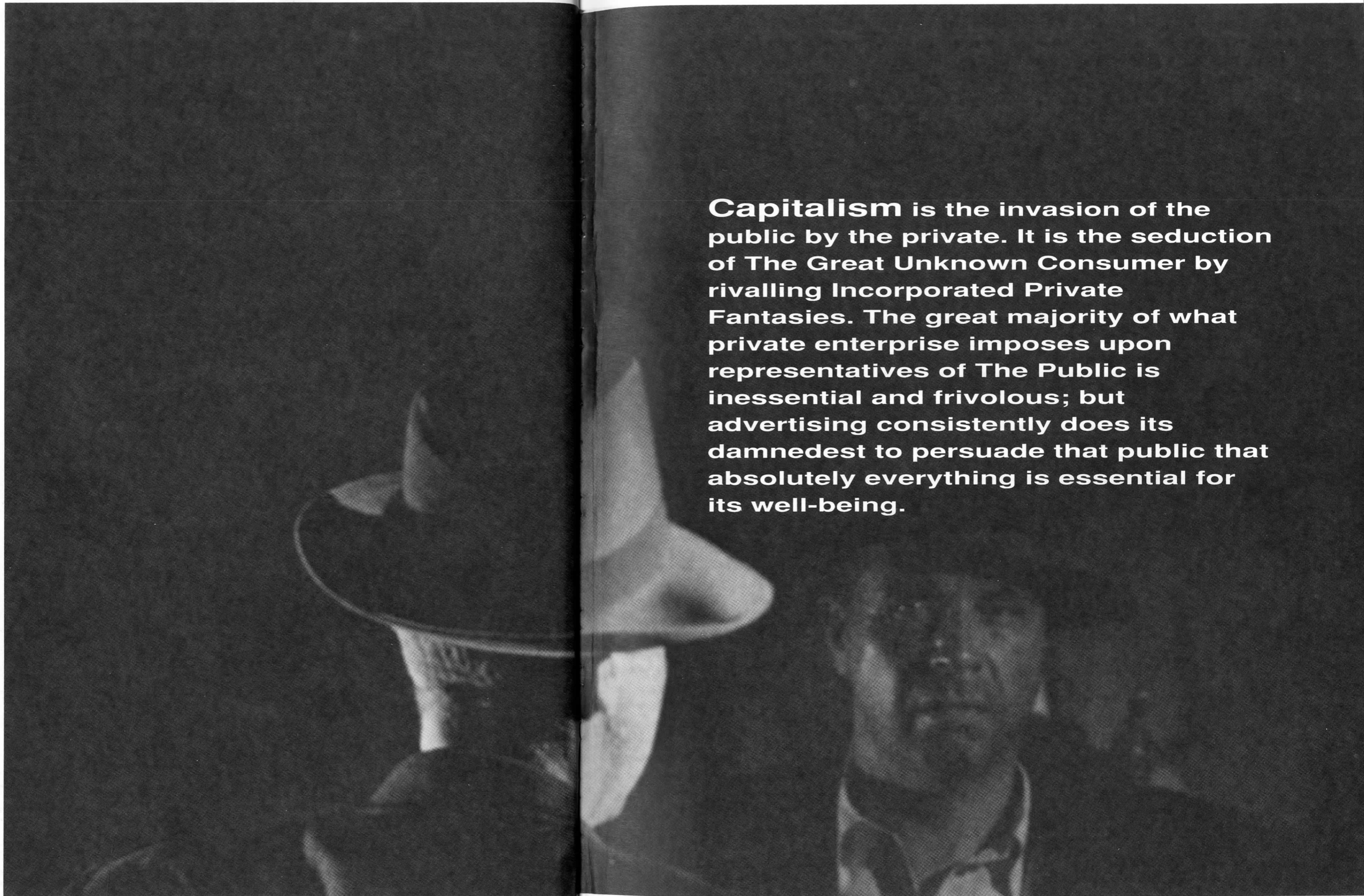


AUTHORITIES



Capitalism is the invasion of the public by the private. It is the seduction of The Great Unknown Consumer by rivalling Incorporated Private Fantasies. The great majority of what private enterprise imposes upon representatives of The Public is inessential and frivolous; but advertising consistently does its damndest to persuade that public that absolutely everything is essential for its well-being.

Andrew J. Paterson

A MAN'S BODY WAS FOUND

THIS MORNING BESIDE THE EASTERN CLIFFS. WAYNE MARSHALL, AGE 29, HAD BEEN STABBED IN THE HEART. NO WEAPON HAS BEEN FOUND. HOWEVER, TIRE TRACKS WERE POINTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS AROUND THE BODY. IT SEEMS THAT THE KILLER WAS ABOUT TO PUSH THE BODY OVER THE CLIFFS BUT THEN SUDDENLY JUMPED INTO THE VICTIM'S CAR AND DROVE AWAY. THE VICTIM'S WALLET, WITH IDENTIFICATION, WAS STILL ON THE BODY BUT BOTH CASH AND CREDIT CARDS WERE MISSING. MONEY SEEMS TO BE THE MOTIVE FOR THE ATTACK AND THE SUBSEQUENT MURDER.

In order to be a conqueror, a successful capitalist, or indeed any sort of expansionist, one must give the impression of wanting to be seduced. Seduction requires that the conqueror must initially appear vulnerable as well as attractive. It is necessary for the conquering hero to believe in his own mythology so the victim can temporarily entertain the illusion of sharing the hero's aura of power. The soft sell has always been more effective than the naked authoritarianism of the hard.

William Knox knew that he could never be any sort of desirable entity to anybody else because he perceived himself as being interchangeable with any other human being on this huge, impersonal planet.

Whitfield knew he was acting foolishly at the time of his spending spree. This was not at all an unusual feeling, and neither was his spending an unusual form of behaviour. There had been several previous bouts of depression which he had temporarily cured by embarking on purchasing binges; in fact, consumerism had become his favourite remedy. To spend is to function; and whether or not the money actually exists can occasionally become irrelevant.

Occasionally he would wake up with the sunrise, well before any of the nocturnal beings who co-habited his building would be stirring. Then, after preparing his tea, he would listen to a cassette of baroque masterpieces, perfectly interpreted by The Cologne Chamber Ensemble under the baton of an unspecified conductor. The baroque, as opposed to the romantic, the 'experimental', jazz, or anything popular, was his

favourite music. Occasionally he would marvel at the opera, but usually he preferred baroque's mathematical precision. No instrument ever sounded out of place against another; the music's texture was exquisite because of its complete avoidance of any accidental elements. A person of a more conventionally romantic disposition had once disdained composers such as Bach, Purcell, Scarlatti, and others by labelling them soulless and autocratic. But to William the romantics seemed indulgent and lacking in formal discipline.

He felt contented with the world this morning. Others can destroy themselves with their irregular rhythms and shrill cacophonies, but that was their problem. Not his.

He was lying on his bed, not thinking or brooding or doing anything except lying down with his head propped up against a pillow while smoking a cigarette when one of Anna's cats crept into his room and meowed. Whitfield looked up and noticed that his visitor was the Chinchilla, which he preferred to the Sealpoint Siamese. The Chinchilla had a luxurious fur coat and a soft, plaintive meow as opposed to the habitual whining of the short-haired Siamese. Since he had proved upon arrival that he had no reticence about cats, Anna had not trained either of her pets to stay out of his room as she had disciplined them to bypass Eric's.

His visitor, whose name was Cleopatra and who did not answer to Cleo, was meowing at a jump's distance from his bed. Whitfield interpreted this meow to indicate a desire to leap onto the bed, while simultaneously requesting permission. He invitingly patted the left side of the mattress, and the cat, after making sure that she would land safely on the bedspread, leaped. After sniffing around the bed, Cleopatra climbed up Whitfield's legs and stretched herself out right in front of his face. He extinguished his cigarette and began to rub the cat's fur below her throat, which was a ritual he had noticed Anna performing on countless occasions. At first the cat, reacting to the fact that his touch was rougher than Anna's, was tentative, but she soon relaxed and began purring. Whitfield stroked Cleopatra for about five minutes; he then decided it was time to leave for work. As he began to bend knees towards his face, the cat abruptly jumped from his chest onto the mattress and immediately began to remove the human's odour from her fur by licking herself thoroughly.

William heard a telephone ringing down the hallway. Although he couldn't tell which one of his neighbours was either not home, or refusing to answer, he knew that the single woman who lived three doors east of his room had an answering machine which she left on at all times, so the call couldn't have been for her. It had to be for one of his two closer male neighbours; he did not pursue any investigation as to which one.

Telephones were unnecessary, as far as he was concerned. Since his employment schedule did not vary from day to day there was no need for his employers to contact him at home. His family obligations were also tightly scheduled: he was to visit his parents and his brother on their separate birthdays, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, and of course Christmas. A telephone was also never needed for invitations since they had always come to him via the postal service.

He felt sorry for people with telephones whose lives were governed by whether or not they received their crucial messages. The shrill ringing of the instrument could interrupt solitude at any moment, and such interruptions were upsetting to any person who preferred anti-social activities to social ones. Even the indirectness of the answering machine was unappealing to him. Its flashing red indicator would automatically trigger curiosity as to the caller's identity. The telephone to William represented a world of speculative relationships and business transactions of which he wanted no part, whatsoever.

Whitfield sat alone in a cafe which was overpriced and, for this very reason, exclusive. None of his co-workers ever frequented this cafe because of its relative priciness — privacy was always worth paying a little extra for.

He buried himself in a local newspaper. Most of the headlines concerned tenant's rights, developers, and corrupt municipal politicians. A particular alderman who had once been the city council's watchdog on air pollution was now being linked with developers who were buying lots at bargain-basement prices and building ugly, sprawling condominiums.

After reading two paragraphs of an article he had decided to finish, suddenly, out of the corner of his left eye, he recognized Julie, a girl with whom he had gone back to her apartment after she had picked him up in a popular local bar

last summer. She had wanted him for sexual purposes and he had definitely been interested, but that was as far as he had been able to go with her. Even though she had been gracious about it and offered to let him stay the night, he had run out suddenly when she was in the shower. In order to avoid her seeing him he left a \$10-bill on his table and ran out quickly in the opposite direction from the one in which Julie was looking. When the cashier yelled out to him he pointed to his payment on the table. Safely outside Whitfield decided he would now have to find another lunchtime hideaway.

Although the roof of William's building had a railing, there was neither a sundeck nor a roof garden and was unofficially off boundary to the tenants. But, since his room temperature had become impossible for him to endure he decided to risk a confrontation with the landlord and lean against the railings.

He could tell by the way the clouds were darkening in all four surrounding directions that a thunderstorm was brewing. Thunderstorms had fascinated him as a boy. They had served to trivialize the strained conversations between his relatives as well as between his parents, and this

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awe had remained with him ever since. William grabbed onto the railing he was leaning against. For a moment he thought he was witnessing the tail-end of a tornado which was devouring some nearby, smaller rural community. He pressed his heels into the plank he was standing on as the westerly gusts had become that violent. But it wasn't until he found himself wishing to be struck by a bolt of lightning that he decided it was time to return to his room and watch the threatening storm develop from the safety of his window.

Whether or not the money to cover his recent expenditures would exist, or when that money would be necessary, he did not know. He had to be out of Eric's and Anna's house by the end of the month and there was absolutely no hope of an extension. They were as peculiar to him as he was to them. "Threatening" was the word his housemates were apt to use when describing him to their friends and neighbours. In their eviction letter Eric and Anna had stated their uneasiness about his presence in their house. Whitfield didn't understand this uneasiness. He was always on time with his rent; how could there be any communication problem?

Again, William decided to do nothing except listen to cassettes upon arriving home. Neither newspapers nor fiction interested him: newspapers because he always killed time by cursorily reading them at work, and fiction because he didn't believe in it. Every novel he had ever read, whether 'intellectual' or 'pulp', had seemed to be uncomfortable truths attempting to disguise themselves as somebody else's story. William hated both the sloppiness and the dishonesty. The 'truth' segments only served to whittle away at the forms of literature; so now he avoided the printed word as much as possible. Only music made sense to him.

This particular evening his preference was for Bach's Goldberg Variations as played by Glenn Gould. The pianist had curtailed live appearances years ago because the ritual involved in performing, by definition, eroded the music's compositional values. And baroque music was concerned with perfection and thus demanded the perfection of recorded sound. Gould was correct in subverting the cult of the interpreter. Also, the pianist had chosen to interpret only the works of one composer, which William concluded to be another gesture indicating a desire for perfection on Gould's part. His choice of composer was not only sublime, it was logical.

A belief in superiority must be demonstrated externally. Such a gesture must be sweepingly exaggerated, with all nuance and subtlety mercilessly thrown to the wind. To simply speak in an arcane or refined verbal language in the face of stupid indifference is not enough. One has to physically triumph over an oppressively

restrictive living environment. That is why there are so many poor people living in bedsitters or rooming houses who drive either luxury or flashy sports cars. That is why there are people living in such quarters who spend every spare nickel and penny on fashion and accessories. There will always be immaculately tailored individuals who become evasive when interrogated about their current accommodation. If nobody else knows the sordid truth, then how can these nobodies possibly make any accusations?

In the days when he had drunk and abused other substances, William had always been grateful for the Sabbath. Some of his former associates had constantly lambasted the retrievability of Sundays because of the fact that very few businesses were open, especially including many bars and all liquor outlets. Even then William had been able to see through such stupidity. He had interpreted the Sabbath as a day on which one was not meant to be self-indulgent. A day provided by external forces on which one could conserve oneself. In the days when he had shared the same concerns with many of the other tenants in his building he had appreciated Sunday as being a day on which, because there was nothing to do, he could therefore do nothing and consequently stay out of trouble. In fact, by treating every day as if it were Sunday he had been able to escape from the world of self-abuse and dissipation.

He had used this technique of ignoring the calendar so effectively it hadn't been until he started work at the Socialist Democratic Party that the calendar became relevant for him again. William smiled to himself upon returning to his room. When his holidays were over he would of course return to a working schedule and then he would be able to appreciate the Sabbath as a day on which he did not have to see anybody if he

"There will always be immaculately tailored individuals who become evasive when interrogated about their current accommodation. If nobody else knows the sordid truth, then how can these nobodies possible make any accusations?"

chose not to.

One snowy evening Eric and Anna were watching ENTERPRISE on their living room TV. Whitfield silently sat beside them at the far right of the sofa. Nobody felt uneasy because conversation was not required. While Whitfield's attitude towards the programme was curious, Eric and Anna seemed to be fascinated.

Tonight's theme was the public stinginess of rich people. Flanking the nattily dressed moderator were one of Elvis's bodyguards; John Lennon's arranged girlfriend during his separation



from Yoko Ono; a Toronto-courier presumed to serve an outrageously wealthy clientele; a biographer of auto-capitalist-turned-coke dealer, John DeLorean; and Peter C. Newman, author of a volume on Canada's invisible rich. In short, all of the panelists either researched or were employed by ridiculously tight-fisted rich people. The more famous of these multi-millionaires used their names to avoid paying for luxuries (e.g. entertainment) which both blue-collar workers and unemployed individuals had to carefully budget themselves for. The courier described his clientele who were in fact not outrageously rich but who were clearly straining their finances on conspicuous consumption. Meanwhile, there were scores of multi-millionaires wearing Woolworths

clothing and driving used Volkswagens.

Whitfield chuckled and left his housemates, who were chronic tabloid consumers, to stick around for the panel's obvious conclusion.

One day upon returning home from work, William noticed the cat which belonged to the woman living three rooms down from his. Although he had never wished to own a cat himself because of the amount of time and money involved, he had always found cats attractive. Dogs he considered to be loud and filthy nuisances while cats had a graceful furtivity. The furtivity was the attraction. Cats used people and then continued about their private businesses.

William stooped over to pet the cat. He stretched out the animal's tail and the creature began purring. After half a minute of this pleasure, the cat's owner opened her door and called her animal's name.

"Plato!" she called as if calling to her son playing in the middle of a busy road, "Plato!" The cat froze for a moment and then ran back into the woman's room. As William walked past her on the way to his own room he could not help but be aware of the woman's glare.

The cold rain was so persistent that Whitfield decided to stay in the subway entrance until there was a break. He didn't want to be late for work so soon after having found a new job, but there was no way he could deal with the rain without an umbrella. While walking towards the newsstand he was intercepted by a clean-cut boy carrying an attache case and a clip-board.

"Do you have a few minutes to spare?" the boy asked of Whitfield.

The boy seemed so innocent, so devoid of anything ulterior, that Whitfield assented. He had his suspicions that he was about to be subjected to a political survey, but he had been able to deal with such surveys quickly on previous occasions.

The sheet on the boy's clip-board was not what Whitfield was expecting. True, it was a survey, but it was on behalf of some religious affiliation to which the boy presumably belonged. Having consented, Whitfield was asked to answer five questions:

1. When was the last time you went to church?

2. What did you think of the service?
3. What are your feelings about Jesus?
4. If you could get to know God personally, would you?
5. What kind of role do you think the church should play?

Whitfield realized that he could answer the first two questions together. He couldn't remember ever going to a place of worship again after his cousin Sarah's wedding. The ceremony had been high Anglican, almost Catholic, and it had been extremely formal. Guests had been divided into friends of the groom (whose name Whitfield could never recall), friends of the bride, and couples with children. The last category sat in the centre pews and the crying of their babies had made it very difficult to hear what was being said at the altar. Whitfield had been mesmerized by the formal perfection of both the actual ceremony and its accompanying music. Handel, he now recalled. He reminded himself to buy some new recordings that he would enjoy during the frequent solitude of his new home. After patiently sitting through the inaudible ceremony and politely wishing his cousin and the groom a happy future, he stealthily escaped from the chapel.

(3) Whitfield mulled over this question for a moment and then informed the surveyor that he did not believe in the mythology of Christ the Redeemer, but he did feel that Jesus must have been as decent a man as had ever been known to live. He felt that the parables in the Bible made Jesus out as being too good to have truly existed even though he had read that Jesus of Nazareth had been an actual person. Whitfield did question whether or not Jesus of Nazareth had indeed been magnified into a saint of epic proportions by posthumous disciples who had successfully profited from Jesus' mythology by pandering to the average person's need to have faith in something larger than themselves.

(4) This seemed to Whitfield a very suspicious question. The idea of meeting God through some sort of introduction service or any kind of third party was revolting. If he wished to seek out God he would do so directly without any external interference and without any dubious



cash transactions.

(5) Whitfield now wanted to leave the subway entrance since the rain was letting up and the previous question had been offensive. However, the last question did not resemble a sales pitch which was designed to seduce the potential customer by playing on his or her need to submit to a higher authority. He thought that the Church did frequently impose antiquated moralities onto its parishioners; yet he envied those same parishioners for having the option of obeying or violating commands. He felt pity for those who were brought up without any concept of right and wrong for they seemed to lack focus and therefore became ideal prey for charlatans of all stripes. Furthermore, organized religion did provide employment for many people who might otherwise be unemployable and, as far as he was concerned, that was truly positive. In fact, he could've just as easily been working for the Church as for the shipping department, as long as he did not have to become a propagandist. He hated having other people's neuroses imposed upon him; therefore, Whitfield felt he had no right to impose his onto others.

He congratulated himself for having responded to the boy's survey thoughtfully and honestly. He remembered occasions when he would have spat obscenities at his interrogator instead of granting a considerate response. As soon as he had answered all five questions thoroughly, he glanced at his wrist-watch and feigned surprise at the time. The boy obviously had something further to say to him, but all of a sudden Whitfield was extremely eager to be on time for work in his new shipping job.

On Good Friday at noon William slept in for the first time since his holiday break. The streets were still deserted and his building was completely silent except for the ticking of his alarm clock. For a moment he wanted to eliminate that sound so that he could exist in complete silence but then decided that to have to re-set the clock come Monday morning might be more trouble than would be warranted. Anyway, he didn't need to see the clock today so tuning out the mantra-like ticking would pose no problem. Later on he knew that the hookers would take to the street at sundown and the silence would officially be over.

Later in the afternoon William could hear

guests arriving at one of the rooms down the hall. There would always be fools who would negate the religious holiday by pretending to be irreverent. To confirm William's intuition, he heard the already intoxicated host greeting his guests with an exuberant, "And a Happy Bad Friday to yous. Why is this particular day, a day on which a historical figure considered to be the Son of God by practicing Christians was assassinated, called 'Good' Friday? The man's premature death is a tragedy. By making this day a work holiday authorities only serve to fetishize the day and create an occasion for indulgence. Since capitalism is officially closed on Good Friday, what else can a passively accepting capitalist do but to celebrate the holiday?"

William preferred the prostitutes to the Bad Friday revellers down the hallway. He was grateful for their habitual emergence at sundown. To the hookers this was just another night. Their capitalism went on as usual because it couldn't afford to wallow in any form of guilt. Guilt which had long since lost its meaning because of arbitrary bureaucratic designations such as calendars. William respected the prostitutes for living outside of the calendar.

A month after moving into his new home, Whitfield felt comfortable. He had found a shipping job not unlike his previous employment and had unassumingly locked himself into a routine. His new shorter hairstyle was successful: a fellow worker once looked at a police-composite photo of *The Suspect* in the newspaper without even glancing at Whitfield. Now that he was earning a steady wage it was not difficult for him to get his hair trimmed every week. He decided, however, to go to a different barbershop every week for the purpose of preserving anonymity. His new housemate Melanie was the only person who had asked him why he preferred his hair so short. She had been speculating as to whether or not he had once been in the Civilian Corps, or perhaps adhered to some sort of religious discipline. She seemed to believe him when he emphasized there was no significance to his severe hairstyle.

Whitfield felt comfortable at home because his role was defined. He was expected to pay his rent and his share of the utility bills, maintain a standard of cleanliness, and act cordial without being unseemingly friendly. That arrangement was mutually suitable for Laura and

Melanie had experienced trouble with their previous tenant. She had been all too anxious to interact and had been a fish out of water as a result of this naivete. Although they had not specified a preference of gender in their ad, Laura and Melanie had preferred a male because neither of them would feel particularly inclined to become acquainted with him any more than would be practically necessary.

William waited until the footsteps had faded, only then did he feel confident the corridors were clear. During the preceding hour he had heard seven sets of footsteps exiting from the building; there were seven other tenants. Now he was alone to be alone forever.

He disconnected the kettle and inserted the plug for the tape recorder. After a great deal of deliberation he chose Purcell to be the composer for the occasion. The particular aria was titled "Death" and that title made all of his previous considerations seem ridiculous. It had always been easy for William to reduce sentences and phrases to one word. He had never understood how others could prefer ambiguity to clarity. To resolution. The cassette had by now rewound back to a point two minutes before the aria would begin.

Having activated the tape deck to play, William pulled his neck-tie, wrapped it as tightly as possible around his neck and wrapped the rest of the tie just as tightly around the left bedpost. He unzipped his fly and played with his penis so that it would be erect by the time the aria would begin. William found that he could arouse himself quickly by focusing upon a recently recovered memory of an acolate he had admired.

POLICE NOW HAVE A POSITIVE LEAD IN THE BRUTAL STABBING OF TWENTY-NINE YEAR OLD WAYNE MARSHALL. A FORMER WORKING ASSOCIATE OF THE DECEASED IS BEING SOUGHT FOR QUESTIONING. THIS MAN IS IN HIS MID-TWENTIES WITH JET-BLACK HAIR AND FACIAL STUBBLE. HE USUALLY WEARS BLUE JEANS AND WHITE HI-TOP SNEAKERS, BUT HIS LAST DAY AT WORK HE WAS WEARING A PALE BLUE DOUBLED-BREADED ITALIAN SUIT WITH BROWN PENNY LOAFERS. THE SUSPECT WAS FIRED FROM HIS JOB IN THE SHIPPING DEPARTMENT OF FRASER & CO. PUBLISHERS LTD. ON THURSDAY, HOURS BEFORE THE MURDER OCCURRED.