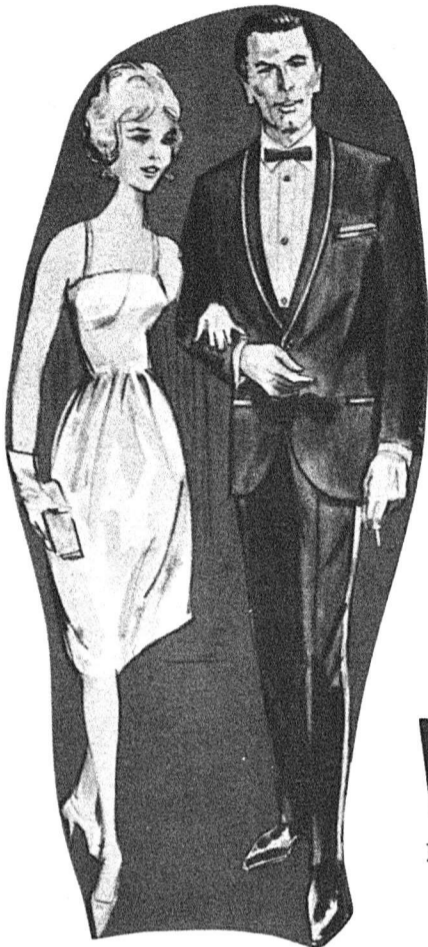


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## THE HERMETICALLY SEALED WATER-CLOSET,

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## A CAN FOR ALL SEASONS

### A Pastoral Dialogue in One Indecent Act.

(Scene: a sauna bath on the third floor of the Cameron Library. Frat rats are seen scuttling through the steam. From the gloom of three miles of stacks containing 200 years' back issues of *The Classical Quarterly* emerges Sir Thomas, the More of Venice.)

SIR THOMAS (bombastically): "Sing, Muse. . ."

(He is interrupted by the entrance of the Muse, who is singing.)

MUSE: "The hills are ali-i-ve, with the sow-w-nd of —"

THOMAS: Gaarghaaghymnjowubght!! (Assaults the Muse.)

(Enter George Washington in a rowboat full of revolting Americans.)

GEORGE: Which way to the Delaware?

MUSE: "Hey there, Georgy gi-i-rl —"

GEORGE: Frijjopyttghwrytiggbez!! (Assaults the Muse.)

(Enter Queen Victoria, whistling "Land of Hope and Glory".)

THOMAS: Aha! It's Clio, the Muse of History.

VICTORIA (scornfully): You haven't got a Clio; we are not a Muse. (Spits at him.)

THOMAS: Thanks a lot (Turns into a pillar of salt.)

GEORGE (disgustedly): I'm disgusted! When I said I'd be in this play I didn't dream that I would be immersed to the powdered forelock in such revolting trivia. I'm leaving!

(Washington strides purposefully towards the elevator, presses the button, waits two weeks, steps through the door when it finally opens, and falls 150 feet to the Rare Books room.)

GEORGE: I cannot te-e-ll a-a-a . . . SQUASH.

MUSE: What did he mean? Did he mean that he can't tell a squash from a pumpkin?

VICTORIA: Yes. He was too involved to see the distinction—nothing but a country pumpkin anyway.

(The revolting Americans begin to murmur seditiously.)

AMERICANS: Seditiously . . . seditiously, etc.

(Enter Paul Revere, riding an elephant. Historical note: Paul Revere was born in Hannibal, Missouri.)

REVERE: The British are coming! The British are coming!

VICTORIA: How many?

REVERE: One if by land, two if by sea.

(The Americans, hearing this dire news, scream in terror, run to the elevator door, and press the button. Immediately the door bursts open and dumps four billion bushels of grain, plus a few broken beer bottles, on top of the Americans.)

THE ELEPHANT (who has been perusing the back issues of *Classical Quarterly*): Ah, this brings back to me those happy days at Cambridge, studying with Bertrand Russell, being captain of the Rowing Team. . .

REVERE: Bertrand Russell! That rotten pinko! D'you mean to tell me that I've had a Comsymp for an elephant all these years and not known it?

ELEPHANT: Fascist dog! (Seizes Revere in his trunk, which he stamps and ships—freight—to Uruguay.)

(Enter a stunningly beautiful coded, who goes up to the pillar of salt that is Sir Thomas, the More of Venice, and looks at him hungrily.)

CO-ED: Mmmm. I just love salt. (Licks his face, at which he immediately decrystallizes, breathing hard, and chases her down the stacks, screaming and giggling.)

(Just then, a loudspeaker car announcing the existence of the commerce rodeo passes the library. The effect is very similar to that of a 150 megaton hydrogen bomb. In fact, the only surviving portions of the library are those containing *The Classical Quarterly*, who sneer contemptuously at the audience.)

REAL FAST CURTAIN.

—The Fantastic Duo

## films

Woody Allen's *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, which I hope will still be at the Strand by the time you read this (it's part of a double bill, so check that you get there at the right time to miss the other half unless you're fond of second-rate older movies with David Niven in them), is an interesting comic experiment that comes off.

I gather that somehow or other a Hollywood studio found it had the rights to a slick but undistinguished Japanese spy, or possibly gangster, movie.

Wondering how to exploit their property most profitably, they thought of Mr. Woody Allen, whose previous cinematic venture, *What's New, Pussycat?*, had been such an equivocal success.

Allen took the matter in hand, excised the original soundtrack except for a bit at the beginning, wrote a new script, disrupted the original continuity (the film now ends at, I'd guess, about the half-way point in the original), incorporated some irrelevant but pleasing numbers by the Loving Spoonfuls, and generally mucked about.

The result is thoroughly successful in its own terms—i.e. if you have reason to believe that you don't find Woody Allen funny, you probably won't find the film funny either, but if the New Humor appeals to you this should be your cup of tea.

Not that the New Humor is that new; time and time again one is reminded of the BBC's old *Goon Show*, which looks increasingly like one of the most influential cultural phenomena of our time.

The sort of surrealism which Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers proved so ideally suited for radio cannot, of course, be exactly duplicated in visual terms.

But Allen is hardly working with the visual components of cinema in any traditional sense when he adds soundtrack to existent "images". The very incongruity between image and soundtrack is the principal comic device he's using. So he's free to be very goonish indeed.

Take the central situation, for example: everybody is in pursuit of the recipe for the perfect egg salad, whose owner will control the world.

I don't want to give away too much more of the "plot", or spoil the jokes for you by lifting them out of context.

But I can't resist one fairly elaborate specimen, which just might sneak past you in all the confusion. A girl is describing one of the villains, and finishes, "I'd call him a bestial sadistic necrophile, but that would be flogging a dead horse".

As you might guess from this, the general tone of the film is not very "edifying"; in fact the dialogue is consistently and delightfully risqué.

Also delightful are the sexy girls, most of whom are courtesy the original film but one of whom, the final one in fact, was Mr. Allen's own idea and an excellent idea too.

I wonder how many imitators Mr. Allen will have. The irritating condescension of the running commentaries to silent movies which have proved so popular on television ("Fractured Flickers" and its ilk) make me a bit worried about the results if Allen's method were to be espoused by less civilized, less cool funny-men.

But it is silly to speculate about possible abuses of a new comic technique so obviously full of possibilities.

A really slashing, filthy underground art could develop (it would have to stay underground to avoid copyright tangles) setting new words to newsreels, commercials, situation comedies, in fact all the filmed entertainment that rouses the ire of the lumpen-intelligensia.

Allen's film differs from these rather obvious efforts in that the original film was so slickly professional and Allen's affection for it stays so palpable.

This is to remind you that the newly purtied-up Avenue Theatre is offering us what by all accounts is a movie that's not to be missed: *A Man for All Seasons*.

I hope to review it next week. I have reservations about the play, though I must admit that when I saw the Edmonton production of the play, with Walter Kaasa as Sir Thomas More, I was quite won over.

If you do go and see the film, probably you should immediately read Josephine Tey's excellent novel *The Daughter of Time*, in which, in the course of rehabilitating the memory of Richard III, Tey does a bit of dirt on the "sainted Sir Thomas".

—John Thompson