Serge and Marc turn on Yvan: Callback Trio

*Context: Marc and Serge essentially entirely dismiss Yvan’s three-page rant about his wedding that he gives when he finally arrives an hour late for dinner and go back to arguing about Seneca. When Yvan tries to get in the middle of it and diffuse the situation their attention sharply turns back to him and his life.*

Serge You want my opinion about your women problems?

Yvan Go on.

Serge In my view, the most hysterical of them all is Catherine. By far.

Marc No question.

Serge And if you're already letting yourself be buggered around by her, you're in for a hideous future.

Yvan What can I do?

Marc Cancel it.

Yvan Cancel the wedding?

Serge He's right.

Yvan But I can't, are you crazy?

Marc Why not?

Yvan Well, because I can't, that's all! It's all arranged. I've only been working at the stationery business for a month...

Marc What's that got to do with it?

Yvan It's her uncle’s stationery business, he had absolutely no need to take on anyone, least of all someone who's only ever worked in textiles.

Serge You must do what you like. I've told you what I think.

Yvan I'm sorry, Serge, I don't mean to be rude, but you're not necessarily the person I've come to for matrimonial advice. You can't claim to have been a great success in that field…

Serge Precisely.

Yvan I can't back out of the wedding. I know Catherine is hysterical but she has her good points. There are certain crucial qualities you need when you're marrying someone like me... (*he indicates the Antrios*.) Where are you going to put it?

Serge I don't know yet.

Yvan Why don't you put it there?

Serge Because there, it be wiped out by the sunlight.

Yvan Oh, yes.

I thought of you today at the shop, we ran off five hundred posters by this bloke who paints white flowers, totally white, on a white background.

Serge The Antrios is not white.

Yvan No, of course not. I was just saying.

Marc You think this painting is not white, Yvan?

Yvan Not entirely, no…

Marc Ah. Then what colour is it?

Yvan Various colours... There's yellow, there's grey, some slightly ochrish lines.

Marc And you’re moved by these colours?

Yvan Yes... I’m moved by these colours.

Marc You have no substance, Yvan. You’re flabby, you’re an amoeba.

Serge Why are you attacking Yvan like this?

Marc Because he's a little arse-licker, he's obsequious, dazzled by money, dazzled by what he believes to be culture, and as you know culture is something I absolutely piss on.

*Brief silence.*

Serge ... What's got into you?

Marc How could you, Yvan?... And in front of me. In front of me, Yvan.

Yvan What d’you mean, in front of you? … What do you mean, in front of you?

I find these colours touching. Yes. If it's all the same to you.

Stop wanting to control everything.

Marc How could you say, in front of me, that you find these colours touching?

Yvan Because it's the truth.

Marc The truth? You find these colours touching?

Yvan Yes. I find these colours touching.

Marc You find these colours touching, Yvan?!

Serge He finds his colours touching! He’s perfectly entitled to!

Marc No, he's not entitled to.

Serge What do you mean, he's not entitled to?

Marc He's not entitled to.

Yvan I'm not entitled to? …

Marc No.

Serge Why is he not entitled to? I don't think you're very well, perhaps you ought to go and see someone.

Marc He's not entitled to say he finds these colours touching, because he doesn't.

Yvan I don't find these colours touching?

Marc There are no colours. You can't see them. And you don't find them touching.

Yvan Speak for yourself!

Marc This is really demeaning, Yvan!...

Serge Who do you think you are, Marc? ...

Who are you to legislate? You don't like anything, you despise everyone. You take pride in not being a man of your time...

Marc What’s that supposed to mean, man of my time?

Yvan Right. I'm off.

Serge Where are you going?

Yvan I'm off. I don't see why I have to put up with your tantrums.

Serge Don't go! You're not going to start taking offense, are you? … If you go, you're giving into him.

*Yvan stands there, hesitating, caught between two possibilities.*

A man of his times is a man who lives in his own time.

Marc Balls. How can a man live in any other time but his own? Answer me that.

Serge A man of his time is someone of whom it can be said in twenty years’ or in a hundred years’ time, he was representative of his era.

Marc Hm.

To what end?

Serge What do you mean, to what end?

Marc What use is it to me if one day somebody says, I was representative of my era?

Serge Listen, old fruit, we're not talking about you, if you can imagine such a thing! We don't give a fuck about you! A man of his time, I'm trying to explain to you, like most people you admire, is someone who makes some contribution to the human race of... A man of his time doesn't assume the history of Art has come to an end with a pseudo-Flemish view of Cavaillon[[1]](#footnote-1)...

Marc Carcassonne[[2]](#footnote-2).

Serge Same thing. A man of his time plays his part in the fundamental dynamic of evolution...

Marc And that's a good thing, in your view.

Serge It's not good or bad, why do you always have to moralize, it's just the way things are.

Marc And you, for example, you play your part in the fundamental dynamic of evolution.

Serge I do.

Marc What about Yvan?...

Yvan Surely not. What sort of part can an amoeba play?

Serge In his way, Yvan is a man of his time.

Marc How can you tell? Not from that daub[[3]](#footnote-3) hanging over his mantlepiece?

Yvan That is not a daub?

Serge It is a daub.

Yvan It is not!

Serge What's the difference? Yvan represents a certain way of life, a way of thinking which is completely modern. And so do you. I'm sorry, but you're a typical man of your time. And in fact, the harder you try not to be, the more you are.

Marc Well, that's alright then. So what's the problem?

Serge There's no problem, except for you, because you take pride in your desire to shut yourself off from humanity. And you'll never manage it. It's like you're in a quicksand, the more you struggle to get out of it, the deeper you sink. Now apologize to Yvan.

Marc Yvan is a coward.

*At this point, Yvan makes his decision, and exits in a rush.*

*Slight pause.*

1. KAH-vye-ohn [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. KAR-kas-sohn [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A painting that just isn’t done very well. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)