

Chapter 2

Mapping the Global Village

“...For all the pleasure his fans have given him, Schulz is a prisoner of his fame as well. He worries some about the lunatics who sometimes stalk celebrities. ‘Sometimes I’ll be walking across the parking lot of the shopping mall and I’ll think about how easy it would be for somebody to get at me. Or I’ll think about a white van with men with machine guns jumping out the back. For some reason, it’s always a white van.’” Rheta Grimsley Johnson. *Good Grief!: the Story of Charles M. Schulz*. New York: Pharos Books, 1989 (149).

Paranoia, white vans, and beneficent technologies of consumption and distribution which turn out to be the mask of an omnipresent, seething cauldron of violence: this terrifying glimpse into the heart of the Pax Americana’s imperial darkness is surely the last thing one would ever expect from the mild-mannered Charles Schulz, creator of the *Peanuts* comic strip and one of the most underappreciated artists of the 1960s. But as Johnson’s biography reveals, the cartoonist was in exactly the right position to know what he was talking about: as a canny artist-entrepreneur who parlayed a daily comic strip into an enormously lucrative global merchandising empire, Schulz was uniquely qualified to register the deep-seated social contradictions of 1960s consumerism. On a certain level, Schulz’s paranoia bespeaks a kind of overcompensation

for the subjective anomie of the new spaces of suburban consumption in the 1960s, or what Sartre would diagnose as the class aversion to the swarming multiplicity of white service vans and the electricians, carpenters, postal and delivery workers who drive them. As we shall see, white vans, the agents who operate them, and the politics of consumerism are all key components of Patrick McGoochan's classic 1967 TV series, *The Prisoner*, which at first glance seems to be nothing more than a spy thriller with a twist: instead of trying to break into the villain's fortress or to uncover hidden secrets, the mysterious No. 6, protagonist of the series, is trying to escape from a mysterious Village with his mind (and secrets) intact. Still, one might well ask, what on earth does the world of *Peanuts* have to do with the world of the Village, which is part psychedelic fable, part paranoid thriller, part James Bond parody, but most of all a kind of televisual theater worthy of Brecht and Genet – a theater which does not simply denounce suburbia, mass tourism and the consumer society, but re-appropriates these things from the standpoint of a new and hitherto unknown politics of consumerism?

Though one would have to retrace the whole development of the comic strip, from its distant roots in the 18th century engraving to the urban caricatures of the 19th century mass periodicals, all the way to the surrealism of early Disney, and finally to George Herriman's high modernist *Krazy Kat*, in order to appreciate the true magnitude of Schulz's aesthetic achievement, suffice to say that the latter's greatest single contribution to the cartoon was to grasp the contradiction between an archaic set of existential coordinates (e.g. the biblical quotations of Linus, Charlie Brown's role as permanent anti-hero, and scattered but regular references to WW I, Beethoven, and other monuments of a vanished or neutralized modernism) and postmodern or multinational ones in a new kind

of visual language. This is the genesis of Snoopy's smoothly rounded, bubble-like build, probably the single most memorable shape of the 1960s, all set against that Lacanian reservoir of the Symbolic, Snoopy's abstractive doghouse. Just as Snoopy's name is a significant mediatic pun in its own right, suggesting a harmless "snooping" or prying with secret affinities to the Cold War spy thriller and the existential voyeur or film noir detective, it is surely not an accident that Snoopy's boon companion – that eternally wordless but constantly twittering bird, who zigzags through airspace with the gusto of Emily Dickenson's bee, and who looks like a miniaturized version of Snoopy – should be named Woodstock. But where Woodstock denotes the counter-cultural outer limit of Schulz' work, Snoopy resembles nothing so much as a freeform scansion of the design ethos of the refrigerators, washing machines, vacuums and other household appliances of the 1960s consumer culture – the so-called "white goods" which replaced a feminized or household labor with electrical machines encased in white or off-white plastic shells of various kinds.

If this is even halfway to the mark, and Schulz is narrating the domestic mythology of early consumer society (something apparent in Snoopy's role-playing skits, which ingeniously reprise almost every professional-class activity or mediatic spectacle imaginable), then our white van might conceivably be related to quite another visual feature of the suburban household: this is nothing less than the ubiquitous offwhite interiors and painted and plastic surfaces encasing the wiring, plumbing, ventilation and other subsystems of the average house. It is as if these surfaces have been peeled off like a sticker and made over into an autonomous, three-dimensional construct in their own right, bristling with potential menace or, at the very least, the necessity of continual

capital investments: what advertises itself as a stable, securely immutable interior turns out, in reality, to be just another exterior, requiring all sorts of bothersome maintenance and a knack for the do-it-yourself job.

Though this particular constellation of an anxiety-laden Cold War consumerism and the nascent postmodernism of the comic strip no longer has much resonance for us today, in the full flood of the Information Age, the example sheds a significant light on the mass-cultural moment of McGoohan's masterpiece. Whereas Schulz derived his visual materials from the American domestic sphere of the 1950s, and thus was able to articulate a 1960s consumerism well in advance of the actual thing (Snoopy's Joe Cool is not quite the leather-jacketed rocker but not yet the hippie college student), McGoohan will re-appropriate one of the first genuine documents of the transnational media culture, namely the TV spy serials and Bond blockbusters of the 1960s, and set them in motion towards the nascent counter-culture. In fact *The Prisoner* will go much further than simply reinventing the spy narrative as a psychedelic fable; the series inaugurates a veritable revolution in the fields of script-writing, set design, sound-editing, plot development and editing techniques. Such technical innovations are more than matched by the amazing versatility and stellar quality of McGoohan's contributions: he was not only the main star of the series, but also wrote and directed the more significant episodes, successfully bargained for its financing and distribution, and even recruited a truly stellar technical and support staff (e.g. writers such as Terence Feely and co-stars such as Leo McKern). In stark contrast to Hitchcock's television series or Rod Serling's early-1960s *Twilight Zone*, which bespeak a cinematic specialization of labor still organized around the strict specialization of the functions of the writer, director and actor (Hitchcock's

lapidary comments and Serling's moralizing conclusions refrain from interfering with the plot at hand, however much they obviously would like to do so), McGoochan's position as executive producer of the series allowed him to employ a qualitatively new division of aesthetic labor, wherein the fields of visual production, distribution and consumption begin to interact in new and surprising ways.

None of this would have been possible, to be sure, if McGoochan had not already built up an enormous store of personal and social capital in the TV business. Thanks to his starring role in the long-running and highly acclaimed *Secret Agent* television series (originally titled *Danger Man* in the UK, but renamed for US distribution), he had the requisite experience and personal connections to launch his own project, hiring some of the best scriptwriters, directors, actors and actresses of the era. Yet the true inspiration for *The Prisoner* was not so much McGoochan's position within the Anglo-Saxon culture-industry per se, but the contradiction of the latter with the specific circumstances of his own specifically Irish identity; or what Bourdieu would term the clash of a neonational Irish habitus with an Anglo-Saxon cultural field. McGoochan was born in New York City in 1928 to a family of recent Irish immigrants. They soon returned to their home country, possibly as a result of the Depression, though little biographical information is available here, and of course it is a significant clue in its own right that McGoochan has consistently refused to advertise his past or otherwise pander to the Hollywood publicity machine. McGoochan slowly and laboriously worked his way up the ladder of the Irish and British stage, and after playing bit parts in various films, he finally struck it rich in the then fairly new industry of television, catapulting virtually overnight into fame and fortune to become one of the highest-paid actors of 1960s British television.

On the surface, such a career would seem to be none too extraordinary for the mass media; Sean Connery's ascent from body-builder to Bond superstar also leveraged a previously marginalized cultural form (the sports and fitness industries) in tandem with a no less marginalized neonational identity (nicely signified by Connery's Scotch burr); while the underrated mid-1960s American TV series *Get Smart* offers still another version of cultural upwards mobility, namely the rise of Mel Brooks from series scriptwriter to one of the all-time great comedy film directors.¹ What distinguishes McGoohan's trajectory so radically from either of these cases was the complicating presence of a third element, namely the irreparable social and political divide between post-colonial Ireland, still culturally and economically subordinate to the UK, and the vibrant culture-industry of a somnolent postmodern Britain, its decrepit industrial base fading in the heat of the American, Continental European and East Asian competition.

Probably the closest equivalent to McGoohan's position was the situation of the African American artists of the late 1960s, and the necessity to invent a multinational cultural praxis somehow able to evade the Scylla of a regressive neonationalism and the Charybis of a multinational consumerism; certainly, one can argue that McGoohan catalyzed the invention of video in much the same way that Jimi Hendrix engineered the emergence of hip hop. Whereas Hendrix reunited the deepest impulses of late jazz modernism with the mass-cultural innovations of the rhythm-and-blues, and thus created the world's first multinational musical vocabulary, McGoohan fused the spy and adventure serial with the most progressive tendencies of Western European mediatic and theatrical modernism. This is a complicated way of saying that *The Prisoner* and, by

extension, the dimension of scriptwriting in video generally, owes a tremendous debt to the pioneering work of Ireland's greatest postcolonial playwright, Samuel Beckett.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the original concept of McGooohan's series is, from the standpoint of form, basically *Endgame* starring 007. Certainly, in episodes such as *Once Upon a Time*, McGooohan will graciously acknowledge his predecessor in a number of ways, ranging from the wheelchair upon which No. 6 is rolled into No. 2's office, to the childhood toys and eerily exposed culture-industrial machinery of the Embryo Room. In terms of content, however, Beckett's influence is far more subtle, and consists less of any presumed similarities in set design or characterization – the windows and household objects of *Endgame* are not really analogous to McGooohan's television screens and household technologies, and the Village's number-hierarchy is light-years away from Beckett's quasi-theological, punning surnames – than in the realm of the theatrical gesture. Beckett's dialogues react allergically to the debased language of mainstream cinema not by simply proclaiming the impossibility of speech, but by intermittently crystallizing around what truly cannot be spoken, rather like a series of still-photos of a self-acting machine tool. The gestural function of the plot functions as a set of repetitions whose exact tempo and execution can never be quite predicted in advance, rather like the early slapstick cinema of Chaplin, which compensated for the lack of a sound-track by gestural improvisation. This is why Beckett's late modernism comes closest to postmodernism, surprisingly enough, not in the negation of the *mise-en-scène* per se, something which is better ascribed to the magnificent oeuvre of Heiner Mueller's mature plays, but in its emancipation of the theatrical gesture via the stage improvisation: thus Watt's famous counting-stones, or the

hilarious exchange of hats in *Waiting for Godot*. In so doing Beckett extends the central insight of Brecht's epic theater, namely the imperative of turning the aesthetic division of labor typical of monopoly capitalism against itself (the stark visual contrasts of the A-effect demanding not a lesser effort from the actors, but correspondingly more: the players become co-producers, co-writers and co-designers of the entire production), via the somatic vocabulary of the nascent consumer society. The wheelchair jaunt in *Endgame* already invokes the inner immobility of the fully automobilized society, in the same way that Hamm's unwieldy grapple gives a whole new meaning to the term writer's block, or, less humorously, the way the garbage cans signify the festering expanses of those gray-in-gray postwar cement blocks into which people were literally thrown away.

This is something *The Prisoner* will invoke not in the terms of a modernist culture of moving vehicles or commodities with visibly motorized parts, but in an unmistakably postmodern one of information-processing commodities. In effect, McGoohan will relocate the function of theatrical gesture away from the specific consumer commodity or species of cultural capital at hand, e.g. the specific mass media, film genre, or theatrical citation, and towards the ensemble of mediatic effects which repackage or otherwise enclose the specific scene, in what amounts to a primordial video form. This is the moment we are asked to watch the process of watching, via those wall-sized video monitors and screens by which the Village's rulers attempt to keep tabs on No. 6 and the other inmates – a reflexivity which then generates its corresponding political content, as No. 6 gradually learns to derail this constant surveillance, by misleading or otherwise manipulating his would-be manipulators. Not the least brilliant aspect of the series is its steadfast refusal to speculate on whether the consumer culture drove the totalizing

paranoia of the Cold War, or whether Cold War paranoia was itself merely the plutonium soft-shoe of the total theater of global consumerism. Rather, both of these social tendencies converge in a politics of information, as relayed by the stunning opening sequence or “tag” of the series, worth analyzing at some length.²

The very first shot we see is a thunderstorm gathering overhead, followed by a series of thunderclaps (the first in a whole series of ecological and meteorological symbols and metaphors) and then a vista of an open freeway. The thunder fades away, and we hear the Doppler-effect whine of a passing overhead jet, our first explicitly transnational acoustic signifier. Finally McGoochan himself roars into view in a custom-built Lotus Seven (license plate KAR120C) in synchrony with another peal of thunder, while the superb theme music of the series (composed by studio artist Ron Grainer, renowned for writing the memorable synthesizer-charged musical opening for the *Doctor Who* sci-fi series in 1963) rises up from the background. Whereas the opening sequence of the Bond films offset the silhouette of the business-suited secret agent with the famous opening bass theme derived from an African-American R&B band, *The Prisoner* complements a series of peals of thunder with a Latin drumbeat, a much lighter, nimbler horn section, high-pitched marimbas and an electrical harpsichord. The effect is one of extreme aural polarization, between a very low, dense set of bass registers and very high-pitched overtones, or what amounts to the negation of John Barry’s superb musical scores for the Bond films, which typically deployed amplified big band and swing tropes (most notably, the use of blaring, overproduced trumpets) to signify the sexual swagger and military bluster of its hero.³ Although we will have more to say about the role of the sound-track later on, for now it should be noted that *The Prisoner* deploys a remarkably

sophisticated set of aural coordinates which will, by the very end of the series, converge literally and figuratively with the musical palette of the counter-culture.

The view then shifts to historic central London and the Parliament building, where McGoohan cruises to the underground parking lot of what is presumably a top secret Government agency. After a determined stroll through a darkened passage, he opens up a pair of double doors and tenders a letter to an official, while the sound-track reverberates with a peal of thunder. This fascinating relocation of the exterior thunderstorm into an interior bureaucratic space turns out to be the prelude to his official resignation from some sort of top-secret job; deliciously, the official McGoohan is talking to is played by George Markstein, the actual script editor with whom he had a real-world falling-out over the direction of the series. The office also contains two significant symbols which will acquire more and more meaning as the series progresses: a cup of tea on the desk and a map of the world on the wall. We also catch a glimpse of a computerized file cabinet, where McGoohan's computer punch card (the highest of high tech in 1967) is stamped "Resigned" by the anonymous typewriter so beloved of the spy genre. Upon leaving the office, he drives to his apartment, tailed by a pair of agents. There he packs his belongings in preparation for what seems to be a vacation trip (the camera zooms in on a photo advertisement of a glorious tropical beach). At that moment the agents pump sleeping-gas into his room, and McGoohan looks up, briefly, through the window at the visual equivalent of the jet engine we heard at the beginning of the opening tag: an array of glass skyscrapers tilts hazily in front of his eyes like the quintessential monuments to the postmodern they indeed are, before he loses consciousness.

This amazing conjunction between McGoohan's upturned, hooded glance and the blank, faceless glass boxes housing the multinational overlords of the global village – that primal political tocsin of the New Left from Prague to Peking, and from Mexico City to Chicago, captured as much by the memorable line, “The whole world is watching,” as the by heady days of May '68, when students and workers alike flashed to the insight that Gaullist France was a capitalist workhouse like any other on the planet – turns out to signify as well a significant rupture in the prevailing spy-thriller narrative. This is the moment when McGoohan's character wakes up, opens the blinds and discovers to his astonishment that he is in an exact replica of his room, located in the middle of a nameless, placeless Village. Where the Bond series transformed scenic vistas and tourist locales from around the world into movie sets, McGoohan turned an actual resort hotel on the Welsh coast into the set for the entire series, ingeniously adopting what appears at first glance to be a quaintly medieval architecture to highlight the hypermodern equipment and deadly power-bureaucracies housed within. At the same time, the action-adventure sound-track is replaced by a subtle, eerie, almost psychedelic background noise, or high-pitched overtones sounded randomly, while the following densely-interpolated set of shots and dialogue takes place (note that each of the following scene changes occur during the previous spoken dialogue, resulting in a smooth, rhythmic cycling of images). The spy movie turns into a protomorphic video:

Steel doors open to reveal No. 2's office situated in the Green Dome, a cavernous, high-tech bubble of steel girders and translucent glass panels; No. 2 sits in a revolving, black bubble-shaped chair at the center of the room.

No. 6: “Where am I?”

No. 2: “In the Village.”

No. 6: “What do you want?”

No. 2: “Information.” *Visuals cut to No. 6 walking across the main lawn of the Village.*

No. 6: “Whose side are you on?”

No. 2: “That would be telling. We want information. Information. Information.” *The scene cuts to No. 6 running across the sandy beach, attempting to escape.*

No. 6: “You won’t get it.” *Scene cuts to an underwater sequence of airbubbles spawning the Village’s main security device, the giant white security-bubble called Rover [actually, a giant weather balloon]; we hear the bubbles as well as what sounds like scuba gear.*

No. 2: “By hook or by crook we will.” *Scene cuts to close-up of the new No. 2 [played by a different actor in almost every episode].*

No. 6: “Who are you?” *The scene cuts to No. 2 watching Rover hunt down and trap No. 6 on the beach on a giant movie-screen, which is the other notable feature of No. 2’s office; we also see a control panel and three upright objects on the desk, which turn out to be handheld mobile phones.*

No. 2: “The new No. 2.”

No. 6: “Who is No. 1?” *The scene cuts to the central mechanical eye of the Control Room, a clearly Expressionist trope, and pans back to reveal another bubble-room, this one with strange machines, a central, rotating camera-device, and extensive wall-maps.*

No. 2: “You are No. 6.”

No. 6: "I am not a number, I am a free man!" *The scene cuts to a shot of No. 6 on the beach; the camera alternately pans far back and zooms in, silhouetting McGoohan as he raises his fist to the sky in defiance. Cynical laughter from No. 2.*

This celebrated three-minute sequence, one of the great video productions of all time, disproves the widespread fallacy that video amounts to the mere acceleration of cinematic images, whose sheer overproduction elides the function of criticism altogether (what Jameson described elsewhere as postmodernism's depthless rush of images). In reality, video works involve a significant compression and abstraction of the image, and the displacement of photographic coordinates or cinematic tropes (collages of photographs) by a heterogenous set of viewing-levels or windows (collages of cinema, if you will). The tag scene of the open road, for example, which we at first expect to highlight a typical automotive panorama, flashes by so quickly that the eye cannot fix on any specific object, and is forced to lock onto the close-up of McGoohan behind the wheel, the wind roaring in his face. Where Kubrick's *2001* spends two-and-a-half hours making the transition from the modernist trope of the moving or flying vehicle to the postmodern one of mobile environments (thus the psychedelic conclusion, which elides the spacecraft altogether and counterpoints the astronaut's dazed expression with the celestial light-show), *The Prisoner* accomplishes the same feat in roughly two-and-a-half seconds. The same is true of the underground spy agency, where the shots of McGoohan's car are upstaged by a series of increasingly faster-paced close-ups; thus the superficially personal explosion of the resignation scene turns out to herald the Information Age close-up of the typewriter

X-ing out McGoochan's photo (the photo is McGoochan's very own, real-life publicity shot from the *Danger Man* series!); or the chase-scenes replayed on No. 2's monitor in the above quotation, which illustrate No. 6's ceaseless escape attempts and invariable recapture by Rover. Over and over again, kinetic or movement-based narratives turn out to be merely a pretext or blind for the far more interesting and important story of the production, delivery and consumption of information.

The question then arises as to why McGoochan chooses to divide the title tag from the credits tag as definitively as he does. A moment's thought will show that the four visual spaces of the title tag – the open road, London, the spy agency, and No. 6's residence – are not just spaces but also specific view-points (the panorama, the aerial shot, the underground shot, and the scene from the window). What McGoochan is doing, in effect, is transforming these national and international tropes into the multinational ones of the surveillance-screen, the space of the Village, the interior of the Control Room, and of course, No. 2's office in the Green Dome, respectively. What makes the effect even more stunning is the fact that, contrary to the first impressions of the casual viewer, the Village is by no means a medieval landmark but is in fact the Hotel Portmeiron, a famous resort in Penrhyndeudraeth, North Wales. Constructed in 1926 by renowned architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, Portmeiron is characterized by a wide-ranging ensemble of styles and periods, and certainly there is something deeply provocative about staging the pitiless power-struggles of Village not in some secret base or mountaintop fortress, nor even in the swanky hotels or tourist monuments favored by the Bond films, but in a quirky resort which might be said to be the *avant la lettre* emblem of postmodern pastiche.

In fact, Portmeiron will set two intriguing visual precedents for the series: first, a sense of teeming visual overproduction or scenic density which is too compartmentalized to be a traditional urban space, but which is also too explicitly historical and refers to altogether too many architectural periods to be a suburban one; second, the displacement of the automotive registers of the spy thriller by battery-powered white electrical carts, bubble-shaped helicopters and of course sheer walking. If the Village seems closer to the jumbled heterogeneity of the Second and Third World favela than to Jameson's great example of postmodernism, the Bonaventura Hotel, then this is only because the latter is primarily about an internalized architecture, i.e. the exotic innerspace of the people-moving lifts and shrubbery-lined atrium, or what amounts to the transplanted aesthetic of the enclosed shopping mall as opposed to the walkable outdoor arcades of metropolitan Europe or the street festivals of Japan. The true social model for the Village would thus be a kind of elite favela, or a zone where the utopia of unlimited leisure time advertised by late capitalism is, for some reason, turned into a hideous compulsion. In the context of the 1960s, this might refer to the apparatus of psychiatric wards, mental hospitals and hormone injections by which both Cold War power-blocs disciplined their political and sexual dissidents; it could also, as in the case of the Old People's Home highlighted in "Arrival", refer to that newly-expanded population of pensioners created by the welfare state and gradually increasing life-spans, which has not yet organized itself into a conscious political or cultural bloc.

All this is closely connected with another profound absence in the series, namely the utter lack of the psychological or familial registers still faintly visible in the existential and mystery thrillers, most typically via the dynamics of voyeurism and the

Hitchcockian fetish of juridical evidence. Yet the Village is ruled neither by the villainous father-figures of the action-adventure drama, nor the national agencies of the Cold War, nor any combination of these things (as with the invariably Teutonic and Nipponese villains of the Bond series), but rather by a thoroughly impersonal, devious and universalized number-bureaucracy. This not only allows McGoohan to portray female characters with an unusual degree of depth and complexity, free from the worst excesses of Bond-style sexism (as with the supposedly Lithuanian female agent in “The Chimes of Big Ben” or the upwardly-mobile taxi maid who turns out to be the new No. 2 in “Free for All”), but also permits the series to outflank a whole range of Cold War nationalisms by means of a powerful aesthetic multinationalism, whose ultimate consequence will be to displace questions of agency onto the thematics of identity. It is not the formal ownership of the Village which is at stake, but the fact that nowhere on the planet (as No. 6 discovers on those occasions when he does physically leave the Village, as in “Many Happy Returns”) can one really escape it.

One need not be an aficionado of Kafka nor have memorized chapter and verse of Weber’s description of the rationalizing function of modern bureaucracies to guess that the positively global reach of the Village ought to have something to do with the social realities of globalization, a.k.a. the grim, meathook realities of the capitalist world-market. In fact, McGoohan will make the task much easier for us, by constantly harping on the autarkic, self-contained nature of the Village, which has its own hospital, stores, dwellings, sports facilities, political spaces and even television station, and thus qualifies as a genuine microcosm of the late 1960s world-system. Putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, the Village is clearly not an allegory of the Cold War, but a metaphor of

something else: a social phenomenon which is not a conspiracy per se but often acts like one; something associated with a brazenly open and multinational architecture rather than the hidden bunkers of the Pentagon, while somehow being just as deadly as the latter; something organized as a totalizing bureaucracy not reducible to the Cold War national security states themselves, but not averse to borrowing and refining their tactics (bridging, in effect, the divide between the Hegelian Mind of the State and the Californian state of mind); and something conversant with the latest mass media and advertising techniques. That something, as we shall see, can be nothing less than that qualitatively new historical subject birthed by the 1960s, the multinational corporation.

Witness an early scene in “The Chimes of Big Ben”:

No. 2: “There are some people who talk and some people who do not. There are some people who leave this place and some people who do not leave. You are obviously staying.”

No. 6: *lightly*: “Has it ever occurred to you that you’re just as much a prisoner as I am?”

No. 2: *apologetic*: “Oh, my dear chap, of course, I know too much. We’re both lifers. I am definitely an optimist, that’s why it doesn’t matter who No. 1 is. It doesn’t matter which side runs the Village.”

No. 6: “It’s run by one side or the other.”

No. 2: “Oh certainly. But both sides are becoming identical. What in fact has been created: an international community. A perfect blueprint for world order. When the sides facing each another suddenly realize that they’re looking into a mirror they will see that this is the pattern for the future.”

No. 6: “The whole Earth as the Village.”

No. 2: “That is my hope. What’s yours?”

No. 6: *ponders*: “I’d like to be the first man on the moon.”

The deliberate repetition of the opening tag, and the unusually direct mention of No. 1 by Leo McKern’s unexpectedly sympathetic No. 2, culminates in the playful re-appropriation of the Apollo project (undoubtedly the premier symbol of scientific and technological progress of the day), allowing us to grasp the astronaut as the cosmological equivalent of the terrestrial secret agent. This refunctions the “alien invaders” trope so beloved of Cold War science fiction, where various and sundry entities indulge in the cosmic bad taste of attempting to do to the US Empire exactly what American corporations were doing to the Third World, into a parable worthy of William S. Burroughs: the astronaut is really an intergalactic political refugee, seeking egress from the Earth. The same principle is at work in such scriptwriting gems as the Orange Alert by which No. 2 summons up Rover from the deep; any other color besides red would be an effective enough parody, but orange is so outrageously inappropriate, reminiscent as it is of Florida, sunshine and the tropical beach to which No. 6 would like to escape, that one cannot help but make the logical and obvious link between the permanent rhetoric of crisis endemic to the Cold War era, and the no less permanent assault of the global mass media and the advertising industry on our eyes and ears.

Cold War science fiction is relevant in one other respect, and that is the basic visual apposition of the series, namely the contrast between a set of curvilinear, smoothly

molded bubble-like interiors containing the latest in information collection, and jumbled postmodern exteriors studded with the latest sensor and videocamera technology. Where the original *Star Trek* series displaced the contradiction between the battle-ready interiors of the Enterprise (essentially the interstellar version of the WW II aircraft carrier) and the apparatus of extended visual reproduction symbolized by the bridge's viewscreen onto a series of suspiciously neonational alien cultures – the visual clichés of the sleekly aerodynamic, flying-saucer-plus-twin-booster-rockets Enterprise, set against the Sovietized hyperphallus of the Klingon Warbird – McGoochan foregrounds the extended reproduction of images in precisely those plasticized, somatically overcharged surfaces of the 1960s consumer culture which *Star Trek* takes such pains to literally and figuratively alienate. Such surfaces do not simply distort or fragment the cinematic surface, as a visual modernism might do, but are sites which constantly reproduce *other* surfaces: as with the endless plasticity of the Village lava lamps, the wall-sized television screen in No. 2's office, or the monitors on which we watch the crews in the Control Room watch No. 6.

This drastic expansion and extension of the processes of viewing is underlined as much by the double-edged Village refrain, “Be seeing you” (sometimes accompanied by the Village's curious salute: a hand-gesture based loosely on the “OK” symbol, formed by using the right thumb and the right forefinger to form a circle over one's eye and bunching the three remaining fingers together; the result looks like an ingenious mime of the number six) as by the visual formatting of the Control Room, where No. 1's central mechanical Eye peers at land-maps, star-constellations, and the activities of the supervisors. The content of this Eye finds its content only elsewhere, however, in the

curious central rotating pivot or seesaw contraption located in the center of the Control Room. Two supervisors are seated on either end of the seesaw, which has counterpoised videocameras on each end; something which we might write off as simply another form of camera technology, if it were not for the superabundance of other metaphors of confined, circular motion and enclosed movement of all kinds, everywhere from the dizzying scene in “Free for All” when No. 6 confronts the Town Council and is spun around and around to the beat of No. 2’s hammer, to that arch-symbol of all Village symbols, the penny-farthing or high-rider bicycle. There is an actual copy of this relic of the Victorian era, invented in 1879, in No. 2’s office, where it seems to serve much the same function as the obligatory Greek statue, Renaissance painting or high modernist lithograph in the corporate boardroom, invoking an archaic mode of technology rather than an archaic mode of aesthetics (rather like a hologram of Charles Babbage’s difference engine in the midst of a semiconductor factory). Less understandable, however, is the ubiquity of the symbol, which is printed on all manner of lapel buttons, newspapers and the like; adding to the mystery, McGoohan imprints the high-rider forever in our viewing consciousness via the closing credits which conclude every episode except for the very last (“Fall Out”). The high-rider does not appear all at once but piece by piece, in tandem with the names of the cast and crew, while the opening theme music thunders in our ears.

This might seem to be mere whimsy or a peculiarly British visual motif, were it not for the fact that something else is being repeated, too, and not just the fact of No. 6’s continuing imprisonment: an element so obvious that, as in the classic Poe detective story, we fail to notice it precisely because it is right in front of our eyes. This is the

universal Village font in which the show's opening and closing credits, subtitles, and onscreen signs, numbers, newspapers and posters are routinely printed: a variation of the Albertus letterset, best described as a kind of streamlined or high-tech Gothic script, whose visual Brechtianism is the perfect foil for the wonderfully devious poster-slogans we glimpse around the Village (my own favorites are "questions are a burden to others, answers a prison to oneself" in "Arrival" and the triple-edged "music says all" in "Hammer into Anvil"). The point is not only that there is no real difference between the late 1960s mass media and the world of the Village, but that we are to read this particular video script not just figuratively – that is, as a metaphor for the spy film – but absolutely literally, as the incarnation of the corporate icons, logos, trademarks, brandnames and visual and aural motifs which constitute a henceforth multinational culture. This is confirmed by the closing credits, which depict a wheel spinning round and round, which freezes into the lower wheel of the high-rider, while the logo of ITC (the entertainment firm which bankrolled McGoohan's project) appears to the upper right; additional pieces of the bicycle appear in lockstep with the mention McGoohan's own company, Everyman Films Limited, the names of the cast and crew, and MGM Studios.

This suggests the two-person video carousel in the Control Room is not so much a cipher of viewing, than a cipher of the re-viewing of prerecorded materials: the space, in short, of the extended visual editing process of video (the Control Room is really the Editing Room). It should be emphasized that this is merely the potential space of such, and not yet the realized thing itself, in the sense that the vocabulary of video techniques in the series is still directly linked to cinematic and late modernist forms. Again, the parallels with Hendrix, who was as extraordinary a studio technician, mixer and sound-

engineer as he was a pure musician, are instructive. Hendrix's greatest works, "If a Merman I Should Turn to Be..." and "1983", from the 1968 *Electric Ladyland* album, which transformed the aural heritage of the blues, R & B, and the sonic palette of the early counter-culture into soaring hip hop soundscapes, project a revolution of musical form which nevertheless did not go beyond the neonational materials of the dissonant R & B 9th chords patented by James Brown, and the psychedelic guitar palette. Just as the sampling and scratching techniques of hip hop could not truly be born until mass-cultural works, tapes, cassettes and recording machinery became available to the public, so too would the furthest possibilities of video sketched out by *The Prisoner* be realized only much later, in the video techniques inaugurated by the Hong Kong action-adventure films of Bruce Lee and the Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

McGoohan's two most significant visual innovations are the subjective viewing-fragment or informatic icon, and the multinational field of viewing-levels of those icons, which we'll call the video cut and the video frame, respectively. The video cut is conveyed by the most characteristic shot-technique of the series, namely an accelerated zoom which first frames an outdoor sequence and then zeroes in, sniper-style, on the telltale videocamera, sensor-unit, loudspeaker or other incriminating detail in question. Meanwhile, the video frame is relayed by the symbolic editing machinery of the spinning lego-style children's blocks on the desk of the psychologist in "Arrival" and "Free for All", and of course the Judge sequence in "Once Upon a Time". The video frame also has an acoustic supplement, in the form of the spinning magnetic sound tracks and other culture-industrial equipment which litter the background of "Once Upon a Time". If the carousel is very much the substantive synthesis of these two elements, the place where

the process of recording and a library of prerecorded materials are brought into contact, then the double wheels of the high-rider might well signify a double editing process, with the larger wheel standing for the visual reel and the smaller one for the sound-track. The seemingly archaic carriage of the bicycle, on the other hand, is a dead ringer for the sunroof of the average Village taxi, suggesting that perhaps a modularized or miniaturized transport machinery is the real issue at stake here.

But the closing credits have one more puzzle for us, without which we cannot fully solve the enigma of the high-rider: this is the ominous line of statues behind the high-rider, another significant reference to the Village statuary, whose stone eyes are actually video-sensors connected to the Control Room. The crucial scene here, in “Arrival”, depicts No. 6 searching wildly for a way out of the Village, while Rover hunts him down and the distorted visages of the statues careen wildly back and forth. At first the statues seem to be the usual assortment of dead white males, radiating the power and authority of a repressive society which presumably attempts to speak in their name. What, then, are we to make of the glimpse of a Buddhist statue in the midst of the pandemonium, which seems to intermediate between No. 6’s panic-stricken flight and Rover closing in for the kill? As it turns out, McGoohan will refashion this puzzling non-European reference into an increasingly powerful oppositional theme as the series progresses. This is the progression from No. 8’s supposedly Lithuanian allies in *Chimes*, who turn out to be Village agents, to the authentic but peripheralized Gypsies by the seashore of “Many Happy Returns”; and finally to the professionalized Haitian technical assistant in “Schizoid Man”, the French Madame Engadine in “A.,B., and C.”, and the honorably pacifist Swiss scientist of “Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darling”. Still later we

encounter genuinely multinational games, such as the fictional Asian game of kosho (a kind of martial arts involving trampolines, another amazingly prescient nod in the general direction of the future Hong Kong films) featured in “It’s Your Funeral” and “Hammer into Anvil”.

This tends to undercut the otherwise tempting notion that *The Prisoner* is motivated by a progressive neonationalism, wherein a postmodern Irish culture-entrepreneur symbolically repudiates a claustrophobic British mass-culture on its own mediatic grounds (what amounts to a McLuhanite neoliberalism, and it is worth noting that McLuhan’s perspective was that of a Canadian mass-culture under assault by its better-capitalized American competitor). There are indeed specifically Irish themes located in the series, most notably in “It’s Your Funeral”, which unmasks the nascent practice of the IRA as the mirror-image of the repressive system it claimed to oppose, or the hilarious moment in “The Girl Who Was Death” when the mad scientist’s minions turn out to be the Welsh marshal, the Scottish marshal and the Irish marshal. (Naturally McGoochan will take advantage of the last, the de facto weak link in the chain of Empire.) Yet the series as a whole will insist, quite correctly, that the system is neither British nor American nor Soviet per se, but is rather the totality of all those things. This suggests that the high-rider symbolizes more than just the perversion of a specific cultural technology, but incarnates a totally mobilized, mediatized and modernized – and for that very reason utterly immobile, invisible and archaic – multinational consumer society with the same visceral power as the peace symbol which signified the 1967 counter-cultural resistance to such.

Just as the counter-culture symbolically negated the totalizing superhighways, bunkered concrete housing projects and political witchhunts of the Cold War secret police of whatever national provenance by means of free-floating happenings or gatherings, so too will *The Prisoner* negate the spy thriller by means of an increasingly complex multinational network of spaces. The trajectory from the office of “Arrival”’s underground psychologist to the brief shot of Rover in an underground cavern at the end of “Free for All”, and from the settlement of “Harmony” (truly the town of one’s dreams) in Living in Harmony to the ballroom dream-sequence in “A.,B., and C.” is more than just the simple extension of mediatic coordinates to the action-adventure genre; by constantly recycling and reprocessing the available palette of shot techniques and scripted dialogues, and squeezing more and more allegorical content out of less and less material, McGoohan carries out one of the central formal principles of video, namely the conjunction of accelerated shot innovation with the ever-increasing repetition of the thing being shown (generally, by means of unusually intense montages or varieties of slow-motion or half-motion close-ups, most familiar to us from the resplendent video epics of John Woo). This aporia between innovation and repetition runs far deeper than what the 1960s saw as the struggle between the Organization Man and the individualistic rebel (“IBM vs. Tarzan”), and what the 1970s glossed as the post-structuralist apposition of the linguistic signified amidst the echoing, decentered field of signifiers: it is the site of a genuine social contradiction between the extended reproduction of the commodity-form, and the innovation-rent by which that form is valorized on the marketplace.

Where McGoohan decisively bolts from the mainstream corporate ideology of our own day – that incessant admixture of manic Wall Street speculation, silicon

industrialism and Web-babble, which is so busy reinventing itself from millisecond to millisecond that it never has time for a single concrete thought, let alone an authentic political or cultural meditation – is that delightfully Brechtian insouciance (one thinks of Brecht’s anti-Stalinist poignard, that the only way to abolish the curse of bureaucracy was to make everyone an administrator) by which a multinational aesthetics stages its own reflexive self-decolonization from the world of the multinationals which created it. This is the genesis of No. 6’s most insistent and telling gesture, the fact that he has *resigned* – not because he doesn’t care, but precisely because he does; and not because he isn’t playing the role of the secret agent anymore, but because he really does play one on a television screen which we are suddenly forced to acknowledge, against all our preconceived notions and ideological conditioning, to be a new kind of political and cultural battlefield. No. 2’s infamous opening line is a double gambit: the Village does not really want information, of course, only obedience. (From their point of view, information is an exchange-value, not a use-value). In fact, it is No. 6 who truly wants information: information on who No. 1 is, where the Village really is, which side runs it, and how it might be possible to escape.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

1. Brooks did not contribute to the series beyond its first season, but was instrumental in launching the basic idea and scenario.

2. The opening tag of the very first episode, “Arrival”, is somewhat less formatted and dense than the remaining ones, which have been carefully streamlined, e.g. the scenes of the parking ticket machine and whatnot are later eliminated, a significant clue that McGooohan was as canny an editor as he was as a scriptwriter, actor and producer.

3. It should be emphasized that this is a critique of the Bond films, not of Barry’s scores, which are some of the best ever written for the cinema (Barry was responsible, incidentally, for scoring the trademark Bond guitar strum, which first appeared in *Dr. No*). The sound-track keynoting the outer space sequences in *You Only Live Twice*, for example, which combined an arresting trumpet theme with a spine-tingling low bass march quoted from Puccini’s *La Boheme*, would remain unequaled in the action-adventure genre until Hideaki Anno’s quotation of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in an episode of *Evangelion*. Barry would go on to win five Oscars for his work as a composer, writing the scores for innumerable other Bond films as well as *Out of Africa* and *Dances with Wolves*.