

## INTRODUCTION

LOOKING for some little Christmas masque or morality to gratify his readers, something with a taste of the time, the Editor of HORIZON has hit on Acts I and II of Jarry's *Ubu Cocu*, reprinted from a newly found manuscript (a variation of *Ubu Enchainé*) by the Trois Collines Press of Geneva. The play was written for the 'Marionettes of the Théâtre de Phynances' in 1900, but—such progress has the new century made—that there is no scene among those provided for his puppets which has not since been re-enacted many times over by real people in all countries. Poppa Ubu, with his mysticism, his fanatical belief in progress, in the essential goodness of human nature, in the responsibilities of friendship and—despite his unfortunate situation—in the sacredness of the family tie—is an epitome of the common man struggling for decency in the world we live in or (as some think of a great power assuming responsibility for a lesser; and he has every right, we feel, to be known as the Santa Claus of the Atomic Age.



*The only genuine  
portrait of Père Ubu*

ALFRED JARRY (1873-1906)

# UBU COCU

## ACT I

Scene : Salon in the home of Professor Achras

ACHRAS: Oh but it's like this, look you, I've no reason to be discontented with my polyhedra; they bear their young every six weeks, it's worse than rabbits. And it's also quite true to say that the regular polyhedra are the most faithful and devoted to their master, except that this morning the Icosahedron was a little fractious, so that I was compelled, look you, to give it a slap on each one of its faces. And that's the sort of language they understand. And my thesis, look you, on the habits of polyhedra—it's getting along nicely, thanks, only another twenty-five volumes!

*(Enter flunkey.)*

FLUNKEY: Sir, there's a bloke out there who wants to have a word with you. He's pulled the bell off with ringing, he's broken three chairs trying to sit down.

*(He gives Achras a card.)*

ACHRAS: What's all this? Monsieur Ubu, sometime King of Poland and Aragon, Professor of Pataphysics? That makes no sense at all. What's all that about? Pataphysics! Well, never mind, he sounds a person of distinction. I should like to make a gesture of good will to this visitor by showing him my polyhedra. Have the gentleman come up.

*(Enter Poppa Ubu in travelling costume, with a suitcase.)*

UBU: Hornstrumpot, Sir! What a miserable kind of hang-out you've got here, we have been obliged to ring the bell for more than an hour, and when, finally, your servants made up their minds to let us in, we were presented only with an orifice so minute that we still don't understand how our strumpot was able to navigate it.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, excuse me. I wasn't at all expecting the visit of such a considerable personage . . . otherwise, you can be sure I would have had the door enlarged. But you must forgive the absent-mindedness of an old collector, who is at the same time, I venture to say, a great savant.

UBU: Say that by all means if it gives you any pleasure, but

remember that you are conversing with a famous pataphysician.

ACHRAS: Excuse me, Sir, you said?

UBU: Pataphysician. Pataphysics is a branch of science which we have invented and for which a crying need is generally experienced.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, if you're a famous inventor, we'll understand each other, look you, for between great men . . .

UBU: A little more modesty, Sir! Besides, I see no great man here except myself. But, since you insist, I have condescended to do you a most signal honour. Let it be known to you, Sir, that your house is convenient for us and that we have decided to make ourselves at home here.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, look you . . .

UBU: We will dispense with your expressions of gratitude. Ah, by the way, I nearly forgot. Since it is scarcely right that a father should be separated from his children, we shall be joined in the immediate future by our family—Madame Ubu, and by our dear sons and daughters Ubu. They are very quiet, decent, well-brought-up folk.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this you see. I'm afraid of . . .

UBU: We quite understand. You're afraid of boring us. All right then, we'll no longer tolerate your presence except by our kind permission. One thing more, while we are inspecting your kitchens, and your dining-room, you will go and look for our three packing-cases of luggage which we have deposited in the hall.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this—that's not a good idea at all to install yourself like that with people. It's a manifest imposture.

UBU: A magnificent posture! Exactly, Sir, for once in your life you've spoken the truth.

*(Exit Achras.)*

UBU: Are we right to behave like this? Hornstrumpot, by our Green Candle, let us consult our conscience. There it is, in this suitcase, all covered with cobwebs. It is obvious that it's of no earthly use.

*(He opens the suitcase. Enter Conscience as a big fellow in a night-shirt.)*

CONSCIENCE: Sir, and so forth, be so good as to take a few notes.

UBU: Excuse me, Sir, we have no fondness for writing, though we have no doubt that anything you have to say would be most interesting. And while we're on the subject, I should like to know why you have the cheek to appear before us in your shirt?

CONSCIENCE: Sir and so forth, Conscience, like Truth, usually goes without a shirt. If I have donned one, it is out of respect for the distinguished audience.

UBU: As for that, Mr. or Mrs. Conscience, you're kicking up a great fuss about nothing. Answer this question rather. Should I do well to kill Mr. Achras who has had the audacity to come and insult me in my own house?

CONSCIENCE: Sir and so forth, to return good with evil is unworthy of a civilized man. Mr. Achras has lodged you, Mr. Achras has received you with open arms, and made you free of his collection of polyhedra, Mr. Achras, and so forth, is a very fine fellow, quite harmless; it would be cowardly and so forth, to kill a poor old man incapable of defending himself.

UBU: Hornstrumpot, my good conscience, are you quite sure he can't defend himself?

CONSCIENCE: Absolutely, Sir, so it would be a coward's trick to make away with him.

UBU: Thank you, Sir, we shan't need you any more. Since there's no risk attached, we shall assassinate Mr. Achras, and we shall also make a point of consulting you more frequently, for you know how to give us better advice than we had anticipated. Now, into the suitcase with you!

*(He closes it again.)*

CONSCIENCE: In which case, Sir, I think we can leave it at that and so forth, for to day.

*(Enter Achras, backwards, prostrating himself with terror before the three red packing-cases pushed by the flunkey.)*

UBU *(to flunkey)*: Off with you, sloven—and you, Sir, I want a word with you. I wish you every kind of prosperity and I beg you, out of your great kindness, to perform a friendly service for me.

ACHRAS: Anything, look you, which you can demand from an old professor who has consecrated sixty years of his life, look you, to studying the habits of polyhedra.

UBU: Sir, we have learnt that our virtuous wife, Madame Ubu, is most abominably deceiving us with an Egyptian yclept Memnon, who performs the triple functions of a clock at dawn, at night a barrel scavenger, and in the daytime becomes the cornutator of our person. Hornstrumpot, we have decided to wreak on him the most terrible vengeance!

ACHRAS: As far as that goes, look you, Sir, as to being a cuckold I can sympathize with you.

UBU: We have resolved then to inflict a severe punishment. And we can think of nothing more appropriate in this case, to chastise the guilty, than the torture of Impaling.

ACHRAS: Excuse me, I still don't see very clearly, look you, how I can be of any use.

UBU: By our green candle, Sir, since we have no wish for our scheme of justice to go astray, we should be delighted that a person of your standing should make a preliminary trial of the Stake, to discover how it performs its function.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, look you, not on your life—that's too much. I regret, look you, that I can't perform this little service for you, but it just doesn't make sense at all. You've stolen my house from me, look you. You've told me to bugger off and now you want to put me to death, oh no, that's going too far.

UBU: Don't distress yourself, good my friend. It was just our little joke. We shall return when you have quite recovered your composure.

*(Exit)*

*(The Three Palcontents come out of the chests.)*

*(Song)*

THE THREE P'S: We are the Palcontents  
 We are the Palcontents  
 With a face like a rabbit  
 Which seldom prevents  
 Our bloody good habit  
 Of croaking the bloke wot lives on his rents.  
 We are the Pals  
 We are the Cons  
 We are the Palcontents.

CRAPENTAKE: In a great box of stainless steel

Imprisoned all the week we feel  
 That Sunday is the only day  
 When we're allowed our getaway.  
 Ears to the wind, without surprise  
 We march along with vigorous step  
 And all the passers-by cry 'Hep'  
 Those must be bloody poor G.I.s'.

THE THREE: We are the Palcontents, *etc.*

BINANJITTERS: Every morning we get called  
 With the Master's boot on our behind  
 And half-awake our backs are galled  
 By the bleeding kit we ave to mind  
 Then all day long with hammer greasy  
 We bash your skulls in good and easy  
 Till we restore to Pa Ubé  
 The dough from the stiffs we've croaked this day.

THE THREE: We are the Palcontents, *etc.*  
 (*They dance. Achras terrified sits down on a chair.*)

FOURZEARS: In our ridiculous loonyforms  
 We wander through the streets so pansy  
 Till we can plug the bockle-an-jug  
 Of any guy whom we don't fancy.  
 We get our eats through platinum teats  
 We pee through a tap without a handle  
 And we inhale the atmostale  
 Through a tube as bent as a Dutchman's candle.

THE THREE: We are the Palcontents, *etc.*  
 (*They dance round Achras.*)

ACHRAS: O but it's like this, look you, it's ridiculous, it doesn't  
 make sense at all.  
 (*The stake rises under his chair.*)

Oh dear, I don't understand it, if you were only my poly-  
 hedra, oh dear, look you, have mercy on a poor old pro-  
 fessor. Look—look you—There's no sense in it, you see.  
 (*He is impaled and raised in the air despite his cries. It grows pitch  
 dark.*)

THE PALCONTENTS: (*ransacking the furniture and pulling out  
 money bags from it*)  
 Give the finances to Pa Ubu. Give all the finances—to Pa



Ubu—let nothing remain, not one sou, to go down the drain for the Revenue. Give *all* the finance to Pa Ubu!

*(Going back into their chests.)*

We are the Pals, we are the Cons, we are the Palcontents.

*(Achras loses consciousness.)*

\* \* \*

*(Achras (empaled), Pa Ubu, Ma Ubu.)*

UBU: By my green candle, my sweet child, how happy we shall be in this house!

MRS. UBU: There is only one thing lacking to my happiness, my friend, and that is to meet the worthy host who has placed such entertainment within our grasp.

UBU: Don't let that upset you, my dear, to forestall your every wish I have had him set up here in the place of honour!

*(He points to the stake. Screams and hysterics from Madame Ubu.)*

CURTAIN

ACT II. *The same.*

*(Achras empaled. Conscience, half coming out of the suitcase.)*

CONSCIENCE: Sir.

ACHRAS: Hron.

CONSCIENCE: And so forth.

ACHRAS: What's beyond this 'Rhon' I wonder. It's like this—

I ought to be dead, leave me in peace.

CONSCIENCE: Sir, although my philosophy condemns outright any form of action, what Mr. Ubu did was too unworthy, I am going to disempale you.

*(He lengthens himself to the height of Achras.)*

ACHRAS: *(disempaled)* I'm not the one to say no, Sir.

CONSCIENCE: Sir and so forth, I should like to have a brief interview with you. Please sit down.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, look you, don't talk of that. I should never be so rude as to sit down in the presence of an ethereal spirit to whom I owe my life, and besides, I just don't feel like it.

CONSCIENCE: My conscientious inner consciousness and sense of justice tell me it's my duty to punish Mr. Ubu. What revenge would you suggest?

ACHRAS: Hey, but it's like this, look you, I've thought about it for a long time. I shall simply unfasten the trap-door into the

cellar . . . hey—put the arm-chair behind it, look you, and when the good chap, look you, comes in from his dinner, he'll bust the whole thing in. Hey and that'll make some sense! Goodie-goodie!

CONSCIENCE: Justice will be done and so forth.

*(He gets back into the suitcase.)*

*(Enter Père Ubu.)*

UBU: Hornstrumpot! You, sir, certainly haven't stayed put as I arranged you. Well, since you're still alive to be of use to us, don't you forget to tell your cook that she's in the habit of serving the soup with too much salt in it, and that the joint was overdone. That's not at all the way we like them. It's not that we aren't able, by our skill in pataphysics, to make the most exquisite dishes rise from the earth, but that doesn't prevent your methods, Sir, from provoking our indignation.

ACHRAS: Oh, but it's like this, that shan't happen again.

*(Père Ubu is engulfed in the trap)*—If you see what I mean.

UBU: Hornstrumpot, Sir! What is the meaning of this farce? Your floor-boards are in a rotten state. We shall be obliged to inflict a heavy penalty.

ACHRAS: It's only a trap-door, look you.

CONSCIENCE: Mr. Ubu is too fat, he'll never get through it.

UBU: By my green candle, a trap-door must be either open or shut. All the beauty of the Phynance Theatre lies in the smooth functioning of its trap-doors. This one is choking us, it's flaying our transverse colon and our great epiploon. Unless you get me out I shall be a dead man.

ACHRAS: All that's in my power, look you, is to charm your last moments by the reading of some of the most characteristic passages, look you, of my Treatise on the habits of Polyhedra, and of the Thesis which I have taken sixty years to compose on the tissues of the Conic Section. You'd rather not? Oh, very well, I'm going—I couldn't bear to watch your end, it's too sad.

*(Exit)*

UBU: My conscience, where are you? Hornstrumpot, you give me good advice, don't you! We shall do penitence and perhaps restore into your hands some small fraction of what we have taken. We shall desist from the use of our debraining machine.



CONSCIENCE: Sir, I've never wished for the death of a sinner, and so forth. I offer you the customary helping hand.

UBU: Hurry up, Sir, we're dying—Hurry up and pull us out of this trap-door and we shall accord you a day's leave of absence from your suitcase.

*(Conscience, after releasing Ubu, throws the suitcase in the hole.)*

CONSCIENCE *(gesticulating)*: Thank you, Sir. Sir, there's no better exercise than gymnastics! Ask any hygienist.

UBU: Hornstrumpot Sir! You indulge in a great deal of horseplay. To show you our superiority in this, as in everything else, we are going to perform the prestidigious leap, which might surprise you, when you take into account the enormity of our strumpot! *(He begins to run and jump.)*

CONSCIENCE: Sir, I entreat you, don't do anything of the sort, you'll only stove in the floor completely, and disappear down another hole. Observe our own light touch. *(He remains hanging by his feet.)* Oh! Help, help—I'm going to wrench my kidneys, come and help me, Monsieur Ubu.

UBU: *(sitting down)* Oh no. We shall do nothing of the kind, Sir. We are performing our digestive functions at this moment, and the slightest dilatation of our drum-pot will make us instantly perish. In two or three hours at the most, our digestion will be finished and we'll fly to your aid. And besides, we are by no means in the habit of unhooking such tatters off the peg.

*(Conscience shakes itself, and falls on Ubu's stomach.)*

UBU: Ah, that's too much, Sir. We don't tolerate anyone trying horseplay on us, and you won't be one to get away with it.

*(Not finding the suitcase, he takes Conscience by the feet, opens the door of the lavatory at the end of the room, and shoves it head first down the drain.)*

## Scene II

*(Pa Ubu, the Three Palcontents, upright in their packing-cases.)*

THE THREE: Those who despise his beady eyes are all of them fools, and flunk-at-schools who'll get a surprise ere the day is out and learn what his machine is all about. For he doan wan' his royal person to be joked about by a son-of-a-gun. Yeh, he doan like his little Mary to be passed remarks on by Dick or Harry. This barrel that rolls, arrel that rolls, arrel that rolls is Poppa Ubu.

(Meanwhile Pa Ubu lights his green candle, a flame of hydrogen in a steam of sulphur, and which, constructed after the principle of the Philosopher's Organ, gives out a perpetual flute-note. And he hangs two notices up on the wall:)

'Machine-pricking done here'

and

'Get your nears cut'.

CRAPENTAKE: Hey, Mister! Some folks gets all the trouble. Mr. Presscock, he's been eleven times this morning to your office in Bleed-pig Square. Hey!

BINANJITTERS: Mister, as you told me to I've carried a case of combustible clenched fists to Mr. Borwell and a full Crappy Box to Mr. Chas. Borgan. Hey!

FOURZEARS: I've been in Egypt, Mister, and I've brought back that there singing Memnon. By reason of which matter, as I don't know if he roightlee has to be put up before he sings every morning, I've set him up in the room underneath. Hey!

UBU: Silence, my eager beavers. We are moved to meditation. Thesphere is the perfect form. Thesun is the perfect planet, and in us nothing is more perfect than our head, always upturned towards that star, and stretching towards its form—what else but our eye, mirror of this orb and cast in its likeness!

The sphere is the form of the angels. To man it is given to be only an incomplete angel. And yet, more perfect than the Cylinder, less perfect than the Sphere, from the Barrel radiates the hyper-physical body. We, its isomorph, are passing fair . . .

THE THREE PALCONTENTS: Those who aren't skeered of his Joadstool beard are all of them fools and flunk-at-schools who'll find themselves ere the day is done with his knocking-machine to start their fun.

(Father Ubu, who was sitting at his table, gets up and walks.)

THE THREE PALCONTENTS: This barrel that rolls, arrel that rolls, arrel that rolls is Poppa Ubu, and his strumpot huge, his trumpot huge, his rumpot huge is like a . . .

UBU: *Non cum vacaveris, pataphysicandum est*, as Seneca has said. It would seem a matter of urgency that we get a patch inserted in our suit of woolly philosophy. *Omnia alia negligenda sunt*, it is certainly irreverent, *ut huic assideamus* to

employ the infamous usage as of emptying casks and barrels, which is deeply to insult our Master of Finance here present. *Cui nullum tempus vitae satis magnum est* and that's the reason why we have invented this instrument which we have no hesitation whatsoever in designating by the title of Shittapump. (*He takes it from his pocket and puts it on the table.*)

THE THREE PALCONTENTS: Hey Mister! Yas suh!

UBU: And now as it's getting late, we shall go to bed. Ah, I forget: coming back from Egypt you will bring us some mummy-grease for our machine, although apparently it runs away very fast, hornstrumpot! and is extremely difficult to get hold of.

(*He takes his green candle and his pump and goes out.*)

### Scene III

(*The Palcontents sing, without moving, while the statue of Memnon is erected in the middle of the stage, on its base of a wine-barrel.*)

THE THREE PALCONTENTS:

Tremble and quake at the Lord of Finance  
 little bourgeois who's getting too big for his pants!  
 It's too late to scream when we're skinning your arses  
 for the Palcontent's knock means he'll chip off your block  
 with that sideways look through the top of his glasses . . .

Meanwhile at dawn Pa Ubu leaves his couch  
 No sooner awake than he's a hundred rounds to make,  
 With a bang he is out and about on the floor  
 where the verminous Palcontents snuzzle and snore.  
 He pricks up his ear, lets it down with a whistle,  
 with a kick on the bum they fall in to the drum  
 till the courtyard's a mass of unmilitary gristle.  
 Then he reads his marauders their bloodthirsty orders  
 throws them a crust, betimes an onion raw  
 and with his boot conducts them through the door.  
 With ponderous tread he quits his retinue  
 enquires the hour, consults his clockatoo  
 'Great God, 'tis six! but we are late today.  
 Bestir yourself, my lady wife Ubé!  
 Give me my shittaboard and money-tweezers.'  
 'Oh, Sir,' says she, 'permit a wife's suggestion

of washing your dear face is there no question?  
 Such topics displease the Lord of Finance  
 (Sometime King of Aragon, of Poland and of France;)  
 through his foul breeks he infiltrates his braces,  
 and, come rain or snow or hail, slanting to the morning gale  
 bends his broad back towards the lonely places.

[Translated by C. C.]

## WAR AND PEACE

I.—BERLIN 1944-1945

*FL. TRISMEGISTES*

Dear HORIZON

You asked me to tell you quite frankly how we lived in Berlin last winter, or, rather, what the *Götterdämmerung* of the Third Reich was like. I accepted, although I know that it is impossible to transmit in words the 'real' image of a country to someone outside it, particularly when the country in question is one from which he has been separated for a long time by a curtain of fire and lies. So much the worse if my anecdotes do not give you a clear impression. I ask you to accept them as such, and some of them may amuse you.

In actual fact, all the Nazis, even the worst ones, are not detestable all of the time, and life in a bombed city may even be agreeable—sometimes. My work caused me to meet with more Nazis—but fewer bombs—than the average Berliner. I will not tell you about what I have seen. It is not a panorama that I am seeking to present; but perhaps these swift impressions will amend, on several points, the general idea which you have formed from outside.

I think that the distress and sufferings of the civilian population of a great city attacked without respite are such as an Englishman may well understand. Multiply the destruction in London by ten or twenty, and you will have the picture in Berlin. Every night, 40 to 80 Mosquitoes brought us their loads of 'Luftminen' ('*Kleiner Verband schneller Kampfflugzeuge*', the radio announcer commented); Flying Fortresses came over in hundreds, and seemed to prefer daylight raids. The fear of losing everything,

c