

Latecomers may be asked to wait until a suitable break in the performance.

Patrons are requested not to smoke in the auditorium.

Ian Anderson on 'A Passion Play'
Martin Barre's opinion.

"With Thick As A Brick, we took the idea of the concept album and had some fun with it. Now we thought it was time to do something a bit more serious and make an album that wasn't a spoof and wasn't meant to be fun. We ended up going to record the album at Chateau D'Herouville, in France, where people like Elton John and Cat Stevens had made records. Our original plan was not to make another concept album. The project started off as a collection of songs, including two that ended up going onto our next album, War Child: 'Bungle in the Jungle' and 'Skating Away (On the Thin Ice of the New Day)'. A certain theme had begun to emerge among the songs - how the animal life is mirrored in the dog-eat-dog world of human society - but the project just wasn't working out. So we abandoned what we'd done and went back to England.

"Back home, I ended up almost completely rewriting all of the material we'd worked on in France, and this became A Passion Play. The concept grew out of wondering about the possible choices one might face after death. It was a dark album, just as we had intended, but it was missing some of the fun and variety that was in Thick As A Brick. The critics savaged us. Chris Welch of Melody Maker [also this review] and Bob Hilburn at the Los Angeles Times wrote really negative reviews that everybody jumped on and reprinted or based their own reviews on. It really snowballed from there, and we got a fair old pasting for that one. On reflection, the album is a bit one-dimensional. It's certainly not one of my favorites, although it has become something of a cult album with some fans."

Ian Anderson, *Guitar World*, September 1999

Over the years, a number of people have had ideas about the meaning of the Play. However, these have almost all been of the type "well, this bit's about..." or "this line is a reference to...". The primary objective(s) of the Ministry's attempt is to discuss virtually every line, in the context of one cohesive story. This

hopefully prevents such contradictions as 'the icy wastes' being considered a 'clear' reference to Dante's vision of Hell, when Ronnie hasn't even reached Hell!

The Play works on a number of levels. One is as a single, coherent story. Individual lines or phrases overlay secondary meanings, either supplementing the atmosphere of the main thread or going off at tangents, throwing out references and ideas which, although rewarding in their own right, bear little relation to the main narrative.

Two approaches to analysis of The Play are to treat it as a single, cohesive story, or a series of meaningful individual phrases, not necessarily contributing to an overall narrative. The two are not necessarily contradictory, but in practice do tend to be.

Partly to provide a manageable structure, and partly for dramatic effect, the analysis takes the form of a parallel-text playscript - lyrics on the left, the corresponding annotation to the right. The four-Act structure is dictated by logical divisions. The Linwell Theatre programme also states it's a four-Act play, though that's *not* my main reason for adopting the structure. I regard the programme as supplementary to the album itself - perhaps more relevant than the 'Thick As A Brick' newspaper was to that album, but still primarily a promotional gimmick.

The programme gives a few basic set directions; these are indicated in grey in the annotations. Other stage directions are added where logic dictates, but they're only my own guesses, and are secondary to the interpretation.

Similarly, the programme indicates the key scene of each Act, but I've subdivided these further, suggesting how The Play might actually be staged. Any comments on this aspect of the interpretation would be welcomed.

Red text indicates track titles, as defined by the original 1973 DJ promo of the album. Further details are here.

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As any listener knows, 'A Passion Play' is not an easy album. Even putting the elaborate musical arrangement to one side for a moment, the lyrics themselves are extremely complicated, the story is often unclear, and much is left to the individual's

emerging, at least for the basic story, building on Ian's own statements about the subject matter (e.g. in the 2003 Remastered CD booklet: "*Following the theme of post-death meanderings in another world...*"). My own version of this narrative is presented here.

Self-evidently, it's not a standard Christian Passion Play, which would describe the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection; as Stefan Dewachter says, the judgement in Act 2 has more in common with Revelations 20 than the Gospels. That's if there is a Biblical reference at all, which I find far from convincing. It's likely that Ian based the general structure of the piece around a generically Christian view of the afterlife, received from a typical British education - but no more than that. The Play is not a Christian work or even a particular comment on religion, in contrast to 'Aqualung'.

Others regard The Play as a reworking of certain literary works. I disagree.

This is the story of Rael. No, no, no; start again. Actually, there is a parallel between The Play and Genesis' 1974 album 'The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway'. Though far more surreal than Ronnie's, the hero of 'The Lamb', Rael, also embarks on a trip (a carefully chosen word) through what might be considered an afterlife or near-death experience.

The biggest difference between The Play and The Lamb, and indeed Pink Floyd's 'The Wall' (1979) is that while all three characters - Ronnie, Rael and Pink - go through an episode of self examination (Rael literally confronts himself face-to-face), Ronnie is the only one who doesn't seem to achieve any discernible enlightenment - he's seen the afterlife and doesn't like it, but there's no suggestion that it's going to change his lifestyle.

This is perhaps typical of Ian's observational style of writing, and his habit of watching from an ironic distance rather than describing the sensations of an experience - Ian leaves it to the audience to decide how it *feels* to be in the Play.

Andy Jackson compares Ronnie to a stereotypical British tourist, who surveys the surface of different cultures, complains about the food, and returns home with little more than sunburn and hardened preconceptions. We, as listeners, learn about Ronnie, but does Ronnie?

Other ideas.

As the audience take their seats: INSTRUMENTAL: 'Lifebeats'

Performed live in 1973, The Play began with a special film.

Overture INSTRUMENTAL: 'Prelude'

On the first 'stab' of Prelude, the ballerina danced THROUGH the mirror. On the second 'stab', the band appeared in a flash, followed by Ian. Recalling this from the 21 May Nashville show, Allen Welty-Green believes he was 'just prancing about' and the band were miming until the main melody began.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE: RONNIE PILGRIM'S FUNERAL

Scene: A winter's morning in the cemetery. A group of mourners stand around a grave. As the curtain rises, RONNIE, a ghost, rises from the grave and joins the congregation, listening to his own eulogy. The audience only hear RONNIE's soliloquy, 'The Silver Cord'.

"Do you still see me even here?"

An enigmatic beginning. Who is Ronnie asking? One interpretation may be God - the only one likely to be able to see the incorporeal Ronnie. I'm a little uneasy about this idea. Mathie interprets the line as "Is there nowhere I can go and be unseen by you?", but from subsequent events, I don't get the impression that Ronnie is someone who thought God was watching anyway.

Alternatively, he may be addressing the funeral congregation. Personally, I favour this one, not least because it neatly leads on to the next-but-one line. Yet another interpretation might be that Ronnie is directly addressing the audience, checking he has our attention before proceeding ("can you hear me, Mother?"). This fits the context of APP being a 'stage musical' or, indeed, a traditional Passion play, but otherwise I don't ascribe much weight to the idea.

(The silver cord lies on the ground.)

The cord linking Ronnie's astral and physical bodies has been severed.

"And so I'm dead", the young man said

Having received no reply to his earlier question, and seeing the link to his mortal body is gone, Ronnie resigns himself to his situation.

over the hill (not a wish away).

'Over the hill' is slang for 'past his best'.

Ronnie has to accept the finality of death. Rather than a sentimental, fairy tale 'over the hill and far away', from whence a wish would bring him back, this is **It**. The End.

My friends (as one) all stand aligned

In a formal group round his grave, united in paying their respects. Or are they attending the funeral merely because it's the 'done thing', the behaviour expected by polite society? They might even be there to be seen by their peers, to GAIN respect and to align themselves with people potentially useful to their careers. That may be overly cynical; A.2, s.1 suggests Ronnie had several close friends, so their intentions were probably genuine.

although their taxis came too late.

They attend his funeral, but didn't make the effort to see him much while he was alive - maybe he was in hospital, but they didn't visit until it was too late.

Carsten Bergmann sees it more simply as his friends having been delayed by heavy traffic, mentioned in the next line.

There was / a rush along the Fulham Road.

There was / a hush in the Passion Play.

People's lives pause for a moment, to say goodbye to Ronnie at his funeral. In the context of scene one, I read 'the Passion Play' as 'everyday life - bustling; thrilling; humdrum'. See also Genesis' "The Lamb...", where I feel the 'it' of the final track refers to the many aspects of daily life.

It's been suggested that the 'rush' of the previous line may be that of the funeral congregation leaving, as soon as social decency permits, with the 'hush' of this line referring to Ronnie's sudden solitude - life goes on, without him. However, I feel that the self-analysis of the next few lines takes place while the

| | |
|--|--|
| | funeral is still going on, Ronnie's thoughts inspired by listening to the priest and his friends speak about him. |
| Such a sense of glowing in the aftermath | Ronnie reflects on his life with a degree of satisfaction. |
| ripe with rich attainments all imagined | He thinks of all the achievements of his life - and realises that he might have exaggerated their significance a little. |
| sad misdeeds in disarray | In fact, much of his life was a muddle of |
| the sore thumb screams aloud, | The clearest, most vivid memories are of his mistakes, regrets and disappointments. |
| echoing out of the Passion Play. | His doubts are confirmed (echoed) by the words of those still in the Passion Play i.e. alive. |
| <u>All the old familiar choruses come crowding in a different key:</u> | As Ronnie hears the events of his life recounted, he reviews them from a different perspective, and realises that his friends' memories of those events don't quite match his own perceptions. This provokes the main episode of self-reflection, in Act Two. Carsten Bergmann suggests that the 'old familiar choruses' are typical funereal music (and, presumably, spoken platitudes) which take on a fresh meaning from Ronnie's new perspective. |
| Melodies decaying in sweet dissonance. | |
| There was a rush along the Fulham Road into the Ever-passion Play. | The funeral is over; the mourners return to their daily lives, everyday concerns driving memories of Ronnie into the background. This is the first of nine instances of the compound adjective 'ever-' used in The Play, implying, as Andy Jackson notes, 'everlasting' or 'ever-recurring'. |

Exeunt.
Instrumental

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO: WANDERING IN LIMBO

Scene: The empty desert of Limbo. RONNIE wanders aimlessly, until an ANGEL arrives to guide him on to the next stage of the afterlife.

And who comes here to wish
me well?
A sweetly-scented angel fell.

She presumably comes from God and Heaven so, as Jan Voorbij suggests, wears the scent of holiness around her. It's interesting that the angel 'fell'. This may imply that she was one of those 'fallen angels' that accompanied Lucifer out of Heaven. Could this be why she's in Limbo; not good enough for Heaven, but not bad enough for Hell (which reflects Ronnie's situation by the end of A.3)? Alternatively, Andy Jackson proposes that she descended "... *from a higher plane than the desolate limbo in which Ronnie now finds himself.*" Maybe, though the word 'fell' still jars. It's been suggested that the angel is a reference to Dante's Beatrice. A case of wanting to see a literary reference where none exists - there is nothing to support this idea, and it simple doesn't fit the narrative.

She laid her head upon my
disbelief
and bathed me with her
ever-smile.

The angel accepts that Ronnie didn't really believe in god, heaven, angels, etc. whilst he was alive, but is still compassionate and willing to welcome him into heaven.

And with a howl across the
sand

Ronnie recoils from the, in his view, fairytale concept of 'angels playing harps on clouds', and flees. It has been suggested that 'the sand' may be that of a beach. There is some attraction to this view, in that if Ronnie crosses a beach to reach the afterlife, there's a neat symmetry in his returning across it in Act 4, on his way back to the mortal world. However, a

more common image of Limbo, with which I concur, is of an endless, featureless desert. Although it is, I doubt Ian drew on childhood memories of Blackpool's beach as an 'icy waste'.

Exit ANGEL.

I go escorted by a band of gentlemen in leather bound

However, Ronnie is no longer alone. For guidance, he has the collected wisdom of prophets, bound in book form - he's carrying a bible. I'm unsure how to interpret this. The angel might have given Ronnie a bible which, when he reads it and thinks about the good and evil in his life, leads the story on to Act 2.

Alternatively, the bible may itself be metaphorical - the angel didn't literally give a bible to Ronnie, but the encounter with the angel might have sparked a train of thought (symbolised by the bible) leading Ronnie to consider his mortal life, in Act 2.

There is a less elegant alternative: a group of people appear from nowhere, seize and bind Ronnie, then force him to accompany them to the Viewing Room. When in doubt, I tend to favour the simplest explanation, but this one just doesn't seem to fit.

NO-ONE (but someone to be found).

Alive, Ronnie wasn't an important or remarkable person (A key point - he could have been you or me), but every individual is special.

Martin Hall expands on this: *"he is no-one in particular, but within him there is something he has not yet discovered, which makes him a particular person. This 'someone' is to be found over the course of the play."*

A second meaning is that the bible is no-one - it's a book, not a person. Yet it's also a conduit - by reading it, Ronnie may be able to find someone in the bible - God?

Ronnie himself?
Terry Moore points out a parallel
with the traditional epitaph 'hic jacit
nemo' (here lies no one) "*a high
honour to any monk or spiritual
traveler who has completely
purified his own ego and is 'empty
of himself that he may be full of
God'.*"

INSTRUMENTAL: 'Re-Assuring Tune'

On to Act Two

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ACT TWO, SCENE ONE: THE MEMORY BANK

*Scene: a small but comfortable theatre with a cinema screen -
the next morning.*

The next section describes Ronnie being judged, his life being reviewed to determine whether he deserves to spend the afterlife in heaven or Hell.

A central point is to consider the identity and role of the judges. The lines are in the second-person (i.e. 'you'), but spoken by a 'we', possibly represented by Peter Dejour, the duty receptionist of the afterlife).

- Are the 'we' other souls in limbo, meaning that Ronnie is to be judged by his peers?
- Are they the various aspects of his own personality, meaning that a mortal's position in the afterlife is determined by his/her own conscience?
- Are they the assembled angels and demons? Personally, I don't think so. The other mentions of angels in the Play seem to characterise them as higher beings, not concerned with the mundanities of mortal life. The 'sweetly-scented angel' of A.1, s.2 is compassionate, not judgmental, whilst the angels mentioned in A.3, s.1 are slightly remote (again compassionate) beings seen from a distance.

Alternatively...

All along the icy wastes
there are faces smiling in
the gloom.

'Icy wastes' might suggest one of Dante's circles of Hell, but Ronnie hasn't been consigned to Heaven or Hell yet, so I doubt the Dante reference, if indeed valid at all, is any more than atmosphere.

Roll up roll down,...

A carnival barker would invite a crowd to "Roll up! Roll up!" for a show. Ian modifies this to 'roll down', but I think this is one of the duality phrases that permeate the Play and Chateau material, and mightn't have direct relevance.

Jeff Chittick suggests an alternative meaning: that Ronnie's sleeve is rolled up, a drug is administered, the sleeve is rolled back down, and Ronnie becomes 'unwound'. Interesting idea, but given Ian's well-established opinion of drug use, unlikely.

... Feeling
unwound?

Four potential meanings:
Dejour asks if Ronnie is relaxed, unstressed and ready to proceed. Dejour sympathetically asks if Ronnie is feeling dissociated, lost, scared: 'falling apart'.

Dejour asks whether Ronnie has fully absorbed the fact that he's dead, and has moved-on from his corpse and its metaphorical 'winding-sheet'.

Dejour checks whether Ronnie has been freed from his leather bindings (if that interpretation of 'leather bound' was correct...).

Step into the viewing
room.

The 'judges' and Ronnie assemble in a cinema, to view the film of his life.

The cameras were all
around.

All the acts of Ronnie's life were monitored, for future judgement.

We've got you taped
you're in the play.

Here's your I.D. (Ideal for
identifying one and all.)

Invest your life in the

The 'memory bank' being both a

memory bank

database of his past actions, and a financial metaphor; the record of Ronnie's life is represented as a bank statement, itemising his changing levels of 'moral solvency' and overdraft.

ours the interest and we thank you.

The ice-cream lady wet her drawers.

to see you in the Passion Play.

Instrumental

Assuming the judges are souls in limbo, the primary excitement in their existence is viewing the events and indiscretions of mortal life.

They watch the film.

Take the prize for instant pleasure,

captain of the cricket team

At first glance, Ronnie seems to have led a worthy life.

i.e. an active part of cosy middle-class society (what could be more archetypally middle-English than cricket?), with creditable competitiveness and leadership skills.

public speaking in all weathers,

Another indicator of social approval; as Andy Jackson says: "*... an art highly prized by middle-class businessmen in order to impress and woo other pin-striped tigers*"

'In all weathers' may refer to the business or financial climate, further implying that Ronnie had been able to calmly retain command in crises as well as more successful times.

a knighthood from a queen.

Note that it's unlikely he had a literal knighthood - that might damage the concept of Ronnie as 'everyman'. The 'knighthood' is from a queen, not *the* Queen, suggesting a reward (marriage?) from a woman important to him, if not necessarily to wider society.

All your best friends' telephones never cooled from the heat of your hand.

He was popular, with several close friends with whom he spoke on a daily basis ('...telephones never cooled...' because of constant use).

Alternatively, close friends who let

him use their resources (such as letting him use their telephones). Andy Jackson suggests this in the light of stories of Ian's 'borrowing' friends' cigarettes in the poverty-stricken days of the John Evan Band. Andy: *"I think we have a template for Ronnie's character-flaw at this point in the Play. He's taking advantage of others' generosity - not in a malicious way, but perhaps justifying his actions to suit himself rather than others."*

There's a line in a front-page story,

Up to now, we've been told the main points about Ronnie's life; the 'front page story', banner headlines and all (the metaphor is reminiscent of TAAB's newspaper cover; but even though, as Kurt Stenzel points out, a front page story of the original St. Cleve Chronicle (not the CD cover) does indeed feature a line about anarchistic artists defacing paintings of horses, I'm inclined to think that's a coincidence).

13 horses that also-ran.

However, closer examination of this 'front page story' highlights some less meritorious events - Ronnie's life wasn't faultless. The 'also-ran' line might refer to other, less worthy deeds he committed, or other people who helped make Ronnie what he was; an 'also-ran' is defined as a horse that also ran in a race but did not get a 'place'; a phrase generally extended to mean a person of secondary importance. So suggesting that Ronnie's success may have been at the expense of others.

Instrumental - much longer in 1973 concerts than on the album.

Climb in your old umbrella.

The 'umbrella' represents the shield of Ronnie's complacency, or arrogance, subconsciously protecting his self-image from the

reality of his actions and personality. As soon as the judges start to address Ronnie's negative side, he tries to take cover.

Does it have a nasty tear in the dome?

This protective membrane is flawed - he has a degree of self-doubt.

But the rain only gets in sometimes

But on balance, the good outweighs the bad, in his opinion - he has a fairly robust self-image.

and the sun never leaves you alone,

you alone, you alone, you alone, you alone, you alone.

Now, alone and 'unshielded' he has to endure the (mocking?) scrutiny of his peers.

Critique Oblique

Lover of the black and white
it's your first night.

The Passion Play, goes all the way, spoils your insight.

Ronnie tried to think in terms of absolutes - black or white, good or bad. But the mechanics of everyday life obscured the ability to judge accurately, turning absolute black-and-white situations into subtle shades of grey. Similarly, in life Ronnie had strong views on many matters, which are about to be challenged. Carsten Bergmann: "*The Human Man of Polarities has to forget his knowledge and roles, which he achieved during life, to be 'innocent' for his new role and decision in afterlife.*"

Note that 11 May 1973, the 'Lover' was 'Actor' and the subsequent line was totally different.

Unfortunately, my recording is indistinct, and I can't make out the lyric. Probably just a stumble and ad-lib to recover, but I'd still like to know what he said!

Tell me how the baby's made, how the lady's laid, why the old dog howls in sadness.

The 'judges' ask Ronnie to explain various profound aspects of life. Unsurprisingly, he can't.

It's been suggested that 'the old dog' is Cerberus, the guardian of the entrance to the Classical Greek underworld. Indeed, taking this line in isolation, there's a compelling parallel with Dante's

description of Cerberus. However, I'm not convinced that this secondary meaning is relevant; the idea isn't developed or supported by other lyrics, and in the context of the story, I feel the dog is just a dog; merely another of life's trivialities that now trouble Ronnie's conscience - why did the dog howl? Why didn't Ronnie do something to alleviate its 'sadness'?

Note that on 11 May and 20 July 1973, and the Chateau d'Isaster Tapes, the line was clearly '... old dogs howl with sadness.'

And your little sister's
immaculate virginity
wings away on the bony
shoulders
of a young horse named
George who stole
surreptitiously into her
geography revision.
(The examining body
examined her body.)

There were things in his life that Ronnie couldn't control, perhaps even didn't know about, such as the circumstances of his sister's first sexual encounter. So he was as much a victim of circumstances as any other mortal; he's nothing special.

To call George a 'horse' might imply a number of equine characteristics, such as virility c.f. a stallion. He's not literally a horse!

Actor of the low-high Q, let's
hear your view.

He's asked to justify himself and his actions.

'Low-high' echoes the contradictory pairs in Chateau's 'Left Right', as well as being a near homonym of 'low IQ'. This is another indication of Ronnie's character in life - an intelligent individual occasionally acting as a low-brow clown to be popular.

Peek at the lines upon your
sleeves
since your memory won't
do.

Dejour/the 'judges' suggest that that they expect Ronnie to give some trite, well-prepared excuse, like a schoolboy cheating in an exam by reading the answers off a crib-sheet hidden in/on his sleeve. Why lines on his sleeves - plural? Could this be another cross-reference to the Chateau material, specifically the tiger's immaculate

pinstripe coat? If so, Dejour may be expecting Ronnie to fall back on excuses of his social station, claiming nothing was his fault, it was just that injustices are built into modern society.

Tell me: how the baby's
graded, how the lady's
faded,
why the old dogs howl with
madness.

More issues impossible to explain.
Again, different on 11 May 1973:
'... why the lady's faded...how the
old dogs howl with sadness.' *It's*
'sadness' in the 20 July show, too.

All of this and some of that's
the only way to skin the cat.

In fact, Ronnie doesn't make some contrived excuse, as he and the 'judges' acknowledge that life is tough, and it's impossible to thrive without getting a little corrupted - there's no reason to be ashamed. In this line, Ian combines two common English sayings: 'some of this and some of that', and 'there's more than one way to skin a cat' (i.e. there's more than one way to achieve a goal). However, he also modifies them. In this context, I read the revised meaning to be that in order to succeed, one sometimes can't share evenly (taking 'all'), but that's the way society works, and it's totally unavoidable.

And now you've lost a skin
or two,
you're for us and we for
you.
The dressing room is right
behind,

Now they've exposed and dissected his life, the 'judges' feel able to make a decision about his future; he can prepare himself for the next stage of existence: his next 'role' in the play.

Or, as Carsten Bergmann rephrases much the same concept: *"by his knowledge of himself he is now able to leave that behind and start an existence and identity in a new dimension."*

As in the previous line, Ian possibly plays with an English aphorism here: to say 'it's no skin off my nose' is to say 'I don't care'; having been humbled and forced to confront himself, Ronnie does care.

We've got you taped,
you're in the play.

In saying they have Ronnie 'taped', the 'judges' have a double meaning: they have a record of his life, metaphorically on tape, but they also have him 'taped' in the slang sense - they have a thorough understanding of his character. As emphasised by the 'skin' metaphors of the previous two lines, the masks and pretences have been stripped away.

How does it feel to be in the play?
How does it feel to play the play?
How does it feel to be the play?

These questions seem to have an envious tone - having completed the formal 'judging', the souls in limbo ask the questions that really interest them: how does it *feel* to be alive ('in the play'), to actually participate in life, rather than just watch remotely ('to play the play'), to be the centre of attention ('to be the play'). In trying to refresh memories of their mortal lives, the souls in limbo echo the concerns of those souls in Heaven, who constantly reminisce about mortal life.

Note that both the original album sleeve and the CD booklet completely omit these lines from the listed lyrics. Why?

Man of passion rise again,
we won't cross you out:
for we do love you like a
son, of that there's no doubt.

The 'judges' accept Ronnie as 'basically okay', and reassure him they won't exclude him from Heaven.

There are obvious allusions to Christ here. Largely on the strength of these two lines, many people have suggested that the whole Passion Play is about THE Passion, and Ronnie is Jesus. However, I'm very sceptical; within the context of the overall story, that assumption just doesn't work. The album features numerous references with possible secondary, 'deeper' meanings, but I'm not convinced they are central

to the story itself.

Mathie states it well, reflecting the Christian allusions without exaggerating the religious aspect. To paraphrase: the use of the phrase 'Man of Passion', as well as the word 'cross', is an acknowledgement that Ronnie has passed through purgatory, and that his suffering is now over. This line, including the invitation to rise again, indicates that his admission to heaven is now assured.

Tell us: is it you who are here for our good cheer?

What has been the purpose of this encounter? Has Ronnie been 'punished' by being humbled in front of his peers, with no productive purpose (or, if the souls are metaphorical and the viewing room represents a period of self reflection, has Ronnie's self-doubt been torturing him needlessly?)?

Or are we here for the glory, for the story, for the gory satisfaction of telling you how absolutely awful you really are?

Or do the souls serve a vital ('glorious') purpose in stripping Ronnie down to the core of his real self?

There was / a rush along the Fulham Road.
There was / a hush in the Passion Play.

The 'court adjourns', the cinema is vacated, the souls slip away, and Ronnie, alone again, moves on to the next plane of existence.

INSTRUMENTAL: 'Forest Dance #1'

Carsten Bergmann makes a very interesting observation: that this music might symbolise the start of Ronnie's new existence in the afterlife, after being judged/judging himself and deciding where to go. The music to these heartbeats is much more spheric and light (ethereal) than in 'Lifebeats' at the beginning of Act 1, which symbolise his departure from mortal life, sounding much harsher and darker.

In live 1973 concerts, John "jumped from his assorted keyboards and proclaimed the intermission" (Meyers). The

screen had been lowered and the story of 'The Hare...' appeared on film.

On to Act Three

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Notes

The annotated film & lyrics

One of the commonest criticisms of 'A Passion Play' is that there's a childish, 'nonsense' piece inserted between Acts Two and Three, which bears no relation to the rest of The Play. In 1973 concerts, the band left the stage after Act Two and a filmed version of 'The Hare...' was shown; this is now available on the 25th Anniversary video, reissued as the 'A New Day Yesterday' DVD.

So why was it included?

The usual explanation, generally accepted but unconfirmed, is that it reflects the structure of a genuine mediæval Passion Play. Such productions were (are) punctuated by comic interludes; relief from the deadly seriousness of the main play.

'**behling57**' suggests that the practice extends back to Classical Greece, and I'm aware of similar devices in Shakespeare, but such cases tend to be incorporated into the main plot. I think the key point about the interval of a Passion Play is that the comic piece need not relate to the main story at all. In the highly religious mediæval plays, the interludes were often secular, even bordering on pagan. This is reflected (presumably deliberately, though I have no confirmation) in the film shown at concerts, with a horned narrator, a maypole and other pagan imagery.

At the natural break in a LP recording (i.e. the point where the listener needs to turn the album over), and in the context of a stage play (reinforced by the album sleeve), a brief interval makes sense. On a more pragmatic level, the interval was presumably included in live performances to give the band a rest and toilet break!

The Lyrics

The full lyrics, accompanied by a transcript of how they fitted into the film, are [here](#).

In case there's still someone who's failed to spot the animal puns, here they are:
Bee wanted to help.... answer began...
... Owl had been ... scowling
Kangaroo... + ...their guru.. = "You can, guru,..."
Newt knew too much...

'The Hare...' is very reminiscent of A.A. Milne's 'Winnie the Pooh' stories, especially in featuring an owl, a kangaroo and a rabbit (not a hare). However, I feel Kangaroo was included primarily for the '...can, Guru,...' pun.

'The Hare...' was developed into a children's book in 2002, by New York artist Michael Korb. His project is viewable [here](#), though he does not yet have a print publisher - can you help?

Who is the Hare, anyway?

As usual, a potentially more 'profound' interpretation can be drawn from 'The Hare...'. Andy Jackson makes a persuasive argument for the identity of the metaphorical Hare: Jeffrey himself. *"I see the story of the Hare is a kind of allegory of Jeffrey's youth as a highly-introverted potential artist at the beginning of his 'journey'."* Jeffrey did wear glasses at school and occasionally afterwards, though that's probably not particularly relevant to the Hare's metaphorical spectacles.

The central premise of 'The Hare...' is that everyone believes Hare to be in crisis, lacking direction (he can't see where he's going), and unable to help himself. Yet at no point does *Hare* admit to being in any kind of trouble (or to anything...). He's *excited*, and only *appears* helpless in the opinions of others.

It's known from interviews that Jeffrey's parents frequently hassled him about his prospects for life after school. *"I can't imagine Jeffrey being the kind of guy to openly argue, but rather chew it over in silence and - eventually - decide for himself."* He had formulated some embryonic 'life plans', but chose not to

explain himself to onlookers, family and friends.

Hare never speaks, but sits in the middle of a commotion concerning his fate, caused by others around him and somehow not actually involving Hare himself. He is 'ostensibly motionless', and mute, which "... *brings to mind Jeffrey's comment that an old acquaintance of his described him as being 'like wallpaper' and 'highly eccentric' at the same time - a kind of blank, and yet containing a bizarre energy. Hare only appears to be doing nothing, but there's an almighty internal buzz going on: the workings of the imagination.*"

It could be argued that the stern, scowling Owl is a father figure, whereas Kangaroo, the other, more interventionist authority figure of the piece, associated with Owl throughout, could be a mother figure, arguing with Owl about what's best for Hare.

"... young Hare can't go with Owl, because he's nodded off in his armchair, he can't go with Kangaroo because he's too big for her pouch, i.e. he's not a child any more, and can't return to the womb. He has to make it alone."

I'm unsure how the allegory extends to Newt and Bee, or, for that matter, the optician. Andy proposes Bee as a friend of Hare; that's as good an interpretation as any. The point is that the others know nothing about spectacles i.e. they are ignorant of Hare's needs and personal priorities. Ultimately, that's *his* business (his own affair) - *"it's his journey, and his 'story', after all. Again, imagine a 16-year-old's, "You just don't understand!" - his private, mute dismissal of everyone's 'tempting' ideas.*

"Because, in the end, Hare can see perfectly well where he's heading" - he has a back-up plan.

Coincidentally, Meyers also proposes Owl as a father figure, but only in a sense that fits his spurious grand thesis (that Tull's material 1971-78 form one work): *"The Owl is the wise one who hinders the imagination of the poet... the ancestral father. Hare is Jethro Tull questing for vision of spectacles. Kangaroo is the Muse.... This little story actually illustrates the anxiety [lan] feels in wrestling with the giant dead of his cultural heritage."* Considering the interval piece in isolation, this suggestion is typically flawed, not least because the actions of Owl and Kangaroo simply don't fit these characterisations.

Leslie Miller acknowledges that the story of 'The Hare...' was indeed probably thrown in as a comic relief, but is also a fable, in the tradition of Aesop - a morality play with animals symbolising good/bad, foolish/wise, etc. The animals were very foolish to believe the ridiculous Hare. Moral: be wary of fools who are out to trick you, and be careful not to blow a minor issue out of proportion.

Michael Dawson interprets the piece as a restatement of the anti-clerical theme of 'My God' and 'Wind-Up'; the spectacles represent vision, in both a literal and a spiritual sense. Hare wisely rejects the conflicting advice of the various 'gurus' or religious leaders, realising that a clear vision is within himself all along, represented by the spare pair of spectacles. Personally, I regard this as a credible interpretation but unlikely to be that intended by the author; I'm unsure whether Jeffrey shared Ian's views of organised religion and would have particularly wished to address the subject.

The Narrator

The album liner notes credit John Evan with 'speech'. Many people have understandably taken this as indication that John narrated 'The Hare...'. However, having heard band members speak in interviews, it is clear that the true narrator was Jeffrey Hammond-Hammond, its author. So why credit John? My theory!

A further source of confusion is the exaggerated Lancashire accent, not apparent in Jeffrey's interviews. This was an affectation, adding to the jokey atmosphere. For a more accurate reflection of Jeffrey's 'real' speaking voice in 1973, listen to 'No Rehearsal' on 'Nightcap' and the '20 Years...' box set - the '...one seat in the circle...' passage is spoken by Jeffrey and Ian.

The Author

Few people realise that Jeffrey was the author of 'The Hare...'; Andy suggests that the credit to Ian and John was solely for the music, which had already been played during the Thick As A Brick tour. Most probably, the story was written independently of The Play, possibly without any reference to those lyrics. As Ian

said in a 1979 BBC interview:

"We decided to put it on film, which meant that we could all go off stage for a glass of beer and a cigarette while this thing showed. So what we did was to make a film: we wrote a little thing around Jeffrey's 'Story Of The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles'...."

It's only fair, therefore, to give the final word to Jeffrey; speaking to Dave Rees:

Rees: *What about 'The Hare...': are you a natural storyteller/writer?*

Jeffrey: *Well, you can tell I'm not a natural storyteller by the way that I'm talking to you. It was described, probably correctly, as a bit of whimsy, which is okay, but I suppose it is very difficult to measure how much of that kind of material one should allow to creep in. Perhaps that was rather too much....*

INSTRUMENTAL: 'Forest Dance #2'

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE: HEAVEN

Scene: The business office of G. Oddie and Son - two days later.

Having spent two days in Heaven, RONNIE is dissatisfied, and has requested a meeting with God.

The Foot of Our Stairs

We sleep by the ever-bright hole in the door,

The inhabitants have all the wonders of Heaven to enjoy, but most of their interest is still in mortal life. They could wander away into Heaven itself, but tend to remain by the entrance, to catch glimpses of mortal life whenever someone enters, or to peer through the keyhole. I see 'ever-bright' as not just referring to visible light, but meaning that the view is perpetually interesting and as attractive to the denizens of Heaven as bright, shiny things are to a magpie.

eat in the corner, talk to the

A possible reference to humility

floor,

and the mindset that earned the residents their places in Heaven? It may also be a hint that Heaven is a little mundane - Carsten Bergmann notes the incongruity of Heaven, the manifestation of divine love, having doors, walls and floors, just like Earth.

cheating the spiders who come to say "Please", (politely).

The spiders are praying mortals on Earth; the dead in heaven hear the prayers but don't pay much attention.

They bend at the knees.

Well, I'll go to the foot of our stairs.

'I'll go to the foot of our stairs' is an expression of surprise, perhaps only used in NW England. I've yet to verify its origin, but I presume it evolved as a milder form of 'Well, I'll be damned', which Ronnie obviously couldn't say in Heaven!

Old gentlemen talk of when they were young of ladies lost and erring sons.

The inhabitants of heaven reminisce about their lives. *On 20 July 1973 the lyric was distinctly 'bearing', not 'erring'.*

Lace-covered dandies revel (with friends) pure as the truth, tied at both ends.

Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs.

Ronnie says this with sarcasm; he finds their stories REALLY boring.

Scented cathedral spire pointed down.

The spire of a cathedral on Earth points upwards, to 'Heaven'. In Heaven, the cathedral's spire, and the inhabitants' attention, points towards Earth. If mortal churches aspire (sorry...) to Heaven, Heavenly ones revere the mortal world.

We pray for souls in Kentish Town.

An area of London, 'coincidentally' where Ian lived in 1968. This in-joke perhaps suggests a degree of self-interest on the part of the souls in Heaven; they don't watch over all mortals, taking a particular interest in the areas and people they knew when they were alive.

Robert Pahre suggests that 'Kentish Town' might be

Canterbury, as the religious head of the Church of England is the Archbishop of Canterbury, a city in Kent. I'm not convinced of the relevance of this observation; there's no suggestion in doctrine that Canterbury is any more 'holy' than elsewhere, and likely to attract special attention from Heaven.

A delicate hush, the gods floating by

Activity pauses in reverence as angels pass. Note that they're 'gods' - slightly lower in the hierarchy than the Big G, God.

wishing us well, pie in the sky.

'Pie in the sky' is another British slang term, suggesting that the angels offer empty platitudes - well-meaning but remote and ineffectual.

God of ages, Lord of Time, mine is the right to be wrong.

Ronnie asserts his right to self-determination.

Panglos points out that another name for 'God of Ages/Lord of Time' is 'Ancient of Days'.

Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs.

Jack rabbit mister...

Rabbits populations are famously able to expand rapidly, so the animal has become a symbol of extreme fertility; an appropriate metaphor for God, the ultimate creator of life.

Incidentally, an American jack-rabbit would be known in Britain as a hare...

...spawn a new breed of love-hungry pilgrims (no bodies to feed).

Ronnie (sarcastically) proposes that G. Oddie use this renowned creativity to produce entirely spiritual creatures, free from all earthly appetites, who could thrive on abstract 'love' and would truly appreciate Heaven - because the ex-mortal souls certainly don't. Meyers' interpretation: ... *the poet prays to transform the body into a pure spiritual substance that cannot be restricted by time, or corporeal reason. The alleged dichotomy between body and soul, or between*

Man and God, will not exist.

Show me a good man and I'll show you the door.

There are so many 'good' people in Heaven that Ronnie has become heartily sick of their piety and wants to leave. To 'show someone the door' is to reject him/her; literally, to ask him/her to leave. It's obviously not an option to evict God from Heaven, so Ronnie will be the one departing.

Terry Moore again proposes a very credible alternative: that a 'good man' may be a spiritual, wise and virtuous person whose teachings are the 'door' to Heaven. I'm not entirely sure this fits the narrative, though.

The last hymn is sung and the devil cries "More."

Hymns were (are?) seen as weapons in the war against Satan. Well, they don't work. Heaven is full of piety, but Ronnie questions whether it has any purpose.

Instrumental

In 1973 concerts after 28/8/73, the beginning of Act 3 was omitted and replaced by 'My God'. A brief keyboard solo reintroduced The Play at this point.

Well, I'm all for leaving and that being done, I've put in a request to take up my turn

in that forsaken paradise that calls itself "Hell" where no-one has nothing and nothing is...

...well-meaning fool,

pick up thy bed and rise up from your gloom smiling.

Ronnie has had enough of Heaven, and decides to try the alternative for a while. It seems Ronnie has a rather idealistic view of Hell.

G. Oddie has heard enough, and interrupts. He thinks Ronnie is making a error, but can understand his reasoning. If Ronnie regarded this version of Heaven as a personal Hell, it would be a punishment to make him stay.

An echo of Mark Ch.2,v.9: 'Take up thy bed and walk' (referring to the healing of a lame beggar). G. Oddie accepts that if Ronnie feels Heaven is 'crippling' him, he's free to leave, if that would make him

happier.
Give me your hate and do as Being the 'God of Love', G.Oddie is
the loving heathen do. happy to accept any grudge Ronnie
might hold against Him, and let him
go to Hell without guilt. Ronnie is
'condemned' to join those souls
who are in Hell not because they
are 'evil', but simply because
they're unbelievers.

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO: HELL

Backdrop rises on a scene in hell.

Might the groan heard at the start of this scene indicate the damned souls in Hell?

Overseer Overture

Colours I've none, dark or light, red, white or blue.

Lucifer's very first comment is to stress his independence - that he owes allegiance to no-one. This is Ronnie's self-image, too. Is Lucifer trying to allege that they're actually rather similar?

Note the double meaning: 'colours' might also refer to a flag (c.f. 'Flying Colours').

Cold is my touch (freezing).

I'm not sure why Lucifer would boast about the idea, but he is 'freezing' i.e. non-creative, as opposed to the warmth or flame of Life.

Summoned by name - I am the overseer over you.

'Speak of the Devil, and he shall appear'.

Given this command to watch o'er our miserable sphere.

Lucifer describes how G.Oddie took him out of Heaven, giving him the job of watching over the Earth, like a janitor checking all the mechanisms operate correctly.

Fallen from grace, called on to bring sun or rain.

Lucifer would rather have stayed in Heaven!

Occasional corn from my oversight grew.

Lucifer acknowledges that his monitoring had some positive results, but nothing grand - hardly justifying the attention of a proud demigod.

Note the play on words: oversight means 'superintendence', but also 'failure to notice'; the 'icy' (sterile)

Lucifer could only create life by accident.

Corn is a powerful symbol in several mythologies, and similarly has a double-meaning: the fertility of life, but also the harvest of death.

Fell with mine angels from a far better place,

A reference to Lucifer's biblical 'fall from grace'. Lucifer didn't like his job, rebelled, and was evicted from Heaven.

Some regard this to be a 'clear' reference to Milton's 'Paradise Lost' (the *only* conceivable Milton reference I can see in The Play).

However, the story of Lucifer's fall is mentioned repeatedly in the Bible, so is very much part of Protestant/English general knowledge. Reference to this particular story requires no specific knowledge whatsoever of 'Paradise Lost'. So, *no* Milton in The Play!

offering services for the saving of face.

I originally read this as Lucifer and his followers setting up a 'rival agency', offering mortals immediate gratification and earthly power in exchange for their souls; a reference to Faust.

Alternatively, the 'saving of face' might be that mortals try to deny their culpability for evil actions by blaming Lucifer.

Now you're here, you may as well admire all whom living has retired from the benign reconciliation.

A particularly complicated lyric! Lucifer suggests that, now that Ronnie's in the same situation, he ought to understand and even admire those other souls who found themselves in Hell not because they were actively 'evil' mortals, but because their lives were spent actually living; engaging in earthly concerns without 'due regard' for more religious or moral matters, so that when they died, they failed to qualify for Heaven.

Legends were born

Lucifer boasts of his power and

surrounding mysterious
lights
seen in the sky (flashing).
I just lit a fag then took my
leave in the blink of an eye.

Instrumental

Passionate play join round
the maypole in dance.
(primitive rite) (wrongly).

jokes about the gullibility of mortals:
the glow of his cigarette ('fag') was
misinterpreted as 'mystic lights'.

The maypole dance was a powerful
pagan fertility ritual, but Christianity
and time have meant some of its
significance has been lost; it's now
considered merely 'quaint', and
modern practitioners are more
likely to be merchant bankers than
shamans.

Summoned by name I am
the overseer over you.

Exit LUCIFER

INSTRUMENTAL

On to Act Four

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ACT FOUR, SCENE ONE: WHERE NOW?

Scene: MAGUS PERDÉ's drawing room - midnight.

Ronnie realises he doesn't like Hell either, and plots to leave.
Here he explains his feelings to MAGUS PERDÉ, and asks his
assistance.

Flight From Lucifer

Flee the icy Lucifer. Oh he's an
awful fellow!
What a mistake! I didn't take a
feather from his pillow.

Ronnie realises Hell is
definitely not for him. He plans
to leave Hell exactly as he
arrived, not taking anything
from Lucifer, neither gifts nor
advice; not even something so
inconsequential as a feather
which has escaped from the
pillow of the bed allocated to
Ronnie.

I see two implications in Lucifer
being 'icy'. Firstly, he's cold in
the sense of being detached

Here's the everlasting rub:
neither am I good nor bad.
I'd give up my halo for a horn
and
the horn for the hat I once had.

I'm only breathing. There's life
on my ceiling.

The flies there are sleeping
quietly.
Twist my right arm in the dark.
I would give two or three for
one of those days that never
made
impressions on the old score.

from emotion and any empathy
with mortal concerns - the
ultimate cynical sociopath.
Secondly, he's coldly sterile
and non-creative.

'There's the rub' - a
Shakespearean phrase (from
'Hamlet') connoting the core of
a dilemma. Ronnie, like most
people, isn't purely good or
bad, so doesn't really fit into
either Heaven or Hell. The halo
of a virtuous soul isn't
appropriate, but nor are the
horns of a 'damned' soul. In
fact, he'd rather just be alive
again, as he used to be - a
plain old hat would be best.

He's a ghost, merely existing.

They're not doing much, but
they're ALIVE. Ronnie is
extremely, painfully, jealous.

He longs for even the most
mundane of his days on Earth.
In British idiom, to be willing to
'give one's right arm' means
one REALLY wants something.
Ronnie adds emphasis: he'd
give his right arm two or three
times over, if he could.

The 'score' could be the
running total of plus and minus
'points' in Ronnie's life; the
memory bank of Act 2.

Alternatively, a score is the
master 'script' of the music in a
theatrical production or concert.
Carsten Bergmann points out
Ian's numerical pun: "two or
three for one" - 2 or 3,4,1. This
may change the meaning of the
sentence, or add an alternative
(simpler) interpretation: that
Ronnie would gladly swap
multiple days in the afterlife for
just one unremarkable day of
life.

I would gladly be a dog barking
up the wrong tree.

i.e. wasting it's time. A common
British phrase - not of Ian's own
invention!

Everyone's saved we're in the
grave.

See you there for afternoon
tea.

Time for awaking the tea lady's
making
a brew-up and baking new
bread.

Ian uses a lot of English 'slang'
in this passage, and another
suggests itself in 'baking new
bread'; to 'have a bun in the
oven' is to be pregnant. To
back up a stage, 'making a
brew-up' *might* indicate, er, the
act of conception. That's not a
typical British phrase, though,
and this whole suggestion may
be tenuous.

Sam Thirouin interprets the line
as creating new blood and flesh
to house the forthcoming souls;
a vague allusion to Christian
mythology?

Jessica Kolman feels that
'making a brew-up' could have
a secondary meaning, hinting
at a storm 'brewing', as "...
being alive again is stormy and
filled with conflict".

Carsten Bergmann sees a
degree of urgency in the
phrase 'Time for awakening...',
breaking Ronnie out of his self-
pity and towards taking action.

Instrumental

Pick me up at half past none

Since there's no imperative to
'do' anything in the infinite span
of the afterlife, time is a
somewhat abstract concept.

there's not a moment to lose.

There is the train on which I
came.

As these four lines are the only
direct railway references in The
Play, I suspect that they're not
really part of the narrative;
Ronnie didn't 'literally' arrive on
a train, it's just a metaphor he's
using in his conversation with
the Magus.

On the platform are my old shoes.

Some interpret this line as Ronnie saying to the Magus that his old body is still available, and requesting to be 'reinstalled' in it. However, if it was buried in Act One, that mightn't be appropriate....
On the other hand...
Panglos notes a possible pun on 'platform shoes'.

Station master rings his bell.
Whistles blow and flags wave.

A little of what you fancy does you good (Or so it should).

Another stock English saying, but with the parenthesis, Ian makes it his own.

I thank everybody for making me welcome.
I'd stay but my wings have just dropped off.

"No hard feelings, but I'm leaving"

Fade to black.

INSTRUMENTAL: '10:08 To Paddington'

ACT FOUR, SCENE TWO: THE FERRY

Scene: A beach (or river bank?), waiting for the ferry.

An obvious inference is that the ferry is that of Charon, crossing the River Styx of classical Greek mythology. The problem is that Charon transported the dead to Hades, but not back to the mortal realm. I suspect any such intended reference is merely for 'colour', rather than central to the narrative.

Magus Perdé

Hail! Son of kings make the ever-dying sign
cross your fingers in the sky for those about to BE.

I don't think this 'cross' is the Christian crucifix, though the pun is obvious. Crossing one's fingers is an expression of hope; I think Ronnie's just saying 'wish me luck'.

There am I waiting along the sand.
Cast your sweet spell upon the land and sea.

Waiting to both board the ferry, and embark on life.

Magus Perdé, take your hand from off the chain.

Andy Jackson informs me that Ian is known to have read

Aleister Crowley's 'Confessions' (Chapter 5 of which is entitled 'The Magus') in 1970; specifically the 1969 edition. The introduction to this edition quotes from an earlier Crowley book, 'The Book of the Law': "Bind nothing! The word of Sin is Restriction!", which seems to tie into this line of The Play.

Loose a wish to still / the rain / the storm about to BE.

'Loose' in this context means: 'release/launch', in the same way as 'Loose the passion' in the Chateau d'Isaster's 'Scenario'.

Here am I (voyager into life).

Tough are the soles that tread the knife's edge.

Note the pun on 'soles/souls'. 'The knife's edge' may be the infinitesimally thin, but absolute, divide between life and death. Occam's Razor would be a good metaphor, though I've no reason to think it's the image Ian intended. It has been suggested that 'the knife's edge' refers to the sword bridge of Arthurian legend, but there's nothing to support the idea that Ian intended this literary reference.

Break the circle,...

The magic circle imprisoning a demon/protecting a magician from that he's summoned? Or, more prosaically, break away from convention.

...stretch the line,...

A 'line drawn in the sand' would be the limit of what's acceptable. Ronnie's not suggesting the Magus should break the law, in a Promethean way, but just *bend* it a little.... Some have suggested the 'line' might be a ley line; maybe, if the intention was to just mention something generically 'mystical'. Then again, maybe not....

...call upon the
devil.

Bring the gods, the gods' own
fire

In the manner of Prometheus,
make use of 'forbidden' power -
the ability to create life is
restricted to God.

Or, following the previous line,
diabolic power: in Latin,
'Lucifer' is 'light-bringer' (not '-
bearer').

In the conflict revel.

The passengers upon the ferry
crossing, waiting to be born,

renew the pledge of life's long
song rise to the reveille horn.

Animals queuing at the gate
that stands upon the shore

breathe the ever-burning fire
that guards the ever-door.

Man - son of man -...

Note the (possible) reference to
'Life's A Long Song'

*In the 11 May 1973 show: '...
gates that stand...'*

A central point, stressing that
Ronnie is 'just another man'
(everyman), self-determining
and independent of Heaven
and Hell. It also emphasises
that this is not the Passion of
Jesus (son of god).

... buy the flame of
ever-life
(yours to breathe and breath
the pain of living): living BE!

Having tested his options in the
afterlife, Ronnie's sole
remaining choice is to return to
life, perhaps in an everlasting
cycle - life may occasionally be
painful, but it is real and
exciting. In the afterlife, Ronnie
was merely existing, unfulfilled,
but he can engage with life,
and really 'BE'.

In 'buying the flame of ever-life',
could Ronnie be 'buying into'
Hindu or Buddhist concepts of
reincarnation, having found that
the Judeo-Christian/Moslem
model, whilst not false, isn't for
him?

Here am I! Roll the stone away
from the dark into ever-day.

*Strong spotlight on RONNIE,
whilst fading the lights on the*

rest of the set.

Epilogue

There was a rush along the
Fulham Road
into the Ever-passion Play.

He's back in the bustle of
everyday life; life goes on.
Jessica Kolman interprets the
fact that The Play both begins
and ends 'along the Fulham
Road', as implying
timelessness or the eternal. I'd
certainly agree it suggests
seamless continuity.

Fade to black.

"Steve! Caroline!"

There has been tremendous
uncertainty about this indistinct
line; it was only as recently as
1999, in an online discussion,
that Ian revealed the definitive
lyric: "Steve! Caroline!",
shouted by Jeffrey.

In live 1973 concerts, The Play ended with a loud crash. This was apparently part of a closing film, the companion 'bookend' to the ballerina film which opened the show. Unfortunately, I don't have any further information about it.

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Writing in TalkTull, **Pamela** suggests that Tull's is a variant of the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play, performed every ten years by the entire population of the small German village, and by definition records the life of Jesus. I'd agree that the structure of 'A Passion Play' mirrors that of the Christian Passion play (incidentally, not specific to Oberammergau - it's an entire genre, performed in hundreds of locations for centuries). A traditional Passion play is indeed based on the life of Jesus, but I don't think the Tull Play is about Jesus, or even specifically religious. Ian took the format and generic title, and there are Christian references, but the story is largely his own invention.

Also in TalkTull, **Timothy Foos** offers a rather different view of The Play's theme: that the Passion Play is life itself, the story beginning at birth, with the silver cord being the umbilical cord. Were one to accept that The Play is an abbreviation of the Chateau material, rather than a section of a larger work, Timothy's idea might indeed fit the context of the Chateau material.

Timothy suggests that the line 'the ice-cream lady wet her drawers' refers to the protagonist's mother, the wetting her drawers being her waters breaking. Timothy: "*This gives credence to the implication that the ice cream lady wetting her*

drawers was a sacrifice, or unpleasant prerequisite to 'see you in the Passion Play.'"

There's a common impression that the ballerina on the album cover and the 'Lifebeats' & 'Hare...' films was Ian's girlfriend, or even Shona Learoyd (later Mrs. Anderson). The latter certainly isn't the case. Shona did appear on the WarChild album cover, as the Ringmistress, but didn't resemble the ballerina, whose name is Jane (I don't know her surname). I can't authoritatively dismiss the idea that Jane was Ian's girlfriend, but there's absolutely no reason to think she was, beyond rumour spread decades later, and Ian was still married to Jennie at the time

Unfortunately, we don't currently have much to put on this page! Any contributions would be gratefully received, especially those of a technical nature.

Comparing 'Thick As A Brick' and 'A Passion Play', **Scott Huntley** suggested that whilst APP is the more mature and complex piece (partly just due to genre; fitting the music to the subject matter), TAAB is more unified, and over time the more compelling listen. TAAB is composed of numerous accessible and melodic marches, many reprised in variations throughout. This gives the listener a 'touchstone'; interest is sustained by the variation, but frequent returns to the familiar 'home' prevent one becoming lost, and everything makes musical sense (with the exception of the hiatus at the start of the second half), even if the conventions of classical music are unfamiliar to the listener.

"APP is quite different. Instead of being created as a set of "variations on a theme", it is instead an Oratorio in the impressionist style of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More like Holst's 'Planets' or Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' than a Handel or Mozart concerto. The individual pieces do not relate to each other in any direct manner. There is more free association involved - but the music itself is stunning in its complexity and downright ingenuity (especially for rock era material), considering that it is, for the most part, dance music (in the sense of classical dance). It's almost a ballet set to words."

For the most part, the transitions in TAAB are very ingenious, further assisting its coherence. In contrast, APP does not 'flow' so much as simply 'happen'. The instrumentation and the vocals would provide a clue, but a person unfamiliar with the album might hear extracts from 'sides' one and two without registering that they came from the same work. In APP, quite of the few transitions are 'clunky and haphazard', sometimes because they

are linking extremely different types of music. One might speculate on an alternative version of the album, with certain sections ending outright rather than being laboriously tied together to make the album a continuous piece. Perhaps the transitions would have been smoother if there had been more time to rework the piece.

Daniel Fawcett questions the coherence of TAAB, suggesting that its repetition of themes with slight alterations was contrived to create a more 'classical' feel:

"TAAB does feel at times like it was a bunch of disjointed songs strung together with 'links', taking random bits, linking them with material that had only a vague connection, and calling it a cohesive whole."

The album included Tull's first use of a synthesizer, showing considerable *"skill and beginners luck"*, in **Michael Corbett's** opinion. *"Many of the tone colors that they got on APP we take for granted in this digital age. But they did it with monophonic analog Mini-Moogs and Echoplex. Very low-tech and more skill-intensive than sequencers."*

This is also the only album on which Ian played soprano and soprano saxophones, the latter being inherently problematic; **Michael Corbett** notes that it is hard to maintain exact pitch. *"That didn't scare Anderson, who used it to give a bagpipe tone."* However, it might explain Ian's reluctance to use the instrument again on future albums, and certainly not live. He played the soprano saxophone on TAAB, APP and WarChild, but then abandoned that too; **Michael Dawson** suggests that Ian didn't play the instrument enough to develop a strong embouchure, the pressure tiring his lower lip and complicating rapid switches back to the flute.

As **Derek Laing** notes, the untitled instrumental section linking the two scenes of Act One (from 5:50 to 6:50 on my CD) consists of *"some pleasant keyboard leading us to a frantic saxophone solo from IA which lasts a mere 30 secs"*. Derek considers this to be a flaw of the album, bearing no relation to the previous and subsequent material (which is a resumption of the previous part).

Personally, I've never thought it particularly disjointed, and in terms of the narrative, it might reflect Ronnie's initial panic at finding himself utterly alone in Limbo. Interesting point, though,

Derek.

On the album, the Best Friends section has a running time of under two minutes, but in live shows this was doubled by an 'improvised' instrumental section, making this a favourite part of the performance for several of the audience. **Lin Sprague**, for example, recalls:

What a great, heavy riff! It doesn't come across as powerfully on the studio album, but live, this was where Martin would open up his guitar and pour out one of the best solos I ever heard him do.

Carsten Bergmann makes some interesting points about the recurring 'Lifebeats' element (theme?). At the end of The Play, "Steve! Caroline!" is shouted over a slightly out-of-tune cacophonous lifebeat, perhaps symbolising the rather harsh, painful, chaotic, mortal life. This contrasts with the unearthly, light, ethereal heartbeats of the dead Ronnie (Forest Dances 1&2). 'Lifebeats' itself, at the start of The Play, is a combination of the two types, perhaps symbolising the transition from life to the afterlife.

Another heartbeat runs through virtually all of 'Overseer Overture', marking the start of Ronnie's time in Hell, just as the heartbeat of the Forest Dances introduced Ronnie to Heaven.

Carsten also makes the interesting observation that when G.Oddie interrupts Ronnie in Act 3, scene 1, he 'speaks' over the same melody as Lucifer does in scene two, but with different instrumentation, a possible reference to their fundamental similarity.

For those who are interested in such details, Martin's guitar for 'A Passion Play' was his Gibson Les Paul Sunburst, later also used for the recording of 'Too Old To Rock'N'Roll...'

Source: the TULL'90 programme, available on their UK tour of small venues.

Peter Dejour - "Peter of the Day" - the 'duty St. Peter' - the receptionist on duty. This implies that the person waiting at the Pearly Gates, meeting the newly deceased and directing them to the appropriate afterlife, isn't specifically St. Peter. Rather more prosaically, it's a job shared by a number of people, and Ronnie

meets the receptionist who happens to be on duty at the time. Maybe St. Peter only greets important people, further emphasising that Ronnie is no-one special. I feel that Dejour is one of the other souls in Limbo, an ex-mortal like Ronnie, rather than an angel. As discussed elsewhere, the angels of APP are remote, higher beings, and have no direct, spoken interaction with Ronnie.

In the Linwell production, this role was taken by Mark Ridley, aka Ian Anderson. Dejour isn't a key protagonist in *The Play*; his role is limited to that of observer and narrator. In Act Two, Scene One (The Memory Bank), the lines are in the second-person (i.e. 'you', so Ronnie can't be speaking them), but phrased as 'we'. I'd suggest that the person speaking (singing) these lines is Dejour, as spokesman (but not leader) for the assembled souls in the cinema. Other voices interject in places (e.g. the 'George' passage), but Dejour is the host and main narrator of the film of Ronnie's life - presenting without judging; a role Ian often plays in his songs.

Each band member is ascribed a part, but I suspect they're just intended as jokes:

The Projectionist: a non-speaking part, but essential in providing content, presumably at high volume. In the Linwell production, The Projectionist was played by Derek Small, aka Martin Barre....

G.Oddie might be expected to wear a white suit; the part was played by Ben Rossington, aka the famously white-suit-clad John Evan.

Magus Perdé: a shadowy figure in the background, but with tremendous influence over the eventual outcome - much like Barrie Barlow ('John Tetrad') on stage.

It's interesting that **Ronnie** is played by Jeffrey ('Max Quad'), as the first we hear of Ronnie is his failing heartbeat - played on Jeffrey's bass.

None of the band members is cast as **Lucy** (i.e. Lucifer) - that'd be too obviously playing into the hands of hostile critics! Imagine the headlines: "Ian Anderson is Satan!". Instead, the Linwell cast list has Lucy played by 'Ronald Pleasant', an obvious joke reference to the late Donald Pleasance, familiar in numerous gothic-horror films of the early Seventies. Not so much of a joke,

as it happens. Ian apparently told Yvonne Nicholson in 1974 that he wanted Donald Pleasance for the rôle of Lucifer in the aborted 'War Child' film project - so the Linwell cast list may have been something of a statement of intent!

The Angel was played by Lilly Schnaeffer.

All the characters listed in the Linwell Theatre cast list have clear roles in The Play, except one: **G. Oddie Jnr**, played by Lou Purcell. I suspect his inclusion in the cast list was merely for completeness, and primarily a joke for the theatre programme; Jesus has no direct part in the events described. If he was to be featured in the production, it'd probably be as a non-speaking observer in G. Oddie's office in Act Three, Scene Two.

A and Canada.

The Tracks

Although the album was officially released in 1973 as one long piece, broken only by the interval of 'The Hare...', the original vinyl copies of 'A Passion Play', given to DJs for promotional purposes, included a track listing. These titles were omitted from the official release, but when the indexed Mobile Fidelity CD version of the album was released in March 1998, the track listing was restored.

Some of these indexed promos, seemingly those used in the USA in particular, did not feature named tracks, merely having 'Edit' numbers. Presumably the track names were not intended to be made public, as singles and tracks on compilations were similarly only given 'Edit' numbers.

The track timings of two 1973 live shows are included for comparison: the 20 July concert at the LA Forum, and the Seattle Center Coliseum show performed a week later on the 27th.

| Title | Album | LA | Seattle | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Lifebeats | 1:14 | 3:24 | 5:35 | |
| 2. Prelude | 2:14 | 2:14 | 2:27 | A reworking of 'Tiger Toon' |
| 3. The Silver Cord | 4.29 | 4:22 | 4:24 | |
| 4. Re-Assuring Tune | 1.11 | 1:09 | 1:13 | |
| 5. Memory Bank | 4.20 | 4:37 | 5:03 | |
| 6. Best Friends | 1.58 | 4:04 | 3:59 | |
| 7. Critique Oblique | 4.38 | 4:41 | 5:14 | |
| 8. Forest Dance #1 | 1.35 | - | 1:15 | |
| 9. The Story Of The Hare | 4.18 | - | 4:16 | |
| 10. Forest Dance #2 | 1.12 | - | 1:39 | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|--|
| 11. The Foot Of Our Stairs | 4.18 | 4:18 | 4:57 | |
| 12. Overseer Overture | 4.00 | 3:58 | 3:59 | 'Edit 8' on 'MU'. Released as a single, b/w 'Edit 9'. |
| 13. Flight From Lucifer | 3.58 | 3:57 | 2:49 | 'Edit 9' on 'Repeat'. B-side of the 'Edit 8' single. Original form of 'Passion Jig' |
| 14. 10.08 To Paddington | 1.04 | - | 0:48 | 10/8, i.e. 10 August, is Ian's birthday. |
| 15. Magus Perde | 3.55 | - | 4:03 | Featured on the ' <u>25th Anniversary Collection</u> ' |
| 16. Epilogue | 0.43 | - | 0:34 | |



The track titles have been added to the annotated Play script, highlighted in red at the beginning of each track. However, I feel the divisions are somewhat arbitrary, not seeming to match the natural musical, lyrical, dramatic or thematic breaks in the Play. Some tracks, such as 'Best Friends', start in the middle of scenes or even verses; rather illogical points, in lyrical, musical, dramatic or thematic terms.

My initial thought was that the tracks were devised simply to provide radio-friendly segments for 1973 DJs, to be played out-of-context.

An alternative explanation could be that the track divisions reflect the way the album was recorded. Perhaps each track was recorded separately, then assembled for the final album. Presumably Ian had learned his lesson from the TAAB recording problems and didn't try to record all of APP onto one tape! Perhaps each segment was as much of the piece as the band could play without having to stop to realign their fingers.

Either way, I don't think the track divisions have a significant role in the structure of the Play as a whole - could this be a reason why the official album release wasn't divided into tracks (even on the liner notes)?

The CD

When the album was first released on CD, it was presented as two tracks, reproducing the sides of a LP, but as **Michael Dawson** notes, it was soon reindexed as one track to eliminate the gap in the middle of 'The Hare...', in response to listener complaints. **Steve Derbes** suggests that the opportunity was taken to *"clean it up slightly - not the full digital remaster job, but a better mastering than the original CD release."* However, there is no clear evidence that more was done than simple re-editing, leaving the music itself unchanged.

The Cover

The album cover is monochrome - not a common practice for 'pop' records. However, this was presumably done to emphasise the contrast between the dead, black & white ballerina on the cover and the (reborn?) ballerina shown in 'living' colour on the back cover.

Much has been made of the butterfly on the back cover - a symbol of rebirth? Well, no, as it's not part of the artwork. This was merely the way the Chrysalis company logo was depicted in 1973 and earlier, so appeared on all Chrysalis records; it is as relevant to the album or artwork concept as the copyright statement. Records produced by Reprise (Warner Bros.) for the Australian market didn't feature the butterfly at all, the same space being occupied by the Reprise 'r'. The artwork accompanying the 2003 Remastered CD omits the butterfly, but it's on the CD itself.

'A PASSION PLAY (Gold)', the Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab remaster (an ULTRADISC II 24-karat gold-plated CD remastered from the original master tapes) was released in the USA on 17 March, '98, but is currently out-of-print ((EMI) UDCD 720 (UPC 0 15775 47202 0), if anyone wants to track it down). Thanks for the details, Jeroen)

The Premiere

It's still not entirely clear when 'A Passion Play' was given its live premiere. The originally intended premiere was to have been at the Empire Pool, Wembley, London, UK on 28 April, but this concert, and that of the following night, was cancelled, despite being a sold-out show.

Presumably the show needed a little more preparation, but this hadn't been completed by the start of the US tour. On 4 May, in Evansville, In., the 'Lifebeats' intro was used (without the film), but this led straight into 'Thick As A Brick' (TAAB), omitting APP.

The 'Hare...' interval film was shown, out of context, but unfortunately broke down.

Further problems delayed the arrival of Tull's equipment at the following evenings show, in Clemson, SC. This meant that despite the abandonment of the support band's set, the concert did not begin until 10pm; Tull skipped APP completely, instead performing the same set as earlier in the year.

'A Passion Play' was omitted again at the next show, in Johnstown, Pa. on 7 May, though an audience member recalls seeing the APP masks and possibly the 'Lifebeat's' film, which led into TAAB. The show was also interrupted by three PA failures leaving Ian inaudible, but these were during TAAB, clearly after the decision to skip APP had already been taken, rather than being the reason for the omission.

According to a contemporary *Circus* magazine article, Tull went straight from there to Knoxville, Tn., not for a concert but to devote a further four days to rehearsal, rather than ruin the entire tour. There is even doubt about this, as it's known Tull definitely played in Oxford, Oh. on 9 May, and Knoxville is a long way from Johnstown and Oxford. The TAAB set was performed again in Oxford, but Ian announced that this would be the last concert before the debut of APP.

Again according to *Circus*, the 10 May show in Columbus, Oh. was cancelled, as the venue could not accommodate Tull's 'electrically heavy' equipment. However (yet another 'however'...), another source alleges Tull played at Kent State University, in Kent, Oh. (over 100 miles from Columbus) that night; the setlist isn't known. Perhaps the Columbus show was relocated to Kent.

However (oh no...), there's a possibility that the *Circus* article was referring to the Kent show anyway; if so, that leaves 10 May with no concert at all.

An audience member clearly recalls a Spring '73 concert at Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Mi., unexpectedly announced a matter of hours before of the performance. It was announced as a surprise show to test the audience reaction to the unreleased material; this was understood to mean it was the live premiere. Though there's no conclusive evidence that it was on 10 May (28 May is also a possibility) the description of the circumstances fits remarkably well.

If that's too straightforward, there's a further complication: a poster exists, advertising the East Lansing show on 15 May. This is odd for a number of reasons. If this was a 'surprise' unscheduled show, would there have been time to print and distribute posters? The poster mentions the date, but surely it would have said "Tonight!", unless scheduled and advertised

well in advance, which contradicts the eyewitness account above. Furthermore, the tour schedule claims the 15 May concert was in Memphis, Tn. - is that incorrect too, or is the poster wrong?

Finally, clarity can be restored: Tull quite definitely played APP at the much-bootlegged 11 May concert at the Norfolk Scope in Hampton, Va. This can go on record as the first *verified* public performance.

The Concert Programme

As usual, concert programmes were sold to the audience at 'A Passion Play' shows. Thanks to Steve Davies, who scanned his copy, we are able to reproduce it [here](#).

The Intro

As already described in the annotations of [Act One](#), live performances of The Play began in a unique way, up to twenty minutes ahead of the scheduled start time and with an [introductory film](#) preceding the appearance of the band.

Changed Lyrics

On a number of occasions, the lyrics sung at concerts differed from those on the album. It could be that Ian merely stumbled over the complex lyrics, particularly as the whole piece was so new and probably less rehearsed that he'd have liked. Alternatively, these could be deliberately changes; further refinements made after recording.

Album

Live

Act 2 (Critique Oblique):

Lover of the black and white it's
your first night.
The Passion Play, goes all the
way, spoils your insight.

Actor of the black and white it's
your first night.
[Indistinct, but clearly totally
different to the album lyric.]

(11 May)

Tell me how the baby's made,
how the lady's laid,

Tell me how the baby's made,
how the lady's laid,

why the old dog howls in
sadness.

why the old dogs howl with
sadness.

*(11 May, 20 July, Chateau
d'Isaster Tapes)*

Tell me: how the baby's
graded, how the lady's faded,
why the old dogs howl with
madness.

Tell me: how the baby's
graded, why the lady's faded,
how the old dogs howl with
sadness.

*(11 May; 'sadness' on 20 July,
too.)*

Act 3:

Old gentlemen talk of when
they were young
of ladies lost and erring sons.

Old gentlemen talk of when
they were young
of ladies lost and bearing sons.

(20 July)

Act 4:

Animals queuing at the gate
that stands upon the shore

Animals queuing at the gates
that stand upon the shore

(11 May)

Changed Running Order

For live shows after 28 August (possibly from the start of that tour, on 26 August), a major change was made to APP, which could be seen as breaking it into two songs divided by a third; it was no longer played as a continuous unit, instead pausing after 'The Hare...' and 'Forest Dance #2'. A ~7 minute version of 'My God' then led into a 'classical'-sounding keyboard solo, which itself blended seamlessly into the instrumental section of 'The Foot of Our Stairs' in Act 3 of The Play, with Ian picking up the lyrics at "Well, I'm all for leaving...".

It is quite likely that a popular and familiar song was deliberately inserted to recapture the possibly waning attention of the audience, making The Play a little more palatable to a concert audience. However 'My God' does have some relevance at this point of The Play, replacing Ronnie's description of boring everyday existence in Heaven. This is the key point - 'My God' was not inserted between 'The Hare...' and Act 3, it was inserted as *part* of Act 3 - though changed, APP was still one continuous piece. In the context of the 'Aqualung' album, 'My God' is a tirade about the discrepancy between organised religion and the 'reality' of God. As a part of The Play, this has added resonance, as Ronnie sees this discrepancy for himself, finding that the blissful Heaven promised by the Church is just as worthy and backward-looking as the mortal church.

Introduction

The Lyrics

Further Notes

At the turn of 1972/73, Ian took his first 0-16NY Martin guitar and a tape of Villa Lobos to Switzerland, staying in a Montreux apartment owned by concert-promoter Claude Nobs (as heard on 'Bursting Out'), to write the music that became 'A Passion Play'. One of the opening parts to the album attempted at the nearby Brick Factory a few weeks later began with a guitar piece owing a lot to that companion cassette.

They then moved on to the famous Chateau d'Herouville, near Paris (where Pink Floyd had taken six days to record the soundtrack of 'Obscured By Clouds' in Feb. '72).

The equipment was "extremely dodgy", and technical problems made recording a real struggle, but they managed to record virtually all the backing tracks for three sides of a double album, plus some overdubs (in the Remastered CD's booklet, Ian describes it as "... a few relatively unusable sections of the album complete, or nearly so..."), before getting so disenchanted with it that they "all just jumped on a plane back to England, scrapped the whole thing and started again." The flute tracks and vocals had not been done (or at least aren't on the recovered tapes); the flute material on 'Nightcap' was recorded in 1993. Ian decided against recording the missing vocal parts, leaving several songs incomplete or merely as instrumentals for Nightcap.

As Martin recalls, a second major reason for the failure of the sessions was the food at the Chateau; he and Barrie in particular were ill, having to leave the studio rather abruptly on numerous occasions - hardly conducive to creativity.

For this whole period, including the Montreux rehearsals, they were all plagued with recurring illness, probably due to a stop-over in Bombay when they returned from their last visit to the USA.

Of the Paris tapes, Ian knew one tape had been saved, but in 1993 another two tapes were discovered, from which he mixed another two sides of the (then) unreleased 'Chateau d'Isaster' tape, for inclusion on Nightcap.

"It doesn't actually sound too bad. It's very Seventies, but it does sound a lot better than I remember it. Although I have to say that perhaps with modern equipment and the expertise developed over the years, it sounds a lot better now than the last time I heard it back in 1972 or 3, or whenever it was that we last played those tapes in the lonely chateau, and decided to consign them to the bin." (*IA, 25th Anniversary Review*)

The rediscovered tapes do include further pieces, but these were

deliberately omitted from Nightcap as being, in Ian's opinion, "simply wretched" (*IA, in Rees, 1998*).

It is difficult to say what was meant by "*scrapped the whole thing and started again*"; some suggest that the 'best bits' of the Chateau material were combined, with new linking pieces, the result receiving fresh lyrics which bore little resemblance to those of the abandoned album and addressing a totally different topic. This is the basis for much criticism: if it was thrown-together in a couple of weeks, it probably wasn't fully thought-through and refined, and the lyrics probably don't mean much. Others suggest that the concept and structure of APP do conform to Ian's original ideas, simply abbreviating rather than entirely reworking the existing material, or taking one aspect of the full concept and modifying it slightly to stand alone. If the latter, APP may represent one complete disc of the proposed double album, remaining true to at least one aspect of the planned, and well-developed, concept.

It's clear that Ian didn't think the work at Chateau d'Herouville was entirely worthless, as in addition to the sections reassigned to APP, two of the pieces were used in virtually unchanged form on the next album, 'Warchild', with the 'animals as people/people as animals' theme recycled in one of Tull's most popular songs, 'Bungle In The Jungle'.

Again in the booklet accompanying the 2003 Remastered CD, Ian says that the intention of the Montreux writing sessions and material recorded at Chateau d'Herouville had been to produce something with the same feel as 'Thick As A Brick':
"... a new and similarly up-beat concept album. TAAB had, of course, been a spoof on the concept album genre and we were set to follow it up with another slightly jokey set of material with a few more musically serious passages thrown in..."

However:

"...the disruptive recent events gave rise to an altogether darker set of tunes on the soon-to-be-named 'A Passion Play'."

For those who haven't seen the LP, the original album was released in a gatefold sleeve, which featured an eight-page complete theatre programme from a fictitious performance of 'A Passion Play' at the equally non-existent Linwell Theatre.

Apart from its straightforward entertainment value, I don't think the Linwell Theatre programme contributes significantly to an understanding of The Play itself. It sets the scene nicely (if you'll forgive the weak pun), but, like the Thick As A Brick spoof newspaper, serves only as a nice keepsake, even a marketing gimmick.

In a short while, this page will feature the text and graphics from the programme - in rather better quality than previously seen on the web! However, in the mean time, the 2003 Remaster includes the theatre programme in the booklet and on the enhanced portion of the CD.

The centre pages of this CD booklet may confuse those who haven't seen the original gatefold LP sleeve: the text doesn't fit on the page. As shown on the corresponding pages on the enhanced CD, the inside of the LP sleeve features the lyrics against a pink background, itself featuring lightly drawn theatre masks: tragedy (left) and comedy (right). Beneath all this is an embroidered ribbon saying "Jethro Tull" (left) and "A Passion Play" (right).

The theatre programme fits into the middle, tucked under two flaps to keep the pages in position. The curved edges of the flaps are visible on that page of the enhanced CD. Located correctly, therefore, the centre pages of the programme show the portion of gatefold underneath the programme, 'as if it wasn't there', and the lyrics can be read clearly.

Another promotional curiosity: the initial release (i.e. only in 1973 itself, not repressings) apparently featured not only the Linwell theatre programme, but also a real, wearable theatre mask; **Job** recalls it as having been of Comedy. Does anyone remember this? Does anyone still HAVE one?

By far the most prolific contributor during the preparation of this site, **Andy Jackson** is probably quoted on every single page of the interpretation - and these quotes were merely the ones I could understand.... Andy is also webmaster of Jethro Tull Press, featuring numerous press reviews of the Play, both the

site, **Andy Jackson** is probably quoted on every single page of the interpretation - and these quotes were merely the ones I could understand.... Andy is also webmaster of Jethro Tull Press, featuring numerous press reviews of the Play, both the album and played live, which are well worth reading.

A large amount of this interpretation of the Play arose from an extended evaluation of the album at the original Tull e-mail discussion list (now defunct), the **St. Cleve Chronicle** (SCC). **Frank Mathie**, a fellow participant in the original debate (in 1997-8, I think), beat me 'into print' with his write-up of the proceedings, available here. Thanks to Frank, and the other SCC members, whose names are somewhere in the SCC archives....

Terry Moore provided valuable insight into the possible philosophically 'deeper' meanings behind apparently straightforward lines.

Thanks to **Carsten Bergmann** for several very useful annotations, and inspiration for more of my own!

The members of TalkTull (a worthy successor to the SCC) saw a preview of this site some months before it went live, attracting some extremely valuable comments. Several specific comments are cited in the main text, but particular thanks are due to **Hawk** and others who 'simply' set me thinking in alternative directions.

Special thanks go to **Job** - Robert Jobson - for sending me, from Australia, free of charge and for no expected reward other than my eternal gratitude, a mint copy of the LP, theatre programme and all. What a star!

Similarly, thanks to **Steve Davies** for scanning his copy of the 1973 tour programme. Sorry it took so long to get it online, Steve.

Jan Voorbij's Annotated Jethro Tull Lyrics site, Cup Of Wonder is an invaluable resource for anyone attempting a venture such as this - highly recommended.

In my opinion, **Leigh-Ann Hussey's** 'The Annotated Passion Play' typifies the over-literate interpretation with which I disagree. But that's okay; others might like it, and it would be rude of me to ignore it's existence. Have a look; decide for yourself.

Brian Meyers' rather fanciful discussion of Tull's albums 1971-78, 'To Be The Play', has long been out-of-print. If anyone wishes to track down a copy (though I doubt it would reward the effort), it was published in 1978 by Fishergate Publishing Co.,

Annapolis, Md. USA. Its Library of Congress Catalog Card
Number: 78-70864.

Your name here! Have you anything to add to the
interpretation? Do you disagree with anything? Can you add any
background information? Did you see the Play performed live?
Please get in contact!

Oh; and thanks, of course, to **Ian Anderson** and Jethro Tull, for
the album itself.

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