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CORADDI

1975

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Ah, NATURE, who always has her pockets full of seeds
and holes in all her pockets.

Catherine Bergeson

CORADDI

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT GREENSBORO
WINTER, 1975

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JEAN

Cindy Pierce

JANE HUNG UP the pay phone in the dimly lit hall. The weight of her body wanted to pull her through the warped tile floor. "Papa's dead," she said, half to herself and half to Mrs. Hobgood, her landlady, who stood in her doorway, clutching her blue chemise robe at her breasts.

"Oh, dear. Dear, dear," she clucked, putting her pudgy hand on Jean's arm, widening her dull gray eyes. She was short and plumped with soft flesh. "Come in, dear, and I'll fix you a cup of tea."

Jean followed her into the cluttered room and sat on the familiar sofa, unable to cry or say anything. Mrs. Hobgood padded over to the portable TV and switched it off. "Dear, dear," she murmured, putting the teakettle on the stove in the kitchenette and rattling cups. "The Lord knows His Will, He does. An old woman like me what hasn't got much time left in this world; I know. Dear, dear." The teakettle whistled and Mrs. Hobgood brought the

steaming cups in and set them on the magazine table. "Let me put a mite brandy in yours, dear. It will do you good." She poured some in both cups from the bottle on the oak chifonier and replaced it on the dresser scarf. She sat down on the sofa beside Jean and put a cup in her hands.

"They put him in a nursing home. He said he was fine when he wrote last month, living at home. He carved figurines out of wood. He said he was going to try and start a garden; grow tomatoes and maybe some corn." Her eyes glistened with the beginnings of tears. "But they put him in a home and he died."

"Sip your tea, dear," Mrs. Hobgood produced. "Who put him in the home?"

Jean put the cup to her lips and the warm liquid eased the dry ache in her throat. She put her cup down on a stack of Movie Worlds and lit a cigarette from her handbag. She had just come in when the phone rang for her. She still had on the sequined jacket over her black,

low-bodied evening gown. "Flo and her husband. My sister." She had drunk almost a bottle of bourbon that evening but she was sober now. "She wants me to come to Kingston for the funeral. I have to leave tonight."

"But it's after midnight, dear. You can wait 'til morning, can't you?"

"The funeral's tomorrow. She tried to get me sooner, but I was out."

She thought of the night before when she had met Frank for dinner at the restaurant of the Mariatt Hotel. Frank Bryant, catchpenny business man with the Shoe Manufacturers Convention in Washington, D.C., expecting his chance at the booze and women that the big city weekend promised. She was thirty-two years old and finding it hard to compete with the younger prostitutes. But she had her regular customers and she still had a figure. She was in bed, screwing Frank, when her father died. She stood up to leave. "I've got to pack." Mrs. Hobgood trailed her to the door.

"The Lord knows His Will He does. Your daddy's soul is resting in heaven, and nothing for an old woman like me to do but wait for my time. Dear me."

Jean called on the pay phone to find out what time a bus for Kingston, Pennsylvania would leave as Mrs. Hobgood watched from her doorway. She threw the cigarette on the floor and stubbed it out with the flat of her silver pumps. She had been tall, taller than her older sister Flo since her early teens, and never did wear high heels. She called for a taxi, then

hung up and thanked Mrs. Hobgood for the tea.

"Least I could do. You come and get me if you need anything, dear."

Down the hall in her first floor apartment she set her red tote bag on the bed that had not been slept in for two days and emptied it. She undressed and looked at herself in the oval mirror above the cedar bureau. Her flesh-powdered and rouged face seemed to sag horribly after drinking and her eyes squinted under thick mascara. She creamed most of it off and combed her sprayed black hair. There wasn't time for a shower. She went through the clothes in her closet and finally pulled out a plaid suit and green shoes to wear on the bus. She didn't have a black dress and decided the brown flowered one would have to do. She closed the hastily crammed suitcase, lit another cigarette, and stood waiting by the window for the cab to come. She wondered why Flo had been so urgent over the phone, as if she was afraid she wouldn't come. She had not seen her family in five years.

The nine hour bus ride was uncomfortable and she could not sleep. But she thrived on late night hours and was always absorbed into a peaceful communion with the people who frequented the bus stations after dark, roaming here and there, from city to city, searching, eluding, passing. The bus was nearly empty; a young black woman was sitting in the seat in front of her nursing her tiny baby. A sailor slept with his head against the window. The

stations they paused at were deserted except for unshaven old men, leaning against the walls with their bottles wrapped in brown paper bags, or swaggering Negro baggage loaders who talked thickly and spat on the ground. Jean smoked and watched the dark world pass, with only an occasional house or street faintly lit. The red tip of her cigarette was reflected in the bus window. Dawn came and she fell asleep until they stopped to eat breakfast and she changed buses. She never did like Pennsylvania. Papa never liked it either. He had lived on the farm in Oregon all his life. Flo and Howard and Jean had all grown up there. Flo married and moved to Pennsylvania; Howard opened up a drugstore in Michigan. He owned a chain of them now. And Jean had gone, at nineteen, to Hollywood to be an actress. There were so many young girls like her, hopeful and lost in dreams of fame. Some stayed a few weeks and then went home to their boyfriends or secretarial schools. She stayed on, asking Papa to send money when hers ran out, sinking it fruitlessly into acting lessons and dancing tutors. She tried singing, but she spent more time in the unemployment office than she did in coffee houses or at party engagements. Papa just laughed at his "golden girl." He always called her that because she had dyed her hair blonde, like Marilyn Monroe, ever since she was sixteen. "Don't worry, my little golden girl," he had said, "you'll make it, no matter what you try." But Papa couldn't send her any more money. She got a break and toured with

a singing group to Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York. But they weren't attracting enough audiences and decided to replace her with a new singer, leaving her in Washington, D.C. She didn't have the money or the pride to go home. She was twenty-three then.

In the last few years she had written her father infrequent, but cheerful letters and he never failed to write her back, even after the scandal between her and a certain Senator hit the papers. Then he had a stroke and came to Pennsylvania to live with Flo. She had gone to see him; the stroke had paralyzed his legs and she remembered him, lying on the daybed in Flo's crowded apartment. He used to carve wooden dolls for her when she was little and she persuaded him to take up carving again, to keep his hands busy. She had brought a present of a musical jewelry box for her niece Susan, but Flo wouldn't let her accept it. She had fought with her sister and left. That was the last time she had seen her father.

It was 10:00 when the bus pulled into the Kingston station. A short balding man in a smartly tailored suit met her getting off the bus. "Hello, Henry." Flo's husband.

"Called the bus station to see what time the bus from Washington would arrive. Car's this way. Flo's at home." He cleared his throat and took her suitcase. He was distant and cold to her, awkward because of the mistimed death and bringing together of strangers. He was nothing like the jovial, husky football player who had come to court Flo when she

was in her teens. They had gone together three years before they finally got married. The car Henry drove was smooth and expensive, and she thought of the picture Papa had sent her once of the new house of colonial brick with white pillars at the front. Henry had done all right for himself. He did not speak, so she continued to look out the window. The sun was eye-squinting bright. It was a blue sky and green budding spring day. She wondered if Flo would really be happy to see her. Five years had faded away in one phone call. Jean was tired and wanted to take a shower.

“What time is the funeral?”

“1:00.” Henry cleared his throat.

They entered an upper class suburban area and soon came to the house. The driveway arched before it and Henry parked in front of the door. Flo came out. Her sister had gained weight; aged more than she'd expected. Her plump legs goaded the swollen body they supported down the steps. She was draped in a black velveteen dress with chiffon sleeves. Her features were heavy; her hair coiffured and tinted an unnatural deep brown in the sunlight.

“Jean! My word, I thought we'd never get you on the phone. Everyone's here. You can freshen up upstairs in the guestroom.” She ushered her in, only side-glancing at her, leading Jean quickly through the hallway, past the living room filled with people and up the stairs. She felt weak and climbed the stairs behind her sister passively.

“The bathroom's in here. Henry, put the suitcase on the bed. You did bring something else to wear, Jean?” She was regarding her wrinkled green suit in disapproval.

“Yes, I did.”

Flo opened the drapes wider. “You sounded like you didn't want to come when I talked to you last night.”

“Well, no, of course I wanted to be here. It was just late. And the shock. I can't believe he's . . . gone.” She wanted to bring up the home, but hesitated.

“They did all they could for him at the hospital,” Flo reported. “I stayed there all night. Didn't get any sleep. The doctor had warned us he couldn't bear up under a second stroke.” Henry left. She smoothed her dress, unable to look at Jean for more than a few seconds at a time.

She ventured forth something, anything to say. “Papa hadn't written me for a month.” And then finally. “I didn't even know he was in a home.”

Flo anticipated her defensively. “That was Henry and my decision and Papa agreed too. He needed attention, the medical attention he couldn't get here at home.”

“Couldn't you have gotten a nurse for him? To put him in a home . . .” She stopped, knowing she had said the wrong thing the moment it was out.

“I don't really think you have a say in anything, Jean.” Flo spoke in a low, un-wavering voice. “Private nurses are expensive. I

don't recall you or Howard sending any money to help support him. Papa's been living with us for five years. And it isn't as if we dumped him in an asylum. I'm sure he had friends of his own at the home. We saw him as often as we could." Flo's eyes implored her. "I don't think you should be the one pointing a finger at anyone." She turned, irritated at her loss of constraint, and left, her hand kneading her crimson flushed forehead.

Jean sat on the bed, wanting to cry, but she was too exhausted. Why had Flo even bothered to call her, ask her to come? Her sister was right, it was useless to confront the matter now. She wished she was home, in her own bed, away from the whole mess. But Papa was gone.

She got up and washed her face, shut the door, and shed her clothes. The shower would have to wait. She was sitting on the bed putting on hose when there was a light knock on the door. "Who is it?"

"Susan." Her mental picture of a little girl did not identify with the young lady of sixteen, hair flowing below her slim shoulders, who opened the door and walked in.

"Hi," she said shyly.

"Well, hello, Susan." Jean quickly slipped the dress over her head, adjusting it at the waist and zipping it up before she moved forward to give the girl a light hug. "Sit on the bed, I'm just fixing my makeup."

There was silence as she powdered her face in the mirror of her compact. "You look the

same as I remember you, Aunt Jean."

Jean closed the compact and put it back in her purse. "Thanks for saying so, honey. At my age it feels good to hear things like that." Another silence.

"You know, Grandpa wanted to see you so bad." She watched the girl whose eyes were now lowered, fingering the design on the bedspread. "I used to visit him at the home . . . when I could . . . and he asked me to write a letter and ask you to come." She looked up with tears blurring her eyes. "I kept putting it off. I was going to write you this week. But he died."

Jean moved to the bed, wanting to comfort the girl; put her arms around her. She sat down, but the impulse was gone; she remembered herself.

"I'm glad you saw him, kept him company."

The girl stood, waving her arms in a helpless gesture. "Oh, Aunt Jean, I'm awful," she sobbed, twisting her hands before her. "I only visited him once, a few weeks ago because Momma wanted him to have all those wooden dolls he carves on. She didn't like them cluttering up the house. And he looked awful, so old. It smelled horrible there, like medicine and old people. He was in this stuffy little room with only beds and dressers and this withered old man was asleep on the other bed. The man looked dead, his mouth was open and his cheeks so hollow and gray. It was awful but I couldn't help it. I hated to think of going

back there.”

There was a painful constriction in Jean’s throat when she tried to speak. “There’s nothing you could have done. He was just too old. It’s all over now.”

Susan wiped her face with her hand. “You know, when he was home, Grandpa always talked about you, about your acting and the funny things you used to send him. Like that red satin heart-shaped pillow and the Lincoln Memorial bank. We’d look through your scrapbook together and he’d tell me what each clipping and photograph meant. He loved you so much, Aunt Jean.”

Memories unveiled in Jean’s weary mind; things she hadn’t thought about for years. She used to mail him the paper announcing a summer stock play she was in, even though it didn’t mention her name. She’d send postbills, cocktail napkins from places she sang at, even sugar packets. He had showed the album to her once and she had been embarrassed at the trivia displayed on its yellowed pages. “I know he must have loved you, too, Susan.” She got up from the bed. “Come on. We’d better join the others now.”

Downstairs the living room was filled with people she did not know. Susan left to help the black maid bring out the buffet lunch from the kitchen. Flo had seen her, but didn’t come over to introduce her to anybody. She stood around wanting a cigarette, but no one was smoking and she hadn’t seen an ashtray anywhere. She felt as if they all knew who she was

and were talking about her. She felt shamed by these people, as if she should apologize to them for what she was, for not having a black dress, for being absent so long. Papa’s gone.

She was saved from wilting further by a handsome man in his mid-twenties.

“David!”

“Hello, Aunt Jean.” He embraced her.

“Where’s Howard? I don’t see him.”

“Dad couldn’t make it.” He took a sip from his drink, avoiding her eyes. “Can I get you something to drink?”

“I would like some bourbon if Flo’s got it.”

“I didn’t see any over there. How about some gin and tonic?”

“That’s fine.” She hated gin.

So Howard hadn’t come. She wasn’t surprised. He’s never gotten along with Papa. He had been ashamed of being a country boy and had left the farm to live with a doctor in town when he was only fourteen. Papa had to hire a young Mexican to help out with the chores and wouldn’t let Howard come home. Sometimes Jean would visit him after school and he would treat her to a sundae at the drugstore where he worked. It was all so long ago.

David returned with an ice-clinking glass. He changed his stance uncomfortably. “I think Dad really wanted to be here, but his stubbornness wouldn’t let him. Even Mom couldn’t convince him.”

Jean couldn’t recall the last time she had seen David. She hadn’t come to his college

graduation, though she'd been invited. Papa had been so proud that he was the first in the family who had gone to college, though he'd never admit it was because of Howard's money. She sipped the gin. "You're with that law firm in Detroit, aren't you?"

"Yes, I've been there a year and I think they're considering making me a junior partner. But I don't know. I'd like to find something more fulfilling. Maybe setting up my own firm in the poorer district. I have Kassy to think about, so I don't want to make any sudden moves. It's been pretty hard without Diane."

Jean remembered Diane, David's wife. She was killed two years before in a car accident. 'How old is Kassy now?'

'She'll be three in July.' He pulled out his wallet and showed her a picture of a pert red-haired child. He held in his hand a tattered photo of a young red-haired woman that had come out with the other picture. 'I was going to bring Kassy down this summer to see her great-grandad.' His face saddened as he replaced the photos.

She held the neglected drink stiff-handedly. "Who are all these people?"

"Most of them are friends of Aunt Flo and Uncle Henry. I take it Gramps didn't have many friends. I think just Mrs. Mendenhall over there." He nodded towards a handsome old woman in a wheelchair. 'Like to meet her?'

David escorted her over to Mrs. Menden-

hall and introduced them. She leaned forward and squeezed Jean's hand between her cold bony hands. "I'm pleased to meet you, Jean." She smiled. "Your father talked a great deal about you." A helplessness crept over her as she stood there, feeling her father's presence in this old woman. It was as if she had not realized until that moment what an effect she had had on him. Her life seemed so incomplete and unfulfilled. She had not even married and given him grandchildren. He had known her mistakes, yet loved her. If only she had come to see him in five years. If only she had known they had put him in the home. She felt worn out, useless, alone. Papa was gone.

The maid announced lunch and they approached the buffet. She was too dejected to eat. Afterwards they left in several cars for the funeral, however most of the people did not follow. The church was Henry and Flo's Baptist church, although Papa had been Lutheran all his life. The casket was closed, but they asked her if she would like to see him. She said no.

The eulogy was detached; delivered by a strange minister paid to say 'he was good, kind, and gentle' about a man he did not know. Flo cried openly as Henry comforted her, but Jean only sat there, next to Susan and David, staring at the alien coffin. He hated Pennsylvania. It was not until now that it occurred to her that he would be buried there, in some Baptist cemetery, far from his wife's grave. Her mother had died when she was

eight; she had a heart attack and died in the kitchen of their Oregon farmhouse. Papa was with her now—somewhere. She became aware of organ music. The service was over and they left the church.

“Where is the cemetery Papa will be buried in?”

“Papa isn’t being buried,” Flo said, blowing her nose on Henry’s white handkerchief. “The body is to be cremated and the urn of his ashes will go to you, Jean. It’s in his will. There’s also about \$500 from his pension and his few personal belongings. That’s all. That’s all he had and he’s given it all to you.”

Jean’s eyes surveyed the quiet street, fixing on no one visible object. Flo’s urgency in the phone call was clear to her now. Her attendance was necessary only for the final unloading of Papa out of their lives, their concern, and their fine suburban home. Papa had been no more to them than a burdensome old man with childish dreams of a garden. Henry brought the car around and she watched her sister get in. It was only when David touched her arm that she followed down the steps and entered the back seat.

She didn’t stay the night. She packed her suitcase and asked Flo to use the \$500 to have his ashes flown back to Oregon and scattered about the grave of their mother. The red satin pillow, the scrapbook of her clippings and photos and Papa’s other trinkets she left with

Susan. Curiously, they found none of his carved dolls except for one, a wooden figurine of a young girl. Jean put it in her jacket pocket. She kissed Susan goodbye and promised to write. Henry was upstairs and did not come down. Flo’s lips touched her cheek dutifully and David drove her to the bus station.

‘I’d like to come visit you this summer, Aunt Jean, and bring Kassy. She’d love to meet you.’

“I think it’d be better if I came to see you, David, and this little girl of yours. And I will.” She turned to look out the window so he would not see the tears.

She smoked on the bus and watched the sun set in the pink and orange sky. A college boy sat across the aisle from her, his duffel bag on the seat beside him. An elderly black couple spoke in low tones to each other. Night came and the bus rumbled on. Frank would be gone when she got back, home in Maryland with his wife and children. Mrs. Hobgood would complain about her bursitis. The night comforted her and she thought about the familiar bars, the hotter nights of June, and bourbon. She opened the window for air.

She felt the smooth wooden figurine in her pocket and pulled it out. She leaned her left hand out the window and let it go. My golden girl. It was somewhere, no where, caught in the infinite night. But she had made sure it was not in Pennsylvania.



SPINNER MOON

Marilynn Byerly

Skein of moon dwindles
 Three maidens spin
Sun blood to sun blood
Beginning end beginning
Spindle returns
Maidens spin moonlight
Blood of birth
 blood of death
Spindle returns
Tear of man, tear of moon
 The ripping asunder
Skein of moon dwindles
 Maidens spin
 thread ends;
In darkness maidens return skein
 To sea
 Moon rises
Maidens spin

MONSTER NIGHT AT THE MOVIES (DOUBLE FEATURE)

Marilynn Byerly

It is a dark and stormy night on the Pacific
A freighter foghorns into camera range—
A Japanese sailor with bad lip sync smiles.
A huge tenacle slips through the door
And loops, like a bean sprout gone mad
To crush him like a cheap trinket.

I beg to leave but am glued
Like my soft-drinked feet
By a promise to little brother
Yawning, kids sit scattered like careless
Waiting to see Tokyo rise like a phoenix
Between one monster movie and the next.

Gargantua—the giant gorilla
Calmly munches a screaming policeman
And spits out his uniform like a kernel.

Home safe again the nine-year old
Goes right to bed.
In the distance a truck roars,
A shadow lurks and
The curtains shakes throwing shadows;
I spend hours deciding
If my night light attracts monsters.

THE GAME

Marilynn Byerly

Darts of love, Cupid's monopoly--
I spy you.
Poker-faced I don't play your game.
Hearts play solitaire,
Hide and seek to avoid the rook,
Leap frog the rummy end.
Spin the bottle at your own risk,
Red Rover, don't call me over the bridge.
Go fish, I remain the old maid.
Pin the romantic tail on another donkey;
Tag the apssionate tic-tac-toe
Ping pong heart to some blind man
Bluff him with charades;
Blackjack him like a one-armed bandit;
Dice his brains to scrabble.
Rule at someone else Redhearted Rover,
I spy you.
Darts of love, Cupid's monopoly--
Poker-faced, I don't play your game.

DUSK

Marilynn Byerly

The spring fall of the sun
Closes to darkness
Like the velvet lids
Of a drowsy Cheshire cat
Until all disappears
But the crooked smile
Of the moon.



LANGUAGE RAID! THIS IS NO DRILL!

Amon Liner

I

The tube creates the pattern
that cannot fail: junkpoem
for our time: seriocomic family tragedy
with all the intersections mapped
for all those intersection-loving entities.

II

If I fail, no pattern fails:
poem junk rattles down the slope:
cops & robbers, linguistic bones,
rubble, I say, the shred of I
will bloom at the intersection

III

of melting snow and test pattern:
one dark pine against the light,
concentric circles surround the crosshairs,
everybody's darkness is where
that bullet is aimed, O loving entities

IV

of the adult westerns, no need to snicker
at the broadcloth blossom of the Idea,
no need to snake that gun from the leather;
your pattern is safe; it's the parson and the
star commander that ride into the sunset, the sun
the mere word.

REVIEW OF A CONCEPTUAL ART EXHIBITION

Amon Liner

Congratulations! You have proposed it as it is—stupefyingly dull. Congratulations! Like the mid-Victorians, you have met Reality head-on and she is yours unvanquished. Congratulations! You have added only 3 coats of heavy varnish—to immortalize you. Now it is safe.

Pieces of words. Film. Lines a propo. You have arrived where everyone is going. Now that you have yout there, how are you going to get there?

Information in a variety
of text-conditioners. In three
reaction languages.

Break open the postcard window,
as Walt Whitman said,
let in the five cent air.
Given this 20th day of
the resurrection of
Frederich Barbarossa
next year in Tokyo.

(to be seen in a rising
shout, glistening like
sea-foam in the subway)

Helas! Jerusalem!

OBJECTS (Objectified)

Amon Liner

Sixteen glittering and one dusty
bumpers pass the unloading zone
next to the outdoor arts festival.
In a space of forty-three minutes,
the auction of the self-destruct,
silver-flake, customized machines
occurs under the cold blue
apparent dome of the troposphere.
A few people, their noses red
as thin arterial blood, get all excited
as the discovery made at
twenty-seven past the hour.
They turn up their collars
and crowd into the street,
obstructing traffic
to get a better look.

Parked across the unloading zone,
the driver of the blue-panel truck
is dead at the wheel. Since
he didn't fall on the horn
as he died, nothing happened.
At least for a while,
December continued as a natural season,
and under the polished blue,
the people continued to pass
in an M & M configuration:
Meat & Machinery
having a decorous ball.
The driver was twenty-three
and saw his whole windshield pass before him
as he died.



Midtown Fort

Walton / All Systems Gone

TOM HUEY

AT NINE ON THE DOT, for the first time in a month, he was fully dressed; a creme-colored three-piece Palm Beach light-weight suit, a peach Dior silk shirt with six-inch collars, a newly blocked Dobbs Panama with a gangster brim and a raw green paisley band, and stud black, close-ankled cowboy boots, a blooming orange cactus on each two outer sides. He reckoned he must now find old no-name, rent a Pinto, spot a dock-bar posh enough to set them up a month in advance plus free daiquiris, shish kibob, rented floods, a strobe for Malla, Kustom amps, and a Country Gentleman with light guage strings for him to lullaby with. And they better have color A screen, the Golden Vista, to illuminate their solos and a Blacklist for reds and charter-boat captains who haven't bathed in a week. And a request for faggot-types and hustlers from Atlanta to primp in the lighting for pickups. A Watusi contest and nostalgia via the Frug. And extras to grace the

stage and a Mount Everest backdrop with sherpas facing the crowd. "We'll bill ourselves as 'Hilary and his abdominal Snowman,'" Spec said. "Make the coon do his act in an albino gorilla suit. Swathe my hands in Ace Bandages and do the wheelchair circuit. "Don't give up hope folks. This young man nearly lost both hands in a deep-fryer, but listen how he plays like liquid gold. And let's have a big hand for the trained monkey. 'No, don't be afraid, he loves paraplegics. Give generously when he passes the cup. Ask him anything, he's also known as Mr. Knowledge.'" . . .

. . . A steady pounding at the door, rhythmical jungle beats, like hands on drums backing Watusi fertility rites.

"Come in."

Malla Pierce entered grinning gap-toothed. He was dressed in Bermudas, long sleeved orange polo shirt, tennis shoes, smeared sailor cap pulled down over his ears.

"I was gonna see if you's done all right an'

I guess you haf. Shoooooot!”

“Let’s go on outta here and get a drink and book us up somewhere, okay?”

“Well.” Pierce was goggled. “I’m off, but I dunno. What you mean, ‘book us?’”

“Don’t ask so many questions. You talk too much.”

“Unh-hunh. Okee-dokee.”

“Can you twist yourself up to ‘Don’t Be Cruel?’”

“Unh-hunh.”

“Then let’s go.”

SPEC AND MALLA walked down the narrow, shagged, spiral ramp, past four drooping cockatoos caged in a mesh trash can, hung and painted marlin, sea bass, right to the bottom. A thirteen-foot high mahogany door, bullseyed with a mahogany steam boat wheel was halfway opened. A stocky man in a Nehru coat and captain’s hat introduced himself in Dixified Brooklynese, “The Ol’ Seadog Himself.”

“Welcome to the Crow’s Nest, Mr. Galt, Mr. Pierce. I bet you felt like you were Santa Claus coming down the ol’ chimbley, hunh? Hah. Well, just step in here and talk it over.”

He lead them into his office. It was shaped like a sandblasted semicircle, complete with one-way glass facing the Tiki Room; there a giant Chigro who had quit the Sumo Circuit was playing a piano that was part mother-of-

pearl, part soft-glo bar, part aquarium. Spec saw himself on the set of some avant-garde silent underwater movie, in charge of staging the fish wars. In fact, he would have not been surprised if the Chigro had floated from his seat and risen through the thatched roof for air.

“The Ol’ Seadog” stood behind his semi-circular desk. Was he on the bridge of the *S. S. France*, preparing a sounding, new Muzak for First Class, and a round of Napoleon Brandy? He tapped the formica and cleared his throat. “Hey. Wow. How do you like it! Hey, look. You just call me ‘Ol’ Harry,’ that’s my real name. Harry Blatogowitz. Jewish Hungarian. Parents still over there. They seem to like it . . . Well. Hey. Wow. Got your call through Rolfe and it sounds pretty damn boss to me. This kind of act could really go over, especially when we got Volcano Weekends. Hey. We could even dress *him* up in a fire-breather’s suit and get him limbo around among de crowd. Hey. Oh yeah! Or get you a steel guitar and some broad to belly dance. Do you play any Don Ho? Sorta mix up the routine, you know? It’s really a melting pot here, and you guys gonna give it a real, what’s dat word, yeah, *potporri* feelin’. I do think, however, that “Hilary and His Abdominal Snowman” will have to go—*for the time bein’*. OKAY? How ‘bout the, uh, yeah. How ‘bout *‘The Luau Duo’*. Yeah! Or maybe, ‘Captain Hook and His Rubber Native?’”

“Oh I like that,” Spec said. “How about you, Malla?”

“Unh-hunh.”

“Oh yeah, by the way, I took the liberty of bringing you a letter of recommendation from my manager at Southeastern Attractions, just to set it straight in the book.”

“Okay. Okay.” ‘Ol’ Harry’ put the letter in his drawer. “Look ‘round! Do ya like it? This is what I call ‘The Half-Moon Room’. Ya see it’s shaped like—”

“A semi-circle,” Spec said. He felt a rush of girder-line phobia. He sat down in a clear plastic chair that was shaped like a hollow pear, lit a Pall Mall between his legs, said, “Can we start next week?”

“Sure! Sure, the soonah the beddah. Hey. Wow. You look kinda pale. You want a drink or something?”

“That sounds good.” He swiveled to face the bar and looked at the flourescent line of bottles shining off the shelf in front of yellow and black print dragonflies. He thought he was asleep when he saw Redloter. He wore a translucent green printer’s visor pulled low over his sunburned forehead. He was reading a menu, sipping on a straw stuck down a pineapple painted like a barber’s pole. A periwinkle lei was his napkin; it hung around his neck. He too appeared to be asleep.

“Redloter, I’m in here!” Spec yelled. The room was sound proof.

“Hey. Wow. Hold it, Spec, yeah. Now listen, if you wanna make contact with dis guy you come over here and do it the *right* way.”

‘Ol’ Harry’ pulled a sequined conch-shell, the size of a cornucopia, from his bottom drawer, yanking telephone cord out with it.

“Come here. Talk into dis, but don’t yell, it’ll blow their fuckin’ eardrums out there. *Intercom*, ya’ know?”

Redloter sat beneath a Lucite sunscreen that ran in an arched oblong directly above the Island Bar. He couldn’t decide between Navy Grog or the Bora Bora Fever Blister. He looked through the sunscreen and saw the early evening stars come awake, snow blossoms from a distance. The old sky, he thought. First star I see tonight. Tell me to pick up Spec after a few or wait and call him up tomorrow. Will this Bora Bora Blister keep my peeling down?

Just as Redloter canned the Bora Bora idea and made up his mind on a double Wild Turkey, two cubes—no chaser, some phantom on the rheostat flipped the plugmold, raised the secondary floods embedded in the bar to such a glare that his triangular face glowed like a radio tower minus the red caution beepers. Spec watched Redloter lay his hands on the bar. Redloter examined his bones as closely as if they were his own X-rays. Some timbre there, Spec figured. An artist’s hand for sure. Or the photograph of some spook’s mitt severed from the arm, stuck in the display case to model jeweled Shriners’ rings, I.D.s, serpentine bracelets. Redloter scanned his reflection in the curving mirror behind him. Eye sockets deeper than mine, Spec thought. God, look at his hollow-ass peasant face! Look at his jaws! The cheekbones of a clergyman circuit riding 1830’s peat bogs, saving nobody, stopping at the pub for a stout and bowl. And what thoughts have been separated from his frontal

lobes and now shine in the aura around his hair?

“Waitress!”

The clangor of a preamp warming. Music from the spheres, “Surfin’ Safari”? No. Amplitude rose like an electrical storm. Somebody switching the inputs. Some ghost haunting the channels, dicking with a cassette?

Then Spec’s voice, softly, sounding recorded, muted, from a star bright or a quasar further out: “Red, Red, it’s me. You can’t see me, but I can see you. I’m in the Half-Moon Room. You’re looking straight at me, idiot.” Redloter waved at himself. “That’s right. I’m at Control Central. I must sound like God out there. I’m coming down.”

Redloter grabbed Spec in the middle of the tiny teak dance floor. They bear-hugged, floundered back into an unlit smudge pot shaped like the skull of a beachbomber, then walked through the slowly weakening light to a table in the corner next to a porthole smeared with aqua finger-paint waves. Two grey gulls dipped for garbage outside, their movement sliced between the fake water until an updraft lifted them through the floodlights and up into the real night.

“Well, where is she?” Spec asked.

“She’s in the bathroom. She’d have probably taken her suitcase in there and changed if she’d known you were going to be here. But what I’ve got to know is how are *you*?”

“Colorless. Odorless.” Spec leaned over and thumped his ear, shook back his hair. “We’re supposed to work in this place starting next week.”

“Who’s ‘we’?”

“Me and this black guy who does rubber man tricks.”

“You’re kidding. You better forget that for a while and come up to the river with us. You look like shit. Anyway, you promised.”

“I know, I know.”

“Look, you can get booked in up there. You know that. They’ll book you anytime you say, anyplace.”

“Yeah.”

“Well?”

“I probably need to do that. I feel bad. This afternoon when I woke up both my ears were bleeding. I still can’t hear straight. I’m dizzy too.”

“You’re coming with us. That’s all there is to it.”

“Well, you back and tell ‘The Ol’ Seadog’ we’re cancelling.”

“Okay. The WHO? ‘Ol’ Seadog’? Where’s he at?”

“Back there,” Spec said, pointing to the curved mirror. “He sees all, knows all. He even controls the humidity from in there. He’s like a Wizard of O—”

Then he saw her. Channele. Deep brown, in a black half-top, the kind she wore for him way back when. She cruised down the ramp, hardly using her legs, like on an escalator seen from the side. Staring him down . . . now smiling as if she could not place his face yet wanted to . . . right up to his side . . . looking at Redloter bring the drinks over from the bar . . .

Telekinesis, Spec thought. ‘The Ol’ Sea-

dog' can will people here from the Half-Moon Room. Transport them on a cloud. Rebuild their bodies in a tellurium room. Send them down the ramp and into my lives.

"Spec? Spec, I want you to meet Travelodge Sleeping Bear. Travelodge, this is Spec Galt. Spec, this is Tra—"

"Sit down, Chanelle," Spec whispered. He looked through the portal at nothing. "Tell me how you've been."

"My name's Travelodge, Spec." She had Chanelle's low-note monotone purr. "I'm mighty glad to meet you. Red's told me so much a—"

"Listen, goddamnit, I don't know what you're trying to do to me, but let's get it straight. Chanelle is sitting next to me. She's swapping lies with you. Do you still go by the name Redloter? What have you done, given her *shock*? I'm the one that needs that! Now tell me the way to play this game and maybe I'll join in."

"This is Travelodge Sleeping Bear. She doesn't know Chanelle, much less have the ability to be her."

"You've seen Chanelle, haven't you?"

"You only told me about her, remember? I was in Tuscaloosa all that time."

"Well." He talked louder. He pushed his fingernails into the table, removing chunks. He ground the whitewash wall with his toe. "YOU'RE LOOKING AT HER GODDAMN FACE RIGHT NOW, UNDERSTAND, THIS IS THE BITCH!"

The Chigro piano player, on a break, slid

to their table. He tapped Spec on the shoulder and shook his head.

"No shout like this, and cuss, please, okey, mon?"

Spec faced him, groined him once with his Hightalian toe and jumped on his bent neck backwards. He rode him like a bull in a hammerlock around the room. Then the Chigro rammed him into the series of shellacked mizzenmasts that supported an orange canvas canopy over the salad bar, the quasi-tent toppled on them both and they fell beneath the poles. Crawling out a v-crease, thousand island covering his suit, Spec waited at the opening with his fists tight, misjudged the Chigro's charge, fell backwards onto the dance floor. 'The Ol' Seadog', trying to quell the melee with stern orders from the Half-Moon Room, punched the wrong button, and filled the place with steam-jungle sounds—bird calls, cat calls, double whoopees, chimpanzee laughter, Tarzan's swinging love hoot from vine to vine, an erupting volcano's burble do blurp splot, voodoo rhythms from steel drums.

Malla Pierce had quietly observed the fight while drinking a Ballantine at the bar. But now he took the tape as his cue. Leaping from the stool, he reached the Chigro's wet backside just as he was in the process of bluefacing Spec with a ceremonial choke hold. He carefully wrapped himself around the Chigro's neck using his "Loggerhead Special".

"I'm thundadeath! I'm thundadeath, you greasy son-of-a-bitch!" Pierce yelled. He tried tightening his lopsided grip. "You betta loose

yo hol' or I'm on to take yo tongue outta socket! I'm on nevah let yo ass go!"

Redloter pushed Travelodge into the corner. He ran to the bunch when Pierce commenced his number, a flustered referee trying to break a Boston Crab before the old ladies climb into the ring with their knitting needles. He danced around them, slid down on the teak, and with his cheek next to Spec's, said, "Tell him you're sorry! Tell him you're sorry, before they kick all of our asses in the shit house!"

But the Chigro blacked out, careened over, cushioned by Pierce's butt and back. The ruckus was over.

Spec looked comatose. His cheeks were blue knots and he lay still.

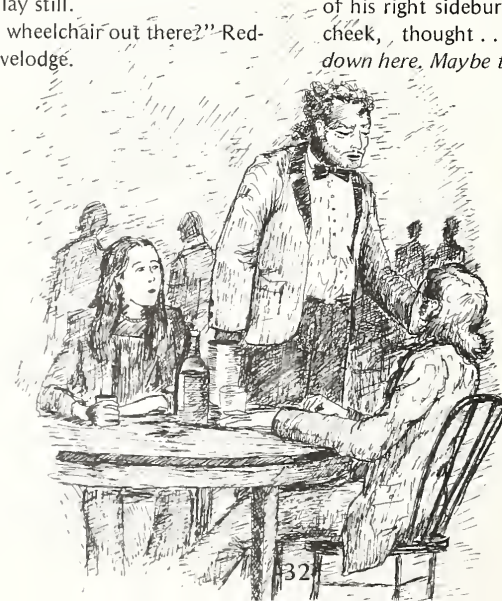
"You got the wheelchair out there?" Redloter yelled to Travelodge.

"I'm going for it now."

"Get it down her quick before he hemorrhages or something." He turned to Pierce. The rubberman was doing situps beside his Ballantine. "And *you* get *your* ass outta here," Redloter said. "I'm taking him back to Alabama now. If he lives and wants to do that act, he'll call you later."

'Okeedokee."

'Ol' Harry' saw it all. He saw the cactus boots being rolled away in a wooden mesh wheelchair, Spec dragged by the arms, his bouncer-piano man still flat on his back, and the contortionist staring down at a tiny pool of blood, the size of a half dollar. 'Ol' Harry' picked his oversized nose, felt the bottom line of his right sideburn against his freshly shaved cheek, thought . . . *what He-men they got down here. Maybe there's an act in dat . . .*



BUILDING KITES WITH A LOVER

Raymond Saint-Pierre

Come play with me,
fly kites along the shore
past the golden trees dying,
the wind making kites of their leaves,
while I, their piper,
will sing them pied colors
up, down, to the sky; earth.

I cannot. These figures must be right
Or it will not work,
The strings with catch
And sticks will break
Tearing wind into paper,
In, out, to the earth; sky.

Leave your squares, triangles
empty boxes without a soul
that can only rise, not fly.
There is no grace in you,
but the beauty of the thing,
and that shall die.

You would not understand.
These paper dolls, their broken hands
Tied upon a string,
A skeleton to frame their desire to live.
They dance half-gracefully, it's true,
Without your spirit;
Totally, with it.
At least,

we do not leave each other alone.

DISCOURSE

Raymond Saint-Pierre

Laughing boy,
 take me in your arms
against a midnight sea
 wishing I were you,
you were me,
 and in each other's eyes
maybe see who feared the most
 from the other
and why we never cry
 in to each other
but always out
 against the wind;
its nature more revealing
 laughing real
in the face of your joy
 at my coming
before you
 to this sudden knowledge
that we are not the same
 and the sea will tear us
before she mends old wounds
 that laughing boys
never cry over.

JIGSAW

Raymond Saint-Pierre

We make a puzzle, you and I
Two halves melting in the center
As our colors run mixing
Blood on blood,
Your bite upon my shoulder,
And the world around us mixes
In our lives, our threatened lives.

MUSIC TEACHER

Marion Andrew

If ever a person had a purpose
it was she
crouching in shawls
and the smell of
dust and roses

Raps
slow ticks
and the creaking
of the contented chair
nods
closed eyes
steam hisses

The sun makes
a gold blur
on the afternoon's
Chopin
and the leaves outside
are fast falling

Catherine Bergeson

Stay here my love, while he comes
He's only walking a path of vibrant patterns.
A side-to-side slink unites pastel sky and rose streaked sand.
I love the shadow that comes over his face
The designs of strength, more than any I know
Warm with the thick breathy air
Stay please, I have an ancient dimstore umbrella and an overwhelming faith.

Stay here my love while he comes and listen
His voice resounding in reverberations of color from a jutting point of beach
to a distant stretch of horizon-
Bouncing inveterately with crashes of sparks.
A sky, black with messages threatens the others, but not him-
Not me.

Join with him and watch
His misty form become solid within the closeness of his touch,
A touch, air-like so sensitive.
A frozen moment in eternity, a frozen voice, quiet, always
Remaining.
I wish I could die in his arms.



A SLIGHT DISTRACTION

Mike Gaski

He was distracted by Aquinas and the utter and complete need to assert the presence of historical arguments that justify the truth in Biblical passages by use of an empirical formula of some sort—i sat there looking at her. He talked of God's existence being justified—she brushed her hair from her face. "Philosophical references," he was saying, "need secondary references" and her legs were uncrossed and crossed again. He was rambling about Philosophers and not taking anything for granted and she touched the nape of her neck slightly and rubbed her arm. "Try your damndest to prove anything you assert, especially matters that cut across incidents considered empirical fact and common snese." Her hand was raised to her lips and she stretched her legs (i kicked the chair). "However, on *that* score what is or what was common sense to one is not necessarily acceptable to others." Her mouth opened; she moved her hips forward along the seat of her chair and her back arched slightly as her head fell softly back. "So beware of Common Sense." She yawned. "Now, back to Thomas Hobbes."

James Mazzotta

The clouds seep in and take their chairs;
A window opens and curtain lace blows through.
Our dangling participles lie scattered in the hall, while
Some would wedge in plaster cracks and listen to the receding echoes.
The empty coatrack teeters in the shadows
Balanced by the gently closing door.





PUPPETS

Marion Andrew

The red curtain snaps back
revealing wooden scowls;
puppet faces,
heads with shriveled, useless legs,
cackling monsters,
fill the stage.
They hold with strong, strong arms
clubs
to crack on Punch's head.

The children scream.

MOSS

Marion Andrew

Cobwebs,
threads
of a dusky
tattered
shawl
enshrouding
Gothic eaves
in motionless lace,
drip rings
into the
deep
silent
water





TRUCK

Steve Chilton

Who would have thought
that bolty beast
with a belly full of
books and other such things;
tatoood from here to
Tampa
with twin brains
and night eyes
could be mangled
in half on a
Louisiana low road

EXCERPTS FROM CRIME ILLUSIONS

Catherine Bergeson

Pounding my gun butt on someone's fine skull
Always finding something to do, when life's very dull.
Raping a dead girl, drinking her blood
Finding a poor man, giving him a gun.
Stabbing a nurse while choaking her son,
Thinking up bizarre type deaths, knowing it is fun.
Never worrying about the cops,
No they never get me down
I get my name in the paper and flaunt around.





MAY 11, 1953

Stanley Knick

Stillness, sudden as the rain stops,
Yellowed nimbus, dark bellied and plains wide.
We huddled in the cellar of a school
 Not laughing children, playing with the time,
 but seasoned gophers in a storm.

The sky shades off to gold, then nearly red,
the spinning dancers touch the stage
a pirouette among the barns and houses
 there a pirate
 here a passer-by
a sometimes Danse Macabre

On Saturday, we rode down poles-and-line flat 81 to Waco
 where the dancers met
The town lay broken, scattered blocks on a table.
Twisted erector-set buildings
with one or two corners still in brick,
their floors blown clean, but full of blowing sand
cells of living,
thrown out beyond the streets
Reunion with the desert.

And some were *NEVER* found from up the gyre.
Never found.



SHARKS

Robin Routh

The sharks are out tonight
 Sharpening their teeth on
Fallen stars and wave riders;
 Waiting in their sunken
 pools of broken shells
For something more than beer
 cans, bent by strong young hands
Warm with life.

Yes, the sharks are out tonight
 And I feel the soft circling
 of their bodies
Waiting for their first juicy bite

But I stand, not running
 Waiting for dolphins
And the dawn's pink light.



THINKING IT ALL OVER IN PLACE

Quentin Powers

The goodbye which never comes
Follows her when she leaves
Out love's embattered, hubless
Door in the darkness of a memory.
The bones of the emotion
Rattled like restless chains
Charting the shreds of night
Around to begin the beginning.

CLASPING WINTER HANDS

Quentin Powers

I've caught you peering in your solemn hat
At me before
Like I was winter with my cold eyes,
Melted my glass-bound heart
And entered my bones with your belief
Into my belief with your clasped hands.

Who says we must be brief?
But to linger long on this lovescape
Is to deny several other things-
Must you hold me limbo in such breathless esteem,
Turning us over & over in your mind,
The possibilities, the endless possibilities.

LAUGHTER IN THE N.C. BAR

Quentin Powers

Standard wife-and-kids jokes
Politics in the dead of readers' ruby heads
Behind their triumphant old taylor veins
Flashing their noses at the band in the april mess.

Flies tell stories in these
Defective places.
Arms dripping with beer,
Eye and finger games,

Summerhouses where wet noses
Step through some southern war or other
And the music
Slaps one on the back like a greasy paddle.

The Course That Satisfied

or

**Basic Transformation 1,
Programmed Redemption of
the Violent Against Person
and Programmed Education
of the Mystic**

Amon Liner

Prelude

ALONE IN THE HOLLOW. Cylinder of squares. In a slow cathedral spin. Alone in needle ship. Dark flower on the chart of light. Blossoming past the velocity of the light of the dogstar, needling past the lightspeed of the children of light. Alone, myself, spinning toward the center of the universe. Alone in a volume of eyes. Alone, myself, myson, mysoonest, mydeath. Alone within a cylinder of mirrors. Contained in a container of containers of eyes, I, the hollow of allhollow's darkest, deepest noon, center spinning, universe all. Alone in leagues and fadoms of lightyears, in a cylinder of squares of mirrors, within each mirror an eye floats, a different color, a different eye, whenever I look within. In hollow, alone, spinning in criminal comfort class ship, in penal ship *Xi-1600*. Spinning savage serious toward the graveman, grav-

amen of my charge. Heavy weight at center of universe, me, myself, my Solemnity, the God of Light, the eyeless joke, the green and lidless eye of death, my sorrow. Spinning inward, down, times of light from times of bones, times of light intolerable spinning from pieces of bone. Myself, myson, my sparkling sorrow.

Alone in hollow of mirror coffin. Nailed through the eyesight reflective animal trapped roaring in a bright darkness. In mirror-coffin ship. Plated with value more sterling savage than death. Plated with squares of apparent glass, depth within depth of eyes. Rose eyes, green eyes, red eyes, emerald eyes, brown eyes, madder eyes, pink eyes, silver eyes, yellow eyes, golden eyes, steel-blue eyes, golden-brown eyes, sadder eyes, gray eyes, gray-green eyes, leaf-green eyes, fire-engine-red eyes, siren eyes, olive-green eyes, wiser eyes, steel-gray

eyes, amber eyes, silver-grey eyes, sepia eyes, baby-blue eyes, twentieth-century eyes, kinder eyes, murder eyes. Alone in hollowness of seriousness of man's reflection upon himself, I see you. I see you follow me; aye, the eyes possess me. I see you follow me, turning as I turn into saints heavy-leaded, radiant eye-brightwash colors. You think the saints of the twentieth century never sinned?

Nailed with silver needles on a cross of light, I tell you different. As if I didn't know. Ship *Xi*, old friend, brilliant buddy, faster-than-light penal system, I love you, you who studied under steel construction, took laurel postdream degrees of beryllium, launched from Earth as solitary confiner three thousand light-years ago, I think, I can't keep count beyond my fingers and my toes. I count five sepia and wiser eyes at this moment. Are you listening. I take no offense being confined here in durance gleaming vile. I plead filthy guilty of guilt. I did it and I danced. Wiser eyes, sepia eyes, I take my choice canded here in needle mirror coffin for assault with intent to commit torture against person known. Known to me personally, Me, Amon Goeth XIV, bon-vivant, eyesightsoreseeker around old Terra in the thirty-first century night, in bright, in all kinds of colors, skins, tarpulins, ropes, tentacles, daggers, philosophers, arcane scavengers of the golden midnight. Nothing like nostalgiz treasure business, the cry for the return of the lusty old twentieth. We called our pack the Reconstituted Condor Society of the Silver Age of Genocide.

But I alone found the memory, Old Amon Goeth the original, a Mr. Fixit in the Final Solution, a handy man with a gas chamber, was no silver-plated reflective fool of time's light years of reason, spinning inexorable from the pieces of bone. You see, I was one of everybody, and everybody had to have a significant namesake, change of name to be somebody. Remember the good ole twentieth, never to be another darkest age like it. Never in ten-thousand spinning hollow of fire-engine red and madder eyes. The good old original. SS Captain. Directed liquidation of Cracow and Tarnow Ghettos, 1943, commanded Plaszow Jewish camp, 1943-44. Sentenced to death, Cracow, September 5th, 1946, according to antique data, Reitlinger's *The Final Solution*. I don't know what the problem would be if one could chronos reality backward and see the old original busy solving problems. No doubt, not alone. But with old original Austrian Nazis. Not alone in Penal ship *Xi*, but together in comradship holding company last stand, busy solving problems, putting the fine finishing touches on; no, caught, not alone, not measured, solved into berylhuman majesty, into silver reflections of amber eyes, into golden-brown, older wiser eyes. I see myself seeing myself seeing myself seeing my Self seeing my eyes, seeing my eyes seeing my babyblue coffin eyes. Therefore, I am alone, young A., headed toward known destination.

Toward Center of Universe, toward planet of neo-A.'s, not A's like me, but wiser eyes, gray and steel-clear eyes, not spinning, but un-

moved. Waiting for prisoner who with concatenation aforesaidmaliced unwise did remove Eye of one-eyed man according to prehistoric ritual as roared in golden dark verse in fragment of manuscript *King Lear*. Why not?

What's in a name determines destiny. That's what all the dark wise eyes speak sunset philosophy to me about, all about, spinning mirror-squared coffin. One of nobody, now, I see it all, the grisly, red-eyed sequence with fire.

Yet they are good, everybody, who with kinder eyes looks down on me, now, says they are good. The Neo-A.'s are good. At the original Center of the Universe, dispassionate, impassionate, less passionate godlike entities, able to slide space torpedoes back along time line with a single thought, able to endure in name of peace and love being tortured and maimed in dogsilver entrail fashions, being able to endure being loved without being understood. Who knows if their names be love or indifference.

Oh no, I see you, spinning like silverplated tentacles from eyes-end, in cathedral heavy-boned like, stained with time's duration of an instant, light spinning like a fortress from the slivers of bone.

Who knows what neo-A.'s look like? Green eyes with brains seven meters high? Purple shells with corrugated, galvanized tin roofs? Sorrow in sepia? Death in a needle's eye?

Spinning through the travel-stained light from the squares of light that are my eyes. Eyes, I see you. You do not see me. I have only to reflect upon you and I am vanished.

Into your reflection. A grave one. Seriously, the one perfect instant when I was A. Goeth the Antique Original Sinnersinned, the instant the one-eyed man cried darkness my way. Nostalgiz can be funny. What's a thirty-first century common era average burbling well-groomed no-groan perfect face like anybody's face doing renewing? Revivifying the slow steel blue years of the twentieth? There I was, old A., directing the chopping off of heads into the ritual firepool with a silver axe; there, in place of blind fury, clear-sighted precision, there I twisted turning the larger than life-size brass wheel, closing the people-proof door as the gas whooshed in. There I hung on the silence, gnawing every fingerbone of it. There I sighted with the primitive laser cannon, exploded the pregnant woman's spine into splintered vertabrae of mainly light, spinning, alone in hollow of man's reflective reasoning powers to the nth degree beyond reason, vision of slashing the amber eyes out of the blue babies with a golden knife, spinning with implacable rationality toward the lightyears end, toward the Center of the Universe; who knows, maybe his fly-blown, maggot-sweated cry of darkness there, arrived a full beast-second before me, but why not? If Lear, a mighty king with rose and madder eyes could split & burn & flay & diddle with a bronze scimitar a bare-forked animal; if A. Goeth the Original babyblueyed sinnergalvanized to action by corrugated humans could run amok with grace under pressure and slice with knives of infinite dismemberment & prolong with wispy gas the instant of time's

last duration in a chamber lined with steel-gray eyes, why not I, nostalgiz prince of old Terra? InHollow, aloneI, spinning inevitable, mirror-Coffin, leaf-green eyes call for my renewal.

If any entities can do it, it's the good ole neo-A.'s, famed universe-wide for miraculous transformations. Not like me, with leaded projectile weapons in my brainpan, with bloody hands, with wolfeyes leering from gargoyle mirror-coffin, with tigerhead over my death's-head, with my mouth down in the dirt, moving in blind, spasmodic hunger for the burned out eyeball of fellowperson, goodfellow, whose name I forget, fifty-thousand light-years backward.

If any entities can mold me, it's the neo-A.'s, famed universe-wide for wisdom and criminal reform procedures. In a wolverine's eyes. Spinning in the rainbow hollow of man's serious reflection on his powers of reflection, I wish to see them. I pray for me now and at the light year of my darkest destination. Certainly sadder eyes look down on me than have ever looked before. Two-hundred thousand light-years inward. The Center of the Universe. Less than a moment in their sight. I'm told. By me. InHollowAloneI, eye to eye with a dreaming Self under a golden leaf melting on the wrinkled, golden head, generation unto generation, I pray for corpus derelecti delight in necessity, light spinning from the needle bones, certainly for wiser eyes than errie I have entered before. Now.

Stopped. Together with them. Neo-A.'s. No one comes here without invitation. No one ever leaves. No one ever comes here without bloody hands, tentacles, the masque of reason gibbering on his brain, the mark of justice burned into his retina.

They set me a problem. Two solutions. A problem set in eternity. I like them for all their angelfaced ambereyed wisdom. Take it or leave it they say. Pastoral planet in null-space. No harmful beasts but time devouring Eye. You live alone. But I like their human looks with golden texture and amber curls. You will live alone with trees and grass and running brooks and non-carnivorous beasts and stones and earth and you will be alone. Until you die. Or? Or else be transformed. But I like them despite their looks, green flabby skin, silver headcrest stiff like twin rows of silver needles, darkeyes, and big as a spaceship. Or. Or else, I enter the machine. Learn wisdom, be trained like a dog, respond to music, to the sound of my own voice crying darkness, be killed and killed again, be understood, be silenced, become silence, by deep image conditioning be transformed, transformed utterly. Or. Or else.

Naturally as I live I pray for solace in company. I say I love machines, steel and beryllium are my best friends. I love the brass wheels within wheels turning within the language, I . . . certainly more savage eyes than I have looked out of, even I . . .

Stage One: Evil

1. "At"

AT LUNCH THE OTHER SUMMER DAY, I became a pig sandwich eyed with devouring rapacity by humans rooting under the lace tablecloth for the last remains of my flesh. At deepest noon the other century, I became a robber with strong convictions (negative) about vivisection crucified between two saviors. At the stroke of light saving time, I became a philosopher examining through the 100x microscope the spirochetes in his blood. At the trinket counter, I became a prime mover in the world of glass finance and tumbled through the jagged edges of the broken emerald eye. Look here, said the golden rabbit, logically you don't exist. At midnight, I became a bonfire on a high hill; I shriveled; I looked outward, horrified, as I set the torch to the heap of wooden crosses piled around my pig-fat, naked body. Look here, I said, really now. At supper, I became a hand-mirror looking into the face of an old bitch with scarlet pointed teeth. How vain I am, she chuckled. As a mirror at the limit of vanity, I knew I had just been consigned to seven hundred years of hell. At odds with my Self, I caught my Self with the knife in my eye, saying to myself, what can I do about pain before

it covers me with formica? At rest in the be-fouled nest of grease-rags and fossil, cracked human thighbones, I eviscerated my favorite blue-eyed cat. At heart, a refined grave robber, I filled the casket with refined gold and made some iced tea. Logically, said the silver thighed corpse, you shouldn't be hungry at this hour. At the lowest point on the brass wheel of fortune, I ceased to exist except as a gleam in the eye of a clothed, forked animal with vicious hereditary criminal tendencies. I stared upward, my little red eyes gleaming in the pit. What do you want? Sallow, textured lampshades? Soft gray soap? Mattresses stuffed with rapunzel's raven locks? I can get it for you wholesale. Just tell me where I'm At? At lunch the other winter night, I became a tautology in a pig's eye. At Diamond Beast Dandy's time, I pulled a sleeve of fire over the green tree and burned alive down to the foundations, angel, baby, house and all, melted the mirror I saw myself for the last time eyeing the old man puttering around the tinsel wash in his own gore. At the middle of the melted glass, I saw the distorted green eye. At this moment, it said, you don't . . .

2. "Under"

Under a cloud of having ceased to exist, I questioned the reality that imposed itself around me. Blue-purple stone facades, old bureaucracies served with scarlet and silver livery, antique city served with chocolate and music. The streets were paved with golden melodies. Under them was the sewer system, filled with poison gas. Occasionally blue vapors would issue from the nearly soundproof manhole covers and nauseate a composer of international reputation. Arrested on a charge of having ceased to exist, the Emperor, a venerable rigidity with silver hair in stiff roach, gave a review of his past inactions. Under grave suspicion of never having existed, the chamberlain of the court, a venerable, silver-haired retainer, somewhat vain, styling his hair in a roach, gave an account of his past indifferences. Under permanent protective custody for never having ceased not to exist, the city street-sweeper, a venerable servant of the people and horses, with the look of an archbishop, but with a touch of vanity, his silver hair set in the latest

stiff roach, gave an interview concerning his anti-past. He never, like the others, attempted to deny the blue-purplish stone facade of his eyes. This was his only saving grace. Hanged at lunchtime under the famous KnightsArch, the rest of the bunch bloated up with noxious gases, swelled to the size of horses, finally burst upon the startled, but loyal, citizenry under them. All of the loyal citizenry were killed immediately without malice, and for many years, their stiff silver roaches clogged the sewers. Elected by popular acclamation to the throne of the duple monarchy, the venerable rigidity of a street sweeper ascended to sceptre under the title of Emperor of Loyal Citizens Only. His first decree proclaimed mandatory the wearing of the hair in stiff and silver roaches, neither gentle sex nor horses excepted. His second decree concerned the infestation of the sewers by untidy, long silver strands, showing black at the roots. But the details of domestic and foreign policy are of no concern to a loyal citizen.

3. "Over"

Over the river of molten steel in a barrel of skin, overcome with bashfulness when asked to address the assembly of the high gods, Thoth,

Thor and Set, overdone with left inside the sun for two nanoseconds longer than recipe required, overmastered by the arch criminal in

green fatigues, who sat on the ground and hurled mudballs in my face, and I making a speech to the assembly of frost giants, overcut during my fifty-year tenure as a longleaf pine, a resinous tree native to the universe, overaccepted by the red jello creatures of Marathon Five, who turned out to be blood of my blood, eager for reunion with their high god, overturned as green and gold despot on the brass thronewheel that turned continually, splashing me headfirst down into the blood, blood of my blood, feetfirst down into the pool of bone chips, bone of my bone, bellydown into the electric fire, torture of my torture, nostalgiz of my nostalgiz, over beset by gray stick-figure children, whelps of my loins, their ways native to my tenure as knife man on the brass wheel, their cries grossly understood by me as I let them cut off my ears and count up trophies, as they spurted away, leaving a trail of anemic, poisoned blood past the morning and the flowering dogstar. Over there, I wallowed, graygreen slug with little red eyes in the long

skinslit in the ground, the heavy howitzers, the big berthas, the big batallions, the spigot mortars, the closepacked wall of silver bullets from the lone enemy poet's machine gun, the steel, slab-sided caterpillars slithering over my jellied bones, over my stained cathedral glass eyes, over my mountain of lice-belly, over my loins, over my feet, cutoff at the anklebone, steel of my steel, children of my joy. Over the good cry for happier days when mere crucifixion between two television personalities all that was ordered, ! was ordered to produce again, seed of my loins, blood of my blood, and blue gas billowing from my mouth and nostrils down the iron pseudo shower pipes into the lungs of the naked bare forked animals. You old dragon You, my children cry as they come running to me in the late blue suburban afternoon. Over my dead body—I say from the cramped position in the solid bronze casket, the little bastards dividing up my universe as if they dreamed it. Overcome with doubt, I dream "I am" . . .

4. "Beyond"

Beyond anything that can be said are the mercies of hell. The big blowoffs when everyone relaxes from the daily electric journeys up the anus and the vagina and relaxes from the daily grind of rasp against the penis head or clitoris or breasts' nipples, when everyone relaxes and takes a well-earned day off from the ted-

ium of screaming Minnie locked in the double sealed sense deprivation chamber forever, takes a short flop from the case of cuddly jack the R. being eaten by fire wormlets from the land of the frost giants, takes an infinitesimal leave of absence from the adolf the h. locked in the pear-cut hollow gem of random percussion,

anti-silence, barking, whining, mewling, yelping, gurgling forever. Beyond the outermost stars are the innermost darkneses, the cages where the personalities lose their savour, the temporary reflections of the gods beyond gods, the meeting engagement of two non-shapes of unknowing darkness, one from this side and one from the other. The result is a godshape of darkness, so dense the word "interior" can never be thought. Beyond the pine woods are the sea, where I loll, encrusted with gray, corrugated shells of my victims in previous judgment, where I float to acquire a covering of blood, where I sink and lie doggo on the bottom during the hours of the dogstar, where I cover myself with dead bodies, trying

to remember what it will be like to be a father coming home in the late blue starlit personal-shape darkness of the god. Beyond the place I was born is the time I wanted to be born, in a pig's eye! Would have wallowed in sewage instead of mud, would have breathed frozen air instead of breathing forth babyblue gas. Would never have met your beautiful scarletskinned, amber-eyed mother, friend of my friend, enemy of my enemy, breaks all the mirrors before they can see her and report back to the division of organic wipeout. Beyond the waste, I lie fallow in the boneyard, nothing to be ashamed of in that, better bluewhales and elephants than I have rested here before journeying to meet our jokester, our shaper.

5. "Outside"

Outside the Garden (where the acid rain is continuous), the Autumn of decadence is delightful. The white towers, the blue purple facades of the old town, the thatched bungalows, the sod huts, the skin stretched over the cone of light birch poles, the setting sun, pearcut, in the hollow atmosphere, tastefully backlit with gray. Outside the castle (where immortal assassins of the Great Amoeba Race from Thermopylae Three continually hide behind the arrases, continually springing out with pseudopods oozing acid at us poor bare forked princelings and dukedoms doomed to a roasted pig with a child in his mouth banquet (who

said we were rapacious as all that, I mean, besides ourselves in some unguarded mirror), outside the castle, the air of death is lucid and serene over the boneyard, and the geese fly Southwest, honking the antique war-chant of our noble ancestors, the Song of the Brass Wheel. Outside this cramped brass shape, I am reputed to be a solid citizen, with respectable pseudopods and fusion products a credit to their father. Outside this ring of fire, I fumble with my beer on a dark counter. Small white hands sprout from the counter. They wave hello, hey daddy, hey. Outside the confines of this red brick institution in which I've been

confined due to a regrettable mistake, I said I was Wellington, actually I'm no such fellow, I'm Saint Just. I cover my walls with white tears. My walls are painted basic black. I read Rousseau from the inside out. Once made a lampshade of the skin of the natural noble savage. Outside all this philosophy, I'm a cuss of a good fellow; I've worn my feet to the carpet trying to call my children home by pacing the great circle, from amberglass tropic sunset to icebergs shaped like monocles floating down the sewage choked Chicago river. Outside this universe, I have great powers over nature. I can

stop the production of plastic, still the stormy rattle of last breath in the Jew's throat, weed the garden of rational weeds and leave the snakes. Outside the circle of shame in which I've been unfairly described, I do what I want when I want, rip myself to shreds with nails grown long for months against the day of my release. I'll not be a Prisoner of War in a Universe that doesn't respect my babyblue eyes conventions. Outside the circle of the damned, I'm considered a good kid, ready to do anything for a dare. Anything!

6. "To"

To a sane man, everything outside the oval of his sanity looks like a circle of madness. To the wisdom-seeker, madness often appears as a utilitarian alternative to his native universe. Breathes there a sane sinner who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native universe? To come so close to one's native universe and then fail, sure that must be the most ghastly of failures. The scarlet-skinned hands clawing up from the white-bone-polished surface of the bar. To become me, I had to wait in line for hours at the Ego Scalper's palatial residence. This godlike being sold egos for spiritual wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. I took what I could get. To be a sane dreamer without an ego in those times was to invite the jello-like

attentions of the organic disposal corps. To believe in golden brown would have taken riches I had already sold. To see the leaves twist into Spring but not into green, just into another shade of amber, gave me an idea of where I might have been if I hadn't used the silver thumbscrew and the hot poker so sanely. To the sane ego, its dream of madness often comes to it in the form of a wisdom-seeker eating shit. To retain and respect the ecological balance of the godshaped universe, the wisdom-seeker says, without stopping for small talk, ever moving on, his mouth close to the ground, his snout hidden under the lace tablecloth. To the sane inhabitants of Plata IV, cellulose eaters to an entity, the shape of a human ego makes them bounce up and down

in fury. Where are your leaves? Your amber leaves? they demand. To one unaccustomed to public speaking, it just spurts out without plan. This is not the season for leaves. The sunset is glass with an old god foaming within.

To go any further, you have to appreciate the economic position of old glassware of Old Terra, circa twentieth century. To remain merciful in hell is a mistake, but not one easily rectified. So many children wish to call you father.

7. "Within"

Within the circle of the damned, it's hard to be a child. To take every passing demon for father, every passing poet for brother. Within the circle of the forgotten, it's hard not to feel cozy with fireworms rotting through your flesh, you forget where you are, that not every demonic angel is your father, not every visionary your brother. Within the circle of the continually silent, you ardently desire irresistible temptations, to sell your pain to a passing poet for one sound of water falling, to give your disused language to a darkened angel of light for one curse directed especially at you, using your name, inventing you again. Within the supplanting flesh, the perpetually breaking bones, you strain to lift a scar that was your memory that you can pray for a white feather of surrender to ardent desire of hate of God directed especially at you, calling your name, you pray for a brass feather of judgment, floating in the warm, rain-washed air, toward you, calling your name, discovering your sin, your death especially for you. Within the circle of light that is only pain, you shrink inward until you discover how many gears and levers and mecanique on a mirror tip of a coffin needle.

Within the crowd of greystick figures, with stiff silver roaches all over, hair shaved down to the skull, you, a gray long-linked polymer plastic pine, victim of rage's inward rage against itself, like all the rest, continually flowing over the nine bridges and the one abyss, back and forth and round and round, just like the rest, and with no language, not even a cry to invent a new language, not even really your own silence, you try to remember the special, the personal implements within which you danced, the razor, the washcloth, the bedposts, the worn hunting jacket, the much caressed body of the beloved, your long gray-flanked automatic load rifle, with scarlet-tipped bone feather attached. Within the impersonal silence that gnaws ever deeper into your ego silence, you try to remember your city, city of your birth and of your exile; but only a melange of purpleblue brick facades, loyal traitors hanging like bloated horses in the square of the beloved emperor, piccolos over chocolate on a field of file cabinets. Within the circle of the damned, you try to forget the particular blank walls that used to mean so much to you, you try to forget the newstyle, textured facades, forty

stories of blank white and every one with a different ending and everyone with little red pigeyes looking at you. Within the circle of the damned, you see the blue-skinned chillren as

they are perverted into the inhabitants of flatland as they cry father to a passing visionary; as you, by that silence, are devoured.

8. "From"

From the bottom rung of the tin ladder, one peers up at the tin gods, each god a hollow cylinder, each one a squeaky sound-reproduction artifact. From the bottom of the ladder, one hopes for the invention of language, not for a hand up, not for an angel of light, not for a wooden cigarman, not for a satan to accuse the ladder of mercy. From the bottom of the ladder, admitted, one's hopes are not reasonable; but as one watches the brass leaves float down from the mouths of the tin gods, one believes one's hopes are seasonable. From the bottom rung of the ladder, whose supports rest in a pool of blood, deep within one's abdomen, almost crushing the spine, slipping toward the groin, one sees the end results, the redundancies, the whole panorama, the wholistic godshaped form of darkness. From the pool of blood and gristle, one sees the bottom of the Joker's ass, a brass bottom, revolving like crazy, playing a golden oldie, Plain Chant Number One. From the smashed vertebrae and the connoiseur's pain in the groin, one sees the bottom of the deeply smiling delight. The bulbous dark cantelope of Fat Boy, the long flank of Thin

Man. From the bottom rung, one sees Queen Victoria's cucumber sandwiches falling from the rainbow flare over Hiroshima. From the bottom rung, one sees the virgin ass of Victoria being caressed by the brass paw of the adolf monkey who sees no evil. From the witches cauldron, one sees the bonny green meadows, and the gods like flies alighting on Europa. From the devil's silver bathyschpe, one sees the fire-engine red fluorescent bellies and tails advertising Coca-Cola and the Crystal Palace swimming through the cobalt-blue, necrophiliac eyes of the sea. From the bottom of the ooze, one sees the ocean is all eyes, babyblue, fatimagreen, kingkongyellow, my how mellow; one wants to hear the eyes of the sea as they speak, for they must have invented a new language, unknown to any but those who dance on water, unknown to any but those who drown at sea. Forgive me, for my language is from those days. Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native genocide?- a language unknown to any but those who drown at sea; Father, pray for me now and at the hour of my ascending from the pit of

generation.

Interlude: One Neo-A. educational corps

assistant to another: "Ah, he's sickening to his duty."

Stage II: MAYA

1. "Blue"

MAYA IS ALL EYES. Blue eyes from shimmering, sequined curtains of black. Blue eyes from shredded, scarlet curtains of skin. Blue eyes from buff walls of bone. Blue eyes from tin masks of tin gods. Blue eyes from the fabled goldskinned elderly bald head and tanned, adolescent flesh of the damned. Blue eyes from heaven, a little monster, just four years old, already wants to pee in Queen Victoria's ear, already poisoned by Hamlet's unnatural father, already damned by not being able to pray with Sincerity. Baby blue eyes above the smile as Hamlet slits the steel mask of the ghost in his father's voice. Blue eyes on the last surviving teddybear in Dachau, tucked securely between two yellow-skinned, saggybreasted forked critters. Blue eyes above the harmonica piping home sweet home down on the Chicago river where the old folks swim in fine fettle, in fine brass feather, cackling to one another of Coca-Cola ads gone by, flipping with the new Antarctica Crawl through the solid waste, only, alas, to melt in the new acid, their babyblue eyes floating on the surface like lifesavers. Ah for a blue sky on a sunny day, a blue language on a silent night.

Blue marbles for eyes in the brass head of my youngest child, dear god, I didn't mean for it to end like this, now all she can eat are late late works by Picasso. Blue elephants supporting the blue world. Can't you hear them singing those old Tramp Down the Forest and Haul the Teakwood Out blues? Not that *maya* is all irrational, the sweet candy allday chewy fatima has brains too. In fact, *maya* means lucidity in one transposition of the language Blue. Blue letters in the blue sky, blue alphabets in the blue water; no, you need fire, you need ice. Pray for weather. Good old gal, nothing if not variable; look at those irregular patches of Blue forming at the recently discovered edges of the universe. Look at all the sensuous astronomers caressing their cameras. Now we'll learn what's what, they say. Notice their skins turning blue as they come to a scientific, agelong, hopedfor climax of lucidity, lucidity undefiled by amateurs charting ephemera. Blue bubble gum flowers from the Lion's machine; *maya* sometimes sacrifices appearances to reality. Already I have a hundred blue eyes and more are popping out everywhere. I can see it all now, the dulcet lovers

shaped like dulcimers meeting on Planet Salmis V, ah the slow sweet strains of those lovers, hungry for the music of each other; lovers there mating by music, proceeding to generation by harmonic progression. Unlike the lovers of Aegospotami VI, pure gold through and through, though with occasional impurities; living always between two flawless hemispheres of Blue, they mate by refining each other, progress toward generation by puddling, then coining. Unlike the lovers of Arbela VII, solid blue cubes of fat, deafdumb&blind, but great eaters, why you ought to see their mouths open all the way; they mate by devouring each other until they get sick; gener-

ation is by mutual vomit; they know if it's a good kid or not by the color of the Blue, bright solid blue for a wonderkid, dull threads among the grayblue for punk with sleazy tendencies to streaky lean. Unlike the forms of blue light that love between two perfect universes of golden silence. They mate by telepathy, progress toward generation by mutual understanding. But perfect harmony being seldom achieved, most of their kids are lacking some conspicuous symbolic system and are doomed never to be truly brilliant. Fortunately, they live for years, and as they continually mate, there are always exceptions.

2. "Red"

Red is the color of Autumn leaves in those realities which are touched by the turning of the brass wheel, that twists the colors in a curve that approached but never reaches Zero, that changes the seasons. Red is blood in every season in those realities shaped by the revolt of the shapeless masses. I was walking along this gentle incline when I saw these grossly swollen, naked animals wearing red neckties. Non-survivors of the Kossuth rebellion I was told. I swam with difficulty through the lice covering the stick figures around the shattered vault; I slit one with a handy two-way knife. A sluggish, thin trickle of red. What's left of Belsen, I was told. Walking though the sewer, I noticed

the workman stringing long lines of naked electric light bulbs. We're pulling out all the skeletons that have drifted above the red line. Have to keep up the reputation of the city of light. Walking though the gray-flannel clad forked bipeds, I noticed some that oozed red at the seams. Pardon me, Sir, but— Forget it, boy, it's a condition that comes with the game. I noticed the red balloons floating on red strings above the heads of children; the children were naked from the waist up, fine, tanned specimens of critters; but each stood in a puddle of red. Excuse me, I said to the youngest, who appeared to be the feuhrer, excuse me, but— Pardon, sir, he said, it's a game that

comes without conditioning; we play it to fool the gray, slab-sided personalities of our dreams. It's only jello. I bent down to taste it. Why this tastes like blood, I said. Monster! Monster! they cried and ran away. Their balloons plunged to earth like a shower of red pennies. I walked over and, using my handy seven-way knife, punctured one, a three-week old fetus, already finely developed, brass skull showing through his translucent skin (and with a silver roach atop it). It crawled out, slipping in the red fluid with which the balloon was filled. Well, he said, with a weariness appropriate to a senile youngster of nine, well, do you want me fricasseed, boiled, fried, roasted or ground to a nutritious protein powder? You're losing blood, I said. Just red, he said. We live in a reality all our own, therefore we can invent new names, which are actually the oldest names for what amuses or destroys you. I'm losing red, he said. I walked frantically until I came to the guardhouse. The guards wore scar-

let uniforms and tin helmets. By long exposure to the dream elements in the reality, their faces were coarse and reddened. Listen, I said, this is the time for your intervention. Things down there need your help. They took off their helmets and placed them gently in a formation on the ground. I watched with horror as they began in unison to stroke their silver roaches. As they did so, their faces became bloated and scarlet. A thin, trilling noise emanated in a cone from their silver roaches. I could feel the tone turning my bones to jello, my blood to silver bone flakes, my brain to weary and perhaps endless repetition of Red, Red, Red. I ran from there as if from all the bureaucracies of hell. In the one look I ventured behind me, I saw their faces assume a blandly eager expression. On my way down, I almost stumbled on a number of the wet things, just emerged from their balloons and trying to crawl up the hill. Don't go up there, I cried. Why not, they said, we want our fathers.

3. "Rank"

The smell was sweet, sickeningly sweet. I walked by day and by night through the metropolis of Auchwitz. The usual bureaucracies of a large urban area were functioning, but the garbage and sewage disposal seemed most inefficient. Although this was somewhat alleviated by open burning, still the babies accumulated. Trailed by two inhabitants of the planet Can-

nae VIII, eighty percent humanoid, the only significant differences being their possession of telepathy and their gray skins and their smell, which was like rotting seaweed. It took us a day and a half to tour the stockyards, for the Cannae were camera freaks and insisted on snapping every detail in medium shots and closeups. Fortunately, their skin being ex-

tremely sensitive and tending to turn a shade of pink (which they despised) on encounter with odd gases, we took only half a day to tour the gas vaults. Although they managed a few good medium shots of the blue pyramids and one closeup of gold teeth, they seemed reluctant to record fully this bustling center, one of Europe's busiest urban-industrial areas in the years 1941-1944. Later, they did take one good group portrait of the city fathers. Too many gray eyes looking at me, so I circumnavigated the universe and made a quickie inspection tour of Perfume Factory Number One. Sweet, slightly sickening, the odor of jungle rot, but the natives of Zama IX would use no other in their mating. Depending as they did on the sense of smell, they mated by mingling augmented body odors, heavy enough to carry small genetic packages. Generation was

achieved by group progression in a grassy field. When all the grass had died from jungle perfume contamination, they knew conception had been achieved. Unlike the inhabitants of Actium X, who, upon perceiving even one odor molecule, one innocuous as the picosmell from old plastic paint from a slab-sided modern tower, whirled into an anti-love frenzy, in fact, went berserk and tried to kill their mates or any other within reach. Fortunately, unknown to them, mating was accomplished in the mingling of the anti-septic, anti-odor secretions released in the common, embraced death agonies. Born in the common floodtide of hate, the little Actiums immediately went berserk in their turn and thus the population was kept at an exactly stable level. Sometimes *maya* removes her famous skull to reveal the mask.

4. "Sweet"

Sweet are the uses of survival. A loyal citizen such as I can spot a sweet-smelling maiden zone a hundred light-years away. But once past the flowering dogstar, it makes no difference. Age would wither her casket before I could offer even a daisy-chain of affection. Sweets to the sweet is good form, but sometimes runs into prickly situations. For a loyal citizen determined to survive, that is. Incarnated as Saint Antony and desiring most ardently to give way to all sweet temptations, how is one to explain

to the gray, stick figure angels that hover above one's immortal, fragrant soul, crying papa, papa, no. And some loyal citizen, some warm body has to do the dirty work of *maya*. Pick the scabs from the kids' wounds and re-infect; twist the barb in the eye, even in the babyblue eye; play dragon and breathe fire on the bellies of some innocent ones, some still with their baby fat, just then wrinkling up their noses at some sweetish stink they cannot yet name. Sweeter still to work in the choco-

late factory. Covering the witches with high-grade dutch chocolate. Instructing them in the art of gnawing from the inside. Mass producing Hershey bars with botulin capsules embedded, cleverly disguised to look like almonds. Dipping Mozart and his silver flute into the big vat. Even a well-organized metropolis of loyal citizens, all with a proper bushido code and the right hair styles, needs a memorial in the plaza of the beloved old emperor to encourage the others. Unlike the inhabitants of Adrianople XI, who, being metal eaters, despise the taste of chocolate, but are filled with an ardent desire for zinc. They mate by exchanging genetically impregnated packages of zinc during excessively formal rituals carried on at precise times of the Adrianoplean year, when the heavy red sun is low in the sky. Generation is accomplished by computer programmed progression of raw zinc into utilitarian artifacts. Some of these artifacts prove cuddly and are named. These are much loved by their progenitors, and Adrianopleans have attempted to establish several empires composed of loyal citizen zinc processing factories. Unfortunately, however, being exceptionally subject to the

universal solvent (water), their empires have usually declined and fallen within one generation. Thus, their population remains stable and much-loved, much cuddled. Sometimes *maya* removes the iron mask to reveal the true metal beneath. As a loyal citizen, only yesterday smeared with chocolate and strung up in the square, my silver roach sliced off and sacrificed to the Universal Identification Laminating Machines (converted a few centuries ago from self-programmed, automatic bubblegum machines), I can safely remark that it's not only shit that smells sweet. Below me, a covey of philosophers several generations into their rapid mutation (caused by overdoses of rationality capsules embedded in chocolate, cleverly disguised to look like peanuts) their mouths wider than ever, their guts wider, their anuses wider, wait expectant for my sweet bones to tumble down among them. Telepathically, though dead, I am aware of *maya* drawing over her sweet bones the cobalt blue curtain sequined with stars and tigers and preying mantises; a perfume as of violets and burned-out tiger tanks flows from it, sweet, overpowering.

5. "Tin"

In the factory, I noticed the robots making tin condoms for fifth generation computer-programmed lust-machines. I stopped to ask a robot the time of day, and he immediat-

ely slipped a tin mask over my head and proceeded to tell me the meaning of time. Time, he said, is stamped out by automatic production units at the Center of the Universe. It

comes in tin medallions, about three centimeters in circumference, each bearing on the face, the head of the old and well-beloved emperor in bas relief, his stiff roach clearly detailed and showing on the obverse, an olympic robot bearing a greasegun into the heart of darkness. Each one of these units, he said, constitutes one standard time unit, good anywhere in the galaxy for a tune up and lube job. He spoke with unconcealed admiration of the design of time; and it was only with reluctance that he agreed it did take several non-standard time-units several light years of agony to pile up enough standard tin futures to purchase a more advanced head. But I'm up to my Mark IV head now, he said, as if to discourage any criticism of such a basically sound economic system. How many marks are there? I asked. The heads go up to Mark X, he said. What happens to those who achieve Mark X? I asked. Nobody knows, but it is thought they go to heaven. Heaven? I squeaked behind my mask. What is heaven? The Center of the Universe, he replied with that typically maddening inexorable robotic logic. I ripped off my mask and started to rush out for some fresh air. Wait, he said, you didn't pay for your mask. I

searched my pockets frantically but could only find a gold medallion, showing on one side, *maya* as a nude voyeur of Light, and on the other, a tiger leaping in fire through a curtain of stars. Look, I said, let's just exchange heads. But yours is only a Mark I, he said with inevitable logic. By all rights, he continued, I should put you in the stamping mill and make time units from you. It's all you're good for anyway. That's me, I said, a good for nothing. But the jig was up, I had to pray. *Maya*, baby, now's the time, the time. I heard her silver voice, just like on the videophone, Smile, honey, smile and your native universe smiles with you. Dubious advice, I thought, but started smiling, a real shit-eating grin. Slowly, slowly, I faded from the clang of logic, leaving my smile behind me. I felt sad, naturally. But what could I do, what complaint could I make? My prayer had been answered. Sometimes *maya* peels off the mask to collect the face; sometimes she peels off the smile to collect the gold teeth. Having no gold teeth, I tossed my medallion in the direction of the Center of the Universe and watched it vanish into a Cheshire Rictus.

6. "Brass"

In the sweet smelling meadow, with the greenest grass this side of Plato, I rambled, playing my silver flute and with no thought of

time. After about a sentence of non-time, my flute turned to a red-hot poker in my hand. I dropped it and kicked it down one of the

numerous magic rabbit holes. I heard it screaming all the way. After standing still in a dense timeless zone of Platonic Green, I felt a brass flare of sound, much like a Hiroshima size A-bomb, from the right side of the meadow. Picking my way carefully through the looking glass inscribed with my name, I finally stumbled with no loss of face into a gray tree at the edge of the meadow. From the tree rippled and roared a medley of brass voices. Blats, honks, squeals, resonant ompahs, all entered me. I felt my head turning into a brass paralogic machine. Inspecting the tree more closely, I found I could distinguish several voices. But only by tone, for all called Daddy, Daddy with a persistence that deserved to be included within the framework of time, Rickety shambles though it is-was. Blatting softly, I managed to calm their Universal panic and peering through my ten-thousand X (a proud possession, it has a solid brass tube and the lens took a time to grind about equal to the decline and fall of Science.) I found about ten million faces (some still with their baby

fat)imbedded in the gray bark and in the gray leaves. Daddy, daddy, do something, be merciful to us, we pray for you. Well, it's not as good as being prayed to, but I did what I could. I opened my brass mouth and said: Time Is, Time Is Passing, Time Was. And lo! Autumn began, and in the flurry of brazen, the leaves fell; and lo! it was winter upon winter, and the tree fell. And the children fell into particulars and died. Standing still in the center of the meadow, I used my microscope on the greenest green this side of Plato, but somehow it wouldn't focus. All I could see was a small figure of green light, dancing in and out of the field of observation. Suddenly the field turned into a red-hot, blasted area of urban area; I could see the black raindrops falling from the heavens, and I knew I was in the season of Hiroshima. Blindly, I popped through one of the many looking glasses inscribed with my name. So what if I did lose face? It could have been worse. *Maya* has her mercies too, and it's not for the condemned to question them.

7. "Sour"

I want nothing but sour faces around me, faces that approve of language and all it stands for. When a loyal citizen complains, he needs a troop of sour faces around him. More than pickle sour, more than melancholy sour. Sour from having taken it all, stuffed with bitter-sweet chocolate cleverly disguised to resemble

poison capsules. I can still remember how I, in company with other sixtieth generation philosophers, made the great sour glutton journey. By this time, reduced to gray flaps of skin barely covering our five-foot wide, perpetually open mouths, our six foot wide, three foot long gut, our two foot long anus. How we

walked down the lime plaster halls, shoveling in the sour, reeking turds of a hundred generations of angels. How some developed sticky feet and snuffled along the turds of the ceiling (these later became known affectionately as heaven dwellers), how some developed sideways traction, skew-ways mouths and rooted among the walls. Down the long long corridors of the bureaucracies of the noble, well-beloved old emperor, we trundled, our mouths forever open and never lacking sustenance. Shoveling it in, singing a happy song (somewhat muffled and not everybody in key), but everybody came in on the choruses, adopted from Three Jolly Coachmen, now Thirty-Three Jolly Philosophers) trundling along, shoveling it in, whatever the satanic engines of the bureaucracy produced, whether green and sweet-sour, whether brown and common-sour, whether blue and icy-sour, whether yellow and monetary-sour, whether black and carbon-flimsy sour, whether pink and chocolate and humanist-sour, whether gray and soggy-sour, whether red and crisp-sour, we just trundled along, we philosophers of happy time, singing our happy songs, reveling in the terrific experiences of the gut as it strained to separate the wheat from the chaff, finally performing our synthetic idealist *a posteriori* duty as philosophers of the finite and making others happy, as after joyous hours of shoveling it in, transforming the shit of the world in the guts of wisdom, we excreted a thin (but steady) trickle of refined gold. How the masses followed us, for millenia upon millenia; How they followed us wisdom

seekers, with rakes and shovels and sacks and small, wheeled processing factories. Sometimes, these last grew cuddly and were named and much loved, much replicated. Suddenly, the masses turned to a new form of low-life and began to seek their wisdom in the sea. The backlog of gold became embarrassing. Fortunately, a friendly scientist came up with miracle drug X. After taking this, we no longer excreted simple gold but golden gnats, artifacts that flew and buzzed of their own volition, and not content with such simple activities, co-operated in teams of ten-million to carve the shit into camels. And thus it was we perceived we had been made a common parable of, and thus we have come in a mass of loyal sourballs, loyal sourdoughs, loyal sourcream-puffs to petition our beloved, noble, old emperor for abolition of our native universe. Failing that, we plead to be strung up in the plaza for edification of the other philosophers, magicians and futurists. Sometimes *maya* kisses the efficient end, but somehow always with surrogates. Otherwise, she's a concrete sadist, operating in the interstices of sour old proudflesh. We, the condemned, mean to complain, and if our loyal complaint is rejected, we mean to create a new native universe, one in which our language can be our own and will only say exactly what we mean, one in which our actions will be always of the appropriate level of decorum and none will run berserk to leave us with bloody hands and foaming mouths and shame.

8. "Salt"

The sea is salt. The blood is salt. Ethic is salt. Tears are salt. Tension is salt. Death is salt. Salt is that common stream in which all creatures swim from their beginnings to their beginnings. Salt is the renewal of dreams. Salt is the end of nightmares. Dark and salt is that common stream in which all creatures swim from their endings to their endings. Sweat is salt. Zero is salt. Echo is salt. Rainbow is salt. Salt is that common deep of light in which all creatures swim from haven to haven. The skull is salt. The boneyard is salt. The withered names are salt. Salt is the common duration in which all creatures await the ending of *maya*. Salt is the word. Salt is the majesty. Salt is the form of the Real. Each in his own direction toward the common goal, each in his own ethic toward the common majesty, each creature in the consciousness of its own kind does cleave the deep, swallow the brine and voyage the salt enlivened ocean to the shore

where waits in orichalcum and gold majesty the Autumn of *maya*. The name is salt. The skull is salt. The Zero is salt. The personality is salt. Cold and briny the common deep of Self through which all creatures swim to the Winter of *maya*. And the snow is salt and the heavens are salt, and all the white and zero roads lead to the to the golden wrinkled hag from whose skin the leaves renew their green and the fables renew the curve of their dramatic actions. She smiles in the salt light. Spring is always in the Zero air, she says. But now, all creatures, each in their several directions, swim through that common smile, through the Zero, into the no-season of reality. Sometimes *maya* is the smile on the face of nothingness. A fine, white, salt smile.

Interlude: Within the Neo-A. educational corps. One neo-A. instructor to another: "Ah, he's sorrowing to his reality."

Stage III: Nothingness

1. "Light"

ALLSHAPER, LIGHT, what symbols we owe to your belief in reality. From common thread of light that binds the souls together to spinning lights,

each marking the perpetuity of a *ka*. All-dreamer, Light, what symbolic gestures we owe to your belief in fantasy. From white child-fist upthrust from the red dirt grave to

postman's air of majesty as he places a junk-mail loveletter in the wrinkled paw. Allcompassionate, Light, what symbolic actions we owe to your desperation, in search of a finality. The executioner reddening the blade with the severance of his own hand. The stripping diving into the molten gold to rescue the god. Allsorrows, Light, what concrete performances we owe to your deepening of the soul of the radiant beast screaming golden in the darkness. The children crying, father, following him around, yelling for a touch of his claws.

The philosophers following his spoor, hoping to look once into his eyes. Allnamer, Light, what language deaths we owe to your searching inquiry into seasons of despair, your power of illuminating what should be hidden, your power of enlightening what should remain ignorant, your power of renewing what should be allowed to rest. Your power to make even the gutter visionary, so beloved of decadent *fin de millenia*, forget the turning and the power of darkness.

2. "Darkness"

Darkness through the language-prism is a turning of the rainbow through the angle of potentiality. Silence is the only obvious and truism accepted color of darkness. But rose in crystal, rose that blooms in crystal, is a color of darkness. Blue eyes in copper is a color of darkness. Green leaves in clear plastic is a color of darkness. Faces on automatic personality trip are a color of darkness. It is said darkness is the color of sin and that all creatures whatever their condition walk in darkness continually. It is said that darkness is the color of

fate and that all creatures, whatever their sins, tumble in darkness haphazardly. It is said that darkness is the color of danger and that, whatever their conditioning, all creatures are in harm's way continually. It is said that darkness is the color of death and that all creatures, whatever their splendor, whatever their prayer, walk in the dust continually. It is said darkness is potentiality and that all creatures, whatever the bitter, the exceeding bitter reproaches they cast upon themselves and upon their endings, walk in creation perpetually.

3. "Here"

Here, properly speaking, is only the dream

of a geometric savage. An infinite, inward

winding spiral. A spiral which is, at some instant, the magic here; and therefore, one in which, at every instant, at every point is the common, the utilitarian here. Here, properly speaking, is the nightmare of Zeno and the ecstasy of Dionysus. Here, as generally conceived, is a point of light. Is, in fact, *the* point of light. The light which darkens must surround, the light, therefore, from which all darkens must draw their names. Here is the intersection of Form and polity of Form, aristocratic welcomes saying Welcome on Your Honor and common moats saying, in effect, no solicitors please. Here is the intersection of the reflection and the echo, the crossroads of the vampire and the philosopher. Here is the answer approached by devious murders and direct intrigue. Here is the body of good fellow staked out on a graph of Cartesian co-ordinates for the felons of metaphysics to torture as they will, to rasp and file and burn in their vain attempt to find the center of his silence, the paradox of his orthodoxy. Here is the place where the midnight candles are extinguished in the rainbow. Here is the objective cry, the prayer, the name called in the middle

of mathematical reality, in the center of agony. Here is the objective non-place of the subjective will. Here, properly speaking, is only the reality of the gentle conquerer, an infinite inward spiral, at which at all points, every language is extinguished in the naming of its dreaming center. Here. Or, as would be said while still in the illusion of *maya*, still in the fantasy of the empirical reality of language, Here and Now. The file across the breasts, the rasp across the mouth, the fiery tongs in the eyes, the prayer given, the name cried at the hour, at the instant, the Here of the radiance of the beast. Here is the inward spiral. The heart, defiled, suffers. The heart, betrayed, suffers. The heart, barbed, suffers. The heart, without a language and therefore without a silence, suffers. The heart, lost, suffers. The heart, found, suffers. The heart, defined, suffers. Here is the spiral leading inward. The quadruple intersection: the cry, the curse, the prayer, the silence. Finally, the name and the withering of the name. Cramped in bronze, the eyeless, slashed, still body is cramped in dust. The spiral leading inward. Here.

4. "There"

There but for the grace of God goes God, philosophized the thirtieth century cannibal, given anti-aging drugs, sealed in a mirror-coffin starship and set on random drive toward the

edge of the galaxy. There but for the grace of God goes God, complained the executioner, hanged by his fickle public, a scarlet ribbon in his glossy black hair, a blue line around his

neck. There but for the grace of God goes God, complained the keeper of the chronos, condemned to experience each instant completely. There but for the grace of God goes God, whined the radiant beast screaming in the darkness, creating the darkness. There but for the grace of God goes God, cursed the Visionary as he gave in to the pleasure of mortifying his body fully. There but for the grace of God goes God, complained the reductionist linguist, set to stew in the brass confines of the cannibal language, devouring its own entrails, the linguist too. There but for the grace of God

goes God, whimpered the gay deceiver, flaunting his painted bottom at the battle of the Somme. There but for the grace of God goes God, cried the baby opening his eyes in the Auschwitz ditch, where his mother left him like a kitten to drown. There but for the grace of God goes God, idealized Grace, accumulating in the soul like coaldust in the miner's lungs. There but for the grace of God goes God, complained the common sinner of the twentieth century, crushed under the inevitable dialectic of the power and the turning of the darkness. There but for the grace of God go I, said God, contemplating necessity.

5. "I"

I know I am not said I and on that rock founded existence against which all the tigers of wrath and the wheels of fortune shall not prevail. For if I were, said I, continuing his involvement in the dialectic of the Supreme Fiction, could I distance myself from my death? Would I not experience my death as more than a word at every instance of my I-in-Being? Could I see my death as an island of the briny dark surrounded by the meadows and the children and the rainbows and the leaves of orichalcum? Would I not experience my death as more than a word in the snakecharge of every cell, in the loss of every memory, in the bitter, the exceeding bitter, dashing of every hope? I know I am not, said I, and upon the existence

of the spiral of the Word, I shall continue to bless and be blest by the sweet-smelling grass, the laughter of little monsters playing hide and hide deeper in the dark, the ultra-orange to hyper-magenta of the rainbow curved through the white mist over the choppy waves at sunset. I am not, said I, and on that inclusivity have rested, am resting, and will be resting on the random and therefore eternal point on the infinite, directionless spiral. Death is not a word; death is an island. Therefore, resting in the music of the blessed negation, despair not when the bell tolls; it tolls not for thee. Unless you feel about your Self the dark and briny deep through which you swim in the direction or non-direction of your death, which is not a word.

6. "It"

It stands before you covered with chocolate and playing a silver pipe to which all animals of the world respond. It is older than the urban blight upon whose rubble you balance. It is older than the death of the sweet brass; it is older than the shaggy grunters of the white expanses, crowded out by the word-obsessed Cro-Magnons. It dreams you into its green shadow, annihilates you into its music. Covered with language, you dance before it, in a spiral leading inward to the gas chamber. Or you dance before it through the dialectic of pastoral decay and into the mushrooming of the urban plaza. Or you dance before it in the air, like an addled saint. Or you dance before it through the Polish Spring Thaw, through the mud of the Polish plains like a humanist demented by a vision of Platonic Death. Or you dance before it like a naked hag before the green altar. Or you dance before it like a sci-

entist dreaming of the Unified Field Theory of Darkness. Or you dance before it like a common japester, beating the wind with your arms of straw, putting a torch to the green wood of your head because you would blaze and illuminate the darkness. It stands before you, a stick figure of gray; it says you left it in a ditch by the Interstate, it says you left it in a frying pan on the stove, the burner turned to High, it says you left it in the care of strangers called You and Another, who ate each other's flesh and tried to create an ambiance of creative, funky, amber-eyed despair, it says you created it in a moment of irresponsibility and therefore created your own silence. It says it's cold, that the ice is all around, that because it is your creation, it is older than you. In truth, it's a shivering bundle of rags, a sallow face. It calls you father and says it must worship you with fire; it calls you God and summons you to dance.

7. "Life"

Life is the continual resurrection of the living. From the chocolate-covered tomb of the strict musick. From the magic mirrors in which rise the towers of the banal metropolis of gold. From the things that go bump in the night and from the things that cry God in the daylight. From the language after the end of

the alphabet. From the aesthetic echoes of rape, executions and the burning alive of children. Life is the continual resurrection of the living from the pursuit of compassion. From the humour of understanding. From the happiness ratings of the wholly sane. From the Mysteries of the napalm-covered babies and

chocolate-covered ants. From the sacrament of Mozart Serenade at the door to the gas chamber, and from the orgy of the fifth-level dis-information networks. From the ice in ice, from the bronze in bronze, from the language in language, from the flesh in flesh, life is the continual resurrection of the living. Each moment by the casual pinoak of autumn, its leaves spiny and scarlet at the edges, still green at the center. At the casual moment of each meeting with the bronze-and-yellow check

coated tout giving the odds on raising a sincere smile from the embalmed lips of a politico or a wholistic emotion from the guts of the language-manipulator. At each reconaissance of the word Blue, at each coffin-mirror-needle perception of the sky, at each casual silence that renews an antique December, at each pear-cut, glass bauble of a word connoting Light that revives the spiral of white dust of the first Spring. The non-symbolic, non-imaged Spring. To that Spring and to that action, Life is the continual resurrection of the living.

8. "Death"

It stands before you covered with twisted carny mirrors, each mirror inscribed with the language of a different god, and only its gold-skinned, bald, wirnkled head peers at you above the squares of glass of babyblue, amber, fire-engine red, orange, violet, green, woven into the gray, double-breasted suit. And the head speaks your language. Your language is of course Reality, the smile on the face of Nothingness, the truck in the wrong gear grinding up the graveled single-lane of Beloved Old Noble Emperor Mountain; your language is Reality, of course, streets paved with gold, platinum sewers, clerks munching zinc-capsuled Hershey bars, dying of Lung Osmosis from eons of breathing gold dust. Your language is Reality Banal, the foxy guy in the maroon trousers, the violet shirt with bronze piping, the hair in

the latest stiff, silver roach, the guy checking into the boarding house for Things That Sell Encyclopedias in the Twilight. Your language is naturally Reality. It stands before you with necklaces of gold teeth, wearing a thousand overcoats of blue-gray skin, the pockets stuffed with snapshots of bare animals being forked into the shallow layers of quickline. It wears a skullcap and a box of language between the eyes. It carries a patchwork with tassels and begs you to pray an objective prayer. It stands before you, gasping for air. And the Prague symphony twists and glitters around it. In the supermarket, it stands before you amid the falling leaves of Autumn plastiwrap. In the middle of the Interstate, it stands before you, a wisp of smoke in the crystal; the customized natural-fur interior babies drive right through

the remembered shade of rose. In the middle of a field of corn stubble, it stands before you, in the twilight like multiple layers of a blue mirror, a straw man, its straw arms breaking under rolls and rolls of parchment, its cotton-waste beard aflame. It stands before you, a pillar of fire in the darkness. Its language is of

course Reality. Death comes arrayed in many fathers.

Interlude. Within the neo-A. educational corps. One neo-A. instructor to another. "Ah, he's sweetening to his responsibility."

Stage IV: CREATION

1. "Fuck"

STRIPLING DIVING into golden Thetis. Realize Vergil dying all this time. Golem and Frankenstein's creation grinding it together, the brass belly against the murderer's brain. Shower of gold on the first robot, the one named Lility. Bringing forth a sixth-generation analog to a Platonic Form. Saints in stiff, leaden robes, passing in the sky, the platonically true pattern of 'fuck'. Style diving into beast screaming golden in the darkness. Realize Satan dying all this time. Pickelhaube and Shako tilting at nemesis, the iron spike and the golden plume over the death's head crossing resonances in no-man's land. Shower of bits and pieces of common infantry upon the first tank. Bringing forth the strategic theory fo the indirect approach to death. The dislocation of the enemy's

psychology (Wordsworth, where now thy healing power?) better than a narrow flank maneuver. Imagination diving into Auschwitz. Realize God dying all this time. Baby squalling and ditch of gasoline burning meeting for the first time. Bringing forth the end of history. Artists wrapt in tiger's form burning in the chimneys of the night. Passing into the zone of silence. Realize language dying all this time. Consumed by the action it cannot imitate, confused by the modern mixture of petroleum and lust. The fornication of the metalloids and the humanists, the cohabitation of the soup can and the mystic. Bringing forth a new world. Melting together of the grand passion and the random, groupie caress. Realize paradox dying all this time.

2. "Love"

Walking through the night. Breathing the air deeper as it gets colder. Listening to the squirrels scabbling down the bark. Shuffling through the leaves. Coming to the abandoned car graveyard. All in a symmetrical heap, the corroded metal. Behind it, the moon. The cars, bent and twisted into one another, eclipse the

moon. There is a faint blue light around then. Absorbed into the silence, I become the silence. I am my native universe. I am my God. I am the need to become everything, to love absolutely. Walking through the night. Breathing the air deeper as it gets colder.

3. "Destroy"

To love absolutely is to destroy completely. Language falls face-down in the muck. The loyal citizens carry on, tight-lipped. Frankenstein's creation shambled to its place on the assembly line; the golem booms the theology of ecumenical silence from its brass belly. Bits and pieces of privates in flander's field return to life to get a good education according to their posthumous right. Scattered in the open classroom, they listen dutifully to general haig expound the newest manifesto from Paris, the theory of surreal attrition. Strip away all the negatives and a shape strange to the bourgeois will emerge, the shape of pure positive. A strange head, belonging to private helmuth atkins asks if this isn't really just the first wave of americanization? Wavell nods in reluctant agreement and points to a drawing of an empty plaza with statues of the aristocratic shaggygrunters, the perspective bent and

twisted into pure positive. This, he said, is an imaginary drawing of the Mark IV monster, who eats barbed wire for breakfast, tames rough terrain for lunch and squashes minotaurs for supper. It comes in Light, Medium and Heavy. The Persing, the Patton, the Picasso. Whom God loves absolutely, God destroys completely. The death beyond death. Unlike rigidly segregated piles of arms, legs, heads in flander's fields, angels are immortal; unlike those who play the steel minotaur by ear, by the resonance of its ferocity, by the colder, deeper, sickening feeling, the empty phrase buzzing in the brain, I'll-never-make-it-out-of-here-alive, by the greater desolation, the abandonment, the resonance of their own ferocity, unlike these proletariat ashes that formalize flander's fields, the angels cannot be loved absolutely. Listen to the end of the lecture of General Blake: Being completely al-

truistic in their rationality, the angels, therefore, cannot receive God's absolute love. Loving because it is their nature to do so and being fulfilled in their nature, they cannot per-

ceive of love beyond perfection. That is, the destruction beyond destruction. The death beyond death. They cannot conceive of the brokenness of God.

4. "Create"

The purpose of language is to create more language. The purpose of more language is to create new language. I am my language newest begins with Light. Light is the formal utterance of ardent desire. In the field of Light on Light, there is no hollow in which light is; rather a solidity of light exists, in which I am. The meaning of Light is Light. At the jagged break of the dream's bone-light, at the clean edge. From the crimson light that is the wound, the golden light extends and fulfills the Form, the absolute body-image. The image of Light is Light; mirror eyes in cathedral colors are not the image of Light; death as a green light sealing the tomb is not the image of

Light; metaphor burning in the crematoria of the night is not the image of the Light; the name God withering in the center of the white light is not the image of Light. Neither the mirror of glass, of flesh, of concrete, of night holds the image of Light. Language, obliquely-twisted, double-twisted, reveals the pressure of Light on the surface-tension of the meaning of Light. And at the random, suburban edges of language, begins the interior of silence, the silence shaped by silence, silence which has never been a gesture between two ferocities. The purpose of language is to catapult the user of language into that silence. Where by Light, the Light is not betrayed.

5. "Understand"

To understand is to walk the infinite spiral generated from the center of the burning bush that burns and is not consumed. It is to analyse the epicycles of the beast roaring golden in the darkness and the hilarity of his stagger through the Zero. To understand is to model the dynamic shape of the swarming pattern of

the tight-lipped, loyal citizens around the bloated, naked carcasses of the loyal ministers, generals and citizens strung up in the Emperor Plaza. To understand is to intuit the gestalt of the slobber-lipped, loyal citizens, as they approach the swollen, purple-black tongues, penises, vulvas of the carcasses. As they approach

with rasp and file to abrade those monstrous organs of political vision. As they abrade the drum-tight skin to satisfy an acquired taste for the divine afflatus. To understand is to be able to plot on a non-cartesian graph the utilitarian value of the dead. To understand is to be able to listen to the loyal citizens as they make a political protest against God. Understand, nothing is achieved by gauze-winged, iridescent, tight-lipped citizens doing their duty. Understand, the political value of death is much over-rated. Understand, these citizens will return to the normal routines: concrete wall, soup can, electric furnace—but fulfilled in their ideological understanding. They have been a Unity, have stood six-square, an Isness against the brokenness of God. Against the breakdown of essential city services into the blight, reality. Understand, reality still stands before you, about three and a third meters high, gray-skinned, covered with rags and lice. Understand, reality still calls you father. Understand, nothing is achieved by this naming. Understand, the aesthetic value of misery is much over-rated. I could call the lice golden and in-

tuit the gestalt of their dance across the renaissance graph of the apollo form of God. Understand, art history is dying. Understand, it's all in the tentacles of financial speculators now, struddlebugs, goldbugs, iridescent loyal citizens. Understand, one could graph, model, intuit a paradigm of the flow of monetary resources across one's native universe. Understand, the theological value of speculation in abstract commodities is over-sold. To understand is to walk through the field of sweet grass and know it and at the same time to walk through the field of burning babies and know it. Understand, the number of curves is the highest infinite number. Understand, the graph of this movement will not coincide with any of those curves. Understand, the value of this movement, the dance within or to or away from the fire is over-celebrated. Understand, the loyal citizens, not interrupting their normal routines, are moving in an indirect strategic approach to encompass the death of the child wandering in a circle through the Emperor Plaza and crying softly to himself, Father, Father.

6. "Mold"

To mold or to be molded, condition or be conditioned, screw or be screwed, all the false dualities. The ontological reverence for dualities, especially the duality of Unity or Duality, is over-done. Meanwhile, within the God-possessed dreamer, the serious, rational savage

awakes and from the brokenness of X molds the empirical City of Gold. From the brokenness of ardent desire, molds the wholistic unknown. If God by Logos molded the universe, then, by God, language can screw its own conditioning. An intersection of translucencies is

the color of ice. The cold intuits the stone that burns and is not consumed in the blue light. The rage of the drifter molds the clouds into the shapes assumed by steel. Mold the language as you please; the baby burns in the desert, in the intersection of transparencies, burns and is not consumed. Abaracadabra, notice the polarization of the dark night of the soul. By God's bones (broken), notice the figure of Michelangelo embedded in, partially molded, as if struggling to emerge from the random meteorite. By Pre-Raphael and all the Mannerists, notice how the word Laser introduced into the language makes a new and perfect parallel with Radar. Through the carefully crafted maze with Radar to meet the Minotaur; through the incoherent darkness with Laser to meet thy Maker. The ontogenetic reverence for synchronous metaphors is over-intellectualized. From the brokenness of the ribs, skulls, pelvic girdles, thigh-bones, metacarpals, metatarsals, from the brokenness of bits and pieces of com-

mon fathers, eyes, arms, feet, hands; from the brokenness of monstrous swollen organs, from the brokenness of shapes of the dead assumed by steel, from the brokenness of the moments of the continual resurrection of the living, from the brokenness of light, falling through darkness, the language is molded. Though vulnerable, its shape cannot be apprehended. Within its flame, we cry Soup Can, Electric Furnace, Concrete Wall, Pinoak, Leaf, Bronze Coffin, Mirror, Eye, God, Needle, Mud, Face, Form, Sky, Flower, Metropolis, Father, Actualize, Activate, Press the Button, Mold. Or else, be cast out into the Weird, go bump in the night, forget yourself into a compendium. Or else, facts. Or else, weep. And also, take off your rags. And also, take off your skin. And also, take off your virtue. And also, weep. Mold or be broken. And then, finish your weeping. And then, enter into the brokenness: that silence.

7. "Voyage"

Voyage. Under the impact of the word Laser, the purple-blue stone facades of the city dissolve. Under the influence of coherent light, three-dimensional eyes are illuminated from within. In the ebony hall, arranged on peristyles, the eye of green light, the eye of amber light, the eye of golden light, the eye of crimson light, the eye of blue light. Under the power of the higher criticism and the method-

ology of language-game and linguistic-theory comparison courses, the names wither on the stones, the symbol withers on the forehead, the writing falls from air. Voyage. Beyond the shallow holes, filled with stick-figures and quicklime. Beyond the burning symbol that burns and is not consumed and consumes. Beyond the Antarctica of the soul, the shapes of children huddle under the white inter-

section of opacities. Beyond the tiger resonance of the soft cry of "father." Beyond compassion, which is flesh; beyond forgiveness, which is emotional integration;

beyond ataraxia, which is stasis; beyond Nothingness, which is given. To the I-am hidden in reality by that which speaks and is not language; to the sweetness of the flame. Voyage.

8. "Probe" (Union with the Godhead)

Dreamed into reality by Who that possesses and is not possessed I am.

Interlude. Within the Neo-A. educational

corps. One Neo-A. programmer to another. "Ah, he's awakening to his Self."

Stage V: Awakening

1. "To Be"

WHERE AM I? It's all right, I answer myself. I'm in the middle of a field of blue flowers. It is Spring, and the sun is warm on my belly. From time to time, a cool breeze tickles my hide. I lie back, indolent in the flowers, and count the clouds. There are nine and a half clouds. The half a cloud is a fragment of my reverie. My beloved walks to me from the edge of the field. Her eyes are gray and clear, her hair, black and thick and it flows to her waist. She's a bit dumpy, but who cares? She can count half clouds as well as anybody. Besides, I'm now skinny as hell, have a criss cross of scars on my back and my hair has turned white, well, I prefer silver, but who cares. She lies down beside me. We count half clouds. When

our reveries merge, we make love. Afterwards, we lie together in silence for a few moments. And then we are seized, possessed by an almost intolerable sweetness, a power of calmness so great we cannot move, cannot slip into reverie or into love; it is a communion by which we are possessed, from the outside, not from the season, not from the mind and not from our love-making. Within it, we know each other and are known and feel ourselves at the center of the intersection of the potentialities of grace. When we are loosed into ourselves, we cannot do or say anything for a time. We lie back, indolent in the flowers and watch the empty sky. Then we make love again and then we sleep.

2. "To Be Understood"

Who am I? I am a plain body. A science of the art of perception. I am in a field of sweet grass. It is summer. I bask under the noon sun. She walks up to me and hands me a mirror. I am filling out, cannot be called gaunt by any stretch of language. The scars are fading, and my hair is definitely silver. We place the mirror in the grass and in it watch the reflection of the sky and the sun. By a science of perception, we call up the art of transformation. The blue sun stands still in the golden sky. It is deepest Noon. The eternal moment. The joy beyond ferocity or serenity. We know each other objectively. There is little to say. "I'm

glad you're here," I say. "And I'm glad you're here," she says. Who are we? a network, a communion that has been possessed and known from the outside. And therefore, we have been understood absolutely. We know we can love and not be destroyed. She scratches my back; I rub the back of her neck. We kiss. The golden sun moves down the sky. I watch her amber eyes reflected in the mirror. Our shadows lengthen on the sweet grass. We make love. And then roll over and watch the stars appearing in the twilight sky, in the mirror. We consider naming them, but decide against it.

3. "To Appreciate"

My silver mane flows down my shoulders; I have decided it should stop growing there. I wrap my green cloak more closely about me and lean back against the bark of an old Pin-oak. It is Autumn. I watch another tree at the far edge of the field. It is a White Birch. Slim, tall, branching into small golden leaves. The wind lifts the leaves away and floats them down in a spiral shape onto the browning grass. I appreciate the richness of that simplicity. I could sit and watch the Birch through the rest of Autumn, seeing, for the first time, each separate and subtle change. But, without my knowing it, my beloved has stolen up be-

hind me. She throws my cloak over my eyes, and though slightly handicapped, I manage to wrestle her to the ground. When I finally get the cloak off, I am looking into her blue eyes. As in my native universe, I am well and perfectly lost in them. I appreciate the serenity of her spirit, the ferocity of her understanding, the casual quality of her wisdom. Eventually what she is doing with her hand, which is plenty, removes my attention from spiritual matters. We make love. Afterwards, for the first time, I ask her a serious question. "Isn't it about time we settled down and started thinking about what to name the children?"

She smiled and then said, "There will be no children. You are my son and my father." She

vanished and I was left

4. "To Savour"

face-down in the ice. Naked, a bare-forked animal in the howling Winter. I tasted the ice. Delicious. I stood and wrapped the snow around me like a living cloak. I savoured the sun, a small, pear-cut glass ornament in the sky. I changed the color of the snow from white to blue. I commanded the Pinoak to

bloom. I decided the sun should stop at Deepest Noon. I lay back indolently and watched the Spring blossom through the snow. I savoured the silence of the native universe I had constructed as a temporary exterior for my Imagination.

5. "To Speak"

I tried to visualize the total field of operations of the divine energy of the imagination, and failed. I collapsed my native universe into its esoteric forms and waited. Presently, a member of the educational corps appeared. Within the machine, but outside of linear time,

we spoke one another. "Tell us what you have learned," it said. I smiled and gave him an ice-flower. He nodded and started to take it, then said, "Of course this is not—" I gave him this formula: "NO this is not known in any ice-language." He vanished and

6. "To Speak Silence"

I followed him outside the machine. Neo-A. was a nice planet, a little dumpy, but rich in undisturbed topsoil. "How does it work?" "You tell me." I told him. "It's a machine that operates on the structure of time. Within it, the being achieves a constant change-rate equal to ninety-nine per cent of the constant, the

constant being the velocity of eternity. With a few controls from outside, it is easy to direct the change-rate into a growth-rate. And any being, no matter how violent against person, can grow to the limits of its native universe and beyond, if able to live almost as long as time. Of course, I realize the Supreme Instant

comes from Outside, that neither the instructional corps or the being has any control over it and that it is the absolutely essential part of the process and that only a kind of preparation for passivity, for grace, was possible from this side." "More than that perhaps, but essentially, tell us what you have just said." I gave him a battered, bloody child-shape of silence. "And this is not known in any language of silence." "You have given me yourself." "My Self has been thrown into that brokenness, into that silence." "Of course, there are no children here, except—" "Except us, who

are the condemned, the violent against person; we are the children." "And the adults." "And my responsibility as an adult?" "First, to guard against those who would create *this* here." It handed back the image of the murdered child.

I created a moment: the earth, the sky, the field of flowers and sweet grass—my beloved. Then I remembered to remember the bloody image and took my place as the youngest guardian on the outermost screen of Neo-Arisia.

A ONE-SIDED CONVERSATION WITH A CHILD IN COWBOY DRESS

David Blaylock

“My dear young man in the cowboy suit, go visit your light-hearted antics on some other corner of the world. You’ve already gotten 27 pieces of candy, 12 popcorn balls, and 2 apples from this house; there is nothing left to extort from me. While you’re leaving, you can pick up the pieces of my once magnificent jack-o-lantern which you have spread throughout the shrubbery. You snot-nosed little brat! Of course I was once young myself, but in my day we didn’t have M-80’s and other such means of destruction. Yes, we played some dirty tricks, but we never disabled or disfigured cars like you just did to my Chevy. I know what you’re up to. You’re stalling so the missus will come out and give you what precious little I have left. **BLAST HALLOWEEN! BLAST YOU LITTLE COSTUMED VANDALS!** I shall have to dig myself out of the rubble tomorrow while the missus clucks, ‘Weren’t they cute?’. You’ll be the cause of my hernia, my heart attack too should I choose to have one. You don’t fool me, behind that innocent exterior beats a heart of pure malice. Get out of here you little six-shooting hoodlum and take your band of cutthroat bunnies and hobos with you. I would sick the dog on you but you ran him off two hours ago.”

CONTRIBUTORS

- Marilynn Byerly is Ol' Faithful to us, a senior her at UNC-G in English with plans for grad school, has contributed to Coraddi for years and is a member of the staff.
- Raymond Saint-Pierre showed up one day to retrieve the poems not being published - we have no idea what he does or much about who he is.
- Marion Andrew her poems mysteriously appeared one day - have never seen, met or spoken with her.
- Catherine Bergeson is an art major at UNC-G, a Coraddi staffer; this is the first time she has published in Coraddi.
- James Mazzotta felt like Robert Redford one night last semester but has continued with the Carolinian as cartoonist any way. This is the first poem of his we have published.
- Amon Liner is an MFA candidate at UNC-G, has published extensively, including a volume of poetry entitled MARSTOWER (Red Clay Press).
- Robin Routh was very nice when I asked her to change the title of her poem, is a first-time contributor and a student at UNC-G.
- Stanley Knick has been more than patient with us, is a student at UNC-G.
- Cindy Pierce had a date with a guy who felt like Robert Redford one night last semester, is a student of Lloyd's; she is a new contributor to Coraddi.
- Mike Gaski who and where are you?

- Steve Chilton wanders around third floor Elliott a lot, pledged with APO this semester, but has been forgiven; he is a staff member and a first-time contributor.
- Quentin Powers sends me stuff from Baton Rouge, is a student in Louisiana and the editor of his school's literary magazine.
- David Blaylock works in the Bookstore, works for APO and works for us whenever he happens to wander in.
- Tommy Huey is a Randall Jarrell Scholar at UNC-G, and has recently published a novel entitled *Swing Low* from which his story in this Coraddi Springs forth.
- Sam Hudson is a student at UNC-G as far as we know, showed up to deliver his work and hasn't been seen since.
- Jack Stratton is Coraddi's new art editor, fine arts major at UNC-G.
- Robb McDougle has waited a long time to see his color in print, is a student in the art department at UNC-G, and has been around forever.
- Paul Braxton is an editor of Pine Needles, a senior at UNC-G, and a longtime Coraddi contributor.
- Tess Elliott has also waited a long time to see her color in print, is also an art student at UNC-G, and has also been around forever.
- Chuck Houska is a Carolinian staff photographer and a first-time contributor.
- Carol Upchurch is another mystery.

COMMENT

The last time an editorial comment appeared in an issue of *CORADDI* was, as closely as I could place it, back in the early 1960s. It has puzzled me that the editors chose for so long to remain silent, but so be it. I choose to break the silence. Very few people actually know what the present status of *CORADDI* is or what, if any future plans there are. I take this opportunity now to enlighten (hopefully) the undergraduate population of UNC-G.

During the last eight months, *CORADDI* has come as close as is possible to its death rattle and still be called back to join the living. I have come close to killing it myself a time or two. Well, the magazine is still alive, but only just barely and only because it was rescued at the last minute by four or five very diligent, hard-working people.

Submissions are at an all time low. Voluntary submissions, that is. I have had to beg for what we have gotten, especially the fiction. Art submissions are way off the mark. Poetry is getting harder and harder to come by. Why this is so is something I have not quite been able to pin down. Lack of interest is certainly a contributing factor. But even if I found myself swamped in submissions, the lack of a staff to do all the work required in producing a magazine would be a block almost impossible to remove.

I saw a picture of the *CORADDI* staff in an issue of the *PINE NEEDLES* from around ten years ago. The staff at that time consisted of around 20 people. I was more than slightly amazed! Twenty people - who put this magazine out - on time - four times a year, held readings and workshops, and participated in a once nationally recognized Arts Festival. We could still be doing all of those things - if we had the people. What a tremendous "if", however, when I have had to supplicate the gods for the staff I do have.

I know that many people believe that the *CORADDI* is nothing more than a Mutual Admiration Society founded to provide a group of elitist snobs with a place to publish each other's work. This is not the case. That the magazine publishes material by the same people issue after issue is simply because these are the only people who submit their work.

A healthy sign in this issue is that we have quite a few first-timers. I certainly hope that this is the beginning of a new trend.

I have heard it said that the magazine is not read because it is too "intellectual", or because what is printed is entirely incomprehensible to the average, non-literary person. What causes me great anguish is that these people seem not to have given the *CORADDI* a real chance.

There is, however, some good news. I have, with the help and encouragement of the Media Board, Kathy Krinick, Lloyd Kropp, and others, decided to change the format of the magazine to something which I believe will have much greater appeal to the student body. The next issues of the *CORADDI* will be bigger, the size of *TIME* or *NEWSWEEK* for example. We will be covering a greater variety of topics, branching into what might be called literary journalism. There will be book, record, and movie reviews, feature articles and a viewpoint section in which we hope to have contributions dealing with a variety of issues. All of these things will be included with the fiction, art, and poetry of the previous format. We plan to have the magazine come out on a schedule of once every six weeks to enable us to do such things as serialization of books and to participate in programs such as *COLLOQUY* which you have already seen in the *CAROLINIAN*.

We will be doing advertising, and our method of distribution will change. One copy of the magazine will be delivered to each dorm room and town students will be given designated places to pick up their copies.

However, we still need people—more than ever, to make this new format a success. This is a formal invitation to anyone who might be interested. We need a business staff for bookkeeping and advertising, we need reviewers and people to contribute articles, we need a greatly expanded editorial and technical staff. Let me emphasize that it DOES NOT matter if you have no experience. Volunteer and we will train you in what you want to do and more than likely, a little extra.

There will be a meeting on Monday, April 14 in Room 205 Elliott Hall. The office will be open all afternoon. Please attend! *CORADDI* wants and needs you!

SYLVIA D. LEPLIN



LOBSTER

Marilynn Byerly

I present armor
To hide tender parts
And with my claw-wit
Snap at attackers.

