her audience of several hundred with the following words (as translated from the French by an interpreter who stood at her side).

"May I introduce myself. My name is Madame Clarence. I am an ordinary person like everyone else here, but I may differ from you in one particular respect. You see, I was born with a special gift. Of course, God has given each of us a particular gift, whether it be the gift of a beautiful voice to sing with or clever hands to make things with. Mine happens to be the gift of 'clairvoyance'. Through people like me - we are known as mediums - the dead can communicate with the living and vice versa. No, death is not the end! How could it be! Have we been placed on this earth for a few brief years simply to die and become nothing? Did the Maker of the universe give us our faculties, our talents and our ability to love simply that these should finally be discarded like so much rubbish? No, deep in your hearts, you know, as I know, that this life is the beginning, not the end."

Already the mood had changed. Those giggling girls in the back row had ceased to giggle, those careless youths, who were also at the back of the hall, had become quiet and thoughtful. After explaining the general principles of spiritualism, Madame Clarence requested and received a number of articles of the kind specified on the notice.

Soon the séance began in earnest. Electricity gave place to the flicker of candlelight. Haunting music emanated from a hidden source. From what he said on a later occasion, it would appear that Sam Pringle, the local radio and television dealer, was still in sufficient command of his

critical faculties to note that the lower octaves of the celestial music were subject to much the same 'crackle and buzz' that one hears when playing back an overused tape. The music eventually died away and total silence ensued, but this silence did not remain unbroken for long.

"Bertie, Bertie! I am calling you!"

After five shattering seconds, a feeble voice from somewhere in the middle rows responded:

"Y-Yes, Aunt M-able?"

The voice, recognizably that of an elderly lady despite its unearthly and eerie quality, continued:

"Yes, Bertie, I've been keeping an eye on you!"

"On me!?", the feeble voice rasped.

"Yes, Bertie, on you! I'll get straight to the point. Is it a sin to borrow money and never repay it? Is it wrong to borrow anything, even an old book or a cupful of sugar and never return what is borrowed?"

"It most certainly is, Auntie. Y-You mean the three pounds I was going to pay back ..."

"That and all the other times, Bertie. Repay all your debts to those who are still alive, but to those who are not, there must still be recompense - either in the present life or in that which is to come."

"Auntie, believe me, I tried to send you back the five pounds I owed you, but your illness was so sudden and short. In any case, I didn't think money mattered very much in the next world."

"You didn't think money mattered very much in the next world! Do you want to wake up in the next life only to be confronted by a queue of ghostly creditors? Everything in the earthly realm has its equivalent in the spiritual, money included!"

"Oh, Auntie, if I ever had a chance of repaying the ten pounds... "

"You have that chance, " Auntie Mable boomed, "For Madame Clarence not only has the power of transforming sounds and messages between

your world and mine. She can also transfer earthly money into an otherworldly bank account."

"You mean, all I need do is hand the money to Madame Clarence and she'll see to the rest?"

"Yes, my child, that is precisely what I mean, and you can also repay your debts to anyone else over here while you're about it."

"G-Good, " stammered Bertie, "W-will a ch-cheque do?"

At this point Aunt Mable's voice, which had hitherto maintained a composed and serene unearthly quality, turned strangely human, almost savage:

"Where I come from the terms are strictly cash!"

Bertie staggered towards Madame Clarence, his progress painfully slow, hindered as it was by the convulsions of a man in the grips of mortal fear. Madame Clarence's facial expression, like that of a Grecian statue, was timeless and serene. Her right arm was outstretched and her index finger pointed fixedly at a large black bag of silk that lay on the table in front of her. Scarcely had he paid his debt than a most remarkable occurrence took place.

A young man, his wan face replete with a bushy upturned moustache, stood up in the third row from the front. His shaking hand betrayed a fear that only great courage could have mastered. His eyes burned with moral indignation, his whole stance was accusatory:

"Can't you see? She's tricking you, she's after your money, she's exploiting your personal sorrows, your fears, just to get your money. She's nothing but a"

The sound that followed defies description. To refer to it as a scream, shriek or gurgle would be to do that sound or noise a great injustice. If ever pharynx may convey to mortal ears reverberations from the pit which is bottomless, if ever uvula trilled to render the human mind, though it were only for a moment, the anguish of Dives, then it was that 'noise' on that night in Chipping Bumpstead. As though the coils of a constricting serpent had been about his throat, the young man staggered towards the exit, uttering as he did so a word that some present on that occasion took to be 'mercy.' Once outside the door, the

young man gave one final yell of pain of deep remorse, perhaps. He then seemed to dissolve into the outer darkness.

From her expression it seemed that Madame Clarence shared in the consternation of her audience, an audience petrified, as silent as the grave. Her eyes were moist and ruddy, like the eyes of a mother made disconsolate by the forward ways of a lost son. The black lace about her face vibrated as she once more became the centre of everybody's attention.

"Fooleesh boy, poor boy! 'E should not 'ave dane zat." As emotion had loosened her tentative grip on the English language, she used the good offices of her interpreter to say:

"It is a dangerous and most fearful thing to trifle with the powers beyond, as the fate of the young stranger should have revealed even to the most hardened scoffer.

"Now that your heart strings are vibrant with awe and compassion, repay your debts to those who have passed on, nay, give in generous abundance more than the law demands, give in such measure that departed friends and relatives should enjoy independence and comfort, a few luxuries perhaps. Mere solvency is not enough."

Stewards passed round collection bags, and even in that poorly hall, many a multi-coloured glitter bore witness to the fact that this mysterious transaction between the earthly and the spiritual realms involved more than items of cheap junk, an impression later corroborated by the findings of a questionnaire circulated by the CID. This revealed that a conservatively estimated sum of fifty thousand pounds, jewellery being assessed on its resale value must have been collected. The stewards ceremoniously brought the bags to the front of the hall and deposited them on the table where Madame Clarence was sitting.

"I can assure you all that your repayments and gifts will be greatly appreciated. You yourselves shall not go unrewarded, if you believe my words. In a moment complete darkness shall supervene. Do not fear, but heed my words. Wait, and consolation shall be yours."

Sure enough, the hall was plunged into darkness and for the next fifteen minutes no one ventured to say or do anything. At last somebody said:

"It's a con! Get the police."

Within five minutes the hall was empty. No one switched the lights and one can only speculate as to the reason. Shame at being thought a fool? Did I say empty? Almost empty?

One person remained, Mrs. Margery Chapman. She believed deep in her heart that she had to wait. Perhaps it was the word 'consolation' that had appealed so deeply to her innermost feelings. She waited half an hour, an hour, two hours, three hours. Was she immune from the gnawing doubt that she was the most inveterate dupe in a community of dupes? If she entertained such a thought, she most certainly succeeded in suppressing it, and would doubtless have sat there until daybreak - to the detriment of her none too perfect health, if deliverance had not come. All of a sudden she sensed that a door had been opened, that a loved one was in her presence, that heaven had not been deaf to the plea of her heart.

"Cecil, Cecil! Is it you?"

"Cecil?" came an answer out of the darkness, "Not blimmin' likely. This is Fred Jackson come to lock up. 'Ere, ain't that spooky lark over yit?!"

Yes, it was indeed none other than Frederick Jackson, a retired London publican whose part-time job it now was to lock up the Community Hall after hours.

Time passed. Madame Clarence was apprehended on a charge of acquiring money and jewellery by false pretences. Her defence was hard put to make out a defence. The Crown had its problems too, as only a minute proportion of the missing money and jewellery was recovered. Madame Clarence's explanation was simple. How could anyone expect to find what had been 'transspiritualized' into the realm beyond? The Defence Counsel argued, possibly with tongue in cheek, that if nothing else Madame Clarence's alibi had the merit of being 'consistent within a certain frame of reference.

Furthermore: "Madame Clarence's assertion does not allow itself to be circumscribed by the limits of normal rationality." As Defence Counsel also pointed out, no one in the audience had been forced to give anything. It could not be proved that Madame Clarence intended to deceive her listeners, only that she enjoined them to make a somewhat

surprising leap of faith, to act in accordance with "a very bold metaphysical assertion".'

All this promised to mark a notch in legal history, but for a very sad and unexpected event, Madame Clarence's sudden death.

On the very day of her funeral, wedding bells were ringing from the steeple of Chipping Bumpstead Parish Church.

"Another slice of wedding cake, Freddie darling?" asked the bride, from that day Mrs. Margery Jackson (née Higgins, Mrs. Chapman by her first marriage).

"Don't mind if I do" said Freddie.

Despite all the small talk, Mrs. Jackson could hear some of the guests in the background talking about Madame Clarence, such snatches as:

"If you were so convinced that she was a con-woman, why didn't you do something to stop her before it was too late?"

"I supposed I was hypnotized somehow, like everybody else."

And from another quarter: "What surprises me is that so many of my parishioners went along to that thing. They must have heard me preach on the witch of Endor on some occasion or other."

"Anyway, she got her comeuppance in the end."

"You're right there, poor woman."

"I say, if you've been taken in, you've none to blame but yourself, is what I always say."

But now all that Mrs. Jackson could hear was an undifferentiated buzz. Having surrendered to a sudden impulse, she clasped her bridegroom by the hand and was looking into his eyes with a serene and yet intense smile. She remembered what Madame Clarence had said:

-

"Wait and consolation shall be yours."

Those were her words, and she knew those words were true.

MABEL, WEARING A BLACK DRESS SOBS, SHE HOLDS HANDS WITH A LOCAL FARMER.

Brother Todd bows to a somewhat overawed audience;

BROTHER TODD

Thank you for your attention. You will excuse me as I have a fixed appointment. Until the next time, whenever that may be.

After a poignant silence a young man wearing a Jewish headcap goes to podium

DAVID SHAPIRO

Hello, I am David Shapiro a student of Biblical and Hebrew studies. There is a saying among Chassidic Jews that the bridegroom on the day of his wedding is freed from all debt and guilt, not because he has not sinned even grievously so, but the cause the joining of a man and a woman marks a new creation the world before the fall as the institution of marriage came first. The tradition may be relevant to a story set in the days of knights and chivalry, and that befits us here near Glastonbury with all its traditions. Let me read a poem with a certain bearing on today's events:

**“HOW SIRE GADDABOUT UNTO HIS NUPTIALS
CAME”**

Sire Gaddabout one spring-tide morn
his sturdy dappled steed did mount.
for he would wed the highly born
Maid Ethrelda Holyfount

He plucked his lute and sang an air,
but scarce a league was trod

than came a cry. "Beware, beware!
Here comes the knave, Sire Heaviplodde.

"Sire Heaviplodde, my mortal foe?
Seeks he this day a fight?
'Tis him or me a mortal blow
must soon dispatch to endless night."

Sir Heaviplodde in armor black
rode up to mock and jeer.
Then said he, holding high a a sack:
"Your head will serve as souvenir."

"Make good, black knight, your foolish boast,"
stern-faced Sire Gaddabout did cry,
"or by ye saints your wretched ghost
full soon the Stygian strait must ply."

The shields did clash, the horses snort,
the dust did fly, the swords did ring,
and, to cut a long tale short,
'twas Heaviplodde who knew death's sting.

A fulsome wench with babe at breast
stood steadfast in the way.
Sire Gaddabout at her behest
stopped for to hear what she might say.

She raised her babe for him to see,
she cocked her head and with a sneer
said:" Knight at arms, remember me?
You left behind this souvenir."

On seeing this the knight did blush.

He bade his squire go fetch some beer.
Then said he to the young girl "Hush,
this bag of gold should help out, dear."

Past hill, past hamlet, wood and mire,
he rode with noble carriage.
Might even yet the fates conspire
to dash all hopes of marriage?

Who stood with visage grim and old
to guard the way before?
A man in black held up a scroll,
whereon were writ the debts of yore.

Not all the gold the knight did hold,
not lands, not herds, his dowry,
could e'er redeem his debts of old
accrued in youthful folly.

"I have sinned" the knight did weep,
"and mercy is my plea.
I must to church my pledge to keep
in holy matrimony."

The grim collector smiled and said:
"As bridegroom you today are free.
Your past is like a shadow fled.
What counts today is what shall be."

PROFESSOR JONATHAN MERLYN

And now let the young couple proceed to the trysting place and declare
to the world that Lost property officer they are united in love and intend

with might and main ever to remain so. May they pass on to the next generation the torch of wisdom and knowledge to shed its blessed and beneficent light to every place the world over.

Please stand up.

Mary and Peter.

Joe and Leon

Jenny, the local farmer's daughter and .. Dominic Crawley!

Applause, and amid all the tumult the slogan "See you later, alligator" is clearly audible.

SCENE 3: FINALE

The couples followed by a throng of academic staff in their gowns, students wearing the attire and costumes of many nations and cultures, and local country folk follow. Leading all is the Pied Piper of Hamelin.