

Chapter 3

The Information Uprising

The very first shots fired in this informatic battle are no more than sniper rounds. At the very beginning of “Arrival”, when No. 6 wonders why the only maps sold are local ones, i.e. depict only the Village, the shopkeeper responds cheerily, “There’s no demand for any others.” Microsoft’s marketing bureau could not have put it better themselves. Likewise with No. 6’s first meeting with No. 2, where he gives his date of birth as March 19, 1928 – actually McGooohan’s own, real-world date of birth, and the one moment of genuinely personal information he will ever impart throughout the series – thus lending an especial poignancy to the classic line: “I will not make any deals with you. I’ve resigned. I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed, or numbered. My life is my own.” What might be taken for the classic bourgeois or Enlightenment defense of the propertied individual is belied, however, by No. 6’s unusual mien – an air of utter simplicity, devoid of even slightest hint of false humility or paranoid grandeur – and no less unusual garb: not the business suit favored by Bond, but extremely dark clothing, no tie, and patent leather shoes. Interestingly enough, No. 6’s normal Village attire comes very close to the latter, with the exception that his jacket is completely black with a single thin white stripe emblazoned around the lapels and wrists, and the shoes are replaced with that postmodern article of footwear par excellence, a pair of sneakers. By contrast, the ultimate symbol of the Village, namely Rover’s floating

bubble-surface, is pure white. In between these polar opposites are the Village inmates, who are generally dressed in segmented blocks of alternating primary colors, strongly reminiscent of zebra-striped prison garb, as well as customized capes and bubble-shaped hats. The visual effect is one of an incessant streamlining, of smoothly rounded curves and jumbled planes of color which comprise the sartorial complement to Portmeiron's picturesque backdrop: clothes which are neither work-suits nor leisure garb, but an ominous blend of both (in the same way that the Village is simultaneously an interrogation center and vacation resort).

Two other significant visual symbols need to be mentioned here: the giant multicolored umbrellas of the Villagers, which combine Rover's distinctive shape with a clearly televisual form (No. 6 never has one, while No. 2 never does without one), and the mysterious Butler, played to quiet perfection by Angelo Muscat. The latter is particularly interesting, both for his constant propinquity to No. 2 (by continuously serving breakfast, tea or other symbolic tasks) and the fact that he utters not a single word during the entire series. All the other characters of the series have an explicit acoustic content: the Villagers with various marching bands; No. 2 with the hazy, psychedelic background music of No. 2's office; No. 6 with the theme music of the series, and so forth. Nor does the Butler ever seem to take sides in the battles between No. 2 and No. 6, preferring to hold his black-and-white umbrella with an air of solemn indifference. Given that the Villagers' umbrellas are associated with a specific kind of movement, namely the whirling effect created by spinning the handle, this suggests that the Butler is the site of a kinetic as well as chromatic and acoustic austerity.

If the Butler is always silent, it is noteworthy that there is one character which never fails to kick up a commotion, and that is our old friend Rover, whose inimitable roar of rage and aggression drowns out whatever else is going on in the same way that Rover's white surface blots out the faces of its victims with a rubberized death-mask. This visceral horror of packaging, of the seamless white surfaces of the 1960s consumer culture suddenly revealed to be gruesomely embodied labor, whose torment is visually annihilated but rendered audible via the anonymous scream of the victim, is more than just a Kafkesque parable of the nightmare of bureaucratic oppression and the horror of arbitrary state power. For one thing, Rover's electronicized howl is set against a whirring, reverberating sonic background, strongly reminiscent of an electronically-altered version of a exploding blender or other appliance gone haywire; for another, Rover is always spawned in the ocean deep and centrally associated with the sea. According to the recollections of those associated with the series, Rover was originally supposed to be a white, bubble-shaped battery-powered cart, resembling a stack of marshmallow-colored pancakes topped by a flashing police siren. In McGoohan's telling of the story, the contraption was supposed to be seaworthy, but sank into the sea during a test run, and was replaced at the very last second by a giant weather balloon.¹ This suggests that Rover does indeed have something to do with the Rover company, one of the leading British vehicle manufacturers of the 1960s, though probably less in the sense of an automotive or transport technology than in the export-driven reality of the world-market. Some crucial moments in "The Chimes of Big Ben" do indeed revolve around scenes of a shipping line and then airline transport; No. 6 and No. 8, supposedly a Lithuanian defector, are to be smuggled into England inside of a shipping crate, tacit acknowledgement of those twin

sinews of the newly globalizing economy, waterborne and airborne containerization. The remote-controlled, bubble-shaped helicopters of the Village are certainly another example of postmodern airmobility.

On the other hand, it is probably significant that the idea of the flashing siren is divested from Rover's immediate corpus and relocated onto the circular overhead lights and pulsating beam-projectors by which the various No. 2's attempt to hypnotize No. 6, that is to say as the limit-point of various light-sources or visual technologies. The most intriguing of these is the eerie light-machine of "Free for All" and "Fall Out", where the camera zooms in and out at a rapidly rotating theatrical light surrounded by gyroscopic gears of various kinds, while the sound track replays a kind of high-tech, oscillating whine somewhat similar to the acoustic backdrop of Rover, only without the latter's roar. During the resuscitation of the deceased No. 2 in "Fall Out", the light-machine kicks into gear while President remarks enthusiastically, "A revolution!" to the seated No. 6, and we see a brief clip of the death-sequence put into rewind, clearly a dead giveaway for the videorecorder (an extremely expensive high-technology item in 1967). This suggests that one of the key strategies of the series will be to turn the extended reproduction of the televised image against the extended reproduction of consumable surfaces signified by Rover. This may explain the (seemingly) shell-shocked Dutton's toy white balloon in the trial scene of No. 6 in "Dance of the Dead", which contrasts nicely to the period costumes of those attending the ball (the judges are dressed as a Roman emperor, Marie Antoinette, and Napoleon, while No. 2 is dressed, perversely enough, as Peter Pan, suggesting a properly American continuation of certain inglorious Imperial traditions). This is also the genesis of the moment in "Free for All" where No. 6 announces, as part of his election

campaign, “I am not a number, I am a *person*”: the camera cuts briefly to a bright yellow balloon with the word “Vote” scrawled on it, and then we hear the sound of it being popped and the scandalized laughter of the crowd. In “Once Upon a Time”, the two themes are finally conjoined in an early scene where No. 6 rocks back and forth on a rocking-chair while No. 2 fires questions at him, with the crucial word “pop” interpolated between shots of a glowing overhead light (the “bubble” No. 6 would like to burst).

This disruption of plastic surfaces is the flip side of a no less thorough-going recuperation of non-plastic surfaces, ranging from Portmeiron’s racy architectural modernism to the art-exhibition in “The Chimes of Big Ben”, where No. 6 wins first prize due to the fact that his entry, an abstract sculpture hewn by hand, is the only one which does not have No. 2’s visage somehow imprinted, carved, woven or stamped upon it. The resulting dialogue is priceless:

First Judge: “We’re not quite sure what it means.”

No. 6: *with a pixieish grin*: “It means what it is.”

No. 2: *hovering in background*: “Brilliant. It means what it is. Brilliant...” *All affability, to judges*: “Oh, you mustn’t let me influence your decision.” *Moves away*.

No. 6: “This piece... what does it represent to you.”

Second Judge: “A church door?”

No. 6: “Right first time.”

Third Judge: “I think I see what he’s getting at.”

No. 6: “Now, this other piece here, the same general line, something more abstract as you’ll notice, representing freedom – or a barrier, depending on how you look at it.”

Moves behind sculpture. “The barrier’s down, the door is open, you’re free, free to go, free to escape, to escape to this... symbol of human aspirations. Knowledge, freedom, escape.”

The sculpture is actually part of the frame of a boat he will use for the escape attempt. There is a roughly analogous scene in “It’s Your Funeral”, where an inmate who is painting No. 6’s portrait discusses the “jammers”, eccentrics who give so much false information to the Village that eventually the authorities ignore them. “What do you think?” says the artist, turning the canvas to the camera: it is an abstract painting, essentially a series of smudged boxes and a circle, vaguely Cubist with Abstract Expressionistic touches; “A perfect likeness”, responds No. 6, and indeed it is. This significant leap from the merely formal rebellion of the art-exhibition to the genuine content of the radical modernisms of Klee, Kandinsky and Picasso marks a formal mutation in the story-line away from the purely privatized or psychologizing escape from the Village envisioned at the beginning of the series, and towards the collective resistance movement mapped out at the end.

One of the crucial elements of this movement is the subterranean transformation of the gender ideology of the 1960s spy thriller, and in particular the erasure of the clearly sexist antagonism No. 6 displays towards the Villagers in some of the earlier episodes (in “Dance of the Dead”, he remarks, in reference to No. 2’s black cat, “Never trust a female, even the four-legged variety”) by a more complex set of gender ideologies. Of course, the men are even less trustworthy, and given that the whole point of the

Village is that blindly trusting anyone, least of all yourself, is a sure recipe for disaster, No. 6's comment reads as an interesting variant of male resentment, wherein the sudden, disorienting plethora of female service-workers, drivers and technicians of all kinds disrupts the home-and-hearth ideology still latent in, say, the occupations of the household maid or nurse. In fairness to McGoohan, one of the hallmarks of the series is its insistence that there *is* no domestic sphere anymore, or at least not one even remotely autonomous from or outside the reach of the juridical and economic infrastructures of the Village. This may explain why the Village, otherwise such a detailed microcosm of global society, is largely devoid of children, at least until near the end, when the children at the conclusion of "The Girl Who Was Death" and the children's rhymes and games of "Once Upon a Time" intimate the sort of utopian prison break-out visible in the finale of *Endgame*, i.e. Clov's sighting of the boy outside the bunker (suggesting in turn that Clov's telescope is the primordial version of McGoohan's video-cameras).

The flip side of the feminized domestic sphere was always the male monopoly on public violence, and it is noteworthy that where the Bond series in its classic form sought to retain the usual patriarchal monopoly on such, and was consequently forced to stage ever vaster and more stupendous combat sequences in order to shift attention away from the aporia of female agents who could be sexually threatening but were not permitted to carry guns or engage in direct combat (a kind of symbolic arms race of the Cold War patriarchy, as it were, roughly parallel to the phallic rocket-fetishism of the US and USSR), McGoohan will critique this on two levels. First, the male secret agent undergoes a self-referential or immanent deprogramming, as in "Schizoid Man", where No. 6's self-inflicted electric shock triggers the repressed memories of No. 2's brainwashing program;

secondly, the female agent undergoes an externalized or transcendent deprogramming, as with the woman brainwashed to fall in love with No. 6 in “Checkmate”, one of the most damning critiques of mass mediatic gender ideologies ever made. Her own moment of liberation arrives when she returns the locket with No. 6’s photograph to him – a locket which is actually a radio transmitter designed to track his movements; tellingly, he will later use the circuitry of the device for an escape attempt. This trope of a masculinized technological self-sacrifice paired to the feminized gift of technology, the immediate negation of the masculinized elite consumerism and feminized high-tech toys of the Bond films, will be greatly expanded in the context of “A Change of Mind”, where an entire Cold War culture of enforced drug regimens and repressive community politics is turned against itself via No. 2’s female assistant. Here it is not the gift of technology but the gift of a freely-given labor-time which allows No. 6 to turn the tables on his captors: she unwittingly takes the tranquilizer which she is supposed to administer to No. 6, and ends up as one of television’s first authentic Flower Children, high as a kite and the willing accomplice to No. 6’s ingenious counter-strike against No. 2.

The true gender revolution of the series, however, occurs only when this sequence of events is reversed, and No. 6 ends up deliberately taking a hallucinogenic drug which is supposed to break him, only in a manner of his own choosing, while the female agent, previously merely a dupe of the authorities, actively assists his rebellion: this is the moment of “A., B. & C.”, probably the single most intriguing episode in the series outside of the double-decker conclusion, and certainly the most sophisticated in terms of gender ideology. For one thing, the female scientist, No. 14, is no hapless underling, she is an independent scientific researcher whose experimental drug permits dreams to be

transformed into images displayed on a television monitor, and for a limited amount of information to be piped in to the dreaming subject. The title of the episode is based on the three suspects to whom No. 2 suspects No. 6 was selling out to at the moment of his resignation. The first, labeled “A”, evidently represents the traditional hard-nosed male secret agent, while “B” represents the relatively more glamorous female secret agent; “C” is an unknown agent, the ringer in the line-up, whose identity is a mystery even to the Village spymasters themselves. An image of each agent is fed into No. 6’s chemically tranquilized mind while a background tape replays a party at a certain Madame Engadine, French socialite extraordinaire. This suggestive allegory of the editing process, wherein the body’s memories are manipulated like videotape, has its primary model in a bizarre scene in “Dance of the Dead”, where McGoohan discovers the body of an agent in a filing cabinet; a move strongly reminiscent of Heiner Müller’s theatrical works, which prefigure the text as a properly postmodern corpse, i.e. as a bureaucratized pattern of information or mass-mediatic DNA.

But more amazing still is the content of No. 6’s normal dream sequence: we see not the usual series of abstract images or surreal collages, but the resignation sequence of the opening tag, namely the opening of the double doors, and McGoohan’s irate delivery of his resignation to George Markstein, repeated over and over again! What makes the visual impact of this move so striking is the lack of a sound-track: instead of the thunder and theme music of the tag, we hear instead the astonished No. 2 and No. 14 wonder what could possibly motivate their captive’s obdurate resistance to the Village, even (and especially) in his dreams. Such extreme contrasts of acoustic and visual registers are hardly untypical of the series, as the title shot of “Living in Harmony” with a fistfight

raging in the background goes to show; one could also point to the vicious fight between No. 2's assistant and No. 6 in "Hammer into Anvil", where they practically destroy No. 6's residence while Vivaldi flows peacefully from a record-player in the background. More revealing still is the sequence of musical quotations in the latter episode, where No. 6 plays and replays the opening of a piece by Bizet on a number of seemingly identical records as part of a cat-and-mouse game with the authorities. This is an unmistakable reference to Kurt Weill's musical parody of Bizet in the opening of Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, as well as a deft scansion of the musical studio technology of the nascent counter-culture. "A., B. & C." will relay this theme not in terms of an interpretive system per se, but as a set of characterological actants or allegories for mass media spaces out of which an interpretive system will later be constructed: thus No. 6 represents the superstar actor playing in a new kind of video theater, No. 14 signifies the media innovator or visual technician which links this theater to (and is linked by) the actual technologies of the video screen and editing room, while No. 2 satirizes those professionals whose business it is to decode or otherwise retail mediatic images, but who do not formally create or directly control the production of such – the ambiguous space of the executive producer or studio executive.

This is not to say that *The Prisoner* is just another mediatic critique of the mass media, as so much of the garden-variety or Web criticism of the series tends to assume – a line of reasoning with a powerful affinity to a certain moralistic critique of capitalism, which condemns the rich for being greedy while failing to comprehend that incessant accumulation is the truly destructive feature of the system, i.e. the fact that even the most garish displays of the profit-motive are only the symptoms and not the cause of the

hegemony of the commodity form. The limitations of such thinking are most apparent when one tries to directly apply mass media categories to the characters of A, B and C: in the case of A, we seem to be dealing with the standard Cold War double-agent. Less convincingly, B might be said to involve a variation on the detective or suspense narrative; at one point, No. 6 accuses No. 14 of being an accomplice to No. 2's latest scheme, and No. 14 says, ambiguously, "We all make mistakes. Sometimes we have to." Later, when No. 14, at No. 2's behest, employs the additional technique of piping not just images but sound as well into her sleeping patient, she deliberately puts the same words into B's mouth, tipping No. 6 off to what is going on. ("Have you ever had the feeling you're being manipulated?!" bursts McGoohan out at that point in his dream, one of the great moments in a series devoted to cataloguing the ways the media manipulates us). But C corresponds to no known mediatic genre whatsoever. In the story line, No. 6 uses his waking hours to discover the underground laboratory which is the site of the dream-experiments; he finds the drug, but does not destroy it or the machinery, but instead reduces the dosage considerably and then leaves everything as it is. When No. 14 finally applies the drug, No. 6 is able to steer himself, to some degree, through the resulting psychedelic experience (as if to emphasize the point, the camera shifts and rolls drunkenly, following the No. 6 through what he knows now is a dream-party, to the accompaniment of thundering horn music). A similar mutation transpires with the mystery spy, who at first seems to be none other than Madame Engadine herself, until we learn of yet another secret agent, heretofore unknown to the Village, who apparently even Engadine works for. Though the unmasking of this super-secret agent is far too delightful a scene to spoil for those who have never actually seen the series (suffice to say that

McGoohan upstages the stage as well as the stagers), it's significant that the unmasking takes place inside of a church, whose doors open to reveal, not an interior, but an exterior – an anonymous urban scene somewhere in Europe, garnished with the disorienting sound-track of an onrushing train. This architectural inversion is nicely complemented by the following exchange: McGoohan takes the package of presumably secret information from his jacket and says, "This means a great deal to me." The hooded mystery spy responds, in best corporate manner, "It is only a commodity." "No," retorts McGoohan with a twinkle in his eye, "it's my future". Still later, McGoohan walks back to the underground laboratory – not in "reality", but in his dream, and No. 2 and No. 14 watch in astonishment as the on-screen No. 6 presents the virtual No. 2 and No. 14 with the contents of the presumably top-secret information he supposedly wished to present to the mystery spy. The packet turns out to contain innocuous travel brochures, another inventive variation on the opening tag.

In fact, the travel brochure's reference to physical escape from the Village is no mere metaphor. What is at issue is the determinate negation of the homogenizing anonymity of the Village by a concrete, irreproducible place. A, B and C are thus not symbols of mass-media genres, but of mediatized social spaces: in A's case, the location in question is clearly the national embassy; for B, it is the less definable space of a garden labyrinth somehow associated with B's (hidden) family and No. 14's spoken resistance, i.e. the collective solidarities of the European social democracies. For C, it is the shadowy, dimly lit urban streetcorner, with the obligatory church bell echoing in the background – the prototypical urban stage, in short, for that other great media-assisted unmasking of the Powers That Be, namely the tsunami of street uprisings which would

inundate downtown Prague, Paris, Chicago and countless other cities around the globe in the spring of 1968. “A., B. & C.”’s signal achievement is therefore its ability to conjoin a localized micropolitics to a globalizing mediatic space, or what Bourdieu would term that multinational class praxis which ties together the local habitus with the transnational operations of the aesthetic niche-market or field in question: this is the raising of the visual sampling and aural dubbing of the cutting-room to an art-form, namely the art of video editing. A little thought will show that most of the other episodes of the series involve a similar constellation of localized mediatic spaces with global coordinates: in “The General”, it is the space of the university amidst the ongoing computerization of knowledge; “Living in Harmony” pastiches the Hollywood set in the context of a psychedelic Western; while in “Dance of the Dead”, it is the popular judgement of the carnival which is played off against the juridical sphere of media History, and so forth.

Bourdieu’s aesthetic critique includes one other term, however, which is no less important than the fields of aesthetic production and interpretation per se, and that is the field of unabashedly political power upon which the aesthetic producers, distributors and consumers are forced by the very logic of commodity society – the unrestricted competition of all against all – to stake their respective claims, in a more or less mediated fashion (if for no other reason than the fact that even the refusal or inability to stake such a claim is itself contingent on the historically-constituted autonomy of art from politics, criticism from censorship, art appreciation from commercial exploitation, etc.). In the Village, the field of power takes some very strange forms indeed, everywhere from the early scene in “Arrival”, where the heliborne No. 2 informs No. 6 that the town hall is host to both a “democratically elected” council and to amateur theatrical events, to the

literal and figurative chess games of “Checkmate”, all the way to the repressive therapeutic-pharmaceutical complex and drug-assisted insurrection of “A Change of Mind”. The most direct critique of what might be called the politics-industry of late capitalism, however, is undoubtedly “Free for All”, both the funeral dirge for the national mass party and the unofficial founding charter of the New Left. In many ways, “Free for All” is the logical complement to the visual innovations and luminous mediatic strategies of “A., B. & C.”; whereas the latter identifies the space of the editing room as a new kind of cultural zone, and thus transforms a certain visual recursion into a protomorphic video library of images, the former concentrates not on the image per se but on the messages and texts transmitted by such – or what Derrida would identify as the thematic of a dissemination which is never quite identical with what is being disseminated. But where deconstruction and post-structuralism promptly sealed off this potentially explosive insight behind the specialized ghettos of linguistics or ontological philosophy, and thus unwittingly perpetuated precisely the authoritarian monopoly over theory authorized by the ontologies in the first place, the most insightful intellectuals of the New Left (most notably, Adorno and Sartre) would insist on the necessarily mediated nature of this dissemination, i.e. the fact that the narrative-industries of late capitalism are hardly innocent bystanders in the business of accumulation, but play an indispensable role in creating new markets, restructuring old ones, and ceaselessly legitimating, transacting and regulating the sway of the commodity form over society as a whole.

This may explain why McGoohan will not simply condemn the marketized election campaign as a fraud or a perversion of democracy, which merely begs the question of what a truly democratic politics *would* look like, anyway, but plays off the

element of scriptwriting against the scripted endorsements, scripted media events, scripted sound-bites and scripted speeches of the political marketplace. Each of these elements is closely conjoined to a specific media technology, ranging from the opening scene where No. 2 appears on TV and on the telephone simultaneously (a nice rewriting of an early scene in “Dance of the Dead”, where the new No. 2 greets No. 6 directly from the television screen), to the instantaneous press publications and megaphone-driven rallies of the actual campaign, to the wallscreen and underground bunker revealed at the very end (the model for the full-fledged videoscreen and underground political unconscious of “Fall Out”). Unlike earlier episodes, which tend to delimit the process of mediatization to two or three discrete mediatic spaces – the usual ones are the hospital or therapy center, the visual surveillance center of the Control Room, and the theatrical stage of No. 2’s office in the Green Dome – “Free for All” does something new, by tagging each media technology with an appropriately subversive and semi-autonomous space. Consider No. 2’s delightfully Mephistophelean pitch to No. 6 concerning the chance to run for office:

No. 2: “Every citizen has a choice. Are you going to run?”

No. 6: “Like blazes, the first chance I get.”

No. 2: “I meant, run for office.”

No. 6: “Whose?”

No. 2: “Mine, for instance.”

No. 6: *pauses*: “You have a delicate sense of humor.”

No. 2: “Naturally. Humor is the very essence of a democratic society.”

One might assume that this formal counterpoint of meaning, counter-meaning, irony and counter-irony indicates that the authorities are somehow just as cognizant of the potential instability of their rule as No. 6's prototypical rebel, but in fact nothing here is quite what it seems. For one thing, the scene takes place not in No. 2's office (as was the case for the breakfasts in "Arrival" and "Schizoid Man") but at No. 6's residence; for another, in the best tradition of Brecht, No. 2 gets to deliver one of the best and most subversive lines of the series – but then, as we learn later on, even No. 2 is not quite No. 2 in this particular episode. By negating the visual motif of the initial meeting between the new No. 2 and No. 6, McGoohan opens up a space where even the script does not follow its own script: the text shears loose from the image, and floats over the scene like a free-floating metacommentary or video clip of itself. Something similar is at work in the rally scene, wherein No. 2 seemingly urges No. 6 on to ever more radical anti-Village rhetoric (the space of the professional politician); or the escape attempt via the speedboat, where No. 2 looks on and directs the action from a helicopter (the space of the action-film director); or, for that matter, the flight from the Village's non-alcoholic bar (the adroitly-named Cat and Mouse) to a supposedly covert still, whose drinks are in reality spiked with a powerful set of drugs designed to break No. 6 (the space of the film noir nightclub owner). The high point of this strategy is the scene where No. 6 is "interviewed" in the back of a Village cart by news reporters from the Tally-ho, the Village newspaper, which can be described as Time-Warner meets Beckett in Prague's Wenceslas Square:

No. 113: “How are you going to handle your campaign?”

No. 6: “No comment.”

No. 113: *writes in reporter’s pad*: “‘Intends to fight for freedom at all costs.’ How about your internal policy?”

No. 6: “No comment.”

No. 113: *writes*: “‘Will tighten up on Village security.’ How about your external policy?”

No. 6: “No comment.”

No. 113: *writes*: “‘Our exports will operate in every corner of the globe.’ How do you feel about life and death?”

No. 6: “Mind your own business.”

No. 113: *writes*: “‘No comment.’”

The litany of double and triple puns here (the Prisoner is indeed fighting for a certain kind of freedom; he is indeed testing the Village’s security system; the Village is indeed a globally-exported phenomenon; and of course the whole point is that No. 6 really does have nothing to say to the Powers That Be) expertly sets off the spectacle of a mass media whose only real business is, just like that of the Cold War spy agencies, retailing the business of others. Probably the only real weakness in this episode is the brainwashing sequence which follows the confrontation with the Village council (again, the significant prototype for the parliamentary assembly in “Fall Out”), an overly subjective or paranoid register which is the privatized or psychologizing flip side of the objectively schizophrenic gestures and unidentifiable language of the taxi driver assigned

to No. 6 for his campaign (who turns out, in the end, to be the real No. 2 after all; the “language” she speaks is actually a meaningless linguistic pastiche specially invented by the scriptwriters). The conclusion of “Free for All”, where No. 6 is “elected” to be the new No. 2 and begins wildly operating the controls of No. 2’s office, first to see if No. 2 has really left the stage and then in a vain attempt to order the Villagers to rise up in rebellion, suggests that a more fundamental representational dilemma is involved here, namely the problem of narrating consumer capitalism not just as a form but as a genuine content. The political version of this was the seemingly clearcut choice before the New Left, to either transform the Establishment from within (the Long March through the institutions envisioned by the Prague Spring reformers and Western social democrats alike), or else to instigate an actual revolution in the streets. History teaches us that both options were illusory; national social democracy could temporarily flourish in the hothouse export-platform economies of Central Europe, but a resurgent neoliberalism was about to strangle the effective global demand this model depended on and thus reactivate the latent class tensions smoothed over by the golden age of state-monopoly Keynesianism; meanwhile the national-democratic and anti-colonial revolutions in the Second and Third Worlds could defeat the US Empire’s rampaging armies with guerilla tactics, but could hardly be expected to counter the far more insidious enemy of falling raw materials prices on world markets. Neither international solidarity actions nor neo-national political disruptions were, by themselves, really capable of challenging the henceforth global habitus of multinational capitalism; only truly transnational labor and political movements would be able to do that.

From this global perspective, “Free for All”’s curious ending – the System’s necessary resort to a direct, brutish violence, seemingly at odds with the much more subtle forms of manipulation and repression No. 6 faced previously – is not an example of weak scriptwriting, but of extraordinarily good scriptwriting indeed. This is the moment of naked political crisis, when the US and the USSR, COINTELPRO and the KGB, the crushing of the Prague Spring and the police riot at the Democratic Convention in Chicago of 1968, US military Keynesianism and goulash Stalinism, the FBI and the Stasi, the killing fields and torture cells of US-sponsored juntas throughout Asia and Latin America and the horrors of the gulag and the laogai, all turn out to be shockingly, monstrously identical.

McGoohan’s counter-strategy will cancel out the theme of the existential conflict of the alienated outlaw versus the System at the heart of the spy narrative, choosing instead to set a series of multinational subjects (e.g. the nursery school rhymes, biographical peregrinations and Shakespearian stages of the senescence of the British Empire in “Once Upon a Time”) in motion towards transnational or mass mediatic objects (the American-style media executives, paranoid Cold War security agencies and counter-cultural uprising of “Fall Out”). Though the two final episodes of the series were televised separately, McGoohan’s own editorial work here – “Fall Out” begins with an extensive synopsis of the main events of “Once Upon a Time” – suggest that they are really two parts of a single, larger episode, designed to run for an hour and a half or so. Careful examination of the script tends to support this view; not only do both episodes harmonize in terms of a common underground setting, a provocative set design, the centrally ambiguous role of the Butler, and the drama of an unyielding dissent at last

overthrowing the power of an inflexible state-monopoly authority, but the mediatic resistances of the first are the logical complement of the mediatic rebellions of the second. This may explain why the first episode is not only the purest theater of the series, wherein a series of pitched battles rages between No. 6 and No. 2 (superbly played by the inimitable Leo McKern) in the confines of a hallucinatory playground, a school, a boxing match and later even a fencing match, but also the purest television: the visual motifs and icons of a whole range of media narratives, everywhere from the school drama to the high school graduation ceremony, the job interview to the car chase, and the courtroom drama to the WW II movie are all stripped down to the basalt bedrock of supercharged, electrifying dialogues, often involving the simple repetition of numbers or nonsensical words. Meanwhile the usual Portmeiron scenery we have come to expect is replaced by an eerie, blank darkness and unusually crisp, blinding lighting-effects, as if the stage and its objects were floating in a dazzling void; our visual sensors are thus redirected away from the scenery and towards the suddenly-visible shot-editing and cutting techniques themselves, counterpointed by the literal and figurative machinery of the sound-track, which we see the Butler turn on and off in sync with the action. This reflexive twist on what might be called the set of the television set begins to disclose its specific content during the seesaw scene, when the contrasting vertical shots of No. 2 and No. 6 slowly accelerate in tandem with the rising verbal antagonism between the two: the result is a displacement of what we have termed the video cut, namely the accelerated zoom used previously in the series, with its latent reference to the physical motion of the camera through three-dimensional space, by the extreme close-ups of No. 2 and No. 6 in motion around the screen. The movement of objects through time turns into the instantaneous

juxtaposition of moving objects in space, the embryonic forerunner of the hegemonic windowing aesthetic of the early 1990s global consumer culture. Conversely, the video frame we identified earlier as the clacking wooden spinnets of the interrogation scene in “Arrival” is rehearsed once again in the courtroom scene, wherein No. 6 counters the machinations of No. 2’s solemn Judge by invoking that central political innovation of the 1960s rebellions, the globally-mediatised nonviolent civil disobedience campaign, and is subsequently dragged off to “jail” (actually a mobile home, complete with a dining area and kitchenette).

This sets up one of the greatest confrontations of the series, wherein No. 2 says, “You’re dead” and No. 6 responds by offering him a knife taken from one of the kitchen drawers, saying, “Go ahead, kill me”. No. 2 cannot refuse this gambit, and approaches No. 6 hesitantly, knife raised, but of course he cannot bring himself to kill, simply because No. 6 does not attack him or offer any kind of physical resistance. This is not only the significant inversion of an earlier scene, the fencing match where No. 2 tries to goad No. 6 into killing him, and No. 6 lunges wildly but merely wounds him, but also recalls to mind Genet’s famous flourish at the end of his magnificent play, *The Blacks*, where the Judge bursts out, “But let’s get things straight: one corpse, two, a battalion, a drove of corpses, we’ll pile them high if that’s what we need to avenge ourselves. But no corpse at all – why, that could kill us.”² To paraphrase Adorno, every inhuman order founded on the logic of sacrifice requires the routinized dehumanization of that which is to be sacrificed: mostly notoriously, as the numbers tattooed on the inmates of the death camps, but of course McGoohan has the prisoners of quite another Empire in mind. The true perversity of the jail is indeed that it is the only self-evident piece of the consumer

culture in the Embryo Room; it is literally the prison within the prison, just as the Embryo Room is itself a prison within the larger prison of the Village. Consequently No. 6's breakout will rely not on that deus ex machina of the Bond series, a superior brand of technology, but on the strategic faultline between the multinational consumer culture of the Village and its state-monopoly technologies of repression: that is, the utopian promise of the consumer culture will turn against the late capitalist institutions in which it is housed. The crucial moment here is the scene where No. 2 pretends to be a German interrogator in a WW II prison camp and No. 6 refuses to play along, which recalls to mind a similar moment in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, when the conclusion of the war suddenly opens up that space of the consumer culture in which Slothrop can miraculously escape from the multiple traps and conspiracies-within-conspiracies set all around him. This is not, as the Right has so often charged, the blind identification of the Establishment with Fascism, but the New Left cognition of Fascism as the distorted and doomed prototype of a hegemonic American state-monopoly capitalism.

It is this essential cognition which underpins No. 6's shocking reply to No. 2's incessant questioning as to why No. 6 resigned: the simple, powerful, unanswerable, "Why don't *you* resign?" This is far more than a simple inversion of a rhetorical position: this is the moment when resistance mutates, virus-like, into revolution. It is not merely that No. 2 cannot really imagine himself as an autonomous human being, capable of making decisions without the crutch of an immense power-bureaucracy at his side; nor is it simply that No. 6 really does care not just about himself but about everyone, and therefore offers the scandalous gift of a socialist equality precisely where No. 2 can envision only the neoliberal alternatives of a poisoned mastery (the freedom *of* the

marketplace) or utter submission (freedom *for* the marketplace), though these are true enough. The point is that No. 2 incarnates, at that moment, the class position of the overlords of the global village, the CEOs of the multinational corporations, and the rentier elites of global finance capital, who are prisoners of the very system they claim to own. Capital revenges itself upon the bourgeoisie by making them just as contingent and incidental to the overall mode of production as the workers they are forced, by the very logic of the ruthless and unbounded global marketplace they administer, to exploit. Despite their relatively privileged position, they and their fortunes are in truth no less vulnerable to market downturns and the juggernaut of global accumulation than the average wage-worker. This is nicely symbolized by the clock running out on No. 2, who despite all his power and influence is, like anyone else in the total system, subject to the judgement of labor-time, that is to say the performance-principle; he was given one week by No. 1 to break No. 6 and finds, at the end, that not only has he failed his assignment, but even worse, he does not really want to succeed anymore. In a clever inversion of the numbers battle of the courtroom, McGoohan counts off the last sixty seconds, while the increasingly desperate No. 2 comes totally unglued and begs for clemency; in response to the latter's pleas, No. 6 brusquely replies, "Ask on... ask *yourself*." The death scene is also noteworthy for its unusual shot technique, namely the handheld close-up of McKern's face and the sound-track of a thudding heartbeat and a ticking clock, while a voiceover intones in No. 2's ears, "Die, Six, die, die, die...". Not two, but *six*, which suggests that either he has completely lost his own sense of identity and that the mysterious No. 1 is ordering No. 2's death before the latter has time to join No. 6's

rebellion, or perhaps that No. 2 is haunted by his own internalized No. 6 or conscience, and thus falls on his own sword before his conscience gets the better of him.³

Who, then, *is* the mysterious No. 1, the arch-villain of the entire series and the malevolent force of evil responsible not only for dreaming up the diabolical prison of the Village, but overseeing and operating it? The answer lies in the nether gulfs of “Fall Out”, whose two-word title is the ultimate thermonuclear pun in a series studded with Cold War puns. It opens with a bizarre scene in which No. 6 confronts a tailor’s dummy of himself with a crude mask of his own face on it, wearing his original clothes and flanked by eerily rustling coat-hangars. This is actually a clever retake of a scene in the “Dance of the Dead”, where No. 6 is invited to the carnival and finds that his costume is nothing other than his own personal attire – dark clothes and leather shoes as opposed to his Village uniform, the characteristic single white-edge-on-black fabric plus sneakers. At one point the maid, an agent of No. 2, comes in and asks, in reference to the clothes: “What does that mean?” No. 6 responds: “That I am still... *myself*.” The maid’s response is halfway between repressive nonchalance and envious petulance: “Lucky you.” The first scene of “Fall Out” radicalizes this motif of an alienated subjectivity by deploying a handheld, jostling camera angle and running low, rolling kettle-drums in the background, thus thoroughly disorienting our visual and aural sensibilities. When No. 6 finally reaches for his clothes, the hit Beatles single, *All You Need is Love*, serenades No. 6, the Butler and the Supervisor as they pass through a rocky passage lined with juke boxes in recessed partitions (a clever reference to the culture of extended musical reproduction). The Butler then opens a door, which reveals a massive underground vault, the true political and metaphorical power-base of the Village, crawling with mysterious technicians, black-

goggled troops with automatic rifles and white helmets, computers and surveillance equipment. It is overseen by a strange, hooded assembly, which we later learn is a kind of parliament, outfitted with theatrical masks (half black, half white) and white hoods and gloves which completely cover every inch of their bodies. The parliamentarians are identified not by name, but by tags describing their departmental zone of authority (these include “welfare”, “pacifists”, “activists”, “identification”, “therapy”, “reactionists” and – touché! – “nationalists”). Off to one side, we also see the central design motif of the Control Room, namely the video carousel, only with twin machine-gunners at each revolving end instead of the earlier videocamera teams.

We see, in short, anything and everything but the Bond stereotype of the megalomaniac arch-criminal in a control room planning to wreak havoc, out of greed or malice, on the world. The reason, of course, is that this particular assembly *is* the Cold War world-system, in its most naked and concrete form: an assembly which preaches nothing but democracy but practices nothing but coercion, which upholds the doctrine of unlimited technical progress in order to maintain an asphyxiating status quo, which oversees everything and is watched over only by No. 6’s seemingly powerless gaze (and, by extension, that of our own), and whose collective decisions are actually decided in advance by No. 1 – represented here by a giant mechanical eye implanted in what appears to be some sort of enormous conning-tower. Nor does No. 1 even use words or other obvious commands, but issues orders to the President, the leader of the assembly, via two intriguing symbols, a curious high-pitched siren and a flashing green strobe light. This is actually a rewrite of the brainwashing sequence in the earliest part of “Once Upon a Time”, when No. 2 uses a pulsating lamp to hypnotize No. 6, and the Supervisor’s voice

suddenly reverberates, against a background of psychedelic noise: “Five... five... five... five...”. The number-system and the specific image (the videoscreen by which No. 2 is monitoring No. 6) are replaced with a twittering, high-pitched electronic reverb vaguely reminiscent of Morse code, and the opening and closing of the mechanical eye.

The numberless President, clad in suitably juridical robes and wig, then calls for order and explains that the assembly has been called in a moment of “democratic crisis”, i.e. must decide what to do with three specific rebels, or more precisely, three forms of rebellion: the counter-cultural youth, No. 48 (played by Alexis Kanner, reprising a similar role from “Living in Harmony”), the mainstream revolt of the ex-No. 2 from “Once Upon a Time” (Leo McKern), and of course that as yet unclassifiable threat to the status quo represented by McGoohan himself. No. 48 arrives via a strange elevator, a cross between a giant piston and a circular platform which can be lowered into the depths, and which discharges a regular cloud of vapor with a sound halfway between a steam engine and an aerosol can. Evidently bolted to the steel column against his will, he immediately starts singing an African American gospel song, “Dem Bones Gonna Rise Again”, the mere words of which cause the assembly to plunge into disorder. Finally, to restore order, he is released and allowed to venture onto the stage, while the President waxes forth about the fecklessness of youth. No sooner is he free, of course, than he runs wildly across the set, reciting the same song, at one point even shouting the lyrics into a microphone while ducking the guards and plunging the entire assembly into chaos.

When No. 48 is cornered at last, No. 6 intervenes to save him, saying, “Young man... don’t knock yourself out.” No. 48, unsure of whether No. 6 really is the rebel he seems to be, tests him with the response: “Gimme the rest”. No. 6 replies gravely,

“Young... *man*.” This respectful familiarity elicits the immediate hostility of the President, who is forced however by No. 1 to negotiate directly with No. 48. The resulting dialogue between the two is a brilliant pastiche of a Beat culture on the cusp of turning beatnik, with the President battling key phrases such as “Got the message”, “Got the light” and “Got the word” back and forth with No. 48 in an attempt to prove his hipness (and aided by some remarkably fast cutting). Of course, the President is interested only in forcing No. 48 to confess to the authorities, which the youth steadfastly refuses to do. Also significant is the call-and-response role of the assembly, which joins in the dialogue at various points. Visually, these moments are always tied to close-up shots of a specific desk-tag: when the assembly chants “Take... take... take...” and beats on the desks with both hands to the beat, the tag in the center of our view reads “Education”; when No. 48 is lip-syncing a recording of “Dem Bones” by the Four Tops, the tag reads “Recreation”; and when a member of the assembly reads the charges against No. 48, the tag reads, appropriately enough, “Anarchists”.

But where No. 48’s rebellion seems to hinge on the latent possibilities of the counter-cultural music scene, the revolt of the ex-No. 2 is more directly linked with those of video, or more precisely still, of a certain kind of Shakespearian political theater mediated via the specific video clip. When he awakes from his slumber, a videoclip of Leo McKern’s role as No. 2 in “The Chimes of Big Ben” is shown, along with a soundtrack of his laughter, which provokes the assembly to laughter in turn. They are clearly laughing at, not with him. Later he takes the stand and recounts his glory days as a Government functionary of some sort (we will assume, an MP), and then his subsequent abduction to the Village, observing ironically, “What is deplorable is that I resisted for so

short a time. A fine tribute to your methods.” Sadistically, the assembly then replays the MP’s mediatized “death” at the end of “Once Upon a Time”, causing his barely-contained hostility towards the Village to boil over into outright rebellion: he walks over and stares directly at No. 1’s mechanical eye, despite warnings from the President not to do so, finally tearing his Village lapel pin from his coat and summoning up the courage to spit directly in No. 1’s electronic face, who hastily orders the guards to carry the MP off to the same holding cell as No. 48.

Imagine our surprise when, after all this, we hear the President turn around and *praise* No. 6’s successful rebellion in fulsome terms, even going so far as to offer the Prisoner a choice: he may either stay and lead the Village, or leave a free subject and go wherever he wishes (a canny retake of our previous aporia, i.e. the Long March through the institutions versus the street resistance, now cast as a decisive, existential – and of course utterly false – choice). McGoohan, who has been watching the performances of the first two rebels from the throne of honor like a hawk (at one point the President says, “I take it you approve of the proceedings, Sir?” and No. 6 parries: “I... *note* them”), is of course not so easily fooled. We have already learned that the reach of the Village is global and that they are hardly likely to offer their most tenacious dissident a post of real authority. To be sure, unlike the other two rebels, he is interested neither in simply scandalizing the authorities, nor does he appear to have own power-agenda. In fact, it’s not clear that he has any agenda at all, which seems to be the main worry of the Village:

President: “You are free to go.”

No. 6: *skeptical*: “Free to go.”

President: “Anywhere.”

No. 6: “Why?”

President: “You have been such an example to us.”

No. 6: “Why?”

President: “You have convinced us of our mistakes.”

No. 6: *more serious*: “Why?”

President: “You are pure, you know the way, show us.”

No. 6: *relentless*: “Why?”

President: “Your revolt is good and honest and you are the only individual. We need you.”

No. 6: “I see.”

President: “You do. You see all.”

No. 6: *skeptical*: “I’m an individual?”

President: “You are on your own.”

No. 6: *pause*: “I fail to see.”

President: *leaving the rostrum and striding onto the floor*: “All about you is yours. We concede. We offer, we plead for you to lead us.”

No. 6: “Or go.”

President: “Go if you wish.”

No. 6: “I, I don’t know.”

President: “Take the stand, address us.”

No. 6: *lightly*: “Should I?”

President: “You must. You *are* the greatest. Make a statement, a true statement which could only be yours but for us, remember us, don’t forget us, keep us in mind. Sir, we are all yours.”

All yours, indeed. The transcript does not do justice to the wonderful interplay here between Kenneth Griffith’s oily President, oozing malignancy and paranoia, and McGoohan’s skeptical, quicksilver No. 6; McGoohan deploys the simplest of words, the interrogative “why”, as the most cutting critical instrument imaginable (the same word plays a similar function in the conclusion of “The General”, only on the level of typed rather than spoken material) and thus extracting the maximum of information with a minimum of effort. His suspicions are later confirmed when he takes the stand to give his speech, only to discover, to his chagrin, that whenever he opens his mouth the parliament drowns him out with applause, shouting “Aye aye aye” or words to that effect. Repeated recourse to the gavel has no effect. Finally he simply shouts out his words, uselessly, while the assembly effectively censors whatever it is that he has to say. This scene does more than just raise miscommunication to an art-form: in retrospect, we know full well he would have said exactly what he has been saying all along – that he will not be manipulated, bullied or controlled in any way, shape or form by the Village, and that he will not play their game, ever. As if to give us the broadest possible hint, the camera cuts to a close-up of the parliament, allowing us to decipher the desk-tag in the center as “Entertainment”. This suggests McGoohan is recuperating the archaic form of the direct political address or soapbox speech from the standpoint of a video politics which will

turn the extended reproduction of the consumer culture against itself, very much as the New Left outflanked the official censorship of both superpowers by means of a whole new set of rhizomic cultural spaces, alternative media and innovative modes of dissemination.

None of this is immediately obvious, of course, when McGoohan takes the strange circular elevator down to No. 1's inner sanctum, passing helmeted, heavily armed guards, and entering a room with the Young Man (still humming "Dem Bones") and the MP (still laughing hysterically) both locked inside plexiglass cylinders marked Orbit 48 and Orbit 2 respectively. This striking image of what Jameson would term a trope of recontainment, of the counter-cultural youth and the Shakespearian fool literally bottled up inside their own monads, is completed by steam hissing from various vents in the background and technicians working on control panels. Pne other cylinder, which is unmarked, opens up, presumably for No. 6. But just when we expect the worst, the clarion horn-call of the Village's outdoor broadcast system resounds, informing us that someone is saving the day: it is none other than the Butler, who bows before No. 6 and directs him to the stairs leading up to No. 1's inner sanctum. After the door glides open, the camera pans slowly across a set of globes resting on a central table, all turned to clearly meaningful positions. One reveals the Pacific Ocean bounded by the USA and Latin America, another is showing an area from Middle East over Southeast Asia to Indochina, the next shows North America again, the next the east coast of North America, the Atlantic and Western Europe, and the last shows North America again (singularly missing are Russia and China, suggesting that McGoohan knew exactly where the Village had its global headquarters). No. 1 is standing at a set of controls, hooded and

masked, and watching a videoscreen which first displays the live image of the approaching No. 6 and then No. 6's speech to No. 2 at the beginning of "Arrival" ("I will not be pushed, filed, stamped" etc.), while some sort of high-pitched sonar or radar apparatus chirps in the background. These seemingly clearcut references to global geopolitics and a top-secret military technology of some sort are loosed from their moorings, however, when No. 1 turns and hands a miniature crystal ball to No. 6, who carefully takes it and looks within, seeing the usual image by which all the previous episodes ended – bars slamming shut across a fast zoom of No. 6's face, all set against an aerial shot of the Village. Stranger still, the sound-track loops back on the very beginning of the "Arrival" clip: "I... I... I..." and slowly accelerates this single word, raising the pitch higher and higher, while the prison-shot wells up over and over again within the crystal. No. 6's response is to let the crystal drop and shatter on the floor, a gesture not entirely unknown to other significant works of British postmodernism.⁴ But what follows breaks all the rules, even those set by McGoohan's earlier episodes: the tape loop continues to accelerate until it is little more than a whining bleat against a rising jumble of orchestral noise, until No. 6, grinning like a skull, removes No. 1's white-and-black mask to reveal – the mask of an ape, which mugs wildly for the suddenly unstable, shifting camera until No. 6 pulls that mask off, too. And the true identity of No. 1, the source of all No. 6's torment and misery? None other than McGoohan himself – who laughs maniacally, lunging towards the camera, setting off a brief chase sequence around the table with the globes. After some of the tightest, fastest camera shots of the series, McGoohan literally chases *himself* up an escape hatch and seals it, and then returns to the control panel, this time not to maintain the status quo but to jumpstart the Revolution.

This is the absolutely dazzling culmination of a long, long line of identity-critiques, ranging from No. 12 in “Schizoid Man”, No. 6’s exact duplicate (wherein No. 12 gets some wonderful lines such as, “Where’d they get you, at one of those people’s copying services, or are you one of those double agents we keeping hearing about so much these days?”), to “Free for All”’s deliberate blurring of the lines between No. 2 and No. 6, to the no-holds-barred identity-struggle mapped out in “Once Upon a Time”. This particular scene solves two particular mysteries for us: for one thing, the assembly’s chant which drowned out No. 6’s address was in all likelihood the same as the tape loop, i.e. “I I I”, the deliberate repetition of the opening word of McGoohan’s speech (“I feel that...”). Repression in late capitalism does not typically involve the absolute expropriation of the subject typical of liberal or monopoly capitalism (the nationalism which violently excludes other nationalities, the sexism which expropriates women’s household labor on behalf of masculinized national corporations and power-bureaucracies, the racism by which the colonies and colonized are held in subjection to the colonists, and so forth) but what might be termed its relative immiseration on the multinational marketplace of identity: thus the celebrated media superstar whose very existence depends on the implicit devaluation of non-celebrities; the CNBC-style telejournalism which reduces the global economy to the chatter of wealthy white male stockholders retailing the retailing of retailing on behalf of even wealthier (and whiter) male stockholders; or the business culture of the giant multinationals or multis, which is open to any cultural group just as long as they swear fealty to the commodity form. Secondly, the Village’s Mephistophelean offer to No. 6 – to lead the Village, or to go – needs to be taken quite literally indeed: the true mastermind behind the Village and all its

power-structures is not really a unitary government or even a set of conspirators, but rather the principle of unrestricted competition unleashed by global capitalism, that is to say the desire to be the global number one in whatever marketplace is at hand. The rebellion against the market must thus operate on two levels: first, the subjective one of a psychological or internal liberation from the dictates of the market forces, and secondly the collective emancipation of subjects joining together in a freely-chosen solidarity on the very terrain of the marketplace.

All this is staged with exemplary clarity by the subsequent uprising, where McGoohan finally plays his hand and completes the transformation of what began as an individual escape attempt into the collective overthrow of the Village, not from without, but by means of the accumulated social forces stored up from within. Taking a fire extinguisher from the wall, he begins to descend silently into the Orbit room, until the Butler gazes up and sees him: lo and behold, the latter, heretofore the loyal agent of the Village, joins the rebellion by indicating with his glance precisely where the hooded, uniformed technicians are. McGoohan swings into action, blinding and knocking down the technicians, and tossing the fire extinguisher to the Butler, who helps him finish them off. They quickly free the Young Man and the MP; meanwhile, McGoohan returns to the control panel and starts some sort of countdown, plunging the President and the assembly into panic and chaos, as they realize they are no longer in control of the situation. After the rebels ambush the guards in the passageway, we encounter the most visually startling and politically powerful sequence of the entire series: while the four rebels shoot their way out to the mobile home espied earlier in “Once Upon a Time” in a vicious firefight with the guards, the Beatles’ *All You Need is Love* pours from the sound-track against the

clatter of machine-guns, explosions, sirens and chaos. The panic of the authorities turns general, as the command to evacuate the Village resounds. Incongruous frogmen in wetsuits flee the carnage on equally incongruous children's bicycles, while the Villagers scramble madly, driving and heliporting their way to safety, just as the four rebels drive to freedom in a truck, hauling the mobile home. Behind them, the final countdown reveals No. 1's domicile, which we had previously thought was a conning tower or bunker of some sort, to be a gigantic booster rocket (McGoohan intersperses actual footage from the Apollo space program here) which thunders majestically into the sky, and whose backwash melts Rover down into burnt slag.

Here at last the thunder of the opening tag, the thunder of the open road, and the rolling thunder of the battlefields of Vietnam all converge in the nova express of the 1968 earthquakes, shaking, pitching and yawing the edifice of state-monopoly capitalism to its globalizing core. One would be hard-pressed to top this mediatic hijacking of the rocket, that central media icon of the scientific-technological might of the Cold War superstates, by the New Left alliance of the counter-culture, revitalized Social Democratic and Left parties, McGoohan's superstar culture-workers and that last space symbolized by the Butler; still, McGoohan has one other surprise in store for us, relayed by the very last sequence of the series. We see the Young Man return to hitchhiking the highways, while the MP reenters the Parliament building to resume his former duties. But McGoohan and the Butler are immediately confronted by a suspicious London police officer, who demands some sort of explanation for the mobile home. Cleverly, McGoohan shoots the whole scene from a distance, using no dialogue, and we see him pantomime some patently bogus explanation to the stolid officer and then point to the Parliament building,

as if to say, the MP will explain everything, before turning and rushing off with the Butler in the nick of time. The pair dash not to a taxi, but to that great symbol of European public sector socialism, the double-decker bus. Later, when they arrive at No. 6's home, the Butler, silent to the very end, enters the building while McGooohan drives off in his customized Lotus, and the scene shifts to a simple urban panorama, with McGooohan racing off into London traffic while the word "prisoner" is displayed, in Village font, prominently at the bottom of the screen.

Aside from the implicit social critique here (late capitalism surely remains the prison-house from which we must all escape), the specific association of the Butler with the urban space of London, that prototypical global city, and McGooohan with the ambient flow of traffic (i.e. a multinational assemblage of cars) suggests that our New Left alliance includes a crucial fourth term: a class of people who are spoken to but have no voice of their own; who perform the innumerable tasks of the Village bureaucracy, but make none of the decisions; who may seem to be utterly brainwashed and subservient, but who will, if given the opportunity, finally strike out against the system which they know from long and bitter experience oppresses them. This, of course, can be nothing less than that strange new thing, the transnational proletariat (something subtly underlined by the fact that the Butler drove the truck which carried McGooohan, the MP and the Young Man to freedom; while the latter three celebrated their escape, the Butler had to keep at the wheel), which symbolically moves into the privileged urban space formerly held by McGooohan's media professionals. This casts a new light on the final moment, where McKern's MP enters the Parliament building under the watchful gaze of a policeman, while thunder roils in the background; i.e. presumably the MP is at last

representing the Butler, who has never before had a say in the running of things. This allows us to decipher the very last shot of the series, which is also the very first of the series, namely McGoochan roaring down an empty highway while thunder echoes in the background, in an unexpected way: this is no longer the atomic thunder of the Cold War, but rather the informatic heat-lightning of the nascent European Union, whose embryonic political conflicts and class struggles are just beginning to flicker on the horizon – the storm, in short, of the video future.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

1. Alain Carrazé and Hélène Oswald. *The Prisoner: A Televisionary Masterpiece*. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1990 (213-214).

2. Jean Genet. *The Blacks*. (99)

3. It should be noted that McKern's haggard expression and decrepit mannerisms during this final scene were by no means mere histrionics; as McGoohan would recount to an interviewer on Canadian television, while working on the final episodes McKern suffered a mental breakdown, very similar to the one which transpired in the episode itself. Though he recovered and would finish the series, the episode highlights the extreme production pressures weighing upon the cast and crew during the final episodes; not only were the crew kept in the dark as to the real identity of No. 1, but McGoohan reportedly wrote the bulk of the final script in a single forty-eight hour stretch of crazed inspiration, suggesting that the final episode stands in the same relation to the rest of the series as the 1968 rebellions did to the social forces unleashed by the 1960s consumer culture, i.e. the moment where quantity turns into quality.

4. This seems to be a peculiarly British symbol of the televisual sphere, whose true genesis was the palantir or magical crystal ball of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, written in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The villain of the series, Sauron, never puts in a personal appearance, but consists solely of a terrifying Eye, a disembodied gaze

which sees but cannot be seen, and which bends hapless viewers to its will (a nice intuition of the ideology behind the CBS logo, really, and one could argue that Tolkien's career as a professional philologist of some renown made him unusually sensitive to the homogenization and deadening of language by the mass media). The time-crystal episodes in the 1970s-era *Doctor Who* series are another, much later version of the same trope, albeit cast in a more conventional, melodramatic plot line. By contrast, American fantasy and sci-fi literature has tended to emphasize the more pragmatic or technological aspect of the mass media, as with E.E. Doc Smith's Lens (a kind of mental telephone, fax machine, and computer all in one) in the classic Lensman space operas of the late 1930s and early 1940s.