



**CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY
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The University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT

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THE KRAY TWINS: THE STUDY OF A SYSTEM OF CLOSURE

by

Dick Hebdige

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Introduction: The Origin of a System of Closure

"I must create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans
I will not Reason and Compare, my business is to Create"

Blake's Jerusalem f.10.20.

"The vampire pursued his ghastly ends with the single-minded
determination of a Hitler"

Herbie Brennan in an article on
post-war horror comics published in "Mayfair" Vol. 8, No. 12.

"It would seem that the new idols have to make their image to
the greatest extremes to satisfy their audiences".

Mick Farren in "Sex and the
Superstars" published in "Fiesta" Vol. 7, No. 11.

The full extent of the burden of personal responsibility in a post-Nietchzian universe, a universe unpopulated by gods and devils, unlimited by divinely ordained absolutes, was, perhaps, only fully appreciated after the two world wars. Several anachronistic notions about the wholesome and inhibiting nature of civilization died alongside the Jews in Hitler's gas-chambers, and it was probably not until the sixties, as the threat of nuclear war omnipresent since 1945, gradually subsided, that the awful possibilities of life in such a godless universe could once more be explored. During that decade Western man began once more to play in earnest - to extend and elaborate upon his Splendid Alienation, to explore his lawless fantasies, to watch that stunted progeny; the images of a freedom deformed and constricted in the narrow womb of the bourgeois consciousness perform on the television screen, the cinema screen and the stage of an everyday reality less oppressed by the tyranny of work.

It was because the electric media enabled fantasy to find expression with such immediacy, that styles, images, forms and norms could be so speedily transmitted and, at least extrinsically, assimilated. In a technological society "reality" was, as ever, impregnated with the images of fantasy and was thereby transformed and visibly enlarged. In McLuhan's Global Village, this impregnation was intensified to the point of bombardment. The process of actualisation was accelerated to such an extent that the boundary between the actual and the potential, the subjective and the objective, the Reality and the Dream, became increasingly arbitrary. The definitive history of this erosion of the Great Cartesian Divide lies outside the scope and purpose of

this paper, and is beyond my capabilities. Such a history would require a complete synopsis of Romantic thought, the development of existentialism, surrealism, relativism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, would require a study of the literature of the Underground and the Drug Culture and would be incomplete without an assessment of how far these ideas permeated down into the "popular consciousness" via the mass media. Suffice it to say that the understanding (that is the intellectual appropriation) of the new discoveries was made impossible. Their sheer volume was overwhelming, the apparent spontaneity of their appearance bewildering. And so, paradoxically, the expansion of the human world, the dictatorship of human forms, was paralleled by the impoverishment of the psychological dimension. Modern man reacted against the apocalyptic potential implicit in his domination of nature by constructing systems of closure; or, borrowing the terms of Barthe's essay on Verne, he sacrificed the "bateau ivre" (and "a true poetics of exploration") for the more manageable Nautilus (merely indulging his "delight in the finite"). I intend in this paper to approach one of the more sensational crimes of the sixties, the seemingly motiveless or at least "inadequately motivated" murders of the Kray twins as themselves the "logical" outcome of a system of closure which parodies the aspirations and fantasies of the society in which it was evolved.

But first I shall attempt to interpret the public reaction to the Krays and should like to suggest that the extraordinary interest such cases elicit in the media, the more questionable covert elements in that ambiguous mix of fascination/horror/admiration that such cases perennially provoke are, themselves, evidence of the bourgeois "delight in the finite" - in a voyage of the Nautilus which will confirm the severe limitations of his own horizons, by taking him to the very edge of his fantasies - to the threshold of what Hunter Thompson calls the "place of definitions" - without exploding or devaluing those fantasies, without actually breaking into that forbidden area.

I shall conclude by indicating how the severe sentences, hysterical editorials et.al. which constitute the "final word" are merely transparent and clumsy attempts to resolve the guilty contradictions implicit in that original mix which forms the public's interest.

1. Mailer and Madness Manson and the Manipulated Image

To illustrate just how deeply entrenched are bourgeois attitudes to the criminal, the outsider, I have chosen to concentrate on those commentators

of the liberal establishment, who, while refusing to make the crasser distortions of their more reactionary colleagues, remain just as limited in their analyses. I shall start with Norman Mailer. In 1957, Mailer wrote that psychopathy as a primitive and positive solution to the problems posed by existentialism, as a kind of magical act of appropriation, was not only a valid response to post-war society but was the one best equipped "to deal with those mutually contradictory inhibitions upon violence and love which civilization has exacted of us."

"Psychopathy [he wrote] may indeed be the perverted and dangerous front-runner of a new kind of personality which could become the central expression of human nature before the twentieth century is over"⁽¹⁾

Mailer's total identification with his outlaw subject, reminiscent of R.D. Laing's recent simulations of schizophrenia, is unrestrained by ethical considerations. Its commitment is to conclusions. Like Eve in Sartres, "The Room" the woman who tries pathetically to emulate her husbands madness, to share his delusions, Mailer adopts a logic at once exciting and suspect; an imaginative exercise undertaken in bad faith. The apparent facility with which Mailer subscribes to a policy of exclusive and explicit ego centrality not only involves his customary endorsement of a tragically limited and inauthentic concept of the Self, it remains ultimately unconvincing, it fails to disguise his principal interest - a somewhat unwholesome fascination in the infinite permutations of his own alienation. It is stance, a pose, an act of romantic "sympathy" which provides Mailer with his passport into the night time world of the urban hipster, but his credentials remain forged, his journey into that world illusory, his participation in its action vicarious.

In a recent article by John Grillo, entitled "An Excess of Nightmare" the playwright attempts to face up to the consequences of this type of bad faith: in the terms of this essay, to reap Mailer's harvest; by examining the meaning of the preoccupation of the post-war avant-garde theatre with images designed to horrify and disturb the audience.

* From "Intimacy".

(1) From "Hipsters" in "Advertisements for Myself".

"A number of young writers ... who are respectable middle-class gentlemen, reserved intellectuals, if not with Convent upbringings at least from good homes, have peopled the theatre with archcriminals, skinheads, necrophiles, hells angels, lunatics, murderers, delinquents, revolutionaries and flagellants, none of whom live within our immediate social circle. These characters are not studies of complex, ~~multi-faceted~~ individuals but are personifications of underground instinctive fantasies....⁽¹⁾

Grillo illuminates how the liberal artist has, in recent years, subjected certain deviant personalities to a symbolic assault, so intense and unremitting as to actually translate these personalities into mere images to be manipulated. In the section quoted above, then, Grillo admits to directly contributing to the demonology of the dominant society by depicting the outlaw as a mono-dimensional figure in a poetic fantasy; a symbolisation - a catalyst employed to evince a specific response. Characters have been replaced by figments - closed vessels pushed out by the author to explore and extend the limits of his own alienation. And in 1969, after a decade marked by persistent navigation of such murky waters, the boats quite literally came home, in the form of two murders, both so sensationally reported, so extensively speculated upon as to acquire themselves the status of symbolic events. The two killings took place in the States: the first was the murder of a negro by a group of Hells Angels employed by the Rolling Stones as security guards at their Altamont concert, the second was the murder by Charles Manson's "family" of Sharon Tate and her houseguests in the Polanski's Beverley Hills home. Two arch-celebrities Jagger and Polanski, both highly successful champions of the "Permissive Age" both publicists for a greater liberalisation of controls, both loudly professing a "sympathy for the Devil", both guaranteed maximum exposure by their long accomplished metamorphosis into living news items were publicly forced to face the ideological implications of their common position. The analogy with Pandora and her box proved irresistible to even the Underground Press, (though some insisted on adopting Manson as a martyr, a sword-wielding Angel of the Apocalypse) and the apotheosis of the Killings into mythical events was automatic. Manson and the Hell's Angels had stepped straight out of Marcuse's Antithetical dimension-the Twilight Zone of the Great Refusal, to discredit and embarrass their radical promoters, to bite the hand that fed them a symbolic value, to deny with force the meaning imposed so enthusiastically upon them. By refusing to fulfil their mystic function as the revolutionary vanguard of a new society, they were relegated to their customary position as folk devils, becoming as Stuart Ewan argues so convincingly in his article on Manson, merely things to frighten the bourgeois with⁽²⁾ Altamont and the

(1) "An Excess of Nightmare" Published in "Time Out" Nov. 23-29, 1973

(2) "Charlie Manson and the Family" in "Cultural Studies III".

Sharon Tate killings showed the limitations of the new radical perspective, a perspective as prone to naive distortions as that adopted by the dominant sections of society. It sought, no less than dominant systems, albeit from a diametrically opposed set of motivations, to incorporate the outlaw within a mythology, to gatecrash an impenetrable world where it was quite simply unwelcome, and to claim that world as its own. The premature reification of metaphors of resistance and denial, the substitution of approximate for precise definitions of freedom amounts to a dangerous and irresponsible abridgement of the authentic process of liberation. It is dangerous firstly because it facilitates the convenient collapsing of the categories of politics and crime by the dominant culture (and the consequent generation of moral panics) and secondly because, as at Altamont the images tend to defy manipulation, to burst from the Dream with disastrous effects.

2. Flowed Fantasy - a Form for the Future

The eventual confrontation of Jagger and Polanski with a reality less amenable than the images with which they had conjured reproduces in miniature a much larger historical process. To take Jung's premise that imagination is "the mother of all possibilities", it follows that metaphor, the expansion of the possible by imaginative synthesis, strives perpetually towards realisation, and hence fantasy begins to acquire a significance far greater than that which is traditionally assigned to it in Western philosophy. Imagination can now be seen to interact creatively with the objective world, to fertilize it, to influence directly if not actually predict its content. To return to specifics, this means that bourgeois fantasy not only reflects the alienation of the society which has produced it, but actually confirms the conditions of its own creation, perpetuates the alienated situation in which it was produced and further exacerbates the tension between man and his universe. And so when we return once more to Manson and the Hells Angels we can appreciate their peculiar aptness and consequent potency as folk devils, as vessels loaded down with the illicit cargo of a pernicious fantasy, as the predictable products of a society unable to accept responsibility for its own imaginative creations, unwilling to take the consequences for its own actions.

In the last of his "murder trilogy", "The Order of the Assassins", Colin Wilson approaches a full recognition of the complexity of the relationship

between the public as Frightened Dreamer and the folk devil as Bogeyman* when he describes the impact of the Persian Hashini cult on ninth century Persia. He designates such figures as Hassan-i-Sabbah, the notorious founder of the cult, "creatures of nightmare" and goes on to say:

"Like the minataur, he is a mythical archetype, he exists because people want him to exist".

To cite another example this time from a work of fiction - Robert Musil, the German Writer concludes his description of the trial of Moosbrugger, whose crime, a sexual murder, haunts the pages of his meandering novel "The Man Without Qualities" by recognising in the defendant's private world "merely the distorted pattern of our own elements of existence". As Moosbrugger is led away to the cells, Ulrich the narrator has the startling revelation that "if mankind could dream collectively it would dream Moosbrugger."

With the advent of the electric media - a global nervous system, unevenly sensitive it is true, but a system, nonetheless, constantly registering and interpreting the traumatic productions of time, mankind did indeed possess the means with which to dream simultaneously and collectively. It seems wholly appropriate that mankind in the sixties should dream the Kray Twins.

"Hollywood is a town based on the power of visuals ... In Hollywood you either become what you look like or you don't become at all"

From Andy Warhol's "Interview".

3. East End Villains in a West Side Story

Before actually entering the strange world which the Krays came to occupy, before even describing how that world was created I intend to make a few preliminary observations about the seemingly intimate relationship between the screen gangster and his real life counterpart, observations which, in the

* The awareness of this direct relationship is present in many of the more articulate folk devils who invoke in justification of their actions the correspondence between their violence on a microlevel and the violence perpetrated in the name of society on a microlevel. During the trial in 1894 of Emile Henry, the French Anarchist who had thrown a bomb at the Gare St. Lazare killing one person ("I had hoped for 15 dead and 20 wounded"), the defendant parried the judge's condemnation ("Your hands are covered with blood") by condemning his accuser ("Like your red robes"). Similarly, Susan Atkins, a member of Manson's family, when asked by the judge if the killing of seven people were not "a big thing" replied with a question of her own: "Is one million dead because of napalm, because of your justice a big thing?"

light of what I have already written, will I hope escape the categories of cliché, truism etc. to which observations of this nature are usually assigned.

In Rober Warshow's excellent essay on the gangster genre - "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" (where Warshow interprets its meaning and importance as a carrier of "the no to the Great American Yes which is stamped so big over our official culture") - there appears the following passage:-

"For the gangster there is only the city, he must inhabit it in order to personify it ... not the real city but that dangerous sad city of the imagination which is so much more important, which is the modern world. And the gangster, though there are real gangsters - is also and primarily, a creature of the imagination. The real city, one might say, produces only criminals, the imaginary city produces the gangster, he is what we want to be and what we are afraid to become."

The ease with which we can move from the gangster of the films to his real life counterpart and make mutually applicable statements amounts to more than mere speculative analogy. It provides us with an index whereby we can gauge the narrowness of the gangster's world, the degree of limitation in the range of possibilities open to the actor once he has committed himself to his role. The close correspondence between actor and gangster has been fully explored in Colin MacArthur's book "Underworld U.S.A." (Primarily concerned with the gangster film). MacArthur cites George Raft and Alain Delon as examples of the actor/gangster whose private and public personae are virtually inseparable, and records Al Capone's legendary offer of \$200,000 to Warner Brothers to appear in their 1932 production "Scarface" as himself. John Baxter in his analysis "The Gangster Film" argues that a parallel situation invites this land of fluidity:

"Both in the public eye, both dependent on the projection of charisma to survive in an uncertain world, both doomed to short-lived careers, gangsters and actors seem too close for true separation."

Whether or not the specific points of convergence are relevant, the closeness of the fictional to the real gangster is important because it highlights a whole set of intermediary determinations of an ultimately aesthetic nature which direct and shape lives dramatically at all levels. I have called these determinations "intermediary" because they are indeed themselves initially dependent upon class - in this case, the acceptability/availability of a criminal career; and the accessibility of a gangster style are related to primary class determinations. These determinations are aesthetic because they are contingent upon the adoption of a role, the convincing

presentation of which is itself dependent upon familiarity with a specific form of popular fantasy.

When Warshaw concludes his essay by writing that the gangster genre:

"Is a more modern genre than the Western because, like much of our advanced art, it gains its effects by a gross insistence on its own narrow logic. But it is antisocial resting on fantasies of irresponsible freedom". He is indeed writing as much about the gangster of the "real city", as the gangster of the "dangerous, sad city of the imagination". The two can no longer be usefully distinguished. Fictional form and lifestyle, both mutually responsible in a society which denies all responsibility, both competing for a more thorough realisation of the possibilities apparent within the limited area of a form, both committed to the relentless working out of those possibilities to their "logical" conclusions coalesce to produce one shrunken world, one self-perpetuating, self-supportive universe - to produce, in short, a system of closure, which a parody of the genuine struggle for completion a tragic and unnatural synthesis.

It is to aesthetic determinations, rather than the apparent motivations of direct financial gain etc. which were stressed by the press (e.g. the declared motivations of the screen gangster), that I will turn when attempting to understand the conduct of the Krays - conduct which often appears unreasonable, unprofitable and bizarre, conduct which threatens constantly to lose all credibility and to lapse back once more into its fictional sources, conduct which makes sense only by a "gross insistence" on the "narrow logic" of the world in which they came to exist.

A highly imaginative and perceptive depiction of the relationship between the London gangster of the Mid-Sixties and the Chicago-Hollywood archetype who dictated so much of his style and self-image is found in Nicholas Roeg's film "Performance". Into the sealed universe of play (Hassan-i-Sabbah's synthetic paradise?) over which the decadent recluse, Turner, presides, bursts Chas the gangster on the run in full possession of the "demon" which Turner has lost and whose return he so desperately craves. As the self-image of Chas disintegrates under the dual pressures of emancipated sex and an hallucogenic drug, Turner prepares to absorb the "demon" as it vacates Chas's body. The first image crucial to Chas's self-perception, to be encountered and discarded (the first card in the pack of his personality to be played), at the beginning of his trip, is the pinstripe-suited, fedora-hatted Gangster. This is the disguise, the fancydress which Chas adopts for the photograph which is to be included in the forged passport. This passport will take him to the States (a literal interpretation of his inner journey) where he will be safe from the mobsters (his past) who pursue him and seek his death. Harry Flowers, the gang leader has already hinted at the obsolescence of this image (You're an old-fashioned boy, Chas, a very old-fashioned boy").

4. What seems to have happened

The tentative tone of this section-heading is necessitated by the fact that the twins provided nuclei for such a quantity of myths that the bare facts of their lives can scarcely ever be extracted from their legendary wrappings with confidence. To search for the truth about the Krays would involve a reduction of the relevant issues quite as facile and probably as unsatisfactory as those undertaken by the Sunday papers. For the Kray twins existed in the mid 60's not merely as professional criminals, but as a living complex phenomenon, an organic Myth nurtured by press and public alike, until their actions ceased to have any meaning outside the theatre constructed for them. As the illegitimate offspring of sex and violence fantasy the Krays were hastily adopted by the Parents of the Permissive Age, the photographers, journalists, socialists and stars who formed what Peter Evans describes⁽¹⁾ "the original cast of characters.... who between them got the show on the Kings Road". Appearing simultaneously in David Bailey's "Box of Pinups" as menacingly attractive incarnations of evil, in the East London Gazette as local boys made good, as "the sporting brothers" supporting charity, and variously in the national press as leading lights in the new nightworld, as ex-boxers turned "company directors", as the intimate associates of the rich and famous, as villains and victims of injustice, the Krays became a polysemantic symbol, our own White Whale within whom massive contradictions found dark and mysterious resolution. As Nichol Fortune writes in his article "The East End - After the Krays"⁽²⁾ they were very public figures indeed, permanent news features,⁽³⁾ ultimately the possessions of the media, (a kind of joint-stock fantasy-factory) determined like all celebrities by the conditions of public performance, by the obligation incumbent upon their exalted position (written into their showbiz contracts, as it were) to fulfill the expectations of their audience, to consult the precedents set in fantasy fiction, to pursue the goals of a bourgeois society (albeit with the profits of crime), and to live out the destructive fantasies of that culture to their bitter and bloody

(1) Peter Evans and David Bailey: "Goodbye Baby and Amen: A Standard for the Sixties".

(2) Published in "Time Out" Jan. 12-18, 1973.

(3) They continue to appear with surprising regularity even now 6 years after the "collapse of their Empire", in the more sensational papers - "Krays turn to God" (Daily Mirror '73) "Ronnie Kray to Marry?" (News of the World '73), "Krays pay tribute to Italian A1" (Daily Mirror '73), and of course Dolly Kray and George Ince which must run a close second to Mr. and Mrs. Mark Philips as the media's love affair of 1973. (See ()).

conclusions. The problem of confronting this Frankenstein, determined to ascertain the facts is not helped by our virtual reliance on one text, John Pearson's "The Profession of Violence" published last year by Weidenfeld and Nicholson and out in paperback last month. This book is vastly superior to others written on the twins (Brian McConnell's "The Evil Firm: The Rise and Fall of the Brothers Kray" and Normal Lucas's "Britains Gangland" are, for instance, poorly written and hysterical in tone) not simply because the writer succeeds in avoiding the pitfalls of generalisation and emotionalism into which his rivals fall immediately, but because he seems to have enjoyed a privileged status with the gangsters and certainly had access to an enormous amount of previously unknown material.⁽¹⁾ I shall therefore, for the most part, merely summarize Pearson's history.

a) Early Days

Ronald and Reginald Kray were born in Bethnal Green in 1933. They seem to have lived fairly typical Eastend boyhoods - any harshness in the physical conditions of existence were compensated by an excess of maternal love. The boys took up boxing on leaving school after rejecting the only other legitimate occupation which offered itself - collecting empty crates at the local fish market. Their early success as boxers was terminated by their call up in 1952, and most of the next two years was spent on the run, absent without leave, or in the military prisons of Shepton Mallett and Colchester. They were dishonourably discharged in 1954 (following in father's footsteps - Mr. Kray was a wartime deserter) and in the same year became the legal tenants of the Regal Billiard Hall in Eric Street, Mile End, in circumstances which can only be described as suspicious (damage to property preceding takeover a very low rent accepted by owners). The Regal was used as a meeting place for local criminals and a storage ground for stolen goods and thieves tools. In 1955, they made their first contact with the men who controlled the lucrative rackets in the West End. Jack "Spot" Comer and Billy Hill, after a long-standing partnership, were fighting for ascendancy in Soho, and the Krays were temporarily enlisted in the ranks of Comer. They accompanied Comer to the 1955 Epsom Spring Meet which provided the criminal underworld with an annual opportunity for a ritualistic display of power and a chance to see how that power was distributed. The tension between the Hill and Comer mobs

(1) It is, of course, characteristic that the Krays should encourage Pearson to write their "official biography", and the rumour was published in the "Evening Standard" that they had first tried unsuccessfully to contact Truman Capote, through his London Publisher to offer him the first option on the story.

subsided with Comer's retirement, after his face had been slashed by razors wielded by "Mad" Frankie Fraser, who was to play an important part in the formation of the Kray's rivals the Richardson gang, and an associate. Comer refused to sanction a proposal for retaliation, put forward by the Krays which involved the use of guns (an expedient no gang, except the Krays had, as yet, seriously considered according to Pearson). Hill also retired at this time but the Kray's entry into the West End was for the time being, postponed. Meanwhile the Krays were building up a veritable arsenal, developing techniques of intimidation and cultivating a reputation for ruthlessness and violence which was to stand them in good stead for years to come, and which was facilitating the development of what was always to be their principal source of revenue - extortion. Protection was collected regularly from the public houses and illegal gambling clubs of the East End. ("That according to Jim", Nichol Fortunes informant "was where the bulk of their income always came from")*

b) Prison

In 1956, a minor feud between the Krays and a gang called the Watneystreeters ended in the particularly brutal beating of one Terry Martin, whose evidence was enough to put Ronnie away for three years. While Ronnie was "away" Reggie and the Krays elder brother Charlie, opened their first club, the "Double R" in the Bow Road. The club immediately became a fashionable meeting place for slumming celebrities, socialites and criminals. Ronnie meanwhile, after being moved from Wandsworth a straight forward "nick" in the old style, to Camp Hill, an experimental prison with a more liberal administration, suffered a nervous breakdown and was moved to Long Grove Prison Hospital in 1958. Here he was classified as a paranoid schizophrenic "quiet, co-operative and mentally subnormal" in the words of his report. The possibility of committal for life made escape imperative, and in this Ronnie was assisted by his twin who helped to confuse identification by appearing on visitors day wearing an identical suit to Ron's. (This story appears in all accounts of the Kray's lives). After avoiding arrest for several months, Ronnie surrendered and was not recertified this achieving his objective, and serving the rest of his sentence in Wandsworth Prison. He was released in the spring of 1959. In the same year, Reggie received an 18 month sentence for attempting with one Daniel Shay to extort £100 from a Swiss Travel Goods Firm in the Edgware Road. While his twin was in prison, Ronnie began showing an interest in the highly profitable prostitution, protection and rent rackets of Notting Hill and Paddington which were making sensational headlines in the press at this time, and Rachman the notorious slum landlord, found it expedient to hand over his interest in a successful night club called Esmeralda's Barn which was situated in Wilton Place. W.1.

c) The West End Weakens

This was the first real foothold the Krays had won in the West End, but it did not take long for the twins to realize how vulnerable the whole world of "high society", of success and "straight business" was to their by no means subtle combination of bribery and intimidation. At this time, the twins recruited Leslie Payne into their organisation. Payne had prospered for many years on the doubtfully legal fringes of big business and now took over Kray's financial affairs. It seemed likely as the Krays became involved in a variety of semi-legitimate virtually undetectable, often unofficially tolerated activities ranging from credit-dealing to large-scale financial swindles and long-firm fraud that they were ready to follow the upwardly mobile pattern set in the United States by the Mafia, gradually extending into wholly legitimate business whilst refining violence into less and less visible (and crudely tangible) forms. Indeed the Krays began negotiating a link up with organised criminals in the U.S. Payne introduced the Krays to Freddie Gore who became their accountant and set up the Curston Group of Companies which served as a front for many of the Kray's illegal businesses. Reggie started investing in radio and television retailers, bought the 625 Centre and took over Dominion Refrigeration Ltd. whilst Ronnie bought the Cambridge Rooms, a plush, overdecorated club on the Kingston Bypass. In a suspiciously half-hearted attempt to check the Kray's rise (were police already on The Krays payroll?), the police charged the twins with "loitering in the Queensbury Road with intent to commit a felony and of trying the door handles of parked cars". The Krays made sure this petty charge received all the contempt and ridicule it deserved in the press when they were finally acquitted.

d) Success and Some Important Snapshots

In 1961, the Gaming Laws were introduced, transforming London and heralding in what Samantha Eggar was later to call "the road show version of the Jazz Age." In the immortal worlds of the contemporary press London began "to swing" to the delight of both the international set and every other criminal organisation in the country. It was at this time that Ronnie first began mixing in what are conventionally described as "distinguished" circles. The high point of Ronnie's involvement in this world came with the Enugu Scheme. Kray was planning with Ernest Shinwell and Lord Boothby to finance a new township in Nigeria which was to be called Enugu and was to serve as a model for the rest of Black Africa. The scheme

fell through and in July 1964 the "Sunday Mirror" linked the names of Kray and Boothby in the notorious "Prominent Peer and Gangster Scandal". The paper attempted to launch a two pronged attack; simultaneously exposing the sexual indiscretions of people in high places and the growth of gangsterism in Soho (a kind of updated Profumo with homosexuality and just a hint of the Godfather to add man appeal to a rather hackneyed topic of breakfast conversation). The "Mirror" made extravagant claims for a somewhat unremarkable photograph of the two seated "together on a sofa", which had passed rather mysteriously "into [their] possession", which somehow synthesised the two scandals and which they refrained from publishing, Boothby sued, both exposees were dropped and the Krays had received a very useful advance warning that police investigations into their activities were currently underway. When the photograph finally appeared in the "Daily Express" (Aug. 6. 1964) it proved to be totally innocuous.

Another episode that concluded happily for the Krays with another cunningly manipulated photograph commenced in January 1965 when a "business associate" of the Krays attempted to extort money with menaces from Huw McCon, owner of the Hideaway Club in Soho. On 10 January, "Mad Teddy Smith, the above mentioned associate, and the three Kray brothers were arrested and charged. On the 28th of February they were acquitted after a sensational court case which resulted in a legal change in the jury system, as it was widely suspected that some at least of the twelve upright men and true had been got at (unanimity was abandoned in favour of an eleven - one majority decision; one jurymen dissenting would no longer secure a retrial). Other precedent had been ~~set~~ - Lord Boothby had asked how long the Twins were to remain in custody without trial - thus raising in the House a question which Viscount Dilhorne claimed had no place being asked there*. The Twins celebrated their victory by buying the Hideaway on the day of their acquittal and holding a massive party for the press. According to Pearson, Read, the detective who was to finally bring a successful case against the Krays accepted an invitation to drink with Ronald and was immediately photographed in his company. The embarrassing photograph was again used to achieve some measure of freedom from police interference - Read was taken off the case and all police officers were issued with a directive not to fraternize with known criminals.

On the 20th April 1965, Reggie's marriage to Frances Shea was greeted by the press as the East End Wedding of the Year and David Bailey took the Wedding photographs. In the same year, Ronald met Ange o Bruno, New York head of the Mafia, at the London Hilton and the Krays became the equivalent

* Reported in Lucas' "Britain's Gangland".

of London agents for the Mafia, handling stolen American securities, and arranging for their resale in Europe. It was in this capacity that the Twins met Alan Cooper, an American gold smuggler and banker who henceforth began to take over the functions performed by Leslie Payne, and who was eventually to play an important part in the Kray's conviction.

e) Gang War Hits Streets

Meanwhile, internal tensions between the various gangs in London competing for the control of the protection rackets was translating the ever-present possibility of open gang warfare into an unavoidable certainty. The Richardsons posed the only serious threat to the hegemony of the Kray firm. Charles and Eddie Richardson operated from a scrapyard in Brixton and were extremely powerful south of the river - their successful implementations of crude techniques of "persuasion" in the previously violence-free area of business fraud encouraged them to consider expanding into the protection rackets. By 1966, the two gangs had clashed several times socially and it was luck more than anything which had prevented armed and open hostilities in the past. At this time, however, the ritual insults were passed back and forth across London with increasing frequency and vehemence. Petrol bomb answered petrol bomb, cars were transformed into weapons and used to mow down members of rival gangs; the Widows, a pub frequented by the Krays was symbolically peppered with shotgun pellets - The ritualistic enactment of territorial conflicts followed precisely that pattern set by Capone in the Chicago of the twenties, and recreated with such monotonous regularity in Hollywood by Cagney and Bogart and Edward G. Robinson. Attack followed counterattack in an escalating spiral as automatic and predetermined as a Hollywood script and London gangsters spoke in the language of the American cinema borrowing the iconography of that cinema to make their emphatic statements. In February, the two most explosive and violent personalities in the two gangs: Ronald Kray and "Mad" Frankie Fraser clashed in the Stork Club. Verbal insults passed audibly and publicly across the room, and war was openly declared. And then, quite suddenly and unexpectedly the necessity for such an inevitably disastrous conflict was abruptly removed by another battle which led to the immediate destruction of the Richardson gang as a criminal force in London. On 7 March 1966, Eddie Richardson, "Mad" Frankie Fraser and several others were involved in a shooting incident with a local gang at Mr. Smith's Club in Catford. Richardson and Fraser were wounded and taken to Lewisham hospital and Ronald Hart a member of the opposing gang was killed. The police immediately launched a detailed investigation into the

Richardson's activities and from that night the South London gang ceased to exist as a challenge to the Krays. Nonetheless on the evening of 10 March, 1966 George Cornell, the only gangster of any importance connected with the Richardsons who had not been implicated in the Catford incident was drinking alone in the Blind Beggar public house, Whitechapel, when Ronald Kray entered accompanied by "Scotch Ian" Barrie. Kray produced a revolver head, killing him instantly.

f) The Legendary Springing of the Mad Axeman:

It was apparently with an eye to counteracting the adverse publicity this gratuitous killing had given the Krays throughout the Underworld, that they engineered the spectacular escape of Frank Mitchell from Dartmoor later in the year. Mitchell, the "Mad Axeman", was considered by the Home Office, to be one of the potentially most dangerous criminals in prison at the time. He was serving an indefinite sentence for robbery with violence and had earned his nickname by threatening an elderly couple with an axe during a previous escape from a mental hospital. At the Kray's trial, it was established that Mitchell could have been of no direct use to the Kray firm - they did not require a bodyguard and Mitchell's low mental capacity disqualified him from holding a higher position in the firm. It was partly the whim of Ronnie who had befriended Mitchell after meeting him in Wandsworth prison in the '50s; but the escape is best explained as a gesture of defiance, a dramatic exhibition of the Kray's contempt for all law but their own. Mitchell was a huge figure - both physically and metaphorically - he constituted an extremely potent anti-authority symbol (he constantly attacked the enemy "screws" in prison) and as such was held in awe by the criminal underworld. By keeping their part in Mitchell's escape the worst-kept secret in the East End (Ronnie's execution of Cornell being perhaps, the next most well-known "mystery"), the Krays stood to gain an enormous amount of prestige in their world.⁽¹⁾ Mitchell was taken to a flat in Barking where "Mad Teddy" Smith helped him to compose a letter which was sent to the "Daily Mirror" and the "Times" and which was subsequently published in both papers. The letter appealed to the Home Secretary to grant a definite date of release for the Mad Axeman if he

(1) Whether or not this is actually the case remains doubtful. Nichol Fortune's principal source "Jimie", is useful once more, in providing an alternative perspective to Pearson's "Jime" claims that Mitchell was slow likeable but impressive. The implication being that the Kray's romantic gesture would be lost on a cynical, and sophisticated underworld. Nonetheless I am interested here only in what the Krays believed they were achieving, and in what they actually did. I am interested quite literally in "their world".

should give himself up. Whilst Mitchell awaited the public announcement that never came, Ronnie Kray left his massive and unpredictable charge in the hands of two members of the "Firm" - Albert Donaghue and George Dixon. As the days passed with no word from the Home Office, Mitchell became increasingly belligerent and unmanageable, threatening to kill the Kray's parents if they didn't produce him a woman. A club hostess was promptly fetched from Soho promised £100 and, in Reggie's words "the gratitude of the Whole East End", if her client was satisfied, and was installed with the "Mad Axeman". She seems to have succeeded in mollifying Mitchell, but the Krays felt he was becoming a security risk which should be tactfully but speedily removed.

On Christmas Eve, 1966, Mitchell was told he was being transferred to Ronnie's country residence and was collected by Donaghue. The girl said at the trial that she heard four loud reports and when Donaghue returned he phoned up Ronnie and said: "The dog is dead: We gave him four injections in the nut". Mitchell's body was never recovered and he is still on the Escaped Prisoners list. Thus, another of the Kray's bizarre games was abruptly terminated.

g) London Overrun by "Absurd Creatures of the Underworld"

The Kray's continued to expand the various businesses, systematically taking over the amphetamine, fruit machine and pornography rackets the Richardsons had previously controlled. 1967 was the year in which the Richardson trial exposed Britain's gangland to its first major publicity since the old Spot-Hill feud. As it became apparent that the technological revolution had completely transformed the techniques and potential of crime (a transformation which is succinctly expressed in the substitution of the sawn off shotgun for the razor) a moral panic was declared by Britain's press. The famous Richardson "Torture Trial" acted as a catalyst for police action in much the same way as the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre provoked a clean-up Chicago Campaign in the America of Capone. Inspector Rand was recalled to the case and placed in charge of a top-security investigation into the Kray's activities. The elaborate security arrangements accompanying the investigation (Read's headquarters were situated in Tintagel House, the rumour was circulated throughout Scotland Yard that Read was conducting an investigation into police corruption, which, in a way, he was!) testifies to the Kray's power, (if not "real" power at least the image of power projected through an extremely effective propaganda campaign). The Krays were henceforth treated as though they constituted a unique threat to the security of the State. News of the investigation, despite these intricate

safety measures, was soon transmitted to the Krays and Ronnie's incessant paranoid fantasies were at last given some confirmation in the real world. As in previous crises, he began drawing up lists of men he considered needed liquidating. One such was Leslie Payne who had by now been completely superseded by Cooper.

Kray offered a local East End villain, Jack "The Hat" McVitie £400 to kill Payne. McVitie had been employed by the firm in various minor capacities many times in the past, not always successfully. Thus, when his attempt to carry out this mission misfired miserably, Ronald decided to add McVitie's name to the list of dispensables, and Reggie was appointed executioner. So it was arranged that Reggie should shoot McVitie at the Regency Club on the night of October 11. When the proprietor of the club, Tony Barrie objected, the Kray Twins and three other members of the "firm", Ronald Bender and two young aspiring gangsters, Chris and Tony Lambrianou adjourned to a flat in Evering Road, Stoke, Newington, owned by an acquaintance of the Krays known as Blonde Carol. A party was in progress but was immediately transferred to a different house in the same street and the Krays waited for the Lambrianous who had gone to fetch McVitie. As soon as McVitie arrived (expecting a party) Reggie attempted to shoot him, but when the gun jammed he was forced to use the carving knife brought by Bender. McVitie was stabbed repeatedly in the face and stomach and Reggie finally pinned him to the floor through the throat. As with the murder of Cornell, this extraordinarily brutal crime bears little or no apparent relation to the provocation offered by the victim. McVitie was known to have "slagged the Krays off" referring specifically to the sensitive areas of Ronnie's size and homosexuality (Cornell had also called Ronald "a fat poove"). Certainly his failure to accomplish the murder of Payne contributed to his selection as a victim, but this selection seems otherwise to have been curiously arbitrary. At the trial a more sinister motivation was disclosed. Since the murder of Cornell, Ronnie had persistently baited his twin, as though his crime had given him extra points in some dark unstated rivalry. After his visit to Nigeria, during the Enugu period, moreover, Pearson claims that Ronald exhibited an interest in the cult of Leopardmen among whom loyalty rituals were extended to the most complete expression possible - murder forming, as with the Hashini and the Thugs, a secret common band of the closest possible nature.⁽¹⁾ Certainly remarks like "I do all the work around here"

(1) This interest could be confirmed by Norman Lucas's description of Ronnie's Cedra Court flat which seems to have formed a remarkable environment - a small world reflecting the various strains of fantasy which predominated in Ronnie's personal mythology. Apparently, oriental and Western Kitsch vied for prominence in a startling, characteristically disturbing manner. African tribal art provided one theme in this cacophonous symphony.

and "I did mine, when are you going to do yours"? from Ronnie (reported during the McVitie trial) were known to precipitate extraordinarily intense fraternal hostilities and McVitie appears to have provided a wayout for Reggie.

h) ... Stranger and Stranger ...

After this episode, the behaviour of the Krays, their projects and their contacts become increasingly bizarre and difficult to verify with absolute confidence. By 1968, the twins' violent propensities were finding more and more devious channels of expression. Not only do they seem to have literally searched for potential victims, interpreted every trifling insult, real or imagined, as an act of defiance meriting the murder of anyone with whom they had the slightest criminal contact - but also the methods whereby these murders were to be accomplished became increasingly ingenious and fantastic. In this period "Mad Teddy" Smith and Frost, a chauffeur of the Krays disappeared after minor arguments with the Twins, and old friends like Buller Ward, George Dixon and a man called Fields were treated to the most brutal and pointless outbursts of violence. At this time also, Cooper introduced a man called Paul Elvey to the Krays as a professional killer. Elvey was first hired to kill a man who had offended an ally of the Krays. Elvey was supposed to kill this man in the forecourt of the Old Bailey with an injection of cyanide dispensed by a syringe, secreted in a briefcase. It was to be triggered off by a sensitive spring mechanism on contact with the victim. After two failed attempts, George Carmana, who had intimidated another of the Kray's allies, Bernie Silvers was selected as an alternative victim. A high powered ~~crash~~ equipped with telescopic sights was to be used, but this original plan was dropped in favour of a method which incorporated the use of explosives which were to be detonated by remote control. It was as Elvey was boarding a plane at Glasgow airport with the two sticks of gelignite required for this job that he was arrested by Read's men.

i) Destination Reached - The Trial and "An Empire Collapses"

Cooper was arrested the next day, but after revealing to the police that he had been employed for the previous two years by the United States Treasury, which institution wanted to break the flow of stolen American securities into Europe, as a source of information and as an "agent provocateur", and this with the endorsement of Scotland Yard (the archaic class-structure of which prevented this information from permeating down to Read) - the investigation took a different line. After failing in an attempt to use Cooper directly

in order to gain self-incriminating statements from the Twins, Read went forward with the simultaneous arrests of the three Kray brothers and twenty one of their associates on the night of 8 May 1968. As an index of their power and an indication of how the Krays were following precedents set by its criminals, up to the time of their arrest, the Krays had been showing an interest in the Docks - attempting to create a labour union racket similar to the type which operates in the States. The Twins had offered the services of an organised force of strongarm men firstly to the employers (members of parliament had been approached on this score) and then to the union itself as an additional protection against picket-line breakers. Although these negotiations came to nothing, the fact that they were even possible provides a disturbing reminder of how far the Twins had penetrated the soft shell of the world of power. The magnitude of the imagined threat represented by the Krays was reflected in the trial which was conducted on a larger scale than was absolutely necessary. Everything was a little overplayed - on both sides. Security arrangements were intricately planned and vigorously enforced every-day of the 139 day trial. The Krays, in their turn demanded press coverage and played constantly to the public gallery, as usual. I shall analyse the trial more completely in a later section. (10) Here I need only record the verdict - guilty - and the sentences of 30 years which were imposed upon Ronnie and Reggie, and of 15 years which was imposed upon Charlie (the rest of the "Firm" receiving sentences ranging from 18 months to 20 years).

.....
"For the judge Moosbrugger was a special case; for himself he was a world, and it is very difficult to say something convincing about a world"

From Robert Musil's "The Man Without Qualities" Vol. 1

.....
I have tried in the above account of the criminal careers of the Kray brothers to record the facts in a narrative form as straightforward and free from comment as possible; intending that the introduction which preceded it should prepare the reader to treat these facts as elements within a system of closure - a system which possesses its own internal "logic", its own exclusive meanings. I shall now attempt to interpret the significance of that world, to examine that logic and explicate those meanings. I wish firstly to turn to the Twin's complicated relationship with the press and related media, touched upon at the beginning of the account, and assess at what points this relationship bore directly on what was to happen.

5. "Kray is a very dramatic person" John Dickson appearing as a prosecution witness in Kray trial (reported "E.S." Jan. 14 1969).

The Krays were, as I have already indicated, the darlings of the media of the sixties. Feted and filmed whenever they emerged from the womb of the Underworld, they exercised their privileges as celebrities with an adroitness and a sophisticated awareness of the importance of public relations matched only in the image-conscious field of American politics. They brought a style and polish to the projection of good image (morals apart, of course) quite lacking at that time in many of the more conventional areas of public life - summoning press conferences whenever expedient, paradoxically winning by virtue of their constant visibility in the press, some measure of freedom from police interference. ¹ As we have seen certain of the Krays projects, when closely examined, take on a bizarre aspect more appropriate to the theatre than to the rational pursuit of profit by crime. If the Krays were organised criminals there is nothing "straight" or "scientific" about organised crime. The sensational springing of Frank Mitchell, ² an enterprise undertaken apparently in order to symbolically demonstrate the Kray's immunity from the law as an exercise of power as an end in itself; the much publicised naming of two pet snakes after the two detectives of the Serious Crimes Squad who were heading the investigation into the twins' activities; and even the public execution of George Cornell in the arena of the Blind Beggar public house before witnesses, all indicate the Krays' flair for exploiting the dramatic opportunities offered by the very high profile they habitually maintained in the press.

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1. This freedom must also have been bought in their day to day interactions with the police by actual bribes; though the extent of this bribing must have been considerable for the Krays to get where they did, it was never disclosed or even touched upon in the press. Perhaps the recent extradition from Holland of Humphreys (the "Soho Strip King") will result in the promised public disclosure of police corruption. Perhaps
 2. This operation was planned, significantly enough, by "Mad Teddy" Smith, who described himself as a television scriptwriter and who had, indeed, had a play about a bank robbery recently accepted by the B.B.C.

pressman's camera) at local charity functions, or to their skilful stage presentation of the many press conferences, called at timely intervals throughout their career. Each rung of the ladder of success was marked by a well-handled photograph. It was as if the apotheosis of the Krays into visual image was identified by the Twins as a means of refining themselves out of existence, of sweeping them to that never-never land of absolute freedom (promised in popular fiction) where, if police did not actually cease to exist, then, crime at least, escaped detection. And thus we can pass from drama to the underlying aesthetic.

6. Bill Sykes or James Bond? Will the real Ronald Kray please be upstanding

"It is the adventure I really go for ... with them it's just like being a spy or something in the Underground movement". Ronnie Hart, a member of the "firm" quoted in Pearson's "Profession of Violence".

Much of the behaviour of the Krays, the dramatic gestures and the strange games played with such frequency toward the end of their careers, has no meaning in the terms of orthodox criminology (in the work of Cressey for example) and evades decodification by the more conventional sociologies of deviancy.⁽¹⁾ It is explicable only when we accept that the Twins' location within that artificial paradise, the bourgeois Utopia, their citizenship of what Tom Pocock calls in his article⁽²⁾ the "citadel of imagined total satisfaction of luxury, sex power ... and admiration." Armed with money and power at a time when anarchical ambition was definitely "in", when traditional power figures forfeited their credibility along with Profumo, and the ceaseless, critical, witty wearing away of the T.W.3 team, when ruthlessness, often masquerading as brass tacks working-class honesty, possessed a certain chic appeal and was certainly preferable to the hypocrisy of the Old Guard, the Krays, as the favoured forerunners of a "social revolution" that never really happened, had determined to take that citadel

(1) Printed in "Evening Standard" March 6, 1969

(2) In a later section I intend to analyse the inadequacies of main-stream analyses of organised crime and shall attempt to explain these deficiencies.

by force.⁽¹⁾ Ultimately, and with a minimum of pressure, it capitulated, its inhabitants welcoming the East End invaders with open arms. The emptiness of this easy victory, the tension it created between mutually contradictory drives (to respectability, profit inclusion - to personal power, notoriety, adventure, violence, exclusion) accounts for the Krays' awkwardness, their refusal to settle in this alien territory. Ronnie Kray stares moodily from the plethora of photographs he had taken during the mid-sixties in which he poses next to celebrities and politicians as if sullenly aware of the incongruity of his situation. His attitude towards his new circle of acquaintances was always profoundly ambiguous. On the one hand, he seemed to extort some real sense of security from their proximity, as a constant confirmation of his success, his having "made it" to that neon-lit heaven/haven of his dreams. During his trial, Ronnie chanted the names of his influential friends as magical incantations to protect him against the odious accusations of the prosecuting counsel:

"I have some very influential friends ... some very distinguished people. If I wasn't here now I'd be drinking with Judy Garland."

On the other hand, the susceptibility of this world to corruption, its weakness for hypocrisy; those self-same conditions which had granted him access, seem simultaneously to have disgusted and repelled him. Ronald made much of employing a belted earl as a croupier at Esmeralda's Barn, and I believe there is just the faintest touch of irony in the statement he made to the "Daily Express" (Aug. 4, 1964) refuting the allegations concerning his involvement with Boothby:

"He was everything I expected of an English gentleman."

(1) The new mood of iconoclasm, with its attendant myths reached beyond the "trendy" world of pop entrepreneurs, the artists and the actors to infect the sober, tradition-bound universe of established industry and politics where Tom Wolfe's Mid-Atlantic man, the suburban Technocrat was seen as the new Moses, destined to lead Britain into that "revolutionary" era of no-nonsense administration, of equal opportunity, and unlimited, general affluence which was to be the next glorious stage in the development of capitalism. (See Anthony Sampson's article 'Changing Anatomy of Britain' Observer Colour Magazine March 21, 1965 for a classic contemporary interpretation of this development). The 60's "revolution" was projected almost exclusively in terms of visual images, styles, "looks" etc. It was not only a revolution which took place mainly within the media industry itself (benefiting a handful of creative young working-class "talent") but in the terms dictated by the visual media (eg. superficial and equivocal pictorial terms which evade a rigorous analysis and a fixed definition). In David Hemmings words (from "Only When I Larf" 1968) "A few poofy East End photographers and a couple of long haired musicians from the North - some bloody revolution."

Ronald Kray's eyes in those photographs carry a vacant expression which I suspect, conceals the same kind of mixture of disillusionment, and resentment and frustration which the psychiatrist sees every day in the bitter eyes of the bored and neurotic suburban housewife. Like just such a housewife, sitting in her over-equipped kitchen, filled with a mass of spotless, labour-saving devices which somehow never manage to quite fulfil the dream, Ronald Kray sits in his over-decorated clubs surrounded by important people who never quite live up to his cinematic expectations, and feels cheated. Trapped in a photographic image, he sits, cheated on celluloid by celluloid.

Once the haven had been reached, the dream fulfilled, the myth of total satisfaction within a bourgeois utopia was exploded and the Krays were left with the prospect of a great, yawning, undefined future, floating in that vacuum which is at the centre of the consumption ethic, which is at the core of the alienated consciousness. The Twins, led by Ronald, escaped even further into the paranoid nightmares of popular fiction-fantasy. As "real-life" lost its urgency, its purpose and its meaning (the competition virtually eradicated with the disintegration of the Richardsom gang, the club scene taped, a criminal empire established) they seem to turn more desperately to the genres of the thriller, and the spy story to provide an answer, a mould into which the Self could once more be poured to re-establish its substantiality, to reaffirm the clarity of the self-image.

It was at the very apex of their conventionally defined success, precisely when unnecessary risks need no longer have been taken, when recklessness was at its lowest premium, when new and untested ventures could be considered calmly and rationally, that we find the Kray Twins at their most incautious, and ill-advised, evolving their most fantastic and unprofitable schemes. It was at this time that they finally terminated their contact with Payne and committed themselves wholly to Alan Cooper, whose credibility as a real life character seems to be challenged at every point, by every "fact" of his existence. He was working for some undefined body, at different times, named as the United States Treasury, Scotland Yard, the Mafia as a kind of "agent provocateur". He was a banker, a gold smuggler, a mysterious figure, in the field of international finance. He was involved with his father in the illegal manufacture of narcotics and L.S.D. He was also, it was revealed at the Kray trial by the Defence Counsel, a notorious police informer, and known as such throughout the Underworld which had derisively nicknamed him "Silly Bollocks" because of his silly schemes. This relationship proved to

be exciting, and filled with adventure for Ronnie, fulfilling his expectations derived from popular fiction of what crime at the top was really like; but it was, in every other way, a disastrous association. It was their involvement with Cooper which eventually discouraged the real Mafia from making further contacts with the Twins, and yet we find Ronnie being taken at this time to the States by Cooper to meet a mock "Mafia" - an incredible collection of unemployed actors, ex-boxers and has-beens of the Prohibition era which nonetheless succeeded in convincing and impressing Kray (no doubt they conformed more closely to their cinematic archetypes than the authentic mobsters would have done¹). It was at this time too that Ronnie drew up endless lists of imaginary enemies and exhorted Reggie in the pointless elimination of Jack "the Hat". During this period Cooper introduced the Krays to Paul Elvey, whom he described as a professional liquidator but who was actually a radio engineer. At the trial, he admitted to being "hopelessly miscast" in the role of hired assassin, and the idea of murdering a victim on the steps of the Old Bailey seemed, he claimed "ludicrous. But I had to make some sort of show."² Together they elaborated those complicated and ingenious methods of eliminating victims which I have already described (Section 4) - the crossbow, harpoon etc.), methods chosen on grounds of aesthetic appropriateness rather than practical expediency. It was during this period, finally, that Kray introduced for serious consideration by the "firm" schemes such as the kidnapping of the Pope, the assassination variously of President Banda of Malawi, Kaunda, and Colin Jordan, an expedition to recover gold buried by mercenaries in the Congo, and the springing of Moise Tshombe from his Algerian goal (a project which actually reached the stage of negotiations with Tshombe's relatives during which such topics as the availability of helicopters, machine guns and nerve gas were discussed). Such exotic enterprises seem to have sprung straight from the pages of an Ian Fleming fantasy, and when Reggie Kray, obviously embarrassed by the disclosure of these excesses in open court, leapt to his feet in a vain attempt to exorcise the nightmare, to reintroduce a semblance of sanity to the proceedings, exclaiming,

"Is James Bond going to be called as a witness? This is ridiculous."³

1 Cooper also supplied the Krays with a number of faulty weapons (including the gun that failed to kill McVitie).

2 Quoted in the "Evening Standard."

3 Quoted from court report of "Evening Standard."

We must acknowledge the unconscious suitability of such an invocation. For the boundaries of Ronnie Kray's world had indeed been fixed in popular fantasies, its content predicted, its meanings defined in just such fictional forms. We should not then be surprised when we learn that Ronald was much impressed by an account of the Life of Al Capone, of whom⁽¹⁾ (according to Norman Lucas) he believed himself to be the reincarnation. Nor should we be unduly perturbed when we find Ronnie cultivating a taste for classical music and singers like Gigli in emulation of his "spiritual forbear," employing a private barber (so many gangsters having been murdered while having their hair cut), building up the traditional costly and extensive wardrobe of suits and silk socks, investing in the electronic gadgetry which so clutters the paranoid world of the modern fantasy-hero (one complete recorder was concealed in an imitation packet of cigarettes, and button hole cameras were issued to members of the "firm" so that suspected detectives could be photographed.)⁽²⁾

At the point then, when the goals of the bourgeois Dream have been achieved, when time, the cherished prize, the pot of gold at the end of the consumer's rainbow, has been won, we find the Twins confronted with a crisis, the solution of which involves an intensification of the fantasy element. Time can once more be consumed purposefully in the exploration of fantasies which had originally dictated the shape of that world. With the subsequent refinement of the internal aesthetic of violence, the closure of that world is finalised.⁽³⁾ The completeness of the form which is presented, then, accounts for the attraction it holds for a public which looks for guidance and reassurance to images of confinement. In a culture whose logic demands that

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- (1) This appears to be commonplace among criminals. John McVicar in his articles recently reproduced in the "Sunday Times Colour Supplement" admits to an early predilection for a semi-fictional biography of Capone.
 - (2) Most of this information was gleaned from reports of the trial published in the "Evening Standard" though some is taken from Lucas and Pearson.
 - (3) We can distinguish a similar pattern, though necessarily uncompleted in the activities of the Richardson gang. Before their arrest they appear to have begun embroidering the edge of violence with the strange and ugly arabesques of pure power fantasies. During their appallingly brutal torture sessions in which the use of electric shock techniques, a variety of blunt instruments, and improvised dental treatment figured largely and which appear to have been games played as ends in themselves, Charlie Richardson presided over the Entertainments dressed as a mock-judge in wig and gown. (See Section 11).

matter, if it is to achieve substance, must first find containment, a closed system is a meaningful system; at once more substantial, more tangible and therefore more "real" than their own open-ended existences. The semblance of order, of everything "having its place", of everything occupying a static position on a fixed semantic scale, these are, ironically, the "advantages" offered by the gangster's narrow world. Its narrowness is tied inextricably to its appeal. The Krays as public enemies then offer a temporary imagined solution to the citizen's private anomie.

I shall now turn back to the nucleus of this system, the family, the supportive and protective framework of which enabled Ronald Kray to make his statements so emphatically and with such confidence.

7. Humble Beginnings - The Eye of the Storm

"Whaddeyou mean by that word 'right'? The only thing we're concerned about is what's right for us. We got our own definition of right".
Hell's Angel quoted in Hunter Thompson's Book "Hell's Angels".

Reggie and Ronald Kray were born in Bethnal Green and always maintained strong links with the area, returning frequently to their parents' home in Vallance Road, one of the few surviving relics of the old Bethnal Green "rookery". As John Pearson writes: "the twins were very much part of this whole vanishing world of the Dickensian East-End". The Krays were an archetypal Cockney family providing a veritable microcosm of the pre-war East-end. All the major immigrant groups which together made up the area had found some representation in the family (the name was Austrian, and the twins had Irish, Romany and Jewish blood) and much of the East-end's cultural complexity was reflected in the wide range of "characters" it contained. The twins' grandfather, "Mad" Jimmy Kray was a prodigious drinker and a notorious barfighter. Their maternal grandfather Jimmy Lee, the "Cannonball Southpaw" was a confirmed teetotaller, and had been a popular music-hall performer and a boxer. Charles Kray, the twin's father was an itinerant gold-buyer, gambler and drinker. The female wing of the family was equally stocked with strong, classic Cockney personalities. Aunt Rose was a renowned streetfighter, the grandmothers were typical East-end Matriarchs, and Violet Kray, the twins' mother could always command the extravagant filial respect, even adulation, to which she was traditionally entitled.

The family always claimed the first and last loyalties of its members, and, after the war, as the physical transformation of the East End was accompanied by a parallel cultural transformation,⁽¹⁾ these loyalties were strengthened and valued with a fanaticism born of desperation. The disruption felt in the fabric of traditional working-class life was counteracted by a reassertion of the value of the only institution guaranteeing some measure of continuity, over which the individual had direct control. The old extended family took on a symbolic significance. It epitomized all the values that the new high-rise council blocks, the vertical streets with the built-in isolationism and individualism, were steadily denying and destroying. The family became what the community had ceased to be - a self-sufficient and fiercely exclusive unit supplying its own justifications, its own codes, its own meanings. From such a perspective, the outside world could be defined negatively, its interests disregarded, its opinion dismissed so long as the family's interests were served, so long as the family was satisfied and continued to survive and prosper. The Kray family became the distillation of a culture which was threatened with extinction, and it is perhaps hardly surprising that the pressures contingent upon this position led to the distortion of what were originally positive values formulated out of the experience of a whole community.⁽²⁾

The Kray "firm" was the more overtly aggressive extension of the family - its more armoured incarnation evolved to fulfil its purposes, to impose its will on a hostile outside world. The "firm's" structure duplicated the tight, fiercely self-protective familial structure. Indeed the "firm" was always and primarily a family business. As soon as possible, the twins invited their elder brother, Charles, to join in their activities, and, later, incorporated their cousin, Ronnie Hart into the organisation. Weapons were concealed under the floor-boards in their mothers house, which provided a kind of permanent base (nicknamed the "Fortress") from which the Krays issued periodically to carry out the "firm's" business. Much of the day-to-day running of the twins' business interests was entrusted to the friends of their childhood and adolescence. Traditional criminal loyalties asserted against the police were strengthened by relationship ties and consolidated

(1) Described excellently in Phil Cohen's "Subcultural Conflicts and Working Class Community" (W.P.C.C.S. II).

(2) The primacy of family loyalties contributed to the failure of Reggie Kray's marriage to Frances Shea, and her subsequent suicide, and can no doubt help to explain Ronnie's homosexuality. More topically, when Charles Kray's wife, Dorothy, was subjected to the unwelcome attentions of the media in the recent Barn Murder Trial, Mrs Violet Kray expressed the family's disapproval of her son's choice in marriage: "I never liked Charlie's wife, but now I hate her. The family has cut her off completely."

the Krays' impregnability. Thus, the "scientific" connotations of the word "firm" (suggesting an organised, impersonally directed industry with a primary commitment to the rational pursuit of profit) which have contributed to the development of so many misleading myths about the Krays can be safely ignored. The alternative adjectival definition of "firm": "not yielding easily to pressure, solid; fixed, stable; resolute, unwavering, stern; strong and steady"⁽¹⁾ are altogether more appropriate. The profit motive was, I suspect, secondary to the power motive. The "Firm" does indeed provide a parody of any capitalist enterprise⁽²⁾ (although the Richardson gang, more thoroughly submerged in the whole world of big business constitutes a more suitable parody, perhaps) extending the amoral ethic implicit in a laissez-faire economic system based on uncontrolled competition, to a point where its origin in violence, and its destructive and irresponsible nature is made visible. But if it caricatures capitalism, it is a specific form of primitive capitalism - the archaic family business and not the rationalised technological mode of monopoly capitalism which is so cruelly exposed. It is more relevant, I think, to see the "firm" as fundamentally an instrument whereby the family's needs (interpreted exclusively by Ronnie) could be served.⁽³⁾ At the centre of Ronnie's world, then, we have the strangely competitive, complementary relationship of Ronnie and Reggie, the Terrible Twins, two distinct and powerful personalities in their own right, coalescing in a virtually indestructable Unit, one mutual identity defying separation. This close-knit relationship of interdependency and mutual reinforcement is extended through kinship and reconstitutes or formalizes itself as the fiercely exclusive and profoundly aggressive "firm". This system never loses its original egocentricity (it remains Ronnie's system) and anything registering at the centre finds a response at the periphery. A sensitive mechanism operating through the functions of a centralised nervous system, the "firm" could never escape the limitations incumbent upon its dependency on Ronnie.

(1) From "The Penguin English Dictionary".

(2) See Section 11 where this metaphor is more fully explored.

(3) Ronnie Kray strenuously denied ownership (albeit from a selfish motive e.g. so he could claim legal aid) of an £11,000 Suffolk House, at his trial. Nonetheless, despite the financial considerations, the vehemence with which he insisted "It's my mother's house" implied her exalted position in the firm/family hierarchy (as if anyone would dare dispossess the Matriarch).

His dominant position meant that Ronnie's paranoid fantasies and bizarre schemes (often brilliant, more often simply insane) flourished unchecked, becoming just as important, demanding as positive a reaction as his more mundane, and workable projects.

As it was with Ian Brady⁽¹⁾, the Moors Murderer, whose fascist mythology was endorsed and supplemented by Myra Hindley, as it was with Mary Bell, the Newcastle 11 year old who strangled two children, and who found in the older, though more submissive Normal Bell, a willing partner with whom to realize a pre-pubescent nightmare; as it was with Perry Smith, the Killer of the Clutter family immortalized in Capote's "In Cold Blood", who found in Dick Hickock an ally who would immerse himself in his system of fantasy; so it was, also, with Ronnie Kray, one half of a powerful common personality, which found completion in its Twin, Reggie. Unlike these others, however, (all of whom held the same fascination for the press, a fascination rooted, as I have argued, in a common addiction to systems of closure, completed forms), Ronnie Kray was able to bring a far greater area within the sphere of his influence by the extension of this original relationship through the family and into the "firm".

Once we have recognised the essential conservatism of the Krays manifested in their commitment to the old familial pattern, we can go on to consider the central paradox which lies at the core of their profoundly ambiguous relationship with the larger East-end community. On the one hand, the Krays seemed to have taken seriously their role as protectors of the local community against the inroads of the State. As they accumulated wealth and prestige the Krays used their considerable power to influence the direction of the new East End was to take; to salvage as much of the old culture as possible. Despite the direct profit to be gained from the cultivation of such an image (limited acceptance by the Establishment, freedom from police harassment), their constantly publicised participation in the public affairs of Bethnal Green derived its primary motivation from a less rational area, and leads us back once more to the family. Ronnie and Reggie sought to reintroduce the old Cockney values preserved in the Kray family into the transfigured environment of the East-end - to literally see the family built back into that environment.

(1) This relationship is adequately described in Wilson's "The Order of the Assassins".

(2) See "The Case of Mary Bell" by Gitta Sereny

(3) Ronnie's nickname, the "Colonel", testifies to his ascendancy with the "firm".

Edward Ross's definition of the "criminaloid" as "the champion of the tribal order as opposed to the civil order" is particularly appropriate to the Krays.⁽¹⁾ Certainly they saw themselves as the unofficial representatives of the local community; "men of respect" benevolently interceding on the behalf of their "constituents", believing as "symbiotic criminals" that the rules can always be bent, fixed or rigged to achieve the desired result. In fact, the ease with which the Krays duplicated in the "straight" world, their earlier successes in the overtly criminal world, confirmed East Enders in their traditional cynicism towards all forms of institutionally sanctioned power. The East-End's long established contempt for the law contributed significantly to the apotheosis of the Twins into local super heroes. Lifted above the community by their business interests in the City, by their involvement in the club life of the West End, and by the sensational reports of their frequent trials in the national newspapers; and at the same time, being a very visible part of that community - opening local fetes, shaking hands with the mayor of Bethnal Green, collecting protection from the old sources, drinking regularly in the local pubs, the Krays were simply larger than life. Sharing a common heritage (valued because threatened), a common accent, a common language and yet ultimately alien and distinct, the Krays became mythical figures, possessing as Pearson puts it "the rare asset of endless credibility". Thus the Krays' continuing freedom in the face of their well-publicised acts of villainy meant that the twins had won complete immunity from the law, and this, in turn, was transformed through the magical medium of local gossip into the myth of invulnerability. The tenacity with which some East-enders still cling to their image of the Krays as the aggressive incarnations of the local community, invested with divine powers by which the interests of that community could be magically served, was brought out in Nichol Fortune's article. Fortune quotes a local resident's indignation over the disruption caused by a recently accomplished redevelopment scheme:

"You know the Queen Street development. The twins would have shook that down something rotten. As it was it got put up with no bother at all. Took about eighteen months. The Twins would never have stood for that." (my underlining).

(1) Edward Allsworth Ross: "The Criminaloid".

(2) A category created by Stan Cohen and Laurie Taylor in their codification of the criminals housed in Durham Maximum Security Prison ("Psychological Survival"). It would seem to specifically cover the Krays.

On the other hand, if the Kray's beneficent descent into the politics of the East End assisted their translation into tribal Gods, their equally spectacular, often brutally violent involvement in to Cockney underworld, their extortion of protection money from the shopkeepers and publicans of the area made them simultaneously the local personifications of the Devil. To place an inordinate stress on the folk-God aspects of the Krays' public persona at the expense of a negative image which undoubtedly carried equal, if not more, weight, would involve a crucial misrepresentation of the East-end community. For the Krays deliberately exploited the East-end's traditional distrust of the police, reinforced it by spreading the rumour (based on fact, no doubt) that they had "bought their way beyond the law", that Scotland Yard was "in their pocket", and used it as a means of oppression. The "code of silence" was respected not simply because the police were traditional enemies but because of a real physical fear of the retribution a statement to the police would invoke. It was because the conviction of the Krays depended upon the testimony of fellow criminals and fellow East-enders that they were able to operate so openly and for so long.

Throughout the trial, the defence counsel questioned the integrity of the prosecution witnesses whom he described as "absurd creatures of the underworld" and made repeated accusations against the police, albeit in the veiled language of the courts, implying that deals had been made with potentially useful witnesses serving prison sentences or coming up for trial. Many witnesses were undoubtedly won over by attractive inducements like the reduction of prison sentences, partial treatment from the judge etc., and yet the testimonies betray a sense of alienation from the excessive, often senselessly violent acts of the Krays which (unless due to an unusually effective briefing from the Prosecution Counsel) is remarkable in its consistency.⁽¹⁾ John Dickson's statement is, in this respect typical:

"someone had got to have the guts to come forward and let the ordinary people know what cruel bastards they were."

Sylvia Barnard, McVitie's common-law wife implied that the Krays had somehow violated the honourable tradition of the old individualistic East end villain (a tradition nonetheless on its last legs anyway) when she shouted at the defendants:

"It took ten of you bastards to kill him (McVitie) because he was a man and wouldn't bow down to you."

(1) Biggs would seem to confirm this disaffection. A man who had met Biggs in Brazil recalls in an article, written for the "Sunday Mirror" (Feb. 11, 1974) that Biggs had called the Twins "real swine."

And she explicitly invoked the collective judgement of the East End to denounce the Krays in an interview given to the "News of the World" (March 9th 1969) in which she insisted that her motive transcended a desire for mere personal revenge:

"I'm an East-ender born and bred, and proud of it. My father was a "Totter", a rag-and-bone scrap metal man with a horse and cart. Proud he was, like me....So's my mum, and she backed me up in my fight against the "Krays".

It was because the Krays ruthlessly used the East-enders' distrust of the law to further the interests of the family that they were eventually denied the womb-like security of the community. What had originally evolved as an expression of solidarity within the community functioning as a collective defence mechanism against a hostile, oppressive and exploitative system had itself been converted by the Krays into an instrument of exploitation. The Krays, not content merely to inhabit that No-Mans land which lies between the disaffected working class East-ender and the dominant social system which claims to serve him, actively sought to extend its boundaries in the struggle for "lebensraum" for the Kray family. The aggressive confidence and assertiveness with which the Krays openly declared this policy of aggrandisement concentrated attention directly upon the state of anomie this dramatically highlighted. I shall now turn to this anomic situation and attempt to clarify what contributed to its exacerbation during the sixties. Anomie is a condition with which modern society has grown accustomed, but during the last decade a state of emergency has been more or less permanently declared by the champions of Law and Order. I shall be examining the explanations offered by the Law and Order lobby within the context of crime as a category which was being perpetually redefined during the sixties.

8. Train Robber Heroes - Soho Fiends

"Time is required for the public conscience to reclassify men and things; so long as the social forces thus freed (by the changed conditions of life) have not regained equilibrium, their respective values are unknown and so the regulations is lacking for a time."

Emile Durkheim "Anomie and Suicide"

The sixties, as I have already indicated, saw a highly dramatized acceleration in the already declining fortunes of the old pre-war Establishment.

The MacMillan administration, embarrassed by its disastrous campaign in Suez, retreated in confusion as the prophetic links between sexual indiscretion and the leaking of State secrets were made during the Vassal and Profumo scandals. Simultaneously, in the early years of the decade, the first tentative sightings of a new and visibly "affluent"⁽¹⁾ youth culture, confident and often articulate in its criticisms of the Parent Culture coincided with the boom in Satire which the T.W.3 team had inaugurated. Poses of defiance, fashionable amongst a fairly limited circle of intellectuals and a section of lower working class youths since the days of the Angry Young Men, the Aldermaston marches and the Teddy Boys, became quite suddenly all the rage in 1963. Crime always an important touchstone to the "mood of the times" became an area which was particularly sensitive to these transformations. It inevitably attracted attention at a time when the traditional framework of authority seemed to be threatening collapse at any moment.

Certain key cases were used to focus a debate on the whole legal apparatus (the judiciary, the police, the prisons) in the public form of the media. Capital punishment, brought into disrepute by the ill advised execution of the innocent Evans in 1950, was eventually suspended in 1965 and finally abolished in 1970, as the guilt of the two other executed men, Bentley and Hanratty began to be seriously challenged by later disclosures. The British bobby, popularly depicted as too slow-witted for corruption was discomposed by the investigation which followed the Challenor case.⁽²⁾ The absolute nature of the courts' decisions was called into question by the unconventional tactics adopted by the ingenious Alfie Hinds to draw attention to his wrongful conviction which, when eventually more or less conceded threatened to expose the class bias of the whole legal system.⁽³⁾ And

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- (1) With the emphasis on the visibility: it was a culture "rich" principally in terms of visual image, style etc.
 - (2) 3 police officers under Sgt. Challenor were jailed for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. Challenor was found insane and unfit to plead.
 - (3) In 1953, Hinds an East ender, was found guilty of robbery and was sentenced to 12 years preventive detention. He refused to accept the decision, taught himself law, and conducted his own highly technical and articulate tightly reasoned appeals going so far as to serve a writ on the Attorney General, took his own case to the House of Lords, and escaped three times from prison to gain publicity. He eventually brought a successful libel action in 1964 against the senior Scotland Yard detective who had originally arrested him, and generally ran rings around police and lawyers alike winning in the process much public sympathy and admiration.

then, in 1963, came the crime which was to consolidate public sympathy for the criminal and capture the public imagination as no other crime probably will ever succeed in doing again. The Great Train Robbery was accomplished on the night of 8th August with a minimum of violence,⁽¹⁾ and £2½ million in used banknotes was successfully (at least for a time) spirited away by a gang of professional thieves. The working class reaction was, perhaps, rather humourously typified in the remark of the guard who offered no resistance refusing to jeopardize his life for what after all was not his in the first place; "All right, mate. I'm on your side".⁽²⁾

Two issues of the "Sunday Times Colour Supplement". (February 14, February 21 1965) carried an article by Peta Fordham about the robbery which exhibits the more restrained and ambiguous middle-class response and which demands closer examination, if we are to keep up with the subtly changing attitudes of the liberal establishment toward crime. Whilst the violence and the corruption of railway employees which were required for the successful implementation of the plan meet immediate and vocal disapproval, Fordham makes no attempt to conceal her admiration for the almost militaristic discipline ~~maintained~~ at all times ("it was to be the exact equivalent of a commando raid ... just as in wartime"), and for the leadership qualities exhibited by Reynolds and the "wolfishly handsome" Goody, who "like some underworld-distorted picture of the ideal officer" is "ready to go over the top, fight and die for his leader", who seems to hold a special attraction for the writer ("The voice was steel-hard; eyes fanatically blue") and whose shoes for some strange reason are possessed of such mute eloquence that she returns to them twice! ("Spruce as always ... even in canvas shoes", "Neat as usual in blue canvas shoes"). Fordham shows willing to adjust to the morality of the situation by condemning the man, responsible through wilful negligence, for the gang's supreme act of treachery by the police as a "Judas":

"Was this supreme act of treachery which let down a band of brothers who whatever their objective, had yet behaved to each other throughout the enterprise with commendable loyalty? (My emphasis).

The military metaphors are used to resituate the robbery within a framework in which it can be evaluated positively without offending the nice scruples

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- (1) Although this was not indeed inconsiderable - the injuries sustained by the struggling driver were eventually to contribute to his early death.
 - (2) Widely reported at the time and revealed in court, to the guard's obvious embarrassment.

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of the respectable reader; the neatness of the operation, its commando-like precision being stressed so that aesthetic considerations predominate over moral ones. The Great Train Robbery, because of the massive sum involved, stimulated the public imagination and, disarmed of all unpleasantness by its essentially non-violent execution, enabled the public to make that sympathetic passage from interest in, to identification with the criminal which had been preparing for years. Deprived of traditional power idols by the drastic reassessments then underway, the alienated observer was ready to turn explicitly to crime for its heroes. ⁽¹⁾

The counter reaction to this tendency is evidenced in the law and order campaign which backed up its case; similarly with reference to certain specific sensational criminal cases of the latter half of the decade. In 1966, the unprovoked murder of three policemen in Shepherds Bush by three criminals headed by Harry Roberts inaugurated this reverse trend which was to find further corroboration five years later in the murder by Sewell of a Liverpool policeman. Authority - hatred was permissible, it would seem, as long as it was not taken too seriously. This was followed in the Spring by the sudden and startling illumination of the dark and private universe of Brady and Hindley whose highly personal belief system, derived from de Sade, neo-Nazism and pornography, had supplied them, with the philosophical means with which to justify child murder. "Freedom" was once more producing Hitlers and the panic was on. ⁽²⁾ 1967 saw the origins

(1) Similar pattern of devt. of Robin Hood myth characterized by Hobsbawm in "Bandits" and by Norman Lewis in his excellent analysis of the Sicilian Mafia "The Honoured Society".

(2) There was, of course an alternative evaluation to be made of these crimes by those excluded groups who really did subscribe to a policy of violence in response to existences which continued to remain in ugly and impoverished, despite the general claims of "affluence". The skinhead, for instance whose words are recorded in "the paint mouse" merely treat the demonology of the Law and Order crusaders to a neat inversion. In a song sung on the terraces of the football ground where obvious police presence is met with open resentment, for instance: "Harry Roberts
is our mate
is our mate
is our mate
Harry Roberts is our mate
he kills coppers".

See "The Case of Mary Bell" Gitta Sereny and "A case of Diminished responsibility" C. Starr in Nora Nov. '69.

of the gangster-scare which commenced in the earnest revelations concerning the Richardsons on the first day of the Torture Trial. In 1968, the case of Mary Bell appeared to lend substance to the doom-laden prophecies of the Anti-Permissiveness Brigade now capably led by Malcolm Muggeridge and Mrs. Mary Whitehouse of the Clean-Up T.V. Campaign. Here was a child steeped in the fantasies of arbitrarily - directed violence fantasy so much a part of television-oriented society. Batman and the Saint were hastily accused of committing twomurders by strangulation in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. And then, at the end of the year, the arrest of the Krays triggered off a remarkable barrage of disclosures which mortified the respectable world confirming its most secret fears about the state of the nation. Ancient analogies were revived and the State became once more the diseased head of the Body Politic requiring the immediate administration of powerful medications (longer sentences), if not actual surgery ... amputations (reintroduction of capital punishment). During the second half of the sixties, the trends which I isolated in the earlier part of the decade were pursued relentlessly to their conclusions. The romanticisation of crime which the Great Train Robbery invited, provided the Krays with a questionable mystique which guaranteed their acceptance in the most fashionable circles, and contributed to their mythical deification. The court meanwhile lost its privileged status as a sanctuary, freed by ritual from the normal pressures of personal responsibility. Those who donned the robes and wigs were no longer magically protected by a divinely - conferred authority. In December 1972, a woman produced a shotgun in the West London court and attempted to shoot the judge who was presiding over the trial of her lover "with a due solemnity". More typically, courtroom scenes were liable to disintegrate into undignified drama ("Real" Method acting as opposed to the classical, formalized style of the past) where challenges were openly issued to the judiciary, accusations were made directly against officers present (as in the case of Ince during the Barn Murder Trial), and insults were vociferously exchanged across the courtroom. (See Section 12).

The Kray trial incorporates all these elements, threatening to descend into farce at times, and never far from the theatre of the absurd. This is best demonstrated in the presentation of the Kray trial in the press, where the piquant titbits offered almost daily in the court reports appear sandwiched between equally freakish items. Certain incidents contemporaneous with the Kray trial and equally perplexing, find inclusion in the "Standard" and combine to confirm a view of a world gone crazy. In early January 1969, for instance, above a report which describes the elaborate precautions taken at the Old Bailey to ensure the safety of the jurors in the Kray case,

we find a report concerning the conviction of Dr. Christopher Swan who stands accused of plotting to murder 8 key witnesses in his trial for offences contravening the 1964 Drugs Act: Swan, it transpires had been approached by a Detective Sgt. Vaughan, who, masquerading as a "chopper man" under the assumed name of Sid Green, offers his services for £15,000. It had been arranged that the "liquidator" should contact Swan with the message.

"I hope the date is right. A happy birthday, signed Sid Green" when he was ready. The deportation of George Raft, the closing of the Colony Club and huge banner headlines declaring "Soho Clubland Blaze kills 3" (Feb. 18th 1969 - over a story about an accidentally fire unrelated to the internal warfare of gangsters and the politics of "clubland" though indeed taking place in Soho) or "Who killed "Mad" Percy at the Odean". (Feb. 18th 1969 - over a story once more cynically introduced to bolster up the Kray material - the late "Mad Percy" the story being in fact an innocent old tramp) provide the thematic background against which the Krays' story is played out in the pages of the "Evening Standard". The fantasy element does not remain earth bound as the banning of the sinister, conspiratorial Scientificology cult-which hovers mysteriously over the uncertain terrain of science fiction appears, a column or two away from the accounts of the Kray case. On January 14th 1969 as Ronnie and Reggie "make a scene" on page 6 by refusing to wear numbered placards to facilitate identification during the trial, the last vestiges of the cult of the Great Rain Robbers are being offered up for sale on page 3 (everything from cutley to blood stained overalls are snatched up by the fans, the collectors of the paraphernalia of crookery - the lorry used during the robbery to transport the money worth approximately £30 fetches £1,550).

And so we come finally to the trial itself, to the meaning of the official interpretation of the Krays as a massive threat to the real security of the State, and to an examination of those subterranean motivations which underlie the public exhibition of a paranoia that validates and sanctifies the crusade for Law and Order.

9. What "Mafia" means

"I am satisfied that Good's friends were prepared to launch something in the nature of a full-scale military

attack, even to the extent of using tanks, bombs and what the Army describes as limited atomic weapons. Once armoured vehicles had breached the main gates, there would be nothing to stop them. A couple of tanks could easily have come through the streets of Durham. Nothing is too extravagant."

Chief Constable of Durham quoted in Laurie Taylor and Stan Cohens Psychological Survival.

When describing the more bizarre involvements of Ronnies "firm" in sections 5 and 6, I challenged those analyses of organised profit-seeking by counterposing the expression of the power drive, through the prearranged forms of totally non-logical bourgeois fantasy. When we examine these analyses more closely we can distinguish those self-same contradictions (more deeply concealed, no doubt) which characterize the alarmist journalism of the sensational press. Judge Gerald Sparrow, in his book "Gang Warfare" offers an analysis, only slightly more level-headed than the frequent gesticulations made by the News of the World and the "Daily Mirror" towards a vaguely defined threat, only marginally less "authoritative" than the thesis proposed so soberly by Donald Cressey in his book "Criminal Organisation:"

"The modern gang leader has rationalised crime. He and his friends are highly organised, highly specialised, and they represent a challenge to society as a whole far more menacing and a great deal more dangerous than any challenge to Law and Order in the past".

Judge Gerald Sparrow in

Gang Warfare

The gangster, it is implied, is at once "scientific" (i.e. craving anonymity) impersonal, almost automated in his violent reflexes and highly visible (advertising his presence by his appearance) psychopathic and unpredictable (i.e. a threat to the personal safety of every individual). He personifies that impossible paradox the "rational" and "efficient" madman, the "highly specialised" Jack of all vile trades which is at the core of all hysteria embedded in the heart of all those unreasonable panics of that undefined fear which is traced along the edge of the known and the familiar. When Edward Heath spoke in March 1966 of "waging war on the modern highly scientific criminal"⁽¹⁾ he was recommending an attack on that same legendary "smartly dressed gent in his 60 guinea suits" who the Sunday

(1) reported in Daily Mirror March 16, 1966.

Mirror of July 16, 1964 depicted running his rackets on "strict business lines."

This is the essential meaning of the American Mafia myth which is rapidly becoming a metaphorical synonym for every conspiracy theory. Thus Harold Wilson refers smugly to Heath's "Ministerial Mafia" in a recent speech, and an article published this month Jan. 1974 - in the Sun about Arab guerillas is headlined "The Godfather of World Terror" and is subtitled "Gaddafi has forged a deadly Mafia out of the fanatics." For the myth of "scientific gangsterism" (essentially, a contradiction in terms is effective precisely because it touches a central nerve of urban insecurity. The "Mafia" provides a metaphorical embodiment for those impersonal, external and invisible forces (which we define as malignant) which determine and dictate the individuals' actions in a mass society, and which ultimately threaten his identity with extinction (total determination).

By collapsing the categories of rational and non rational crime, by arranging the unnatural marriage of Goody, the military tactician, the modern "expert" and Ronald Kray, the imaginative director of a company of talented actor-gangsters the two great criminal enterprises of the decade (the Great Train Robbery and the Kray protection empire) were united.⁽¹⁾ Two distinct vocabularies of crime were thereby moulded into one monosyllabic utterance which articulates a profoundly modern anxiety. This collapsing is most apparent in the crudest forms of popular journalism, the most trashy pulp fiction. In "You Nice Bastard", for instance a novel by G.F. Newman, the author engineers the convergence of an

(1) We can, perhaps, formulate the essential difference in Status assigned the Train Robber and the Gangster in the popular consciousness by applying the terms "Noble Robber" and "Avenger" used by Eric Hobsbawm in his analysis of primitive bandit cultures. The Train Robber would correspond to the Noble Robber who effects a redistribution of wealth (albeit a very small scale indeed); who avoids unnecessary violence; who is admired, helped and supported by his people; and who is captured only through treason. (The models for this type include Robin Hood, Angelo Duca, Pancho Villa and Zelig Khan). The tabloid press, at least, continues to subscribe to this idealization. A recent headline in the "Sun" (Feb. 9, 1974) reads: "Briggs the Robin Hood" Thief may soon go free in Brazil" The Gangster, on the other hand conforms to the archetype of the Avenger most perfectly represented by Lampiao of Brazil. The avenger symbolizes power, and vengeance, inspires fear more than love, emerges in times of rapid social change, and appeals to the public imagination by demonstrating that "even the poor and the weak can be terrible" Lampiao means "The Captain" and it is sufficient merely to recollect Ronnie Kray's nickname - "The Colonel" - to argue a common source for the two men's mythical potency in a popular "Strong leader fixation". See Hobsbawm's Bandits.

enormous amount of symbolically potent criminal myths to form one gigantic embodiment of the law and order nightmare. Victor Russo, the protagonist, is a half-cockney half Sicilian gangster who performs the most dastardly deeds of the Krays and the Richardsons (razor-slashing Al Mark, (Jack "spot" Comer) murdering "Wild Frankie" Phillips (Mad Frankie Frazer) and presiding over brutal torture sessions) whilst managing in the meantime to appropriate the profits of the "Great Mail Bag Robbery" and run a chain of brothels which would have put the Messina brothers to shame.

The convergence of the sub-categories of crime is, of course, less pernicious than the wholesale fusion of politics and crime, accomplished, for instance by the "Sun" in the article about Gadaffi already mentioned. It does nonetheless assist the magnification of the subversive potential of crime by presenting the Underworld (an amorphous shifting mass of temporary allegiances, and arbitrary convergences) as a distinct, autonomous and purposeful Entity, and hence facilitates the generation of a moral panic.

10. The Apple Cart Almost Upset

I have suggested that the imagined threat to the State, posed by the Krays originated in a popular "law and order" myth concerning the specialised and rationalised nature of crime in a Technological Society -- I should like to conclude by briefly suggesting that the trial itself, the ritualistic stripping away of the veils of myth in which the Twins were clothed, represents an attempt to avoid the implications of their phenomenal success, by erasing the magic runes by which their success was signified. The contempt exhibited by the judge, during the summing-up, for what he described as "the grotesque respectability, achieved by "these pathetic products of the criminal underworld" strikes the observer as a transparent attempt at diminishing the Krays real significance. The Kray trial provided an Establishment feigning outrage, with a cathartic spectacle, a ceremonial stripping of civic rank which allowed the State to go on functioning, undisturbed. By publicly denying the Twins status by excluding them once more to the classes of the Cockney and the Criminal the judge was attempting to rewrite history to preserve only official version. But the glorification of the incorruptible Inspector Read and his team (championed by the press, commended by the judge) fails to conceal how completely the Krays demonstrated the real susceptibility of the world of power, money and success to corruption. The Krays' case dramatically illuminated what Sir Joseph Simpson described in 1964 as "the

declining standards of conduct set by men in responsible positions" and constantly threatened to expose the exploitative system upon which that world was based by uncovering its roots in violence. The Krays advertised their alienation in a spectacular fashion and their sensational careers, so hotly pursued in the press, constitute a parody of the bourgeois success story and threaten to lay bare the faulted structure of the bourgeois fantasy, the emptiness of the bourgeois dream. The Krays then had been admitted to the previously sacrosanct inner chamber of the Capitalist system and had failed to conduct themselves with the proper decorum. They had refused to tread the corridors of power quietly and respectfully, and had instead loudly proclaimed their prescience showing the world just how crooked those corridors actually were. The Kray Twins came very close, in fact, to giving the whole game away.

11. East End Heads and South Side Tails: A Doppelganger for Mr. Kray

"Ten years ago any symmetry with a semblance of order - dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism - was sufficient to charm the minds of men. How could one do other than submit to Tlon (a complete fictional world) to the minute and vast evidence of an orderly planet? It is useless to answer that reality is also orderly. Perhaps it is, but in accordance with divine laws - I translate inhuman laws which we never quite grasp. Tlon is surely a labyrinth, but it is a labyrinth devised by men, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men."

From "Tlon, U Bars, Orbis Ter Us"

Jorge Luis Borges.

"Let me have men about me that are arrant knaves. The wicked who have something on their conscience, are obliging, quick to hear threats, because they know how it's done, and for booty. You can offer them things because they will take them. Because they have no hesitations. You can hang them if they get out of step. Let me have men about me that are utter villains - provided that I have the power, absolute power over life and death. The sole and single leader, whom no one can interfere with. What do you know of the possibilities of evil! Why do you write books and make philosophy, when you only know about virtue and how to acquire it. Whereas the world is fundamentally moved by something quite different". Herman Goering quoted in "The

Inner Circle" by I. Kirkpatrick

A few characteristically succinct lines from Borges elucidate quite adequately the form of the sealed universe in which the Krays came to move and indicates, at once, the origin of that form, its *raison d'etre*, and the compulsive appeal it habitually exerts. Goering speaks from within the form itself and unconsciously diagnoses his own myopia by assigning a specific metaphysical valency (evil) to those "inhuman laws" which are essentially neutral in moral terms and which are ultimately inaccessible to human terminology itself.⁽¹⁾ He is, by definition, lost in the labyrinth of National Socialism, a system which Joachim C. Fest characterizes by its renunciation of ideology for the sake of power"; a system which Goering himself helped to construct, and in which he was inextricably involved.

Perhaps it would be presumptuous to suggest that Ronald Kray could have spoken Goering's words if he had been so inclined and a little more articulate. But we need not resort to hypothesis; the parallels between Gangster and fascist are glaringly obvious. Bertolt Brecht's play "The Rise and Fall of Arturo Ui", which caricatures Nazism by fusing the histories of Hitler and Capone makes all the necessary comparisons. I would maintain that Fest's location of a crude concept of the Darwinian struggle at the very heart of National Socialism, indeed, as an end in itself, applies equally well to that world over which the Kray Firm held hegemonic sway during the last decade. Fest writes:

"At its roots National Socialist ideology contained only one tangible idea: the idea of struggle... violent struggle was itself an ideology and if it had a goal above and beyond mere self-assertion, it was the power that beckoned at its end."

It should hardly surprise us to find that Fest's observation applies also to the Krays rivals, the Richardsons, whose eventual removal from the scene ensured the Krays' ascendancy and who, in many ways, merely reflect, north of the river, the image which the Krays projected from the East End. Struggle requires two more or less evenly matched opponents and from the late fifties to the mid sixties Ronnie and Reggie Kray found an equally resonant echo across the water in Charles and Eddie Richardson.

(1) We can say that Goering has committed the positivist fallacy forcing those precepts which pertain only the natural sciences into the human sphere where they simply do not apply. It could be argued that Sorel's resolve to create "an artificial world of order", involves a transposition which is just as suspect, and, perhaps accounts for that short lived flirtation with Italian fascism which has caused his Marxist admirers such acute embarrassment.

I shall now attempt to decipher the labyrinth which Charles Richardson created from his scrap-metal yard in Camberwell. So that the basic theme of closure should not translate this paper into an artefact as limited and pernicious as the forms which it describes, I shall be placing the Richardsons within the larger context of the world of big business with which they merged at certain times and which always threatened to afford them a permanent sanctuary. Thuggery is never far from fascism. Neither can it be purposefully isolated from the exploitative and competitive economic system in which they both find origin. Adolf Hitler merely constitutes a charismatic incarnation of the spirit which had moved the Krupps' empire for centuries. And Charles Richardson personified the piratical spirit of primitive capitalism in exactly the same way.

Sadism and the Scrap Business: a Minotaur in the Metropolis

"He killed for play
out of pure perversity".

From a poem written in memory of Lampiao, the Brazilian Bandit.

"Richardson is very much a man of our times - stylish until the last".

From an article published in the Sunday Times (11 June '67)

"I can't make it out. It sounds like the Ku Klux Klan".

Charles Richardson refuting allegations made by Lawrence "Jonny"

Bradbury in an interview given to the Sunday Times (8th May, 1966).

"What's Al Capone done then? He supplied a legitimate demand. Some call it bootlegging. Some call it racketeering. I call it business".

Al Capone quoted in "Al Capone" by F.D. Pasley.

Charles William Richardson was born on January 18, 1934 in Camberwell, South East London. His brother, Edward George was born two years later.

Childhood was hardly idyllic. The Great Depression passed away finally only with the advent of war, which in turn was followed by the grey years of reconstruction. Unrelieved poverty was punctuated only by the ravages of the bombs and the bulldozers. For Charles and Eddie as for Ronnie and Reggie, bombsites served as playgrounds, but the depressing external conditions were, for the Richardson brothers, unalleviated by the strong, supportive family structure which had nurtured the Krays. Charles was not even permitted the doubtful respite from work and responsibility which school theoretically affords, and was forced, at the age of fourteen, to adopt the role of principal breadwinner for the Richardson family, (which also comprised a younger sister) when his father left. In the words of Mrs. Eileen Richardson, the boys' mother:

"Times were pretty hard then."⁽¹⁾ And we can safely assume that severe economic pressures were responsible for Charles's first appearance in juvenile court in May 1948. He was found guilty of stealing a small quantity of lead, valued at £1,00, and, just a year later, was committed to an approved school from which he escaped. During 1949, he appeared in juvenile courts another three times for breaking and entering offences.

Richardson himself claimed that his "legitimate" business careers started at this time and grew from the capital he accumulated selling ice-cream and toffee apples. With the money thus saved, he began developing a scrap metal business, purchasing a lorry as soon as he was 17. In an interview given to "The Sunday Times" (11 June 1967) his mother says that she had already discerned in her eldest son a single minded ambition and a fierce independence.

"Charlie always wanted to be his own boss. He didn't care how hard he worked". An extremely dominant and aggressive personality, Charles had always resented authority at school and resisted incorporation. Predictably then, after being drafted into the army in 1952, (the same years as the Twins) we find Charles and Eddie spending most of their Service Life in military prison (where according to Pearson, they met and clashed with the Krays for the first time).

In 1956, at the age of 22, Charles formed the Peckford Scrap Metal Company, which, like the Krays' billiard hall in Mile End served as a cover for the Richardson's operations as receivers of stolen property, and Charles was convicted for receiving in 1957 and 1959. The scrap-metal business constituted the original nucleus around which Charles and Eddie (who became director in 1957) constructed a complex business (ranging from purely criminal to the semi-legitimate and the wholly legal), a loosely connected framework of criminal allegiances (the S. London equivalent of the Kray Firm) and an elaborate mythology of violence and sadism. Charles and Eddie, deprived of the secure home background which contributed to the Krays' phenomenal power, translated the offices of the Peckford scrap-metal works in New Church Road into a case (both actual and symbolic) and a inviolable castle in much the same way as Ronnie and Reggie apotheosised their mother's house into "Fort Vallance". As strongly situated in Camberwell and South London as the Krays were on their Bethnal Green "manor", the Richardsons remained firmly tied to the scrap yard from whose offices they

(1) Quoted in "The Sunday Times" (11th June, 1967).

organised break-ins and business deals, protection and profitable investments overseas; and in which they initiated the notorious torture sessions which provoked such a horrified response from the public gallery during the trial. (1)

From the late fifties onwards, Richardson began taking an increased interest in the fruits offered by a legitimate entrepreneurial activity. Attracted by the impunity which a respectable facade so easily provides, he extended the range of ~~his~~ criminal enterprises by setting up a succession of organisations which served as "fronts" behind which he could operate unobtrusively and virtually without obstruction from the law. More than this (far more so, perhaps, than the Krays), he threw himself into "straight" business. Finding a real invisibility (in sharp contrast to the Twins, he rarely appeared in the national press) inside the grey worsted world of the city, he set about engaging in a series of long-firm frauds, and putting into practice the dubious ethic concealed at the core of ~~modern~~ capitalism. After all, Richardson was singularly equipped to deal with the rigours of life in the "rat-race". Eventually substituting actual physical tactics (out-pricing, undercutting etc.,) which mean "good business" and signify a "healthy economy" he simply applied a literal interpretation to the principle of "cut-throat-competition." (2)

In 1963 Eddie set up his very own lucrative wholesale chemists business which soon had branches all over South-East London. Charles became a director of a fancy goods business with premises in Brixton and Camberwell, and rented a railway arch in Bermondsey where he bought and sold office

(1) Tony Lawrence the Fulham scrap-merchant, attempted a rather shoddy simulation of the Richardsons rise to power, complete with shootings, petrol bombings, and a bungled "liquidation" which resulted in the accidental death of his right hand man Terence "Baa Baa" Elgar. Although achieving a limited notoriety in the Press during 1967 and 1968 he remained very small fry indeed never getting further than a somewhat pointless feud with a publican and a rival scrap merchant based in Tooting. John McVicar, the widely respected "loner" of the London underworld, in an article written for "The Sunday Times" about his experiences inside Durhams Maximum Security Wing, describes Lawrence as a "mug" and exposes the essentially plagiarist nature of his criminal aspirations. Lawrence, McVicar tells us, idolized Richardson in prison and trailed around rather abjectly after the stronger man.

(2) A television series "Big Breadwinner Hogg"(now discontinued) explored this relationship between business and violence.

furniture. He was soon entrenched in the fashionable heart of London's whizz kid world, renting a luxury office in Park Lane. Meanwhile Eddie was quick to capitalize on the gambling boom opening up with "Mad Frankie" Frazer, a wholesale business in one-armed bandits in Tottenham Court Road, and extorting protection money from the clubs which he supplied with fruit machines.

It is difficult to assess the full extent of the Richardsons' activities from the early sixties onwards. Shunning the publicity the Krays seemed to court with such ardour, Richardson more or less disappeared from public view from 1963 to 1966, when the murder of Thomas Waldeck, a South African mining prospector and the Catford shooting incident refocused public attention once more. Nonetheless during those years, Richardson was at his most active - and though avoiding a further term in prison until 1967 when he received a 25 year sentence, he managed to secure a phenomenal amount of acquittals (14, in fact). To take one example in 1963, he appeared in court charged with possessing a fire arm and 500 rounds of ammunition without a certificate and was given an absolute discharge. As Ronnie Kray began to expand through the militant machinery of the Firm, acquiring (through bribes in the real world, through self-deification in the Ideal) the "invulnerability" which earned him his nickname the "Colonel", Charles Richardson was simultaneously buying his way above the law (bribing police, corrupting and intimidating witnesses and jurors) and formulating an equally dense personal mythology with himself as Prime Mover and Principle Actor. More than this, the two men found, in each other both an enemy as potent, as firmly located (in similar local culture) and as determined to win as himself; and an ally. For each found a dangerous confirmation, a double-edged reassurance in the "reality" of the other. Ron Kray needed Charles Richardson in order to prevent the kind of personal collapse he had experienced at the prison, in exactly the same way that we must find a reflection in a mirror in order to preserve some kind of sanity. The preservation of what are primarily adolescent values - a strong sense of territory, the desire for peer-group adulation - was facilitated and made plausible by a parallel retention on the other side of the river. Together cinematic fantasies became realisable and the two gangs were on the point of clashing openly a La Capone when the shooting at Mr. Smith's Club made a confrontation impossible and unnecessary. Paradoxically then, the gangsters' primary source of self-clarification and potency posed a constant threat to his very survival.

As obsessed with personal power as Ronnie Kray, Charles Richardson declared himself an "untouchable" and, to all intents and purposes, that, for a time, is exactly what he was. But beyond the fundamental dialectic contained within the struggle as end in itself; beyond the basic terms of the opposition, in which shotgun answered shotgun, and reprisal followed counter-reprisal, the two men diverged considerably, adopting different strategies to realise their common goal. Whilst maintaining a strong financial interest in gambling and drinking clubs (both as owner and as "protector"), Richardson did not move easily in such surroundings. Neither did he feel comfortable in the expensive suits which were considered a necessary prerequisite for the kind of position he sought to occupy, and, according to an acquaintance, they "looked better on a coat-hanger".⁽¹⁾ For the Richardsons, respectability offered anonymity and a semblance of legitimacy; it held no intrinsic appeal and Charles Richardson never suffered from the excessive star-fixation to which his rival was so prone. Needless to say, the Richardsons did not find access to the glamorous circles in which the Krays moved and they never appeared to seek it. The Richardsons, in short, lacked the style which was so important to the more subtle, flamboyant and gregarious Krays.

Despite the constant internecine conflict - perhaps even because of it - the Richardsons operated with an ever-increasing confidence far from "cockiness" and expanded the range of their business activities at a prodigious rate. The hectic years of the early '60s which had translated the two vaguely anachronistic "West End" criminals into the West Ends men of the moment, served the Richardsons equally well. Apart from the proliferation of night-clubs and gaming rooms which, according to an "Observer" article of the time⁽¹⁾ helped to disseminate "the criminal" way of life", the 60's

(1) Which is not to say that the Krays were particularly elegant. Jim Nichol, Fortune's interviewee makes a derogatory remark about the Kray's "flashiness".
"They were cheap, they were flashy, they looked like Italian Ice-Cream Sellers, the pair of them."

However in spite of the crudity of this image, the Krays combination of narcissism and nastiness was remarkably successful in the new night clubs where sophisticates and shotgun merchants blended in a most disturbing manner.

(2) The article by Eric Clark, is entitled "The Greenfelt Gangster" (Observer May 22, 1966). The quote comes from Milton R. Wessel, American Federal Prosecutor and director of a 2 year investigation into organised crime in the U.S. "If we open the door wide to the spread of gambling we shall accomplish one thing above all others; we shall make the under-world way of life more extensive, more secure and almost unsusceptible to challenge. This idea of a criminal "way of life" firmly entrenched in an expanding clubland is undoubtedly responsible for the genesis of many panics about the scale and cohesiveness of organised crime (Mafia - conspiracy and criminal subversion theories). The same article gives some indication of the Richardsons involvement in protection; the "south London racketeer" who "boasts privately that 40 clubs and other enterprises are 'under control' can only be Charles Richardson.

as I have suggested favoured the hardheaded working class opportunist and the Richardson brothers benefited from this unprecedented tolerance. Most of the incidents dealt with in the 1967 trial refer back to this period and the Richardsons were undoubtedly at their most active, their most ambitious, and their most effective during these years. Our information about these activities is restricted to those allegations made by Lawrence "Johnny" Bradbury, the man convicted for the murder of Waldeck in a statement given to the South African police and the piecemeal revelations made during the "torture trial". The Waldeck affair demonstrates most clearly the extent to which the Richardsons had immersed themselves in "straight" business and illustrates how closely business and violence are related. The facts are themselves sufficiently articulate, I think, and I shall, for the most part, merely summarize Bradbury's statement and subsequent statements made in court by Mrs. Connie Waldeck.

In December 1964, Richardson formed a company called Concordia (PTY) Ltd., with a South African mining prospector called Thomas Waldeck in order to exploit certain base mineral rights won by Waldeck in the area, known as "the Meer". A similar company was floated in London. Waldeck had been involved in a series of suspect mining deals, and was notorious for his sharp practice. Since 1960, he had become obsessed with the idea of extracting diamonds illegally by winning rights which covered base minerals only. None of the various companies set up for this purpose lasted for long, and a confusing network of mutually contradictory and mutually annulling contracts stretch back over these years. It is fairly certain that Concordia Ltd. and the later Lebombo Mineral Ltd. in which Richardson was to become so passionately involved were also launched in an attempt to realize this ambition.*

None of these agreements were legally binding because they contravened the terms of previous contracts undertaken by Waldeck. Furthermore, by May 1965, Richardson had invested at least £200,000 in the venture and had seen no returns. Lawrence Bradbury, who fronted the Bradbury Wholesale Company, a long-time fraud engineered by the Richardsons was sent to South Africa to evade police enquiries, set up a special company called Orange River Enterprises to buy machinery for the Waldeck venture, and no doubt to report back to Richardson on the state of his affairs in the Meer. Nonetheless, Richardson fired Bradbury on the faulty and, as it later transpired, unfounded evidence supplied by Waldeck accusing Bradbury of

* The perlite which was mined was of an inferior quality, and was not commercially viable, being unsuitable for use in the building trade.

misappropriating funds. However, Brian Oseman, another of Richardsons associates who had invested heavily in the perlite scheme confirmed Richardsons earlier reservations concerning Waldeck, after flying out to South Africa and it is probable that by the Spring of 1965 Richardson had decided he wanted his partner murdered. In May Waldeck made an application for an additional 20,000 Rand life policy "to cover anticipated death duties on his enhanced estate." On June 6, five days after the new policy became effective, rifle shots were fired at Waldeck's home by Bradbury who had returned to South Africa with his family in April. On the night of June 29, 1965 Waldeck was shot dead when he answered the door of his Parkwood home. Bradbury claimed at his trial that he had merely driven the assassin, a well-known London villain, flown out from London for the purpose, to and from the scene of the crime. This was never substantiated and in April 1966 he was convicted of the murder and sentenced to death; the sentence being later commuted to life imprisonment. During the trial, Mrs. Connie Waldeck claimed that Charles Richardson stood "at the top of the pile of ruthless London hoodlums," and in subsequent conversations with Chief Inspector Arthur Rees of Scotland Yard, Bradbury made the first sensational allegations against the two brothers which were to lead eventually to the Richardsons convictions. As the sordid disclosures - the beatings and the knifings - the tales of men nailed to the floor through their knees, of teeth forcibly extracted - began filtering back to England; Richardson agreed to give his first newspaper interview to the Sunday Times. In this interview (May 8, 1966), Richardson attempted nervously to refute the allegations with a somewhat misplaced flippancy ("It's so ridiculous, my friends are laughing"), but the document holds a singular interest quite apart from any light it might throw on Richardson's private perversity. Certain oblique references were made in the interview indicating a level of involvement never openly explored in court.

At one point it is hinted that a former C.I.D. officer helped Richardson to negotiate the South African mining deal, and such an arrangement would certainly lend substance to the accusations of corruption which Richardson repeatedly levelled at the police. All such accusations were summarily dismissed in court. Furthermore, it was revealed that Concordia's board of directors at various times included a prominent West End solicitor, a Fleet Street news editor, and an alderman who was associated with Mr. Christopher Soames, a former Tory Minister of Agriculture. Once more, evidence indicating a high degree of penetration into the world of power was never openly discussed and its implications remained unexplored. Needless to say, the obvious connections were not made and respectable names were tactfully forgotten as the more immediately shocking evidence gradually began to accumulate and take precedence. The Waldeck case was never adequately publicised in England (though certain features did appear in Sunday Mirror and it did not feature in the Richardson trial)

The absence of such an investigation does render the ascription of guilt to the obvious villains of the piece, somewhat facile and reductive. In the Waldeck case, the line where sharp practice ends and brute force begins is scarcely distinguishable; but then again, such vertiginous speculations are not the stuff on which the court thrives.

The evidence accrued in the relation to the affray at Mr. Smith's Club on the night of March 7th 1966 was far more conducive to judicial debate. The facts of the case were self-evident: Two London gangs had clashed in a Catford Club over the "right" to "protect" the premises, and the ensuing shoot-out in which several were wounded, and one killed, was sufficiently remote from the experience of most of the citizenry to invoke the rhetoric of the prosecuting counsel, who compared the scene to that of a Western film ("the picture is ... rather like a part in a Western film"). Eddie Richardson was sentenced to five years; "Mad Frankie" Fraser also received five years.

In July 1967 Charles Richardson and Albert Longman were tried on two charges - conspiring to pervert the course of justice by attempting to induce the jurors in favour of Edward George Richardson and conspiring together between March 8th and July 28th 1966 to pervert the course of justice by suborning witnesses for the prosecution upon the trial of Edward Richardson and others for fighting and making an affray. One prosecution witness had been paid off and a bottle had been thrown through a juror's window. Again

we are granted an insight into the strange personal logic which dictated Richardsons' erratic behaviour: the bottle contained a note which read: "Bring them in guilty". This was apparently designed to frighten and confuse the jurors. Richardson received twelve years for the jury incident and eight years for suborning witnesses. Richardson had been in custody since June 30th, 1966, when he saw his common law wife, Jean, and nine other men arrested in the co-ordinated dawn raid which was to become a standard Scotland Yard technique for dealing with serious criminals. During May and June 1967, the principal charges connected with the various assaults were dealt with at the Old Bailey - and the "new wave" of British gangsterism broke on the new media. (1)

The trial suffered from those limitations (those constricting effects of an archaic judicial procedure; the impulse undeclared of course, but perhaps not unconscious-to suppose certain embarrassing facts) which we have seen at work in the Kray Trial. It served to illuminate only briefly and unevenly the world which the South London gangsters occupied. The prosecution and the police concentrated on those charges which they felt sure would secure a severe sentence from the judge and a nauseated reaction from an audience alienated, at least in public, by such excesses. Thus we know more than enough about the controlled savagery with which the Richardsons enforce their capricious imperatives. The explicit identification of violence with play was indeed shocking. It was, in fact, designed to shock - to spread that reputation for unpredictable sadism, which was to prove so valuable not only in terms of prestige but in real cash profits as well. Victims were selected more or less at random from among the circle of criminal acquaintances business contacts compromised by their involvement in various shady deals.

The "lesson had no validity for the torturer or victim outside the experience itself. The medium was indeed the message. No further information seems to have been desperately required; no specific offences demanded such cruel reprisals. Although the initial recipient of the Richardsons' ritualistically formalised violence, Jack Duval, seems to have crossed the firm in some way (refusing to defraud a company for which he worked through fear of being found out) the later victims were merely acquaintances of the original culprit,

(1) Finally in December, 12 men were convicted for operating a fraud at the London Airport car park which had netted them £200,000 in four years. It transpired that during 1965 those men had been approached by the Richardsons and had been compelled to hand over a large proportion of the substantial revenue. Money had continued to arrive in regular payments until November 1966.

supposedly aware and generally ignorant of Duvals, whereabouts. Finally Benjamin Coulston another associate of the Richardsons was tortured so badly that he had to spend several days in hospital,⁽¹⁾ for no apparent reason whatsoever. He was accused of swindling two of Richardsons colleagues out of £600 on a consignment of stolen cigarettes; but, after convincing Coulston that he was to be murdered; perpetrating the deceit by wrapping him in a tarpaulin, loudly talking about Vauxhall Bridge and driving the terrified man around the block instead, even Richardson admitted with a smile that he had punished the wrong man.

Victims were often given a roll of banknotes (the sum varying from £30 to £150) as a halfhearted gesture towards some kind of compensation and in contemptuous recognition of their entertainment value (an artistes fee?). From Duval to Coulston we can chart that movement towards motivelessness or inadequate motivation which I have already noted and related to the Krays drive to power and their incarceration within bourgeois forms of expression. A certain dubious status was won inside the underworld and certain dubious profits were made from direct extortion as a result of the reputation thus gained. Beyond this, the golf clubs, the barbed wire, the pliers, and the electric generator - the paraphernalia of fascism - became the baroque disguise behind which Richardson sought to conceal his personal deterioration.

I have already described the processes of disintegration and refinement which accompany the final stages of closure when analysing the Kray case, and there is no need to reiterate the argument here. Suffice it to say that the judge expressed in his summing up, a revulsion, genuine enough no doubt, from the deeds of the convicted men, but characteristically he confined his criticisms (rooted in the offended aesthetics of the civilised man) to the quantity of violence and the manner in which it was instigated:

"you terrorised those who crossed your path and you terrorised them in a way that was vicious, sadistic and a disgrace to society" (My emphasis)

And so the judge deplores the method (the "way") and ignores the meaning. Society has indeed been disgraced but at a level at once too deep and too close to home to be admitted into court. The concentration in the trial itself upon those acts of sadism which enabled the press to abbreviate the

(1) The struck off doctor whom Richardson employed to look after his "mistakes" was unequipped to deal with such severe injuries.

case to a conveniently concise and sensational formula "TORTURE TRIAL" (instant headline?), meant that the full implications of the Richardson's rise was never drawn out in court (a similar absence was noted in the Kray trial and its treatment in the media).

Richardsons business activities which phase out imperceptibly from the crudely managed small-scale frauds to the less obvious, but no less criminal manipulations of big business and international finance were declared "sub-judice" after the Richardsons convictions, but later the Attorney General was to make the somewhat sinister decision (conspiracy theories apart) to drop all out-standing charges on the grounds that the main incidents had been dealt with and a further trial would cost a great deal of public money.

A Polish born business man, Bernard Wajcenberg, a man whom the judge said had learned in a war time concentration camp "patterns of thought" and "habits of life" with which the jury would be unfamiliar and who was associated with the Richardsons' described in court how he was confronted by a bruised and bleeding Jack Duval in the Camberwell offices of the Peckford Scrap Metal Company. The shrewd business man, not unduly scrupulous, but a respectable and useful member of the community nonetheless, was thus forced to face the darker side of the system to which he was so firmly committed. He was predictably horrified and said:

"I did not know what this sort of thing was. Business is Business, but violence is something different."

Perhaps, we are now in a position to dispute that distinction.

12. It is impossible to draw a paper which deals with organised crime during the sixties to a satisfactory conclusion. Too much information is still unavailable for any really comprehensive investigation to be made. I have confined myself to studying the history of one particular gang - the Kray "firm"; itself, by no means a distinct and self-enclosed unit, which dominated the more publicity-prone sectors of the London scene for a number of years. To complete this picture, I then turned to the largest and most prestigious gang (The Richardsons) which for time, challenged the Kray's hegemony. I should like here to outline subsequent developments in the East End underworld, to take a cursory glance at three recent highly publicised cases, which in some way, lead us back into the labyrinth of London's criminal world during the last decade. Finally, I shall be suggesting a more obvious

matrix for that maze than the one put forward in the earlier sections of this paper, by examining the implications of the Gaming, Betting and Lotteries Act (1960), which, I have stated, transfigured Soho and the nation's gambling habits.

In the Family Tradition

"Nothing has gone right since the Twins went into the West End. It got the coppers narked. They didn't mind all the old rackets back in the East End ... But all this cooking the books in gaming clubs up the other end was asking for it."

A Goswell resident quoted in the second of Nichol Fortunes articles "East End Since the Krays" Jan 19-25 '73) issue of Time Out

"My son is as innocent as a new-born babe, you bastard!"

The mother of Leon Carlton on hearing the judge pass a 12 year sentence on her son.

In the East End, things unlawful functioned in much the same way as they had before the Krays' arrest. Many of the Krays' operations continued to turn over considerable profits virtually without interruption; the business was carried on by various associates. Nonetheless, the traditional East End pattern, whereby a strong closeknit family provides a point around which violence and power can accumulate, soon began to reassert itself once more. The Dixons and Tibbs both attempted to follow in the Twins footsteps during the late 60s and early 70s, and neither family got very far.

Changes in the structure and leadership of the Metropolitan Police Force and a fresh initiative from the Home Secretary, Robert Carr, account for this failure. After the Krays demise in 1968, the special squad, stationed in Tintagel House, which had led the investigation into the Twins affairs, was retained. "Nipper" Read himself was promoted; but his successor Chief Superintendent Albert Wickstead (soon nicknamed "The Gangbuster") who came himself from the East End, was quick to prove himself equally dedicated and efficient. This move coincided with the nomination of Robert Mark as Metropolitan Police Commissioner (the only person to whom Wickstead was responsible) and a rigidification of the Home Office line on law and order. From this time onwards, Scotland Yard repeatedly issued directives announcing a more determined and inflexible policy in relation to serious crimes. Armed

with the spectre of the Krays, the militant forces of the law proceeded to invade the East End, confident of gaining convictions from a judge and jury, alerted by the recent disclosures, against the dangers of the "rising tide of crime".

And so it was that in 1972, George and Alan Dixon appeared in the Old Bailey with several associates, charged with blackmail and conspiracy to blackmail. The Dixons had known the Krays for some years; had mixed in the same circles; had profited from the same sources. But the scale of their operations never approached anything like that achieved by the Krays. Indeed Dixons counsel contended that the total haul from their activities (as far as was known) amounted to "120; but a precedent had been set and the two brothers were described as "mini Krays", and there was talk of "violence and extortion walking hand in hand". The conspiracy charges, which automatically increased the seriousness of the original charges (a method of securing longer sentences only recently introduced) mark the new tendency toward rigour and severity which I have dated from this period in Section 8.

The trial bore many resemblances to the Kray trial. The same elaborate security arrangements prevailed and dictated an oppressive atmosphere in court; the integrity of several prosecution witnesses was constantly being questioned by Defence Counsel and the heavy sentences (12 years for the most part) provoked the angry outbursts from the Dock, which were to become so familiar two years later, in the Trials of George Ince. There were also accusations of police corruption and bending of evidence which invariably accompany contemporary gangland trials. And Alan Dixon shouted somewhat prematurely;

"Wickstead's reign is now going to be at an end. We will get you Wickstead".

Because in late 1972, Wickstead secured the conviction of the four Tibbs brothers (George, Jimmy, Bobby and John), their father James and four associates. The men charged with attempted murder, grievous bodily harm, possessing weapons conspiring to prevent the course of justice and concealment. Again heavier sentences were greeted by violent scuffles in the dock as the convicted men were led away shouting that the defendant had been "verballed up" by Wickstead. The appeals against the sentences given the Dixons and the Tibbs, together with the allegations of unscrupulous and unlawful police tactics, soon died in the repressive atmosphere of debate which prevailed as the law and order panic began to take a hold.

Buggy, Biggs and the Barn Murder Trial

(i) "The nightmare was always defeated by my family's love".

George Ince on being found not guilty.

The name of Kray continued to haunt the Central Criminal Court and the occasional headline and it featured quite spectacularly in the Barn Murder Trial. George Ince, a builder of Manor Park, East London stood trial twice for the murder of Mrs Muriel Patience and the attempted murders of Mr. Robert Patience and his daughter, Beverley, in what was to be described by Oliver Martin, Q.C. for John Brook, later found guilty of the murder, as "a very strange case" which, "is probably unique in our criminal history". Once more, the "facts" are somewhat opaque, the conclusions reached in court unsatisfactory.

It appears that on the night of November 4th, 1972, two men broke into the Sun Lido House, the residence attached to the Barn Restaurant in Braintree, Essex. After being refused the keys to the safe by the restaurant's owner, Mr. Bob Patience, one of the men shot his wife, Muriel, through the head, using a cushion to muffle the blast. The two men left with two bags containing £900 in notes and a quantity of cheques, which were later found burned, leaving Mr. Patience and his daughter seriously wounded by further gunshots.

Ince was identified by Beverley Patience from photographs, shown to her by police whilst she was recovering in hospital. She later picked him out of an identification parade and Mr. Bob Patience was "100% certain" that Ince was the man who had killed his wife. Ince gave himself up when he heard through underworld sources that an intensive search was underway and that armed police had been authorised to shoot if he resisted arrest. In May, 1973, he angrily protested his innocence before Judge Melford Stevenson, who had presided over the Kray trial in 1968 (a fact which Ince believed would prejudice his chances of acquittal); and succeeded in making the front page more than once by dismissing his lawyer for incompetency and aggressively conducting his own defence, showing scant respect for standard judicial etiquette. He was ordered from the courtroom, on that explosive day of his 6 day trial, and the jury brought in a 9-3 verdict of guilty after lengthy deliberation. The judge declared a mistrial and the fiasco was suspended until Ince appeared in court a few weeks later on the same charges. The disclosures which were made hardly served to elucidate

the matter; Ince claimed throughout that he was caught between a gangland vendetta and a vindictive police hierarchy which resented his association with the Tibbs brother and the underworld in general, and were set on a conviction. Rumours began to circulate that Patience was a fence for stolen property, that he had met Ince 15 years previously in this capacity, and that the safe had contained anything between £15,000 and £40,000 on the night of the murder. As the trial progressed, the defence began to rest increasingly on an alibi which for obscure and sinister reasons, would be difficult to substantiate. Tension mounted in the press as veiled references were made to a mysterious woman whose husband was "out of circulation for the time being", and who, Ince claimed, had spent the night of November 4-5, 1972 in his company. Eventually, the woman - a Mrs. Doris Grey - was compelled to give testimony. Despite an unconvincing attempt at concealing Mrs Grey's identity, certain references to brothers-in law, and a billiard hall in Mile End made it obvious that the woman was Charles Kray's wife, Dolly. She brief appearance was enough to secure an acquittal and, amidst cheers from a public gallery packed with family and friends, the triumphant Ince was led from the dock. A scuffle broke out as he shouted across the court at Chief Superintendent Len White, head of Essex C.I.D.:

"It's your turn now...for corruption. You are corrupt."

As he was being led from the court, the accusations continued:

"You took some money".

The identity of Mrs Grey was openly disclosed in the newspapers the next day (May 23, 1973) and it was revealed that Ince had been the victim of two attacks by men representing the Krays, one in 1969, when he was shot in the legs, and once in 1971, when an attempt was made to blow his genitals off with a shotgun which had been thrust down his trousers (93 pellets were removed from his left calf).⁽¹⁾

In September, Ince appeared at the Old Bailey once more and was sentenced to 15 years for his part in a bullion raid that had taken place in 1972 at Mountnessing near Brentwood, Essex, in which £395,000 in silver had been stolen from a security van.

(1) The same papers carried a footnote reporting an assault in Parkhurst Prison, in which a man had been attacked with a broken bottle. The Twins were held responsible and were moved into solitary confinement.

The Barn Murder case lapsed yet again into obscurity but was suddenly resurrected by the arrest in January, 1974 of John Brook and Michael de Clare Johnson. The trial was greeted with anticipation by a press by now hypersensitive to its sensational potential - and they were not disappointed. New headlines progressively more emphatic and astonishing, appeared each day proclaiming the strange goings-on at the Old Bailey: Brook, arrested at a Lake District hotel where he was employed as a porter, admitted that the Biretta discovered in his room (and later found to be the murder weapon) was indeed his, and he pleaded guilty to possessing a firearm without a license; but he vigorously denied the murder charge, declaring that he had lent the gun to Johnson on the night of November 4, 1972. Johnson, it was alleged at various times throughout the trial had made a deal with the police to secure preferential treatment and a lighter sentence, and had been present at the murder of Mrs. Patience, accompanying another man, possibly Ince. A man called Hanson claimed that Brook had confessed to murdering Mrs Patience when he was sharing a room with the defendant in the Lake District hotel, but on February 1st, this testimony was seriously brought into doubt, if not wholly discredited by a man called Trott who declared to the by now bewildered court that another man called Quinn had approached him (Trott) in Walton prison and had advised him that if he told the authorities that Brook had confessed whilst in prison he (Trott) would get parole. On February 2nd, Johnson claimed that Brook had gone berserk in the South Lido House and had told him not to interfere in what was a "family affair". Finding a way through these confusing and contradictory statements had not been made any easier by the blatant accusations made against Bob Patience by Brooks Counsel. On January 18th he openly accused the appalled and obviously discomposed man of being a "fence" who had been present when the Mountnessing bullion robbery had been planned and whose unfilled swimming pool was to be used as a storage place for a large part of the haul after the crime. It was further suggested that Mr Patience owed Ince money taken in the bullion robbery.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, a tenuous link between Patience and the Krays was established, and the case became even more complex. It was revealed that 14 years before when Patience was running another restaurant, "The Ranch House Club" in Ilford, a customer, Richard Coomber, who attacked him, was later found fatally injured in the car-park. Patience testified that he was bundled into a car by men who were acquainted with the Krays and driven to an East

(1) These charges were denied on January 19th by a police officer who took the stand.

London Engineering Works where the manager advised him to ensure that the 17 witnesses to the incident, all club members, developed, "bad memories". In a dramatic gesture (dramatic enough to indeed substantiate Patience's statement) a member of the Kray firm present was said to open a window, produce a gun, and fire one shot into the yard, following this with the cryptic warning:

"It only barks once".

Eventually on February 15, 1974, the jury (which had been under close police surveillance since an anonymous threat had been delivered to one of its members urging the jury to bring in a verdict of not guilty for Brook),⁽¹⁾ delivered its verdict of guilty, and Brook received a life sentence three times over; Johnson was given 10 years. An enquiry was ordered into the complaints made by Ince into the Essex police force, by the Chief Constable himself. Nonetheless - certain questions will most probably never be asked, and we can expect the case to retain its impenetrable mystique.

I have related the events which took place in the Barn Murder Trial at some length because I think it deserves detailed treatment. It reflects the complexity of criminal interactions (both with fellow criminals and the police), and gives us a glimpse of those shifting and unchartable regions which lie between the professional criminal and the police, between itself and the law. The courts overt retention of an archaic and reductive morality in which specific individuals are found guilty of committing specific crimes against other individuals in some neutral dimension of pure cause and effect, was rendered absurd as each new witness, whether an ex-prisoner or a police officer, restaurant owner or self-confessed criminal declared himself more or less the same shade of grey. The processes of accommodation necessary for the continuance of crime and detection which stood thus exposed, made a comedy of the end result - the judicial process.

(11) The farcical "arrest" of the escaped Train Robber, Ronald Briggs, in Brazil, by two intrepid members of British C.I.D. - Detective Chief Superintendent Jack Slipper and Detective Sergeant Peter Jones, played out, for all to see, on the pages of the national newspapers makes similar nonsense of the myth of single-minded police detection by laying bare those self-same processes

(1) Typically, this too is equivocal and ambivalent. It could easily have been an attempt to discredit Brook.

of accommodation. Ronald Biggs jailed in 1963 for his part in the Great Train Robbery, escaped from Wandsworth Prison in July 1965. In 1970, reports arrived in Britain that Biggs had been arrested in Australia on a charge of being drunk and disorderly, but had been released before his identity was realised. A home movie purporting to show Biggs swimming off the Australian coast was subsequently shown on British T.V. British police arrived in Melbourne only to find that their man had escaped them by a mere matter of hours. The game of goblin hide-and-seek was underway and Biggs (as far as the media was concerned) concealed himself successfully for three years in Rio under the alias of Michael Haynes, until the night of February 1st 1974, when he was arrested by two Scotland Yard detectives at the Trocadero Hotel. But despite reports in the "Daily Express" which, in some devious way, had helped to engineer Bigg's reunion with the C.I.D. that Biggs had given himself up, preferring to spend the next 28 years behind bars in order to be near those "green fields" of England which he missed so desperately, rather than spend a life of exile with a beautiful young girl in Brazil; Biggs seemed reluctant to move. On Feb. 5th, the two disconsolate detectives returned to Britain without their charge and there ensued the long diplomatic exchange between in England and Brazil, which, at the time of writing, has failed to resolve the problematic fate of Ronald Biggs.

Meanwhile certain crucial facts about the circumstances of Biggs arrest remain remarkably elusive, and these deficiencies have invited an enormous amount of conjecture and debate in the Press. The simultaneous arrival of two C.I.D. men and a couple of reporters from the "Daily Express" (which had been advertising the life story of Biggs for days) outside room 909 of the Tracedero Hotel, Rio seemed more like a conclusion than a coincidence. On February 2, Ray Carter MP for Birmingham Northfield tabled a question to Mr. Carr, calling for an inquiry into the affair and a statement from the Melbourne police commissioner, Jack Davis, claiming that he sent detailed information about Biggs movements to the Yard three years before (this information about Biggs apparently included the alias under which Biggs was travelling, his route and destination) was published in the national dailies. Rumours began to circulate in the Press (not in the "Express", of course) that Biggs had been doublecrossed; that "certain men in England" did not keep their word; and those same swampy ill-lit areas of doubt about the integrity of almost everyone involved began to emerge once more.

At the same time, the Brazilian police spokesmen claimed that their part in the Biggs capture had been underplayed by Scotland Yard and that Slipper and Jones had tried to hasten the return of their charge in a manner that was if not actually high-handed, insensitive in the extreme. The whole affair was indeed clumsily managed and the offended Brazilian authorities demanded an exchange of prisoners, even some kind of bilateral extradition treaty. The political implications of such a treaty would have severe repercussions for the Government at the best of times, but in February, with the election fast approaching such an incendiary item of foreign policy was automatically tabooed, and the debate was played down.

The "human interest" angle was by no means neglected in the interim. Biggs was pictured in the papers on his arrival at Brasilia airport, waving and smiling at his girlfriend Raimundo de Castro, who in turn was shown alternatively blowing kisses and bursting into tears. Uncertainty pervaded Biggs love-life as much as it did his relations with the law and the papers made much of Raimundas loudly proclaimed pregnancy (since discredited - a pregnancy would have guaranteed Biggs Brazilian citizenship and freedom from British law). The same papers dwelt with undisguised relish on the "high life" of gambling and girls, clubs and red light districts into which Biggs had been projected by the Great Train Robbery. Here was a man who, despite signs of premature middle age, kept his love life at a pitch which could be envied by any commuter with a daydream to spare. Biggs daylight life as a carpenter with a struggling painting and decorating business was thoroughly eclipsed by the brilliant scenes of Rio life, sun and swimming which served as inspiration for the journalists rhetorical flourishes. Once more, bandit worship joined forces with the Great Littlewoods syndrome to present a composite picture of a man who had won the pools his way - a man who had triumphed on his own terms.

Meanwhile, Mrs Charmian Biggs vacillated under the intrusive eye of the camera, proclaiming her resolve to "stand by Ron" one day; to divorce him the next. On February 4th, she explained her decision to remain in Australia without seeing her husband:

"My job is to reassure my children that the world is still stable."

Within a few days a national newspaper had flown her out to Brasil at its own expense to see what chemical reaction would be provoked by introducing

a new element - a deserted wife and family - into the situation. The "Sun" and the "Daily Mirror" carried a photographic record of the couples first meeting; the holding of hands, the argument, the tears etc. After all, Biggs was a very public person, one of the medias very own, and privacy would be unthinkable at such a mythically crucial moment. Neither did the Brazilian media ignore their illustrious captive. Biggs appeared in a 60 second television interview declaring, in fluent Portuguese, his love for Brazil and his desire to become an honest Brazilian. And of course the native public, traditionally romantic in its attitude towards crime, traditionally reluctant to yield up its suspect refugees, was promptly seduced. Biggs became a national hero overnight and the Brazilian Government, by now succumbing to Britain's penitent approaches was openly embarrassed.

And so, at a somewhat portly 44, Biggs, by maintaining erotic appeal (still worth fighting for) confirmed the myth of the bandit-hero and resurrected the Great Train Robbery to its original legendary status. The revival of the Great Train Robbery as a metaphor of the Noble Crime which was automatically precipitated by Biggs arrest was further confirmed by the very circumstances of that arrest. In the drama as it was played out in the pages of the national newspapers, Biggs appeared as the duped victim, the harassed fugitive; the little man dragged kicking from his Dream by the inhuman and constrictive forces of civil power, which can never be eluded for long. Slipper, on the other hand, appeared as the villain of the piece, collaborating with the press, offending a foreign power, acting dishonourably, spoiling the fun, even finally, scowling at the cameras, moustachioed and in a white raincoat like some pulp detective. Once more, as in 1965 the Great Train Robbery, shifted by the Press and public alike into some ideal dimension, became synonymous with all those things conspicuously absent from the lives of ordinary people - riches, sex, leisure time; in a word freedom. This was inevitably contrasted against the dull mechanics of apprehension; and the drab monolith of authority which moved slowly but surely towards its prosaic goals; and the contrast was no less effective for being implicit. Caught between three such forces - the Brazilian police; the British police; and the "Daily Express" - Biggs could only smile and wave at the cameras. But by thus establishing a real and immediate link with his audience; by presenting a personality with which they could readily identify (the small man in the tight corner), Biggs was somehow transcending captivity, overshadowing the

anonymous official to whom he was handcuffed.

(iii) Biggs and Ince (and Patience for that matter) lead us back into the London underworld of the '60s. The apprehension in March of the two men charged with the murder of "Scotch Jack" Buggy some time in May, 1967, and the arrest of Bernie Silvers in January on one charge of murder and two charges of incitement to murder (the actual murder took place in 1956, the two incitements are alleged to have taken place in the '60s) provide even more penetrating inroads into the past.

The bullet ridden body of "Scotch Jack" was found floating off the coast at Seaford on June 6th 1967, and the reports of the discovery appeared in the papers the following day next to the announcement of the sentence given to the Richardson brothers. Buggy, who had disappeared on a night in May, when two slightly different rumours of a shooting in Mayfair began to circulate throughout the underworld, was immediately labelled a victim of a gangland feud "concerned with gambling clubs debts or protection rackets in the West End".⁽¹⁾ He was undoubtedly familiar with the Soho circuit, and had been released the previous December after serving 6 years of a 9 year sentence for shooting a man in Picadilly. There was talk of £30,000 being peremptorily demanded from Buggy by a notorious protection gang.

Bernie Silver, mentioned more than once in the Kray trial, had been considered, for a number of years, a man whose influence and underworld status bore no relation to his apparent power. Silver declares himself an "antique dealer", and is the archetypal man behind the scenes - quietly running strip clubs and undramatically involved in violence.

Needless to say, the circumstances in which these cases have been re-examined are far from clear. Officially, Robert Mark, as part of his crusade against serious crime, has re-opened certain files closed by his predecessor. On the other hand, Frank Daniels, the retired bookmaker charged with the murder of "Buggy" denies that he was arrested in a Marylebone public house, as was claimed by the police, and affirms that he gave himself up voluntarily. The pressure brought to bear on Bernie Silvers (his clubs were closed for a week before his arrest), who had operated undisturbed in the West End for several years, coincides with the intensification of police activity in Soho which followed the sensational

(1) Taken from "Birmingham Post", June 7th, 1967.

trial of "Rusty" Humphreys and the allegations of corruption levelled at police by her husband.

Nonetheless, it does at least seem that light (no matter how shaded) will be thrown for a time on certain areas of the '60s London Underworld which have, until now, been totally obscured. It would seem that that circus in which the Krays were the clowns is at last ready to spotlight some of its more modest performers and to feature some of its quieter acts. (1)

(1) For instance, the celebrated mystery of "Ginger" Marks' disappearance from outside the Carpenters Arms, Bethnal Green on the night of January 2nd, 1965 might be cleared up. It is widely rumoured that Marks, a 37 year old salesman and haulier, is now helping to prop up Hammersmith Flyover, having been buried beneath one of its supports.

Clubland Cabala, Big Shots and Bingo.

I should like to focus upon a point at which biography and culture, crime and the law, reality and fantasy, all converge in an attempt to effect affusion of the factual and speculative sections of this paper in some kind of Grand Finale. To accomplish this crucial mediation, I have chosen to concentrate on the Gaming legislation of 1960 and the consequent metamorphosis of the British Club scene.

The unprecedented stimulus given to British crime and gangsterism by the Gaming, Betting and Lotteries Act of 1960 (recodified in 1963, without any basic amendments) cannot be overestimated. It performed as vital a function in the evolution of organised crime on this side of the Atlantic, as the Volstead Act did in America of the twenties, and inaugurated a similar era of overt violence and spectacular law-breaking. Indeed the already mentioned comparison between London of the "Permissive '60s" and the Chicago of the Prohibition ("the road show version of the Jazz age" etc.,) was to prove irresistible. Both pieces of legislation, designed to limit the growth of organised crime, paradoxically had the opposite effect, galvanising a somewhat stagnant gangsterism into frenetic and vigorous activity. In Capone's Chicago, the villains moved in to supply an undiminished though now illegitimate demand, in Krays "Swinging London" the criminals emerged from virtual obscurity to openly direct what had formerly been an illegal industry. In both cases the law stood exposed as a transitory artefact as subject to change as man himself, and a mood of irreligious moral relativism prevailed and was popularly applied to other sacrosanct areas of civil life, previously free from mortal criticism. In Chicago, where it became necessary, even fashionable to break the law if one was to continue an established life-style, a whole public went subterranean. In London, where a healthy disregard for the old restraints became commonplace as a clandestine activity traditionally associated with crime received the official seal of approval, a whole underworld turned public.

Betting shops and Bingo halls became a part of everyday life and despite the declared intention of the Act to outlaw professional gambling for individual profit, the bookies thrived visibly. Meanwhile those who played for higher stakes won even greater benefits by opening gambling clubs. The 1960 Act was a legislation of loopholes - its famous clause guaranteeing equally favourable chances can be held to all players ironically legalised "chemin-de-fer", the game where chances can be held

to equally favourable because the bank passes to each player in turn. In order to comply with this clause, the bank, in craps and roulette,, while remaining with the house, was offered to the player (this did not bring him any advantage as the odds in favour of the bank are guaranteed only over a period of time). With the banks built-in advantages plus extra money brought in by membership fees, by drinks, and by table charges for "chemin-de-fer", gambling became very big business indeed.(1). At the Olympics Casino from June 1963 to May 1966, bad debts had reached a phenomenal £1,200,000.

As these developments were not foreseen in the Act, there were no safeguards. There were no licensing requirements for gaming houses or casinos; so the police could not object to men with criminal records opening clubs. There was no police right of entry (except in Manchester under a local Act) and no vetting of personnel. To a large extent, criminals, who had run the racket when gambling was outlawed, merely continued to do so after 1960, under the auspices of the law. Clubs proliferated in every major city throughout the country. London also contained some 80 casinos, 1966, one of which - the Colony Club - was managed by George Raft, who was being watched by the F.B.I. and was believed to be a front man for the American Mafia.² Pickings from gambling and protection proved so rich that London was well on the way to becoming a haven of organised crime. The "underworld" way of life did indeed receive much favourable publicity (the cartoon bookie with a big cigar, the club-owner with his new car, new clothes, new women as the vanguard of the long-prophesied social "revolution"), the gangsters explored the possibilities within affluence; legging it up the ladder of success and flashily advertising their presence at the top.

And clubs and pubs, the Pleasure Domes of the working-class featured constantly in the individual gangster's career, and defined his prospects. They provided platforms on which he could display his worth, his fearlessness ("bottle" in criminal argot), his ability to inspire terror and extort respect. Thus, it should hardly surprise us that clubs and pubs provided the settings for some of the most dramatic confrontations during this era. We need only turn to Ronald Kray's murder of George Cornell in the "Blind Beggar" or to the affray at "Mr. Smiths Club", or the

1. This game was known to turn over £10,000 an hour in one big club, when play was going at full-tilt. (Thanks to Eric Clark for much of this information about gambling in his articles on gambling (22-29th May 1966) and a later article "Crimewave Britain" (Sept. 18th 1966)

2. In 1968, Raft was deported.

bombing of the "Queen Elizabeth" by Tony Lawrence, to confirm their centrality. Quite literally, in a geographical sense the shape of the gangster's "world" was dictated by the clubs he owned, protected or frequented. They often formed the boundary which enclosed his "Manor" and his uninvited presence in a club outside his own territory would be interpreted as an act of provocation per se. Business and pleasure, profit and consumption were inextricably entwined in the gaming clubs which provided a new source of revenue, an arena in which the gangster could perform, an area in which he could relax and interact with other criminals. Beyond this, the clubs provide a parameter of the gangster's dream, and define the perimeter of that inner world of aspirations and expectations which I have attempted to describe in this paper. Whether supplying in their dark spaces and furtive corners an objective correlative for his own softly lit mental states, or simply offering an ideal environment (heaven with an extension on the licence) in which to fulfil his dangerous fantasies, the clubs were in every way necessary to men like Ronald Kray. As both the economic base and the superstructure which depended his private desires, his secret appetencies, his still born ideology of struggle, the clubs promised simultaneously satisfaction and excitement, security and challenge, cash and somewhere to spend it. If the Kray twins were actors, with old Hollywood scripts, then clubs like the Colony were the perfect sets on which to play out a vicious dream or two.

In 1968, the amendments to the Gaming Act coincided with the conviction of the Krays and the set was struck as the principal players were led off to Parkhurst. Our own version of the Jazz Age came to an end, like its predecessor, with the grounding of its most flamboyant deities. After Capone's demise, the organisation which he had introduced continued to function with less noise and more subtlety and we can safely surmise that a similar pattern was followed in this country after the Krays imprisonment. British crime will continue to produce the occasional performances which will entrance and absorb the nation's attention once more. It is doubtful, however, that it will ever mount a spectacle as brilliant, as dangerous, or of such epic proportions as that mounted by the Krays in the Mid-'60's.

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<u>"Gang Warfare"</u>	Judge Gerald Sparrow
<u>"Criminal Organisation"</u>	Donald Cressey

Appendix A

<u>"The face of the Third Reich"</u>	Joachim C. Fest.
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Appendix B

<u>"The Green Felt Gangsters"</u>	Eric Clark ("Observer" - May 22 1966
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<u>"Crimewave Britain"</u>	Eric Clark ("Observer" - Sept 18 1966

"The Evening Standard" was used principally with the Krays,

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