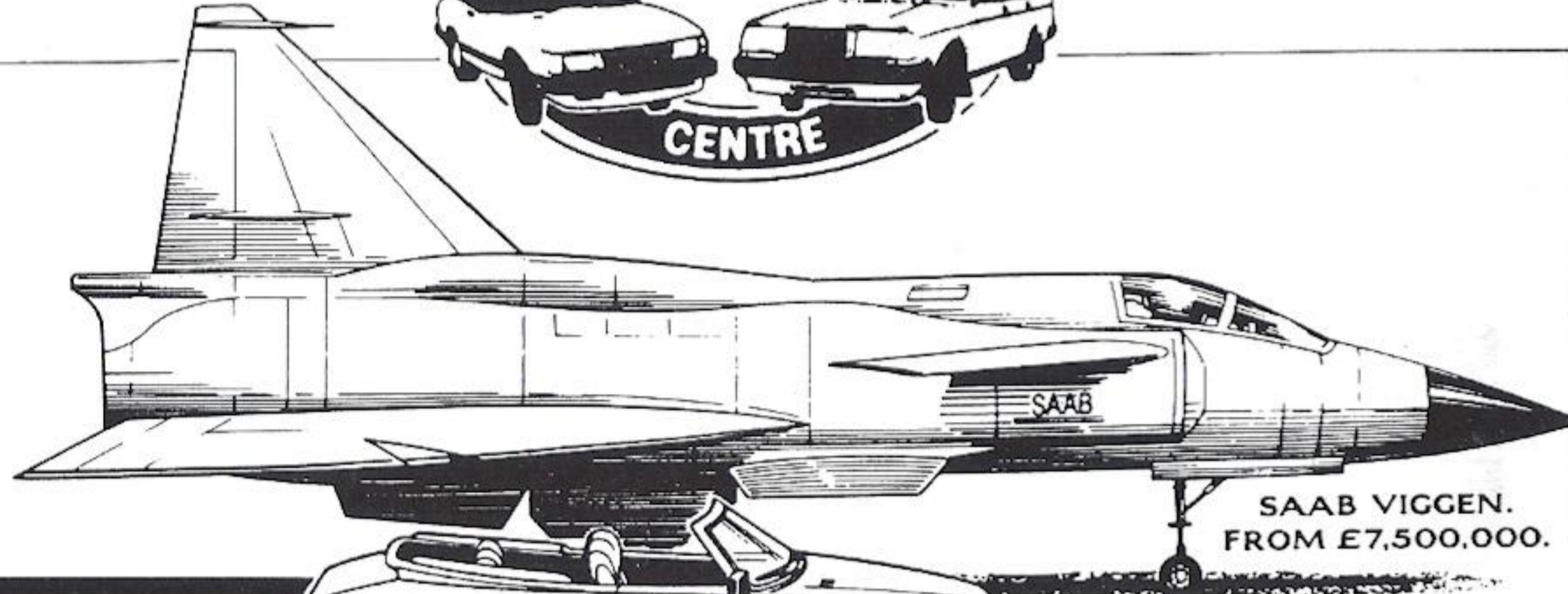


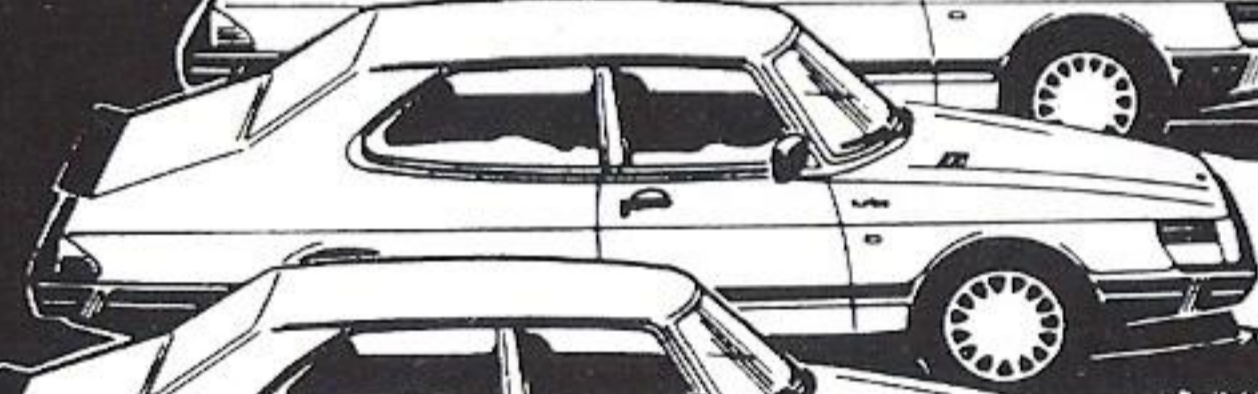
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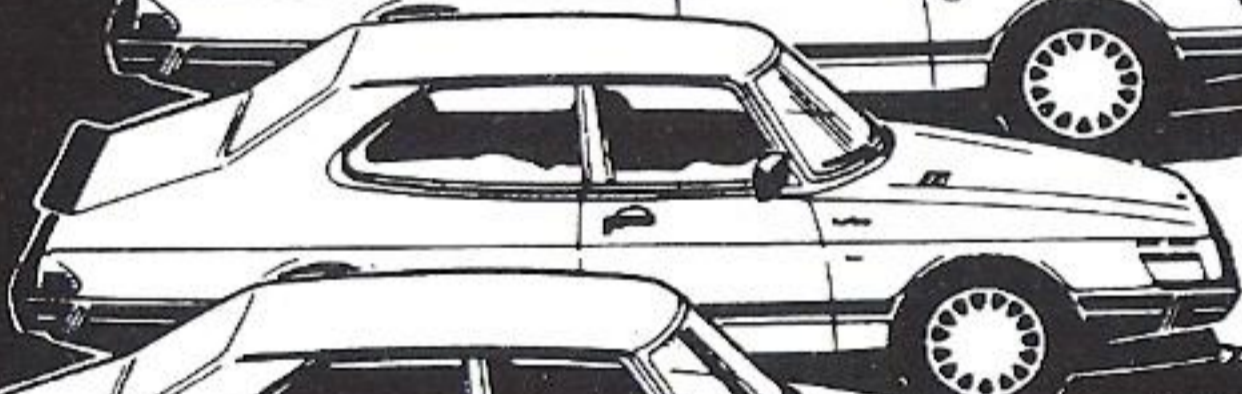
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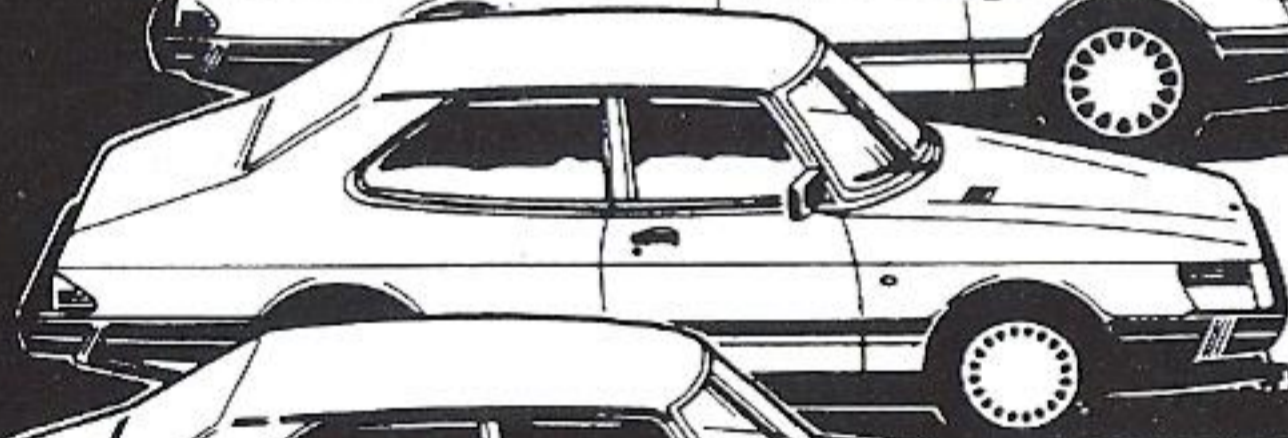
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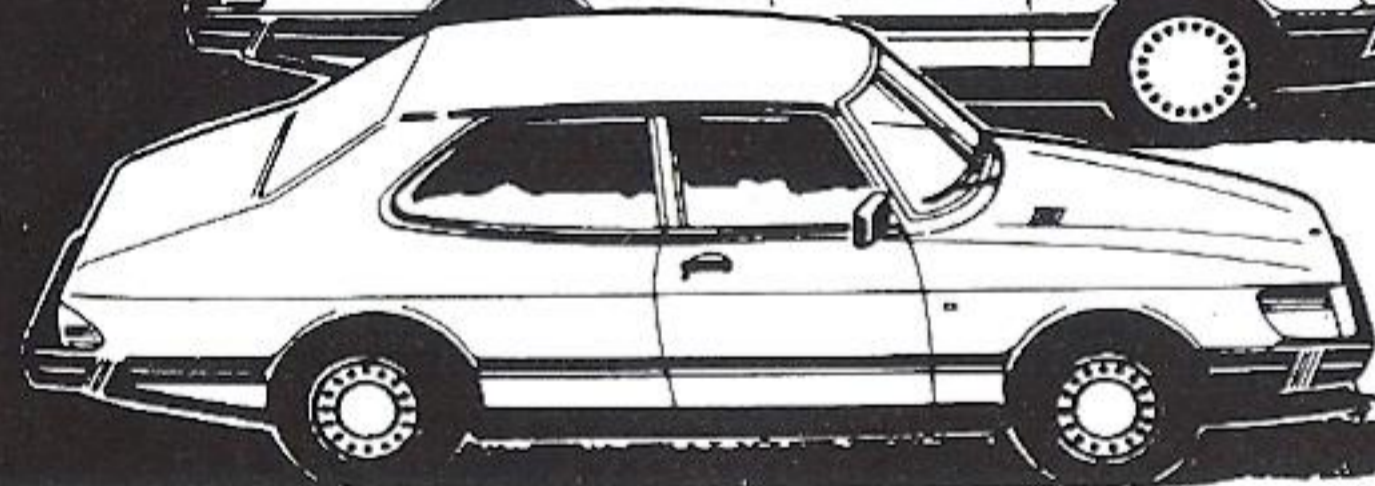
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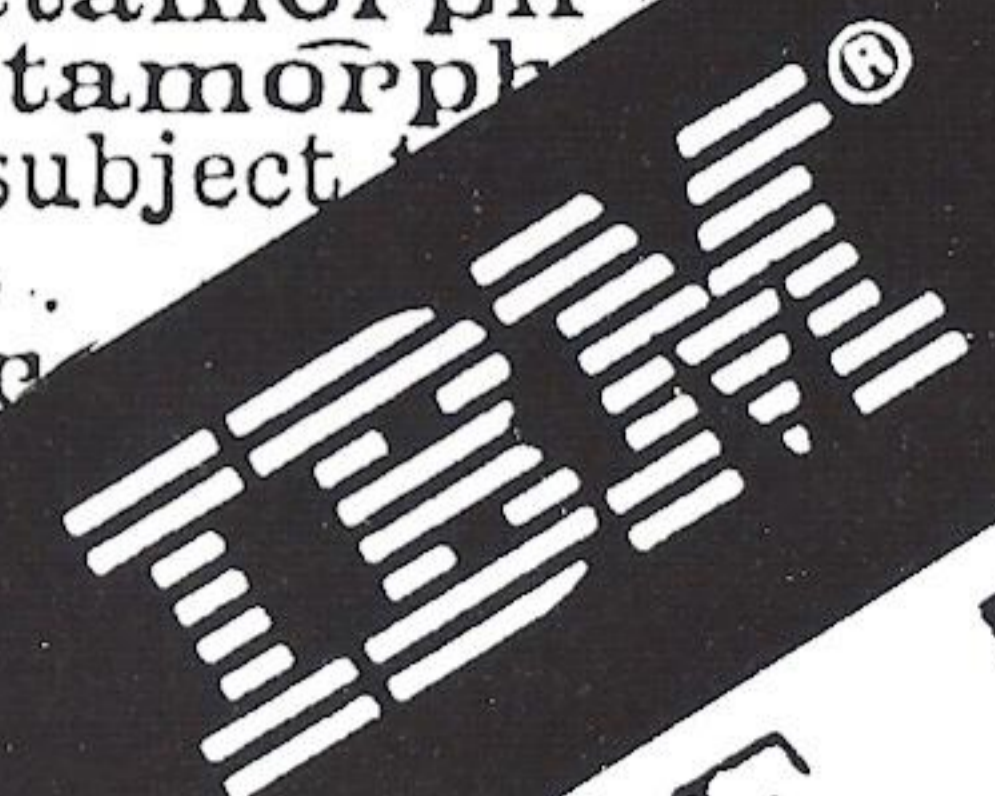
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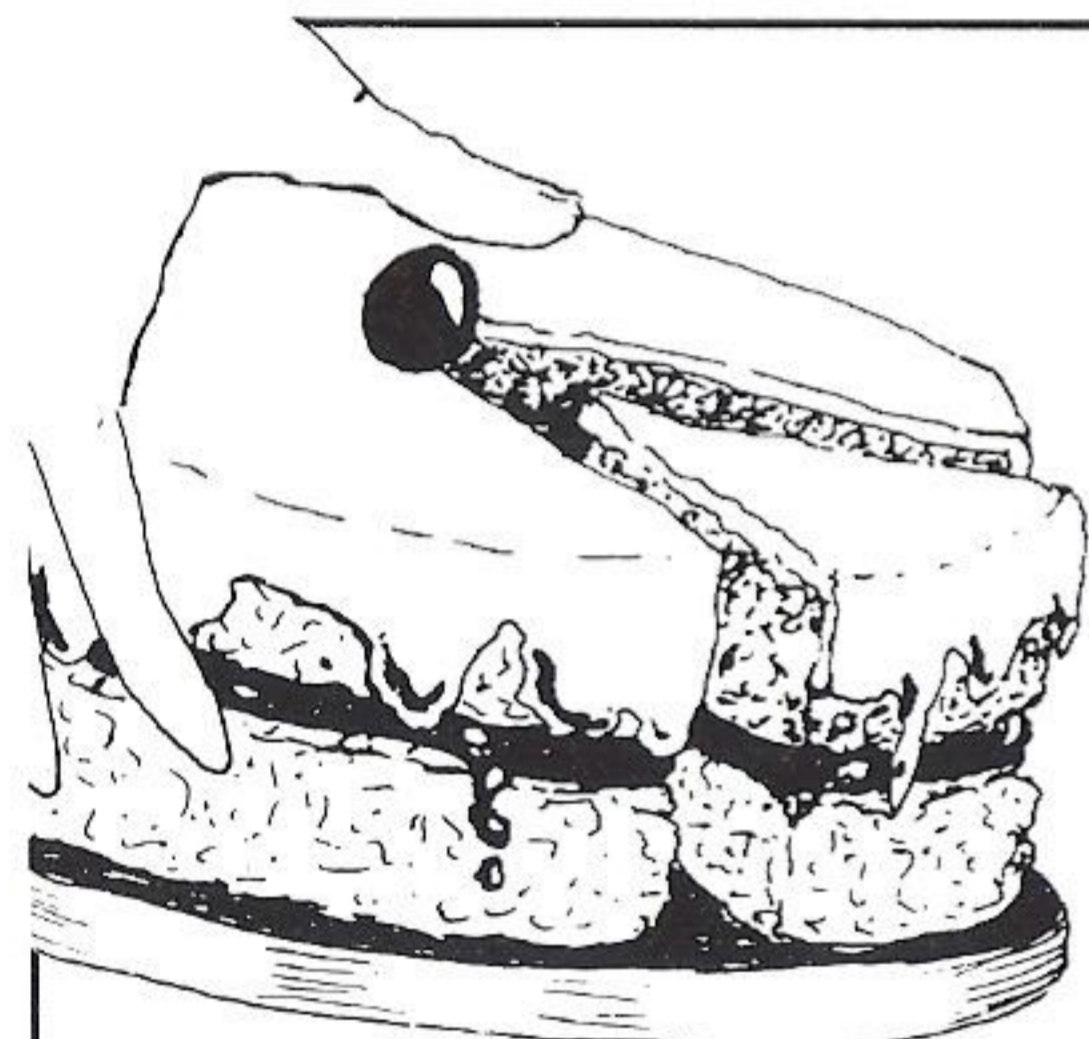
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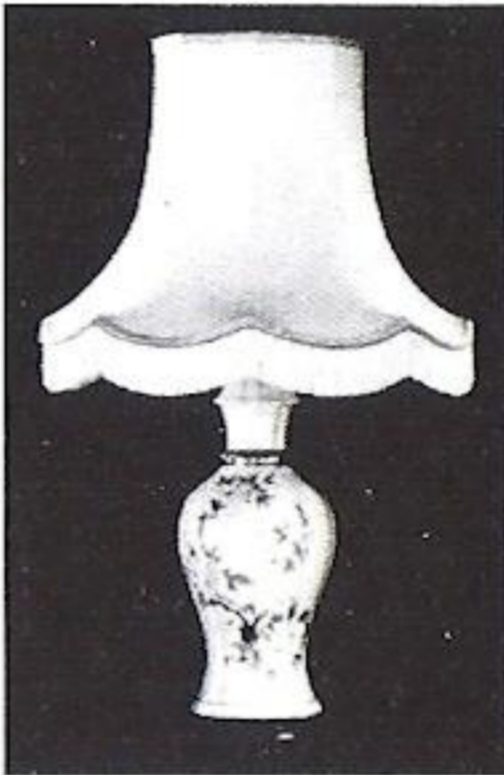
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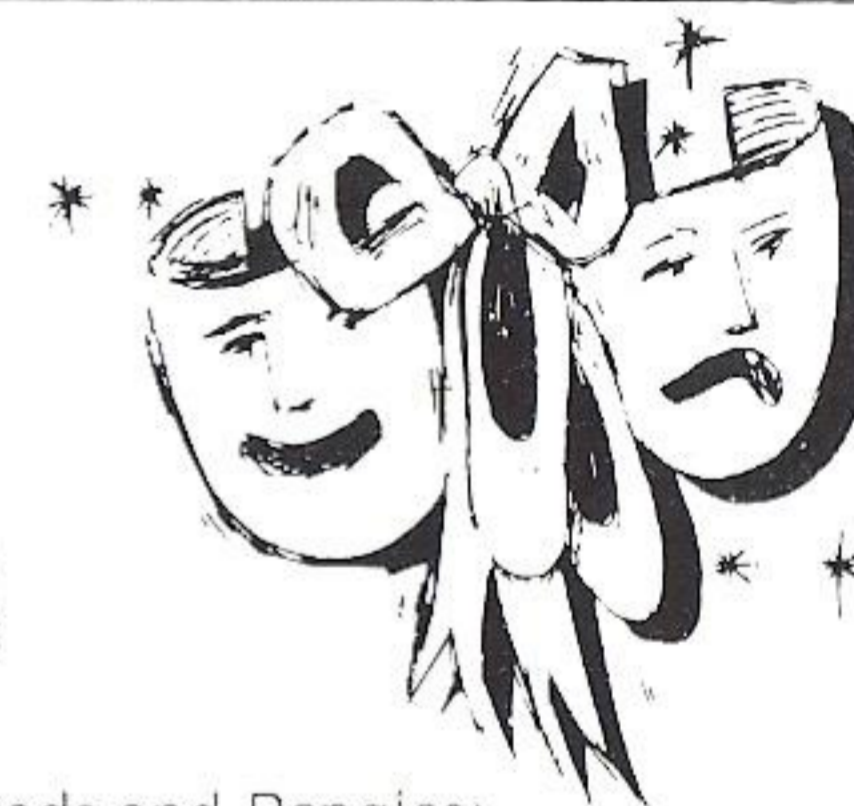
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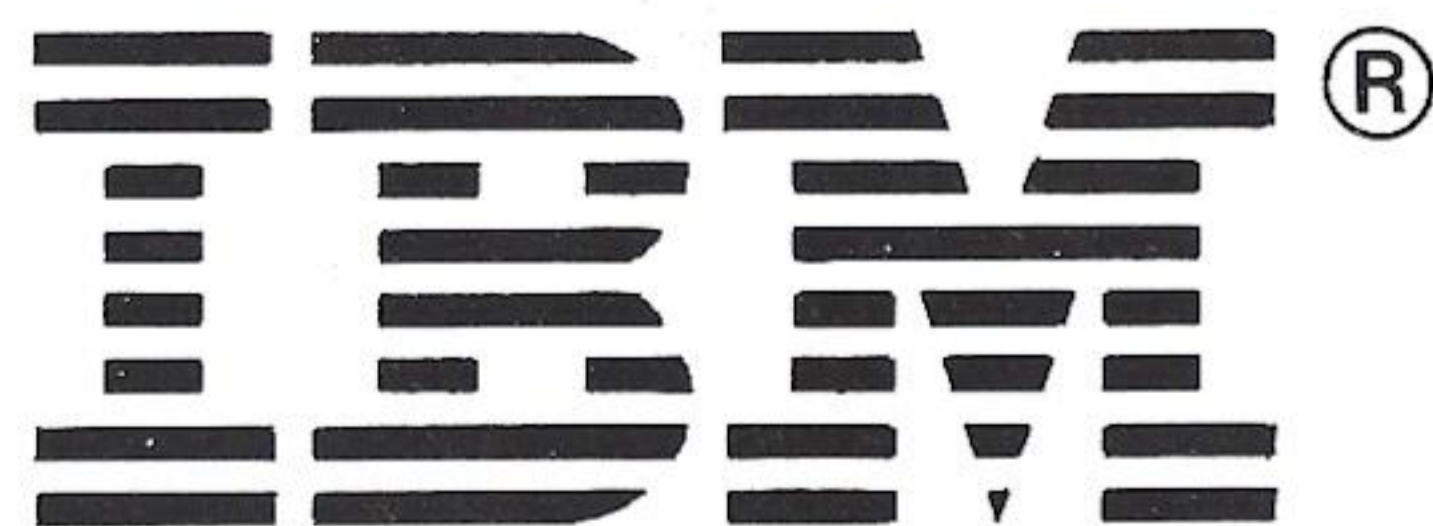


*Once again The Questors is proud to present a new play by a new writer. This year's winner of the £1000 prize in the IBM sponsored Student Playwriting Contest is . . .*

# STATE OF THE ART

by B.F. HERST

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THE QUESTORS PRESENT

1ST PERFORMANCE 4TH JUNE 1988

# STATE OF THE ART

by B.F. Herst  
(winner of the IBM Student Playwriting Award)

Directed by JOHN DAVEY

Designed by RAY DUNNING

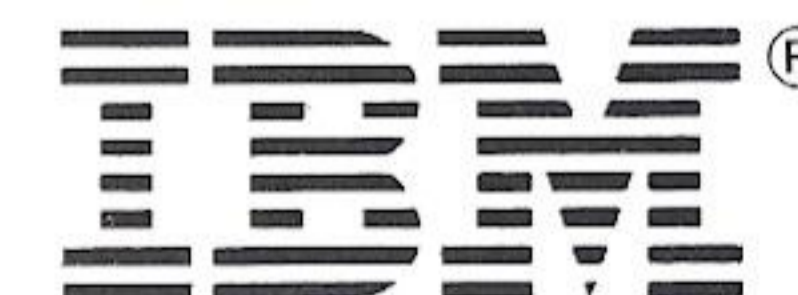
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## STATE OF THE ART

Last December I had my first conversation with Beth Herst. I was in Ealing, she was in Toronto. I had the pleasant task of phoning her to tell her that she was £1,000 the richer, having just been judged the winner of the IBM Award. She accepted the information with what I have since come to recognise as characteristic calm and only the faintest air of disbelief.

At the time all I knew about her was that her name was B.F. Herst (I learnt her first name during the call) that her home address was in Toronto, that in term-time she was studying at Birkbeck College, London, and that she had written a remarkably good play, then titled **The Perils of Metaphor**. Since then in a good many conversations with her I have discovered, amongst other things, that she is a Canadian national, a student of English Literature at the moment working for a doctorate on the heroes of Charles Dickens and that this is her first play. And the play has become **State of The Art**.

To be precise, this is Beth Herst's first TWO plays, for what you will see (or have seen) tonight is the product of two separate pieces which she gradually realised were, in fact, one. Much of its dramatic interest derives from the tension between its two settings; England in 1918, and Toronto in 1988. For the relationship between them, the play will have to speak for itself — as indeed it does with great subtlety and eloquence. One play it undoubtedly is, and a play which has proved fascinating in the rehearsal room. Beth's weekly visits have not only contributed greatly to the accuracy of our Toronto accents, but provided us with valuable insights into her text. During rehearsals Beth has made adaptations, cuts and improvements — but it is a great tribute to the quality of her original dialogue that these have been remarkably few.

Later in this programme I refer to the extraordinary range of work submitted for the Student Playwriting Competition. As a demonstration of this one has only to look at the contrast between last year's winning play, **The Death of Joe Hill** and this year's winner. Joe Hill, was an energetic company show, politically committed, with an engaging roughness and directness. **State of the Art** is as polished and carefully constructed a piece of theatre as you could wish to see. Both plays are fine examples of the quite different qualities which young playwrights are capable of bringing to the theatre.

But the time has come for you to judge for yourself. We hope you enjoy it too.

JOHN DAVEY

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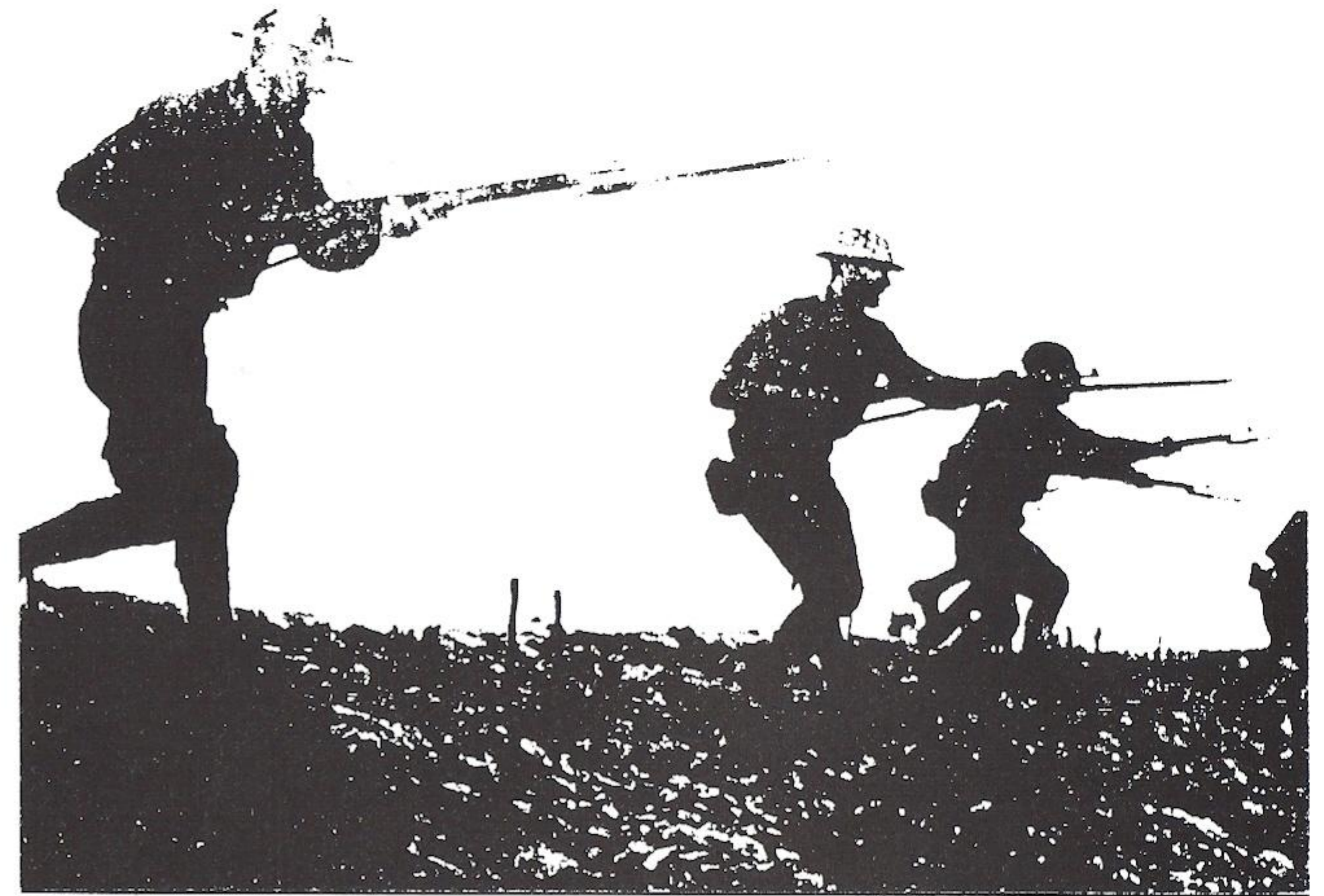
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"The true Canadian achieves self-definition by default"

(Anonymous)

To a would-be-writer, 'born and bred' there, Toronto can sometimes seem less like an independent city than the third point of a triangle, with New York and London completing the figure. For they, to an imagination long fed on borrowed traditions they supplied, are so much more than places — symbols, rather, states of the art the writer seeks to make his own. In London he sees cultural legitimacy, an emblem of the literary achievement to which he aspires, the source of a heritage that was never quite his. In New York he finds affirmation of a different sort in commercial success and the prospect of 'making it'. It is a curious sort of imaginative schizophrenia, but these are the dominant points of his landscape: the city of literary tradition, the city of success. And Toronto is held suspended somewhere between the two, a place to come back to, perhaps, a place once left.

B.F. Herst









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## THE QUESTORS STUDENT PLAYWRITING COMPETITION

When Michael Green first suggested a Student Playwriting Competition in 1985, it was with two aims: firstly, to encourage new young playwriting talent; secondly, to place the name of The Questors very firmly on the map as far as students were concerned and to attract them to our theatre. Only time will tell us to what extent the latter aim has been fulfilled, but there can be little doubt that the former aim has been realised.

Last year's competition — the first — was sponsored by Gestetner, enabling the Theatre to offer a prize of £1,000. Similar generosity from IBM UK Ltd. (no strangers to The Questors) ensured that this year's competition was run on a similar basis. Next year's competition will be sponsored by Waterstones, the booksellers. To all three companies we offer our thanks — but especially, as is only appropriate on this occasion to IBM, who rescued the competition when Gestetner was taken over by another company.

When Michael Green launched the first competition, it was with a great deal of trepidation; friends in the Grapevine nursed him through the agonising wait for the first enquiries and the first entries. In the event his dedication, foresight and industry were amply rewarded when more than a hundred scripts arrived in The Questors office. It was no surprise to find a huge range of style, subject-matter and quality, but it was gratifying to note that most plays had been specially written for the competition. This year we have had entries which were begun (but not completed) for last year's competition, thus demonstrating the value of making it an annual event. I am told that enquiries for next year's competition have started arriving before any fresh publicity has gone out!

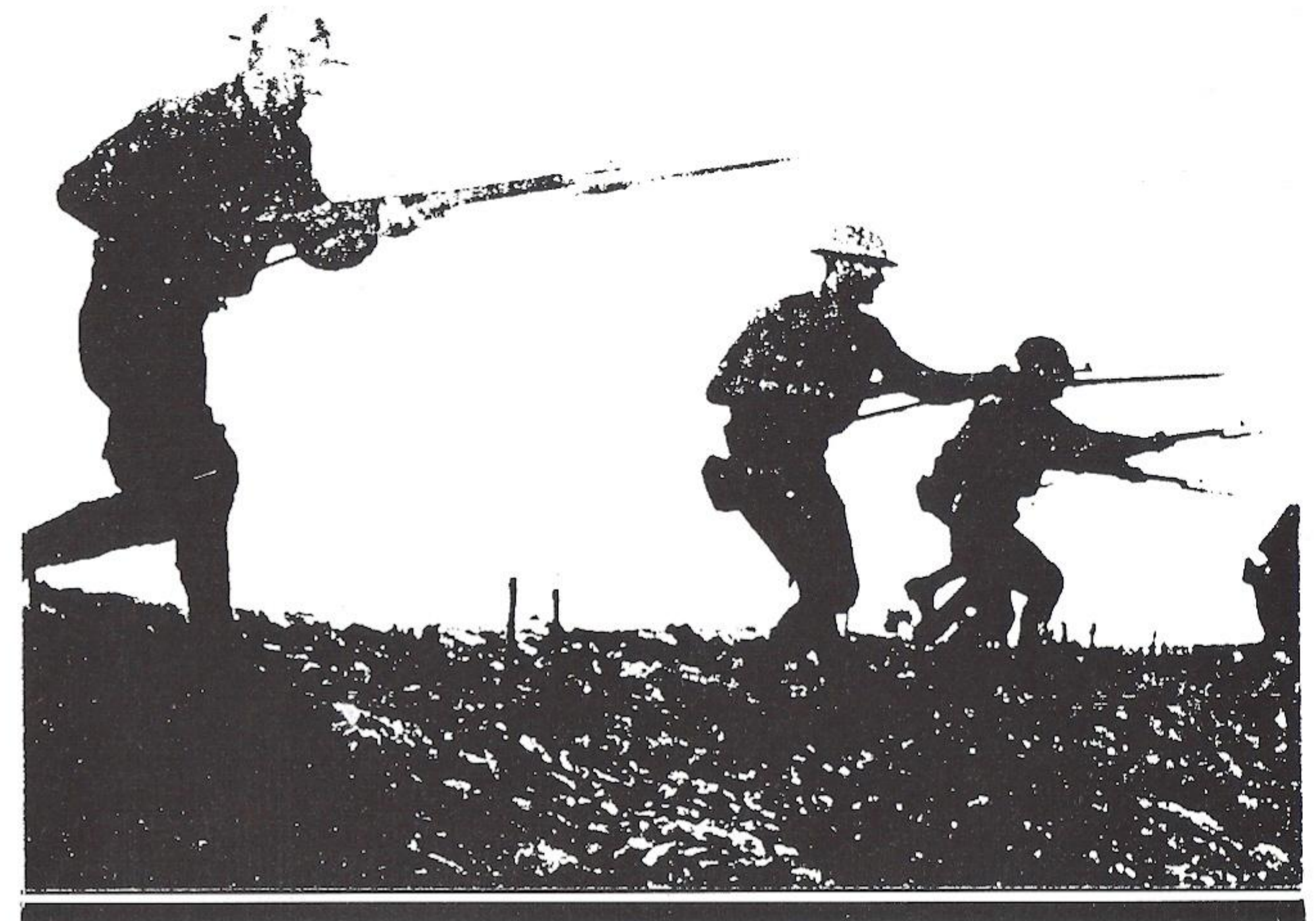
Last year's winning play, **The Death of Joe Hill** by John Fay attracted favourable reviews from the national press when it was performed in the Playhouse in June; it has since gone on to further productions elsewhere. Last year's 'runner-up' (officially there is no runner-up, but the play was too good not to recognise!) **The Brick** by Nigel Swain played in the Studio last season and travels to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August, as part of the Questors presence there, along with tonight's play **State of the Art**. Another entry, Sebastian Baczkiewicz's **The Man Who Shot The Tiger**, was performed in the Studio earlier this season.

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This year's competition attracted slightly fewer entries than last year's (probably a result of our being obliged to run it over a shorter period) but again demonstrated the range and quality of student playwriting. The judges, Dame Judi Dench, Michael Williams and Roger Rees had a difficult task, but eventually picked a worthy winner in Beth Herst with her extraordinarily mature first play. We are very grateful to our judges for their work and delighted that they have agreed to continue in this role for next year's competition.

There is no doubt that the Student Playwriting Competition is providing a valuable opportunity for our young playwrights. The future of the theatre lies with them. The Questors has done much for new writing in the past; by encouraging young writers in the present we trust that we are helping to build that future.







THE QUESTORS THEATRE

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- 1985/86: Abstraction: Analogy & Allusion Exhibition  
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“... tongues in trees, books in running brooks, Sermons in stone...” So Nature writes, manifesting a consciousness on the surface of the planet.

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Are we not resourceful in discovering the Infinite in the brief life of a sub nuclear particle? And in 100 years proved Carlyle wrong by taking delight in its measurement?

But who is holding the mirror up to whom I wonder? Nature or Humanity? Perhaps the mirror is a sheet of clear glass?



THE QUESTORS THEATRE

## COMING EVENTS

### IN THE PLAYHOUSE

#### PRESENTATION OF THE IBM AWARD FRIDAY 10TH JUNE IN THE THEATRE

At the end of the performance on Friday 10th June, in the theatre, MICHAEL WILLIAMS, one of the Judges, PETER ELLIOTT of IBM, will present a cheque for £1,000 to B. F. Herst, this year's winner of the Student Playwriting Competition

There will be another competition next year, this time sponsored by WATERSTONES BOOKS

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