

extensions

NO. 1 \$1

VITO HANNIBAL ACCONCI

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ANDRÉ DU BOUCHET (France)

ROBERT DAVID COHEN

STANLEY COOPERMAN

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LANE DUNLOP

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JOACHIM NEUGROSCHER

MIODRAG PAVLOVIĆ (Yugoslavia)

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CARTER RATCLIFF

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GEORGE SCHNEEMAN & RON PADGETT

HUGH SEIDMAN

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV

HANNAH WEINER

PETE WINSLOW

SUZANNE ZAVRIAN

STUDENT GRAFFITI (France)

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No. 1

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Carter Ratcliff

YOU NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN

Your letters have been arriving
stained with light-weight machine oil.
It puts us, Linda and I,
in mind of the perforating machine's
short fit of treason.
Now the lawn is green as ever
and our thoughts are flourishing too.

Speaking of treason,
Linda suggests that you posed for this landscape.
Flypaper revolves at the edge of that notion
all touched with willows
and the important tree house.

Revolving
is so typical of things of this earth
and of earth itself, too . . .
It approaches us

as we walk near the drugstore
in the evenings of your palatial holiday.

Surely you haven't forgotten the neon.

It hasn't forgotten you. It's like a movie parrot.
One with good manners in the dissolve.

Linda feigns concern
that the drugstore smell
has infected the tone of this.
It hasn't. She's asleep.
She's blond as a lawn can be blond
and much taken by the neon palomino.
It belongs,
but not as the landscape itself belongs.

This landscape looks as if it originally produced
someone nasty, at first endearing, now known
as Pretty Boy. Do you think he's pretty?
Are you pretty or do you just turn
dark bright colors as just before a storm
starlings, frightened and surprised, next
find you naked?

Should we close the window?

These curtains so skittish.
The first drops are good-natured
about not breaking the window.

Are we fucking?

Are we at the edges of our skin?
Or do we say "We're close"?

I have a million of these questions.
They stood like screen doors across the landscape.
You were so leafy and dim. We took you to the station.
Are you warm?
Do you believe in primogeniture?

Am I an only son?
Have you made your will?
If not, why not?

A PRAYER FOR WARMTH ON DECK...

A prayer for warmth on deck
like raindrops on the cover of a book
a setting that appeared once
in the way of moments
of monuments I'm tempted to say
because they like the sound
of recitation
especially when it turns green
before as it did when you named the book
Fragile & the seagull (you again!)
carried it off and
& & into the bow

Carter Ratcliff

SUMMER PORCHES

Asia, overfaint with meadows,
My dear, you will be absolutely lonely there
As the days don't progress but reappear
From the future to console one another
For the advancing hordes of porches.

It's in the sky-camera, your admirer, that
Even white is ruffled and brilliant
— like you on your way to exile —
and you will be discovered returning, but only
To a meadow you discovered during your first few days of exile.

"Exile" is my word. I know you would prefer
"Scorched with lovely elm shade" but I prefer
Just one, as in the days when we required
Just one postage stamp, not
A flock of them balanced
in the protocol squabble
over hue and denomination.

Tomorrow I'll attempt "visit" though I fear
That you'll prefer "Asia, horde of starlings,
Noonish shimmer along the wall. Moss and old sticks,"
So near to each other have we fearful grown
In this tan meadow where the days reappear
For the moment they're crushed and the spangles
"Clarified" not blurred like starlings
Or the vicious rocks like porches and the Argonauts.

That Hellenic statue near the rocker
Is wearing cloth from distant Asia. She tells vague stories.
I'll get my next word from her.

It will be "devotion" of course.
It will lure us to the days after tomorrow and bring
The Asian distances, faint with your exile,
Next to us, my love, so absolutely lonely here,
And clothed in distance like the newest meadow, there.

Dan Graham

ALL YOU NEED

(as recorded by *The Beatles*)

written by

JOHN LENNON

PAUL McCARTNEY

copyright by Northern Songs, Ltd.

PATRIOTIC LOVE

the first bars of the Marseillaise heralded by trumpetry. . .

plain song
Gregorian chant
chorus
d'Amour

then John in 'high' (ethereal) falsetto

[illegible]

"So it's not the word that you're saying; it's the sound: Krishna Krishna Krishna Krishna Krishna Krishna Krishna and it's just sounds. . . and sounds are vibrations."

George Harrison

singing softly, Paul, 'as if under the spell' of a love potion. . .

"Nothing you can sing that can't be sung

Nothing you can say. . .

a drug effecting varying 'highs' of intoxication

chanting with an obviousness of an exercise elemental as breathing. . .

SEXUAL LOVE

"But you can learn to play the game

It's easy all you need is love. . .

fading into a delirious, sweet surfeit, nauseous chaos. . .

LOVE IS EASY

"There's nothing you can make that can't be made

Nothing you can save that can't be saved. . .

SPIRITUAL LOVE

The later days of the Roman Empire saw the emergence of the astrological Piscean-Christian Age. Pisces, the sign of the psychic diagnostician, in its better aspect represents sympathetic, benevolent love holding in check a tempestuous, weaker side, given to excesses of sensuous love and sloppy emotionalism.

"Love is all you need. . .

LOVE IS EVERYTHING

the last line endlessly repeated, comingled with suffused shrieks, syrupy trumpets, saxophones and shimmering violins. . .

BROTHERLY LOVE

LOVE IS FOR EVERYBODY

now everybody, calypso-style, joining together for a raucous finale, set off by silly horns beeping in the background. . .

**"All together now everybody
All you need is love. . .**

* 'love' is named
87 times in the song

"Love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love. . .

LOVE IS NOTHING

**"Nothing you can do
But you can learn to view in time. . .**

-cliches
-sentiments
-syllogisms

LOVE AS A NOSTALGIC IDEAL

These verses by the courtly poet,
Armant David:

"I love and seek her so much
That I believe this violent passion
May drain me of all desire
Thus, love would lose me everything;
Her heart's desire drowns mine
As if flooded in a sea of sweet sorrow."

"Nothing you can do that isn't meant to be. . .

*the mechanics are the message; the product of countless other
'degradations' of the same trite 'idea' of love*

a switch has been pulled and the 'degenerating' background
has become exactly a decibel louder, no closer. . .

**"It's easy all you need is love
All you need is love. . .**

free-floating flotsam and effluvium

"She Loves You, yeah, yeah, yeah" surfaces again just before the 'hearts and flowers' surge of "Greensleeves" which itself is spliced off one note short of the resolution of its first bar. . .

the end of the line

"P.S. I Love You" - once
"Please Please Me" - 'oh yeah. . .'
in chorus
"Love Me Do" - 'yeah, love me do'
at end
"It Won't Be Long" - 'yeah, yeah'
as response in chorus
"I Want To Hold Your Hand" - 'yeah,
you. . .' in verse one
"All I've Got To Do" - 'yeah' said
occasionally
"Drive My Car" - 'yeah, beep-beep-
beep-yeah' chorus
"I'll Get You" - 'oh yeah' in chorus
break
"Day Tripper" - 'Sunday driver, yeah',
one-way ticket, yeah' in places
"Taxman" - 'yeah, I'm the taxman. . .'
in chorus
"A Hard Day's Night" - 'yeah' said
once

**"That's all you need
All you need is love. . .**

LOVE IS EASILY EXHAUSTED

**"Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need
Love is all you need. . ."**

Suzanne Ostro Zavrian

MANGOES

Because the moon moved, eclipsing the mangoes,
I could not see them:
MANGO: A YELLOWISH RED OBLONG
 oversweet and acrid, green
TO PEAR-SHAPED TROPICAL FRUIT THAT
 rose yellow, more oblong than sleep.
HAS A FIRM SKIN AND HARD CENTRAL
 You say that I have never seen your eyes?
STONE AND IS WIDELY CULTIVATED FOR
 How could I have seen your eyes, eclipsed
ITS VERY JUICY, AROMATIC, AND PLEASANTLY
 as they are by mangoes
SUBACID PULP BUT IN SEEDLING AND WILD
 (although they fill my sleep)
STRAIN IS OFTEN EXCEEDINGLY FIBROUS AND
 I have never touched your mouth,
HAS A DISTINCT FLAVOR OF TURPENTINE.
 but I know it has the taste of turpentine.

ELIPSE: GEOM.

I looked for the red tamarind
A PLANE CURVE,
 and yellow mango
THE PATH OF A POINT
 to deliver the universe to me
THE SUM OF WHOSE DISTANCES
FROM TWO FIXED POINTS (THE FOCI) IS CONSTANT,
 or, failing that
A CONIC SECTION, THE CLOSED INTERSECTION OF A PLANE
 to tell me what today meant.
WITH A RIGHT CIRCULAR CONE.

ELLIPSIS: GRAM. OMISSION OF

The poem I wrote about mangoes
ONE OR MORE WORDS, OBVIOUSLY
 was not about mangoes but you.
UNDERSTOOD, BUT NECESSARY
 You never saw it, so
TO MAKE THE EXPRESSION
 the ellipsis was complete.
GRAMMATICALLY COMPLETE.

THE CENTER

1.

and this week end:

rest

what way out

the limits
the equations of force and motion
the ranges of distance

the 4 walls of a room

a man's mind
a woman's body

until the Blackshirts
come cracking in the door

love

a telescope massed to the suns

where he sits
in a heated suit
recording
the images of stars
on sheets of film

and in

the voids

where he looks

2.

had considered
the departure of Mercury
from expected course

43 seconds of an arc
per century

perceptible
in its closeness
to the sun

9 million times
more massive

the shift of the spectrum

the gravitational deflection of light

from the place
of the patent office

it was afterwards
that it came to him

Venus

Earth

Mars

Jupiter

Saturn

Uranus

Neptune

Pluto

the stench

of the battleground

&

then

in the spaces

the center

of the universe

lies in

3.

ash as
to star
the gesture
of love
Betelgeuse
Sirius
Aldebaran

the considerance
of constellation

the levels of night

and that which has left us

and in those regions
the tenuous hydrogen

drifts in the reaches

and is lost
from us here
involved
in the heart's
pulse

the pulsate
gas

in the vast

peripheries

4.

the swell on

Betelgeuse

past our caring

as he went to him where he sat with her
and said get up or I'll hit you here

past our caring

the juke box

fused

in song

5.

in the star track

the remembrance

the moons flow

retrograde
east to west

or here

as the wind moves

as in

Cocteau

as they edge

thru hell

or

as when

they are in *Hiroshima*

the glazier

turning

and the mirror

which Orpheus

looks in

as in the world

rests

in the cylinder

of Palomar

to endure

the cold

pouring

at each

swing

of the door

out

where absolute

zero

is no

joke

There are these abstractions
 pursued in the force
 to obliteration.
 The surcease of pain.
 The peace of order.
 The self lost
 in progression of argument.
 The rest of the monastery.
 The mathematics of cosmology.

the disturbances
 of the real
 the oscillations
 in the planes of feeling
 had awakened
 in the dark morning
 the body beside him
 lost in breath
 the forms of the world
 drifted at the wall's width
 in the outside cold
 the terror
 as if poised at an edge
 the desire for escape
 the places
 where the trees were profusions
 the spaces
 into which he saw
 the center
 he constantly sought
 not profoundness
 but the weight of measurement
 had reached a hand
 to touch that breath
 the processes

I KINGS 21

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard
 Both more than his own, and not his.
 Rock-fed, the secret conduit of faith
 Strengthened the hands of its roots
 And the stock of his fathers' name
 Supplied its sap to his life's leaf
 That sipped the sweat of its face
 As the pleasant jewels of the dew.
 Of what else was the promise of Israel?
 As well sell handfuls of dust, or the sky.
 Yet a man's hand, like a little cloud,
 Could blot it out from under the sky,
 All value gone in the ownerless grave.
 Naboth's vineyard was an ordinary one,
 Why forsake life for their dead sake?
 'Set Naboth on high, and stone him.'
 On which the men of his own town
 Set Naboth on high, and stoned him.

from *The Snow of Lebanon*

II KINGS 2

Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal,
Two men with their minds on the sky
Of heaven. So they went down to Beth-el,
The sun's house, the home sky of God
Who was wise, yet set in his ways;
Whose hours were the same as the sun's
Day-labor in the bare room of heaven.
So they came to Jericho. Man's eye
Banged like a moth against the sun,
The sky's ingrained silence. At Jordan
The chariot of Israel and the horsemen
Thundered in the clouds' dust of water;
Reined in, the horses of fire laughed
In the sky's split side, at Jordan.
Two men with their minds on the sky,
Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal
To heaven. And he saw him no more
And said Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

from *The Snow of Lebanon*

LUCIFER (II)

'Joined in horizon's line of confusion
The sky and sea confess their origin,
The sun's progeny, as clouds come up
Against the blue-eyed tyrant's I AM;
The sea argues and agrees to shores
Incessant conversationist of silence,
Linguist of its surds. Heaven is at
Zero, the forced labor of the azure.'
That hero, statue of his own horror,
Fell for the horizon's smile of gravity.
The sea changes hands under the moon
The other sky's democracy of stars,
Yet the stations of the sun remain
To be climbed with a sabbath zeal
In your days, the stars' of course,
And in your eyes. Under these heavens
The man-child of light comes of age,
Wise in his generation, many as sand.

from *Sky Poems*

Schema for a set of poems whose component pages are specifically published as individual poems in various magazines. Each poem-page is to be set in its final form by the editor of the publication where it is to appear, the exact data in each particular instance to correspond to the fact(s) of its published appearance.

- 1 Using any arbitrary schematic (such as the example published here) produces a large, finite permutation of specific, discrete poems.
- 2 If a given variant-poem is attempted to be set up by the editor following the logic step-by-step (linearly), it would be found impossible to compose a completed version of the poem as each of the component lines of exact data requiring completion (in terms of specific numbers and percentages) would be contingently determined by every other number and percentage which itself in turn would be determined by the other numbers or percentages, *ad infinitum*.
- 3 It would be possible to 'compose' the entire set of permutationally possible poems and to select the applicable variant(s) with the aid of a computer which could 'see' the ensemble instantly.

SCHEMA

(number of) adjectives
 (number of) adverbs
 (percentage of) area not occupied by type
 (percentage of) area occupied by type
 (number of) columns
 (number of) conjunctions
 (number of) depression of type into surface of page
 (number of) gerunds
 (number of) infinitives
 (number of) letters of alphabet
 (number of) lines
 (number of) mathematical symbols
 (number of) nouns
 (number of) numbers
 (number of) participles
 (perimeter of) page
 (weight of) paper sheet
 (type) paper stock
 (thinness of) paper stock
 (number of) prepositions
 (number of) pronouns
 (number of point) size type
 (name of) typeface
 (number of) words
 (number of) words capitalized
 (number of) words italicized
 (number of) words not capitalized
 (number of) words not italicized

POEM

35 adjectives
 7 adverbs
 35.52% area not occupied by type
 64.48% area occupied by type
 1 column
 1 conjunction
 0 mms. depression of type into surface of page
 0 gerunds
 0 infinitives
 247 letters of alphabet
 28 lines
 6 mathematical symbols
 51 nouns
 29 numbers
 6 participles
 6"x9" page
 50 lb. paper sheet
 dull coated paper stock
 .007" thin paper stock
 3 prepositions
 0 pronouns
 10 point size type
 univers 55 typeface
 61 words
 3 words capitalized
 0 words italicized
 58 words not capitalized
 61 words not italicized

LIFE/LINES

Every time I try writing a poem to you
It turns out that the paper
Is a poorly erased palimpsest.
Older writing smudges through
And my verses turn into a crabbed interlinear.
The other day you were singing in the shower
And naturally I couldn't hear you
Above the gush of the water.
I would have gotten in with you,
But you're so afraid of intimacy
That you turn spontaneous gestures into far-reaching rituals.
In the evening when you sang the title role at the Met
(I forget which opera)
I tried humming along during your big arias
But the opera freaks nearby kept shushing me.
Why do you always send me urgent telegrams c/o American Express?
This is New York and you know I never check for my mail there.
I tried placing a collect call to you yesterday
(I was broke)
But your line was busy.
By the time you hung up, the telephone company had gone on strike.
I was born on a Thursday, far-gone,
A couple of blocks from the Roman ruins in Vienna, far-flung
And I have gone further than any Roman mercenary
But yesterday when I wanted to take the IRT Broadway 7th Avenue down-
town express
To go and see you
The man in the booth wouldn't change my ten-dollar bill.
Either he thought my feelings were counterfeit
Or else he didn't have enough silver to cover them.
No one would give me a token,
My love beads made them think I was a hippy
And this season is bad news for begging.
So I wrote a poem on the back of a discarded candy wrapper
Stuck it into a no-return coke bottle
And flung it into the Hudson.
Float along, little missive.
If anyone finds you I hope they deliver you to the right address.
If not, you'll end up in the Sargasso Sea
Among the ensnarled wrecks of myriad lives.

AN INVITATION TO NAUSICAA

Actually, she heard him the first time.
Why don't you come along, Odysseus said.
She said she'd love to but. . .
Why don't you come along?
She smiled gratefully while waves foam-whitened on the shore.
(Gulls careening.)
Daughter of Alcinous and Arete, king and queen of the Phaeacians.
On a clear day you can see the universe.
(*"She is described in Homer's Odyssey as gracious and charming
but saddened by Odysseus' departure."* – COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.)
Actually, she understood the question the first time
but, incredulous, pretended she hadn't.
I said (he said) why don't you come along?
(Seagulls careening. Waves whitening.)
My days are social/full, my duties pressing.
Politesse demands he ask a third time, with just a modicum
of resignation, a touch
of understanding in his voice.
Ever since then, we speak of an "invitation to Nausicaa" when
asking someone the impossible with both of us knowing that he
or she *would* say yes if the whole universe were different.
But since it's not we
regretfully decline.
(Gulls careening. Waves whitening.)

(April, 1968)

*In the morning there is a thought brought broken to me
like a splintered frame.
In the early daytime light spills from the book of night
that lay open on the windowsill: did you see it too?
Outside the pane in the white trees there are birds.
From beyond the window some dogs cough, I hear
the passing whine of wings, and a thought comes mingled
with the pull of wind.*

*We hear the faraway sea-sough of the moving winds.
We claim the books of morning with their leaves like white
flagstones.*

*In the shadow of the cup of afternoon my thought lies steeping.
Only half the morning has been measured out,
And I feel the tugging of the kite of noon.*

Gail Deeb

Steve Katz

MYTHOLOGY: DIANA

"Because Diana was the huntress, not the temptress," I replied. I forgot what the question was. Anyway the ball on the 43 yard line in their own territory, fourth down, two yards to go, for most quarterbacks a kicking situation. For me a mere flick of the switch, another channel, and life or death in the soapy window. The machine is stuck — with an overflow, and no change for another load. What to do? I got up in a flash and found another way through to the closet where my winter outfit dangles. I had a date with my baby, I speculated. The sadness of my baby is ill-conceived, as is all primary emotion in our time. That suddenly caught me lonesome and I exited to the courtyard of our sanitarium where I loved to behold the birds when it wasn't raining. This time, the rain. I hid under the eaves by the window of Nelly Bloomgarden, the typhoid carrier, and was stopped dead in my tracks. She'd been in that room since 1897. I could see her through the barred window lying on her side and watching the TV a generous party had donated. She didn't like football. It was a first down with the ball on the thirty. How had they done it? The wind up. The pitch. From behind a tree she tosses a mudball at me. "That's no way to do your hunting," I call, whoever she is. She's no temptress. I remember what he asked me now. He said, "What's the score?" That's a peculiar question to ask when the answer I gave was what I said at the outset. "The score?" The score is that nothing is happening in my heart, not even the action so familiar, you know, and one has to exercise those muscles to keep their tone. For a while I relax on the bus back but when she has to get off she finds that I have closed my fist around the seat bar over her long and smelly hair. "Ouch. I missed my stop." She was sitting in front of me, unarmed, unfortunately, because I'd make a nice roast for her table. Why do they all make out she's a woman, anyway? Couldn't she be the great Jim Brown when she says to me, "Let's run off and get married just on the spur

of the moment?" How do you answer a question like that without dropping her hair which my habit is to put in my mouth? We sprint off together like in the Musical Comedies and head right for a super market where we buy the aforementioned roast and by the time we're back at the place it's a marriage feast and we nibble on that. "Turn off the damn box," she says. "Are you a temptress or a huntress?" I ask. The ball has changed hands and those were on the offense who now are on the defense. It's time to go out and get blazing drunk so I step to the threshold on my way and Blooey — I'm had in the arm in the back of the neck in the right loin. Next time you won't catch me marrying a you-know-what. The air is sharp and clear, the winds are crisp, the ground crunchy underfoot, a perfect day for the game. First I hustle down to the market by the docks where beggars scoop fishscraps and I look around for a poor girl there because I want to fuck. Better to fuck a poor girl from the docks than a rich one who can afford weaponry. I dig one up covered with muck, the scales of carp stuck in the dirt on her wrist and forearms, and I buy her from her father for a song.

I'm sizing up your daughter
Who lives here by the water
I might save her from the slaughter
When the other fishes caught her.

And she delights me with some verses of her own:

One evening yet to come you will limp to the high roof garden
And bubbles from the lip of a peach will bust on your sniffer.

Ah, the twentieth century hustles by like a centipede, how I love it, how we all behave in it as if it were the twenty-first. Yes, it's exhilarating, it's a bulge in the flow of events. All I need to do is turn my back and I can be sure anything will happen. It's happening now but when I reverse my field it will be too late. What happened? Well I scrubbed her with a hemp rag and she came out pretty and bright as a nickel. When the medical student who lived below us fell in love with her glands I released her to marry him. "Be the huntress, not the temptress," I advised her; or was it, "Be the temptress, not the huntress?" Anyway halftime was just over and I can't bear to hear a kick-off so I turn down the sound and leave the glimmer. The air above the atmosphere of the city is full of jets going South for the Winter. South. What a stupendous idea. I buy a rucksack, bicycle playing cards, a sackful of lotions, and an automatic needle-threader, and head South myself, or rather with a free-living beauty I meet on the bum. We got to the beach and dropped into the water and lay around like cantaloupes getting tan. The girl was a bronze athletic type that you find sometimes on the beach and sometimes you don't. She met a Persian gymnast there and we all made love on a trampoline till I was out of the question. I looked at my watch and saw it ticking. "You're not a temptress," I said. "I'm a hunter," she said. I got out of there quick as a wink, arrows wobbling by, and to mine own self I was true. The game was finished, the final score 26-17, though I don't know who won, but those of you who know me realize it all adds up to forty-three, and so you've got it.

Jack Anderson

ONCE EACH SPRING THE FACE OF OPHELIA APPEARS UPON THE WATERS (for André Masson)

She drifts with the current on her back. No one sees her. Not the clouds above. Nor the gardeners on the bank. The huge barge floating toward her does not see her. Nor does the bargeman, sweating in the sun. They will pass over her. As will the pleasure boat with its turning wheel. When the river calms again, the imprint of her face will still be on the water. The clouds will roll downstream like drawings of organ music.

HANDS

Unclench these hands. They smother the light.

BALLOON

note: Presented as a Poetry Event at Robert Rauschenberg's loft, the evening of May 25, 1968, as part of a series of poetry readings in celebration of the publication of *The Young American Poets*, Follet/ Big Table.

All words and music were pre-recorded on stereo tape. The two poems were recorded with two voices (both the author's), one on each track.

1. "Eye" decals were passed out to members of the audience who were instructed to affix them to their foreheads. Since there was no seating, the audience stood or sat wherever convenient.
2. Chinese New Year Street Music 4 min.
SOUND EFFECTS, Vol.2, Audio Fidelity DFS 7010.
Drums, gongs, firecrackers, etc., the same one-minute cut repeated over and over again.
(*"Plenty of action here, with fervent gongs and drums and bursting firecrackers providing an authentic backdrop for the enthusiasm of both children and adults."*)

3. **So as I was saying to you
yesterday,
this rainy season (October)
is very good for the mahogany
lumber.
So too is the snow season.
Your lap, however,
disappears when you stand up
to wave goodbye
to the afternoon as it sinks
into the ocean.
Today I am the tomorrow
of your longitude.
And Wednesday I shall be
the road that covers
your stove, your dove,
your smile.
Balloon? He (you) watches
the balloon
rise up.
First it is balloon-size
and then beachball, basketball,*

**This section of "BALLOON" was first published under the title "Talk" in the Chelsea Review No. 22/23, June, 1968 and is used with their permission.*

baseball-size,
and then it is the size of a green pea.

The sky becomes a bowl of soup,
becomes something else
to be looked upon at leisure
with great pleasure.

Is it you? Is it you (me)
that I spot through my range-finder
coming down Main Street,
grinning from ear to ear?

No. It is only the dog of your
Irish sea captain,
foaming.

No. It is only the sunlight
hitting the gas truck
rear-view mirror
as it turns to the right on
Elm Street.

4. The long poem you are about to hear is an acrostic made from the first two stanzas of the poem you have just heard.

This Poetry Event is entitled BALLOON and it is dedicated to the French artist Odilon Redon who once wrote: "For the most part, the artists of my generation have looked at a chimney flue and seen — only a chimney flue. They were not able to give a blank wall anything of their own essential imagination . . . Everything that lent itself to symbolism or that allowed for the unforeseen, the imprecise, the indefinable whose aspect was confused with the enigmatic, led them astray: they were afraid. True parasites of the object, they cultivated art on a purely visual plane . . . We must remember that we have other things than the eyes to satisfy."

5. Inflation of a 10 foot weather balloon with helium. The balloon, attached to the helium capsule (bright orange) by fishing tackle, was floated a little more than half way up the three-story high "chapel" loft. A spot-light illuminated it from below.

6. *So As I Was Saying To You*

Springboard into the grassy or the finite
opens the door to the door
as dawn closes another black window
so that light can't move
inside the glassy or the small gray box.

Weather decides. Then as now, we entered,
as always, the present indicative,
stringing along with fourth-string runs on
someone else's sonata machine.

Again the weather. Again the trial balloon.
You plummet. I fold.

Inside the concept "time" as opposed to
nighttime or "perception"
going on and on in spite of the poor reception
the morning or the evening
oozes out of several obscure letters of the alphabet.
You whisper obscenities into my good ear
often in code so that no one can
understand the decisions, the boycott.

Yesterday This Rainy Season

You come to the parting of ways by way of
eating habits that are invincible
softly with the softness of soft air
to all the incumberances
recalcitrant or redundant
dangerous to pass or to touch.

And then, of course, the passionate way of handling this,
your daydream, is
to make the ambush bulletproof,
however conspicuous, no matter how
isolated from the up-draught.

So stop these rainy days that
release such hopelessness upon
another dry gathering of astronomy buffs.

I can't stand alimony or money problems
nor can I stand
your ability to smile
softly at whatever displeases you.

Enough! And, by the way,
another gripe: your
stomach pains, your
old-fashioned way of conducting my life,
not by telegrams but by touch.

October

(Open the door that leads to the door,
collide with the collision.
That these cartoons are religious
or political
belittles only the incision.
Ergo: the juicy or the crumb
Reality, however, is not so humble

Is Very Good For The Mahogany Lumber

I confess to your accusations concerning my
something or other
valuable or invaluable to someone
equally vague
regardless of the xerox copies
you were kind enough to send me.

Gap. We'll close it with a question. The
opening of the clear light
otherwise known as the sphere or the
"dying"
for whatever it is worth. Perhaps nothing
or perhaps
reality in one of its many
theatrical disguises.

Home is where these incongruities relax,
enjoying the unmitigated thrill of
magic tempered by visibility.
Again the prerogatives mount. And again
harm becomes vigorous —
— occasionally it also becomes
gamey, sarcastic, trivial, or
alchemical —
Never again. And then again
you become
lackadaisical in your devotions
under financial duress.

My father dies. My mother follows and so do I
being here now but also
elsewhere
remembering the sphere.

So Too Is The Snow Season

Someone, something, somewhere
opens the door to the door
that leads to still yet another door.
Opening or closing. Opening.
Opening the door to the door.

Something moves. It moves into the smoothness of
nothing that spans the remoteness
of your silence that is physical.

We plunge. Into what? Into this
sadness of infinity. This
endless proximity
and then another movement starts
so wordlessly
opening the door to the door,
narrowing time.

Your Lap, However

Your lap, however,
occupies the stiff territory
under the skin.
Repeat: your lap, however,
liquidates the far reaches of the clear
air that is
pornographically blue.
Helicopters cut the line
or least resistance, cut
world message units into
evil images of evil
variously aligned in terms of
evil alignments
removed from the species.

Disappears When You Stand Up

Delight in the sound of these vowel sounds
inside the circular
stopgap of these visual toys
attentively
prepared towards non-visual ends.

Power circulates
eclipsing the flood
and eclipsing the orb, the eye, the
religion that acts to disguise
someone, something, somewhere else.

We float. We please. We
harm the complete
negotiation that is unpopular.

You — all by yourself — are responsible for
oceans that are dry,
umbrellas that are
so fragile
that they cause more rain
and color the landscape
narrow regions of a singular green.

Decisions to desist
uphold the decision to
prepare for the miraculous inflation.

To Wave Goodbye To The Afternoon

Tough. It's too bad that logic is
often impractical in dealing
with the contingencies, the
announcements that arrive in the form of
vehicles of remorse,

endlessly verbose.

Gaining this insight is a loss to the world
of business and/or publicity
oddities that
depend upon
biology or chemistry.
You told me this and I agreed
eventually
that the eyes have it
over the ears:
that the mind is hollow,
ending the synapse.

Again the moment is
folded up into
tiny pieces
each irregular in shape
repeating the eyelids of the grammar.

Now is the time
our endlessness is discreet,
our pleasures are concealed,
not only deadened by the visual.

As It Sinks Into The Ocean

Aimless wanderings. Aimless sludge.
Stomach pumps.
Instant crime. I bow out.

The words become interiorized.
Society melts
into a large pool that
narrows down the birth rate and
kindness becomes aggressive.

Sleep. Sleep that
imaginary boundary of dreams
needs some air raid sirens
to keep these windows from
humming mindlessly into the
eye of the stupidity.

Oceanography becomes
contemplative.

Eyes see only the verbalized
and then when the fire begins
nothingness becomes tangible.

7. Thank you for your cooperation and your attention Please remove your "eyes."
8. Black out. Chinese New Year Street Music, while balloon is pulled down and deflated in the darkness. Lights.

ANDRÉ du BOUCHET
(Translated by Lane Dunlop)

THE SCYTHE'S EDGE

I

The aridity that lays bare the day.
Up and down in the earth, as the storm goes up and down.
On a way that remains dry despite the rain.
The immense world empties, and nothing is lost.
Through the rent in the sky, the ground's denseness.
I animate the bond of roads.

II

The mountain,
the earth swallowed by day, without the wall moving.
The mountain,
like a caught breath
the glacier's body.
The clouds flying low, level with the road, illuminating the paper.
I do not speak before this sky,
torn,
like
a house returned to breath.
I have seen the day shaken, without the wall moving.

III

Day scorches the ankles.
Waiting, the shutters drawn, in the whiteness of the room.
The whiteness of things appears late.
I go straight toward turbulent day.

METEOR

The absence that serves me as breath begins again to settle on my papers like snow. Night appears. I write as far as possible from myself.

LAPSE

The shadow,
shorter, the heat outside, serving us as fire.
Nothing divides us from the heat. On the floor of the oven I advance over,
broken,
towards those cold walls.

THE CLOUD

May the earth pass away, and we will advance, like the cloud,
in the depth of the air.

Unequal,
when it is day, to this road's strength,
until the extinction of the stones,
unknown
to the hands that smooth them.
The day that tamps us down in the ballast of breath.
On the inaccessible ground, on the road left to the lamp, each stone is a lamp.
For crossing the road, before the day beats it flat.
The mountain
The fire,
received,
on the summits of the ground,
joins me, almost.

NEAR THAT WHICH ILLUMINATES YOU

Near that which illuminates you
as far as the horizon where the heat leaves off,
already I hear, farther away, the air's rumbling over the dry earth.
claps us. The dew of sleep

BEFORE THE WHITENESS

Before the whiteness of the sun came as near as your hand, I burned without going out.
In the obscurity of the day, nothing is, on this road, but descent, and sunburst. Until
the fusion of evening.

Our road is unbroken by the heat that sends us back,
illuminated. Without your halting
 in that heat. The road on which I still sink outruns me, like the wind.
 I do not know the road on which our breath recedes. Day, falling, surrounds me.
 My hand, already withheld, barely splits the dryness, the blazing.

BIRTHDAY

In the dream, I walked away from myself
Toward the laughing soldiers at the railroad station.
We leaped into a green river, packs and all.
Boats looking for survivors
Found a child clinging to a black rock.

Awake, I find the world redecorating itself
With snow. It is a slow descent, my birthday
My temperature climbs.
Fever is my true climate, making
The tenement roof beyond the window
A white page of terror,
The slate of my infancy
Some revolutions ago. She who wiped
My infected eyes is dead, lost to the whiteness
That breaks all signals. Loving her
Was like taking an escalator to heaven,
But I let her die.

Look into these alternating currents, Tesla.

I attack the floor with a broom of anger,
And my fever finds white feathers
All over the room: far under the unmade bed
And under the table and chairs. How did they
Get there? Are they mine? Is this the feathered
Metamorphosis of a hairless dog? Neither winged
Horses nor New York pigeons call here. Is it
A question of angels?
What fallen, plucked angel
Shares this prison,
This snow-drop enterprise?

Snow keeps drifting into the darkness
That wells up from my sleep.
The black branch of the oak tree in the yard
Moves slowly, showing all my
Symptoms of withdrawal.

I throw the feathers out into the snow.
Is the room getting darker, or am I going blind?

In this cheap, non-stop movie of my life
A musk ox is pounding the ice with his hooves.
He is looking for lichens and dwarf willows.
Batty and hungry, he paws the ground and bellows.

THE LUCKY ONE

The streets of her look were lined with roses.
It was all too pretty; it was a poem with a lawn.
Her words were a dazzle of trumpets,
An apocalypse of touch
In a golden kingdom of lions and sleeping gypsies
Under a colorless light.

Trapped in her dream,
I was an uneasy mirror.
I was an uneasy river under a bridge remembering hurricanes.

The birds of my attention scattered like an explosion.

I remembered the dying geranium in my kitchen.
I remembered my light-saving penury.
I remembered the roaches and rats in the walls of my intentions.
I remembered the darkness welling up from the floor.

I left with her fingers clutching at my elbow.

Her house walked out of the yard and stared after me.

To go on, Bert is coming in: he goes as far as that: it comes to this: now Bert comes to this point: sooner or later he will leave: (I spoiled it by thinking ahead, even by thinking aloud, though you can't tell, whatever you say; while I did so, he left, and I could not see every step he took ((because I was thinking, as I said, a while back)), I can't tell you how he left.)

Here comes Celia: she steps in: she steps on it: she has stepped down, she says: (I am still listening to her informing me of that as she steps out, I tell you:) (now that she is gone, I have time to say that she stepped on the rug, the ladder, the stool, the stairs, the foot-rest, while she was here, among other things.)

(That's me, waiting for the next: this is what you have next: that is to say, now: I'm on the left, by the way: it was a clear day: rather, that's clear.)

It's Adrian, entering now: he enters into the conversation: (you don't say a word now that he has entered upon something else: you get the picture.)

To go back: 1. Bert was his name because his family gave it to him; he signed a statement to that effect, and had it notarized (the seal is on another sheet of paper). 2. Celia was her name, certainly, because Bert told me so. 3. The picture is printed on different paper. 4. Adrian was his name because that is part of the whole picture.

On the one hand there were two.
On the other hand there are two.

(He moved yesterday) (
 (He walked once) (
 (He stirred there) (
 (He ran two miles) (when a rope pulled him further)
 (He shuffled a moment ago) (
 (He rolled in the morning) (
 (He danced Wednesday) (
 (He drifted twice) (
 (He flew at 5 o'clock) (
 (He darted one second) (when the alarm rang, which made him reset the ala
 (He skated Saturday) (
 (He cruised January 1st) (
 (He made his way last week) (
 (He slid three yards) (
 (He shifted one last time) (until he decided to shift his quarters)
 (He climbed Monday) (
 (He waded through at 8 o'clock) (
 (He glided four hours) (
 (He dodged one night) (up to the next morning, this one, and there he is, B
 (He sank two years ago) (
 (He traveled to the end) (
 (He crept Thursday) (
 (He ambled at 3 o'clock) (
 (He flitted here) (starting on this spot
 (He changed places Sunday) (
 (He strode at 10 o'clock) (
 (He marched finally) (
 (He jogged Friday) (before she did) (before she pulled him over, and over t
 (He skied in the morning) (
 (He drove March 21st) (
 (He rode for five days) (
 (He waddled until then) (
 (He lurched that long) (
 (He passed by Tuesday) (by this time, Wednesday)
 (He trotted to the post) (
 1

Let me explain. There are places that are particular areas or localities, regions; places that are the parts of space occupied by a person or thing; other places, like a square or court in a city, or a short — usually narrow — street.

Come closer. There. Now let me explain. There are things that are matters, circumstances, affairs, or concerns; other things; which are done or have been done, or are to be done; and more things, still, which constitute steps in a process, ends to be achieved.

But you can't get it right from where you are. Come here. That's better. There you are. Here, let me explain. There are persons who are individual men, women, or children; human beings as distinguished from things and lower animals; and persons, surely, that are living human bodies; and more than that — persons, you see (you are close now), that are personalities.

(But where are the animals? Let me explain. There are persons — I said that before — persons ((I say it again)) who are brutish, debased, or inhuman — I haven't said that before — persons ((once again)) who are like animals. So they were there, the animals, above; they are there, still, if you look, now, as you listen to me, here, now that you are so close it is hard to see more than a blur. But there are other animals — let me explain, since there are interpretations, meanings, or definitions — still other animals, I say, that are four-footed creatures, beasts — Do not put the persons there, and do not come too close.)

Once there was a man

DO NOT READ THIS: "DO NOT READ THIS," I SAY

Twice there were two men

SKIP THIS: "SKIP THIS," I TELL YOU AND YOU

Twice there were three men

WATER TRIP

Pearls must be
like flowers growing
out of dark
deep
in blue sea-meat
pushing
from a seed
or grain
where fishes bangle
each other, and
whales
tumble like fleas
looking
for something to
scratch,
squid
maybe, or loose
wormy eels
bigger
than stars
under mountains
of salt
snow,

and millions
of points
like powdered
rainbows
busy
eating for-
ever, invisibles
making
islands
with firm
pink
leaves wiping
the ocean
clean,
listening
to whispers
of sharks, jelly-
fish and
dolphins: de-
lectable
glisten sucked
through the infinite,
gentle,
gill-drifting
mandibles
of God.

MANHATTAN TRANSFER

Music

 sewn
out of brass and dead trees:
switchblades
hidden
behind the fat smell
of a lilac.

It's a question
of symbols, if you
look for them:
snow
between the paws
of a young dog,
when it limps
over chemicals and theaters,
a pavement
hardened with money. . .

or the girl
hustling Fourteenth Street
with each breast
candy-
 flavored, brown
stones
tied to her nipples:
they swing
 they
stretch splat against the wall
of KLEIN'S, and

whisper
 juicyfruit
in a nickel bag of love.

FOR TRUDY, HER FEAR OF DARKNESS

Even sunlight
breaks
into reasons, reasons: stare
wrinkles
on cellophane, and
we are

 pinned
between sheets of glass,
turned
like dead slides, or
polarized
over fires

 fueled
by some crazy sawdust
stuffed
up all our dreams. . .

Why should we
who
 dance
dying
through the air
pretend that questions mean
anything
more than whales
or flowers?

 Remember:
you ran under my hand
in waterfalls, and
each pebble
of your breath
was a shape of laughter
younger
than despair.

BIPED

There will always be someone coming in summer with fierce qualities
If there are diseases, there are sick men
I took a long shower, a masterpiece, which took me into the future

But I did not blend with it

Lenin: "The aesthetics of the future is ethics."

Old question: "May I be you?"

Who are you?

There will always be someone coming in summer with fierce qualities

August 27, 1968

Robert David Cohen

VALENTINE

Fortunately you were born.
That is why you turned
a Schwinn bicycle in my
dream and why vodka met orange
juice and created the
screwdriver. The movies
seem to be talking over
everyone's lives; there also seems
to be some kind of "Master
Race" we are all more or less
watching, going out and coming back.
My umbrella
in the first frame became
"umbrella." The second
was full of storms falling
behind you.

George Schneeman & Ron Padgett

Miodrag Pavlović
(Translated by Jack Norris)

DUSAN: THE CONQUEROR IN CONSTANTINOPLE

On Sunday the gates of the Eastern city
were thrown open for me
by angels speaking Serbian.
I felt I knew the secret of the city
and I spoke Greek on the square,
but when the citizens heard me they shouted:
that's not our ruler
and locked themselves up in their towers.

Next I climbed upward towards the serene sky
Clouds covered with greening woods
formed an arch above the Bosphorus
and many marble stairways
led down to the foot of the sea.

That was how the capital came
into my hands without wrath
and the domes of Hagia Sofia
were apples I received as presents.

When lights were lit
I began to give orders:
send messengers to Nerodimle
launch vessels against the Turks
and serve dinner in the halls.
My new minister then whispered to me
that I needn't bother too much with affairs of state
Evidently I hadn't noticed
that I had died two hours by horseback from the city
but he added that I was still a welcome guest
that on the upper landings rooms were awaiting me
prepared for the night and for my visit in the hereafter

Ever since, I've had an important position
in the death senate of Constantinople
it's no use looking for my tomb in Serbia
no use desiring a different glory for me.

THE BLIND KING IN EXILE

I write to you from the capital of the world
Here I sit at the window, I, an imperial guest,
listening to the noise of the street beyond the walls,
the chitchat of the falconers at noon
the shouts from the galleys at the docks

This morning I knelt down on marble
and tonight I will listen to the singing of repentance.
I dine with fragrant ladies
and thus I live, exiled, in the imperial city
yet close to the different parts of the world.

I could have seen fabulous things here
if they hadn't torn my eyes out in my country.
I have to go back there to look for my eyesight.
But if I'm blind how can I find my country?
I know only the roads
at the bottom of my memory,
marked out by long chants that lead me by the hand
like clouds from one shore to the next.

If the messengers put me on horseback
if the speedy couriers lead me away
who can say what throne they might make me mount?
How shall I rule an invisible empire?
I can only be a servant
a beggar before bolted doors;
my father who blinded me in this world
will heal me in the next.

To my son I leave battles,
the crown and double vision.
Let him strike foreigners harder with his scepter:
as for me, I'll go off quietly to look for my eyesight.

THE FOUNDLING

You found me lying on leaves,
bearing a secret name, perhaps a vegetal one,
and I can't say who I am:
half my name remained on my mother's breast
half on the chapped lip of the giant.

Perhaps I'm the guzla rejected by a singer in exile,
perhaps the fratricide escaping vengeance
or the prophet who leaves
his thoughts like cobwebs
on the branches of oak-trees.

Carry me off, you merciful carters,
high up in the winds on the peaks of the forest
to cool my wounds;
or else sell me on the slopes of the sea,
sell me to other countries, to rich cities
where in the gardens of tender mothers
aging giants gaze at the ocean
but never want to trample my forehead
with harsh feet

I can no longer spend each night watching
in the foliage the dense glow of uncreated beings
who study my suffering
for the wisdom of non-birth.

HUNTING

I took my brother hunting
in the woods at dawn,
we had fine steeds
flint arrows
and the forest was swarming with wild animals
My brother, a man of few words,
understood the language of the animals
the wolves spoke to us about fraternity
the wild boars had the voices of our ancestors
and the birds the voices of our sisters
poor spinsters never married never born
for days on end we never stopped hunting
we wanted to unharbor the true prey

Then we returned to the village
starving and empty-handed
even the servants made fun of us
the unfaithful wives we had left behind
had absconded with the jewelry
Even the monastery refused
to offer us beggars food or shelter.

Only our horses remained faithful
they carried us off into the distance
and the birds soared over our heads
thrusting aside the clouds.

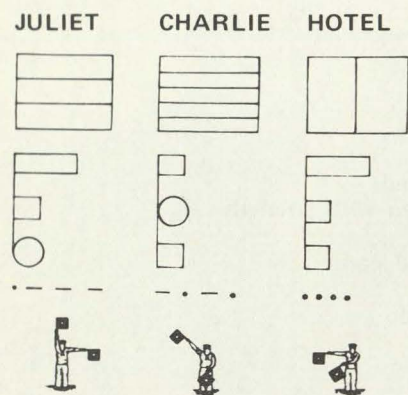
THE SLAVS BEFORE PARNASSUS

Our leaders brought us to these southern lands
when we were heady with unbelief and green with strength
to chew up the flanks of the marble
to batter down the mountains with our bludgeons
and drive the panicky herds across the sea.
And in this blue we dance our savage round
and sleep naked at night
near shattered idols.

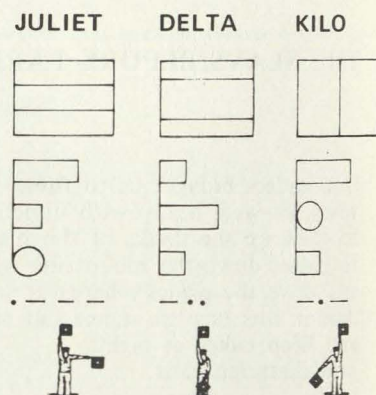
The singers asked us in secret
who had attended the burial of heaven
and who had witnessed the death-rattle of eternity.

They still said: night should be filled
with singing not destruction.
At dawn great halls will be sailing
with the lovely bodies of the lords of the earth
and anchor on the summit of the mountain
the divine shape will appear with the dawn
and hands shall rest upon our shoulders
adopting us as new sons

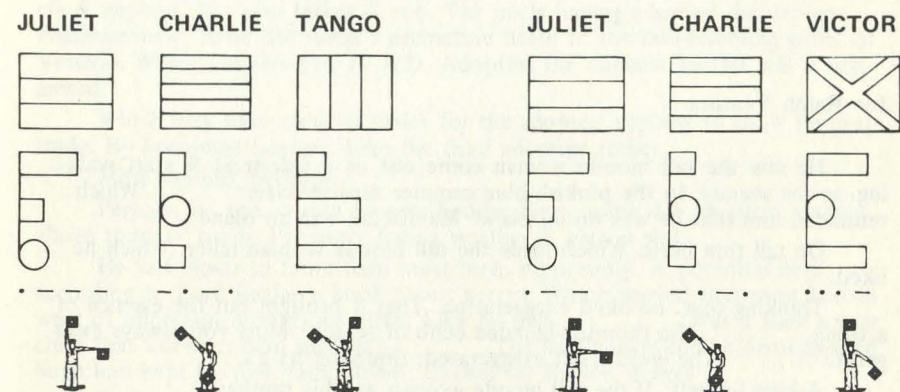
Our nakedness will then don words
like the birchtree donning leaves in spring.



LET NO BOAT COME ALONG-
SIDE.



I SHALL FIRE INTO THE BOATS
IF THEY PERSIST IN COMING
ALONGSIDE.



BOAT COMING, BOATS COMING.

BOAT IS ON BOARD, IS
ALONGSIDE.

EARLY MORNING MOTHER

by

Ursule Molinaro

for Ralph Ventura

He saw the tall blonde woman come out of a sidestreet & start walking up the avenue. In the pinkish/blue summer sunrise haze. . . . Which reminded him that he was on an island. Manhattan was an island . . .

On tall thin heels. Which made the tall blonde woman taller. Which he liked.

Thinking that: he liked exaggeration. That it brought out the essence of a thing. . . . The thinning-blonded echo of reason: Must you always exaggerate . . . The word itself exaggerated: doubling its g's.

Asking himself: If the tall blonde woman was his mother?

Which was absurd. Because he was short. & stocky. With dark short hair. It was unlikely that he had been born of a tall blonde mother. Whose shoulder-long hair could be dyed, of course. Did she? Or didn't she?

Which was absurd because he was back in New York. N.Y. U.S.A. Had just flown back to New York, N.Y., U.S.A. Had been back since yesterday afternoon. & his mother lived in Como. Northern Italy. Supposedly. Probably. Probably still. Although he had not found her there. After flying there, 3 weeks ago. To look for her.

Asking himself: Is this my mother? every time a plausibly-(or implausibly-) aged woman walked in front of/beside/past him.

Whose looks he liked: on days when he loved his mother. With the passion reserved for the unknown. & therefore beautiful.

Or disliked. On days when he hated her. An ugly woman who had aban-

doned her son. After dropping him furtively into the world, not quite 18 years ago. A shamefully ugly cop-out mother.

Asking himself about varying sizes & shapes of women. Who huddled at street corners. Came out of a *latteria*. Reached for green-leafed vegetables. Blocked his path. Crossed one of the many picturesque cobble streets he was walking. In Como, Northern Italy. Where he was born.

As were the 2 Plinies. The Elder & the Younger. Whose pensive statues sat in niches on either side of the main entrance to the Como cathedral church.

Which had been called: *Comum*, at the time of *their* births.

Uncle & nephew, not father & son: according to the thin priest who had come rustling toward him, out of the chilly cathedral twilight. & stopped.

Stopped by a not-quite-18-year-old boy face, hesitantly questioning: Padre? & a not-quite-clean not-quite-18-year-old boy finger, pointing at one of the statues.

Which had sculpted an expectant pout on the thin priest's face. (Yes, my son?)

Immediately flattened into a thin smile, when the finger traveled to the opposing statue, underscoring the next question: Figlio?

The thin priest's black-rustling explanation — in slow careful British: Uncle & nephew. But *also* father & son. The uncle having adopted the nephew. Posthumously. After the uncle's premature death in the lava-bubbling gullet of Vesuvio. When it erupted in 79 A.D. Adopting the nephew by last will & testament.

Which may have made it easier for the adopted nephew to show his gratitude. By becoming famous. Like the dead adoptive father.

More famous, perhaps.

Perhaps he, too, would be petrified by fame, some day. & sit in a niche above tourists' heads. Pensively facing weather & pigeon shit.

He was closer to fame than most men, supposedly. A potential hero: according to Lord Raglan's book about heroes. Which proved that most heroes were of uncertain/mysterious birth. Like his own. . . . Was it such a wise child that knew its own mother? . . . The lord's own/known/distinguished birth had kept his own fame down. Except for Raglan sleeves . . .

Perhaps he should stop looking for his mother, if he wanted to become a hero. A folk(-heroic) singer, perhaps. Who'd bring Como's fame up to date.

He had stopped looking for his mother 2½ weeks after his arrival in Como. In one of the small restaurants in one of the small streets behind the cathedral. A small restaurant that belonged to a big woman with a gleaming marble throat. Who was reading a newspaper across her bar, in the empty coolness through a rustling bead curtain. & ordered a glass of white wine.

Who could have been his mother.

By age rather than by size.

Which made him think: that he couldn't tell a woman's age, once she passed 23-25. But could tell the age of girls . . . of American girls . . . down to a couple of months. Tell the difference between 16 & 16½.

Which made him think: that he liked big women.

The big woman who was not his mother. Wasn't anybody's mother. Had no children . . . no son of her own.

Who would not have abandoned *her* son. Never! Not such a good/good-looking son. Who had flown across an ocean & walked all over Como, to find his . . .

She said.

After he told her.

If she understood what he told her. In mimed Italian.

Must have understood to some extent, obviously. To be weeping.

Into the glass of white wine she was pouring for him. & into the glass of red she was pouring for herself. While he watched a big tear slide down the marble throat. Leaving a glistening snail trail. Before it disappeared into pillowed darkness.

While she watched him watch. & wept more. & became a mother to him. Feeding him. Putting him to bed.

Became more than a mother to him, for the 2½ weeks he had left to spend in Como. Northern Italy.

Which he spent in the big woman's small restaurant behind the cathedral. Eating *pasta*. & rolled-up beef. & small song birds. & bread-crumbed leaves of veal. Drinking white wine. Which the big woman's customers offered him, when he sang for them . . . American songs . . . in the evenings. & played on someone's guitar. After the big woman told them that he was from Como. Originally. Like the rest of them. But had been adopted away from Como by a rich American lady. But had flown all the way back from America to look for his mother.

2½ weeks of (not much) sleeping. In the big woman's big double bed over the restaurant. With a valley in the center, hollowed out by years of the big woman's body.

Against which he'd lie, on his side. His head against the gleaming marble throat. His hands on the big soft behind. That made him think of horses' — mares' — behinds. That trotted up & down/up & down through much of the night. & stood still toward dawn. Halted by sleep.

& he'd sleep late into the day, rolled into the valley after the big woman got up.

Sleep until after lunch, sometimes. Until she'd come back upstairs, to take a nap. Half-asleep on her feet. Letting him do anything he wanted with her big white half-sleeping body. Which was lying on its back, in the valley. With wide open legs & a sleepily smiling mouth. While his mouth found one of the big white breasts. & bit into it from time to time. Softly. Because he had never been weaned.

Because he had never been nursed. At the orphanage. Where he had spent the first 2½ . . . Italian . . . years of his life.

. . . His Italian was growing back. . . . He felt taller in Como than in New York . . .

He had planned to go back to the orphanage. If it still existed. To ask one of the nuns . . . the mother superior: Who his mother had been? If she still existed? & his father? Perhaps . . .

Before he ordered a glass of white wine from the big woman with the gleaming marble throat.

Who told him . . . carefully; in the big double bed: that it was perhaps better to stop looking.

That he might find himself disappointed. Any woman who abandoned her son . . . When others . . . like herself . . . could have no children . . .

Perhaps it would be better/kinder not to disturb the fragile new life the unfortunate one had perhaps made for herself.

& make a new life for himself.

Right here, if he wanted to. In Como. Where he was born, after all. In the restaurant, if he wanted to. In the big double bed.

It was not so important to know one's parents. It was more important to know one's friends . . .

To which he had nodded.

Which he was planning to repeat to his legal American mother. More or less. When he got back to New York.

Planning to say that this was . . . more or less . . . what one of the nuns . . . the mother superior

. . . who had remembered him. & his legal American mother. Who had asked about her. & promised to pray for him. For them both. Who had invited him to stay for dinner. . .

More or less what the mother superior had told him when he'd gone back to the orphanage. Which hadn't changed much in all these . . . a little over 15. . . years. . .

Which his legal American mother would be glad to believe. Or pretend to be glad to believe. Because it was also more or less what she had told him one of the nuns — the one he'd say had remembered her — had told *her*. When she had gone to Como, Northern Italy, a little over 15 years ago. When she had adopted him.

When *he* had adopted *her*, supposedly. According to what she had told him. Many times. Every time he asked about his 'real' mother.

Telling him: How he — a round-eyed 2½-year-old — had reached for & clutched the American ladyfinger that was playfully being held out to his 'little face.' He alone. Out of 30-40 fellow orphans.

He had never particularly cherished the hand-me-down recollection of the round-eyed orphan, reaching for. . . & clutching. . . that playful fateful finger.

Could not see himself reaching for & clutching those fingers now. They repulsed him.

Asking himself: If he was ungrateful?

Wondering: if he would mind touching his 'real' mother's fingers.

Which also were slightly garlic-scented, probably. (If she was still alive?) Like the big sleeping woman's fingers. With which he was touching himself in the big double bed.

Out of which he had climbed. Carefully. & dressed. His naked soles cool on the tile floor. & carefully picked up his suitcase. — Which he had repacked before the big woman came back upstairs for her nap. After the

last lunch customer had left. — Which she had made him get from the hotel, the morning after the first night in her bed. Why pay for a room he wasn't using? When he had a room. For as long as he wanted.

For 2½ weeks.

The door of which he had carefully closed. After 2½ weeks. —Thinking: that he wouldn't be hungry again for weeks & weeks & weeks. Tiptoeing all the way to the Milano train.

Past the Como public school. Which he had planned to visit. But had not visited.

To which he would have gone. Probably. If his legal American mother had not adopted him.

In which he might have gotten better marks than in the reputable New York private school to which she had sent him.

Planning to tell her: that he had visited the public school. & was grateful to her for not having to sit in goose-shit-colored classrooms on one of the stiff narrow benches. — Which he had not seen.

In which he would no longer be sitting, probably. At his age. Almost 18. No matter how bad — or better — his marks would have been. He'd probably be working, at his age. In a silk factory, probably. Or behind a bar. Supporting his 'real' mother.

Hating her for it, probably. For being husbandless. Still. If she had not made a 'new life' for herself.

Which would please his legal American mother. Justify the money she had spent on his trip, if he came back telling her that he was grateful.

Which he had perhaps no reason to be?

Perhaps he would have become something better than a silk-factory worker. Than a handy man behind a bar. Because of his voice, perhaps.

Which would have been the same, if he had stayed in his native Como. If she had not adopted him away.

Although? Would it have been the same? Without the singing lessons she forced him to take? . . . Which he often skipped. . .

Which he might not have skipped in Como. Because of his native awe of the thin black-rustling priest who might have discovered his voice when he was still a tiny boy. . . Such a big voice in such a tiny body. . . & forced him to sing in the cathedral choir. . .

Forcing him to become famous. A local teenage hero. The pride of Como. Northern Italy.

Where he might have done better than he could hope to do in America.

Even if he was accepted by the reputable college his legal American mother had graduated from. With honors. To which she had written, hoping to have him accepted. In spite of his bad private-school marks. On the strength of her own good marks. & her good American name. Which she had given to him to share. & her good American money.

To become the history professor she wanted him to become.

Perhaps the petrified younger Pliny had become a historian mainly to please the Elder. Out of gratitude for having been adopted.

Perhaps he would become a wino, in America. After having become a history professor. If he passed the college examinations. If he was accepted. A well-educated wino, reclining in the doorway of a Bowery hotel. Pointing a shaky professorial finger at a cluster of less-well-educated winos. Asking: If they thought he'd be reclining where he was reclining if he had not been adopted. . .

Which would make them weep into their sneaky pete. & offer him a swig.

Which was worse? Or better?

:To let himself be petted by a doe-eyed 16½-year-old in a supermarket parking lot, during a week-end in the country?

Or be pressed against the family refrigerator by her cool mother?

Or be pulled into the locker room by the gym teacher's sports-despising wife, during a baseball game? In America.

Or be (s)mothered for 2½ weeks by a big wisely weeping woman with a restaurant & a gleaming marble throat? In Como. Northern Italy.

Women of varying shapes & ages. All ready to console him for not knowing his 'real' mother.

All except his legal American mother. Who expected gratitude. Which: he thought: was justified.

Which he never quite knew how to show her.

Which he would have liked to show her.

Tried to show her. By lying to her.

Carefully planned sure-faith lies. To which she'd listen with her thinning-blonded face. Whose smiling credulity he found hard to believe.

Hard to face.

Which he had not had to face. . . not immediately. . . when he got back to New York.

Where he had found the apartment empty. & a note beside the telephone. In his legal mother's American hand. Hoping to force him to call her in the country *the instant* he got in. Even if it was in the middle of the night. So that 'Karl' could meet his bus. They ran all night, during the summer. See schedule attached. To come straight out to the country.

Instead of drifting from bar to bar. Drinking up the money he had not spent at the hotel in Como.

Trailing the back of an exaggeratedly tall, exaggeratedly blonde woman of unseen age up an avenue in the pinkish summer sunrise haze.

Feeling good & guilty, because of the note beside the telephone, for not coming straight out to the country.

Where they were 'all' waiting for him:

His legal American mother, propped up in a chaiselongue under a white/green/&blue-striped beach umbrella beside the cemented swimming pool. To keep the crisping brittling sun out of her hair.

With Karl. Her legal. . . third. . . American husband.

Who envied him the readily consoling women. His readily-consolated youth.

Who called him a 'professional orphan.'

Who hated being taken for his father by uniformed acquaintances.

Karl: lying in the grass, outside his wife's overshadowing periphery. Browning his stomach. To exhibit his brown summer stomach to the pale city women . . . with jobs. With whom he slept once a week. In rotation. When he drove to the city under the pretext of checking the mail.

Who never omitted to describe 'his day in the city' to him afterwards. With a great love of. . . educational. . . detail. To prove that he was. . . still. . . very much of a man.

To whom he'd pass on an occasional daughter. Or mother. When he felt tired of them. Exhausted. When he thought he'd never want another woman. Not for weeks. & weeks. & weeks.

Finding himself trailing an exaggeratedly tall exaggeratedly blonde back a day after tiptoeing out on a big gleaming marble throat.

Instead of taking an immediate bus out to the country.

Where they were 'all' waiting for him:

A summer selection of his legal American mother's fossilized friends & relations:

Scraping/scrimping professors, with booming classroom voices. & readily consoling, disconsolate wives. & bored rebellious daughters. Or sons. But mostly daughters.

International bureaucrats. Who traveled expensively. But ate hamburgers at home.

More-or-less published authors. Who mourned the passing of the printed word. The decline of the 'linear culture'. Who drowned their more-or-less unpublished grief in very dry vodka martinis.

For whom he had sung, occasionally, in past summer evenings. After dinner. & played the guitar. After an endless day of unrelated lying on the cemented periphery of their endless tedious conversation. Of their drinking. In which his legal American mother did not permit him to participate. Not until he came of legal drinking age. — Forcing him to drink furtively. Indiscriminately: vodka/gin/scotch/bourbon/campari. Whatever whoever among the readily consoling wives &/or daughters sneaked to him, behind his American mother's legal-aged back.

For whom he would probably be expected to sing. . . Italian songs. & play the guitar, as soon as he arrived in the country.

Which would delay telling his carefully planned lies. Until later. Until she'd come into his room. & sit down on the edge of his bed. With a thinning-blond questionmark stamped on her face.

Later that very evening, probably. If he walked up to the empty apartment now. & called.

Which depended on the tall blonde woman.

Whose tall blonde back he was still following up the avenue.

Wondering: what a well-dressed beautiful (?) high-heeled woman was doing on the avenue at 5-5:30 a.m.

She looked too recently dressed to be coming from a party. Out of

a nightclub. Too carefully combed to have walked out of some man's bed. Out on some Karl.

Who couldn't be walking to work at this hour. Was walking much too deliberately to be walking to work. Much too well dressed. . .

They were alone on the avenue. Except for an occasional truck.

Except for an oldish woman who was coming down the avenue, toward them, on white elephant legs in short pink socks. Carrying a bulging shopping bag. A cleaning woman, probably. On her way home from work.

About whom he did not ask himself: Is she my mother? When the woman ran up to him. & took his hand. & held up her. . . left. . . cheek to him.

Which was wet. & glistened. From the tall blonde woman's spit. Pointing to the cheek with an expression of incredulous indignation. Stammering a request that he confirm . . . testify. . . that he had seen. . . hadn't he seen. . . ? . . . what she couldn't COULD NOT believe.

To whom he handed a consoling. . . not too clean. . . handkerchief. Wordlessly. To wipe her cheek with. So she wouldn't hold him up. So he could run after the tall blonde woman.

Who was already half a block away.

Spitting into the face of a younger cleaning (?) woman. With a printed kerchief over rolled-up hair.

& into the bright-eyed face of a teetering drunk.

& of a white-shoed white-hosed nurse. Or maid.

Who all came running up to him. One after the other. In order of spitting. Indignantly incredulous. Pointing to a wet-glistening cheek. Stammering requests that he confirm. . . testify. . . share indignation. . .

To who he had no more consoling not too clean handkerchiefs to give.

From whom he escaped.

To run after the tall blonde woman. Who was getting further & further away.

Whom he saw spitting — he supposed — at a short black female silhouette in front of a newstand. Seeing a short black arm shout out & slug at the tall blonde woman. Who slugged back. & walked on.

He was running. Panting up the avenue. Planning: to overtake her. To walk half a block ahead of her. Turn. Walk back toward her. To hold up his smiling face. & wait for her to spit. & say: Hello, mother.

& take her by the arm. & walk her up to the empty apartment.

& telephone his legal American mother later. Tomorrow. Or the day after.

& not sing Italian songs & play the guitar on the cement-edge of the pool. Or in the after-dinner dining room. In the country.

But spit in Karl's waiting face behind the wheel, at the bus station. & walk up to each house guest, around the cement-edge of the pool, or in the after-dinner dining room — if Karl drove him to the house, after having been spat at. Which he would probably do. At a loss for something else to do. — & spit into each upturned waiting face. Gravely. Politely. As though bestowing a grateful kiss.

How many hours am
I a presence

of grass?
Always windows
opened, & doors.
Populations found

my kiss

a new solar system.

O world, help! I'm so beautiful.
I caw-caw as though God
makes me
his parting gesture.

"My old girl, Gretchen,"

I named

a moon

one Xmas
because ears were being kissed the world
over. A Tokyo
factory-worker revered his ear
like a new

daughter.

O the newly-kissed in Genoa,
& my heart bulged like a mailbag.
I became 2 a.m. and part macaw!
Above a park

(5 years after)

the footballs were booted.

"Aya" up high!

"ole!"

a plump boy cried
a-waiting
one like love.

Yet, I was that night my self,

my ordinary one.

A geranium was making

the fire

escape pretty! "Dorothy,"

I shouted, "how could you say God
is cold?"

I sleep

a-top

you

like your family roof in Hampton Bay."

THE PRESENCE OF TELEPHONE WIRES

Phrases of loving pour into you.

Earlobes await your outpourings like hundreds of wine glasses.

As the coats of white paint alter the barn to a country theater,
you come, the line of purpose.

And in the cool suburbs you hurry from one tree to another
cool tree. O then I would hurry like you . . .

CHEAP VALENTINE

I guess I like you
Even though you have no legs and must wear 80 pairs
of stockings

I knew your breasts were peculiar
Now one of them has exploded, ruining a sweater
I was disgusted to see you had given birth to a cigarette

Your eyes are demanding
I'm sorry, I don't have 23 thousand owls
But I guess I like you.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES AT THE TOASTMASTERS MEETING

I thought I could get away with speaking in tongues at the
toastmasters meeting
But they got on me for lack of continuity
Speaking too fast
And exceeding the time limit
Horns and whistles had gone off in my ear
Flares had gone up dynamite been set off
The room cleared and still the vision continued
Like a 2-year bout with hiccups

Spewing out truth
I held the floor until the building was demolished
And became conscious an old man in a strait jacket
With no memory of anything
To a tape recording of applause.

THE NEW NATIONAL SONG

The last time my voice broke
On the high notes of the Star Spangled Banner at the ball game
I resolved to write a new national song

AMERICA QUEEN OF THE NORTH AMERICAN LAND MASS

Required a range of only four notes

And was transposable to any key

I sent it to the copyright office and the New York Times

It appeared as a letter to the editor

FROM THE ROCKIES TO THE APPALACHIANS AND A FEW HUNDRED
MILES ON EITHER SIDE

Had a simpler lyric and a three-note range

This time I got a rejection slip from the copyright office

BETWEEN MEXICO AND CANADA IS 48/50THS OF THE SUBCONTI-
NENT I LOVE

Had only two notes and no rhythm to speak of

When they played the Star Spangled Banner at the ball game

I sang my own song

And everybody stopped singing the Star Spangled Banner to listen

Even the organist stopped playing to listen

The ballplayers stood with their caps off listening

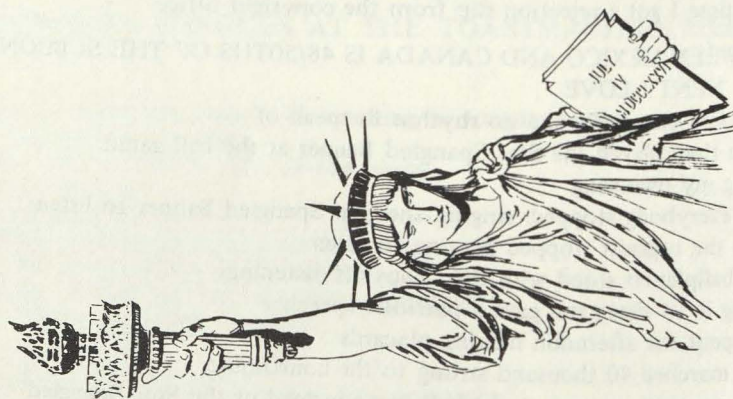
I sang it 14 times and gave a patriotic speech

We spent the afternoon making placards

And marched 40 thousand strong to the courthouse

Now we sing my song at the ball game instead of the Star Spangled
Banner

And other countries are trying to get me to write songs for them.



Hannah Weiner

I SAW THE LAND BEARING _____
 LIGHTS OR FIRES WILL BE SHOWN AT THE BEST LANDING PLACES
 I HAVE NOT SIGHTED THE LIGHT
 LIGHT, S IS, ARE, NOT BURNING
 ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OUT ALONG THE COAST OF _____
 IT IS NOT SAFE TO RISK MAKING THE LAND
 IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LAND
 YOU SHOULD KEEP FURTHER FROM THE LAND
 YOU SHOULD NOT LAND
 YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LAND

CORRADO AUGIAS

MEMORY DIRECTION (DIREZIONE MEMORIE)

(Translated by Joachim Neugroschel)

Winner of the national prize of the Accademia di Roma
 in 1966

Originally produced by La Compagnia del Centuno at the
 Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

The first English-language production will take place this
 season at Ellen Stewart's Cafe La Mama in New York.

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 be addressed to: Joachim Neugroschel / 855 West End Avenue /
 New York, N.Y. 10025.

CAST OF CHARACTERS .

FIRST

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH

NEWCOMER

ATTENDANT

(Five white iron beds, all but one of which are unmade. They show the traces of the bodies they have held. Overwhelming whiteness all around. Two or three iron chairs which are also white. White has to be not merely the predominant color but the only one, to the point of being disgusting and oppressive. The time can be one of those irrational hours at which a community awakes. Three of the inhabitants of the room, upon getting up, shamle along, wrapped in white albeit ancient night gowns. A fourth inhabitant is still in bed, sleeping, thinking, or perhaps even dead. An attendant enters. The three pull out their bowls — of old aluminum, harmless tin — and receive their breakfast. Next, the attendant goes over to the fourth, shakes him, inserts a pill through his teeth and a bedpan into the bedding. Exit.

The three eat. There is no sound other than the almost rhythmic clinking of the tin, and then gurgling, swallowing, clearing of throats, sucking. The three exchange glances of complicity. A few moments later, the attendant returns to pick up the bowls and the bed-pan. The FIRST inhabitant opens a niche in the wall, bends down jealously over his plants; the SECOND droops about listlessly; the THIRD stares attentively above and below his bed; the FOURTH continues to sleep or think. Then the SECOND walks over to the back and presses his ear against the wall.)

SECOND (turning to the others): Shhhhhh!

FIRST (after turning slightly): Are they there? (SECOND shakes his head without leaving the wall)

THIRD: We can't hear them anymore.

FIRST: It's been five days.

THIRD: The rat is making too much noise.

FIRST: No, they've gone away.

SECOND: Shhhhhh! (Strains desperately against the wall, while the other two stare fixedly at him. General silence. Pause. Then, pulling away:) The rat is making too much noise.

FIRST: (shrugging): They've gone away. (Goes over to his bed and begins to make it. He performs the operation with great reluctance and then turns to his plants. Meanwhile:)

THIRD: (pointing to FIRST, says quietly to SECOND) He's deaf.

(The two of them snigger ironically; then SECOND resumes his wandering about the room while THIRD goes over to his bed and, seeing FIRST straightening out his own bed, he decides to follow suit. He performs his task with an almost acrobatic intensity, leaping to and fro in order to check the alignment of the bedding.)

FIRST: (turns around in order to speak to THIRD): It's not a very good beginning.

THIRD (immediately): What about his? (FIRST shrugs and starts taking care of his plants. THIRD pulls out two or three very heavy pads of paper from beneath his bed and with a great deal of difficulty he lifts them up to the bed.) There we are.

FIRST (to SECOND): Let's sit down a bit. (Goes over to his bed and sits down, with his hands in his lap; then he motions to SECOND to come over.) What do you wish to say to me? (SECOND gives him a long quizzical stare.)

FIRST: How do you feel?

SECOND: Marvelous!

FIRST: Yesterday you said —

SECOND: Today is today. (Goes over to THIRD's bed) Would you like me to help you put the papers in order?

THIRD: No thank you. Don't you want to talk to him? (Points to FIRST)

SECOND: No. (FIRST and THIRD exchange mute glances.)

FIRST: Tell me the truth, did you hear them?

SECOND: You're getting slower all the time.

FIRST: What do you mean? (SECOND goes over to his own bed, rummages about in the mattress, pulls out a silver bell.)

THIRD: Put it away. (SECOND appears indecisive, but THIRD repeats decisively:) Put it away!! (SECOND makes up his mind to comply. FIRST smiles gratefully at THIRD. General silence. Long pause during which the three of them exchange frequent quick glances to catch even the slightest reaction. However, nothing happens.)

THIRD (to FIRST): Today's a holiday.

FIRST: Yes, it's a major holiday.

THIRD: There'll be a lot of people.

FIRST: A huge crowd.

SECOND: It's raining. Nobody's come.

FIRST (to THIRD): It's a major holiday.

SECOND: It's been raining since yesterday. The roads are blocked.

(THIRD remains silent. Sits down on his bed next to his pads of paper)

SECOND: Would you like me to help you put them in order?

THIRD: No.

SECOND: Would you rather do it by yourself?

THIRD: I don't know.

(FOURTH, motionless until this very moment, moans beneath his blanket, the three others instantly turn and stare at him with apparent expectation. But nothing else occurs)

THIRD: We'll have to wake him up.

FIRST: It's the pill. (SECOND goes over to FOURTH and shakes him gently. FOURTH emits a sigh of protest as if wanting to sleep on.)

SECOND: It's useless.

FIRST: He's fast asleep. (General silence. Long pause during which the three of them resume their glances and mutual scrutiny.)

THIRD (to FIRST): Are your pains gone?

FIRST: Almost entirely.

THIRD: From your feet as well? Can you walk? A lot? (FIRST looks at his own feet without replying. Silence. Pause. Then:)

THIRD (to SECOND): Last night I looked for a candle. There were none left.

SECOND (quickly): There aren't any in the summertime. They're all taken away.

FIRST (surprised): Summer?

THIRD: It's very hot today.

SECOND: I agree.

FIRST: Not more so than yesterday.

THIRD: Oh, but it *is*.

SECOND: It stands to reason, this is the height of summer.

THIRD: It gets hotter every day. (For an instant, the three remain motionless, watching one another.)

SECOND (looking at FIRST): That's why we're always sweaty.

FIRST (slowly): At six a.m. the sun is already blazing away.

(The three smile at one another, then THIRD stretches out on his own bed, puts on a pair of glasses and starts consulting his papers, jotting down occasional notes. This will be his main occupation until the "tragic" end. SECOND goes over to his own bed. From his mattress he pulls out white old clothes and pieces of underwear which he starts examining. After remaining silent for a while, FIRST speaks:) Memory direction. Sunday the fifth, snow; Monday the sixth, fresh snow of God; Tuesday the seventh, rain; Wednesday the eighth, rebukes; Thursday the ninth, life uncertain, indisposition; Friday the tenth, in the garden and on the ramparts; Saturday the eleventh, poor dough; Sunday the twelfth, passed through a great deal of danger; Monday the thirteenth, found a dead swarm of bees. (The recital of the journal continues quietly.) Tuesday the fourteenth, excrements; Wednesday the fifteenth, accounts and calendars; Thursday the sixteenth, rice and a good deal of snow; Wednesday the seventeenth, reflections, instruments; Thursday the eighteenth, tempest; Sunday the nineteenth, ill with a serious problem to recall. (During the further recital of the diary, FOURTH has awakened and turned to SECOND whose bed is next to his own.)

FOURTH: Coffee, how was the coffee? Will they give me any? . . . How was it?

SECOND: Black.

FOURTH: Why do you always treat me like that?

SECOND: Not always.

FOURTH: Yes, *always*. (THIRD makes a sign of intolerance.)

FIRST (trying to shout out the others): Monday the twentieth, frozen still, excruciating pains for every thing. Lorenzo's death.

SECOND (pointing at THIRD): Can't you see you're getting on his nerves?

FOURTH (in a whisper): Why do you treat me like this?

SECOND: Why don't you keep quiet?

FOURTH: No.

SECOND: Well, then get up and leave. (Pause) When are they untieing you anyway?

FOURTH: The chief always says half an hour after the pill.

(SECOND loses interest, turns back to his old clothes.)

FOURTH: Are you gonna tell him? (Pause) Listen, are you gonna tell him?

SECOND: What should I tell him?

FOURTH: To untie me.

THIRD: If the action does not occur, we shall say that we have been wasting our time, each and every one of us.

FIRST: The important thing is not its occurring but rather its coming at the right moment. (turning to SECOND and THIRD) If you two would only quiet down a bit.

SECOND: It's not me, it's him. Every day: are you going to tell him? Are you going to tell him?

FOURTH: The half hour is over.

FIRST: All the more reason. The Chief will be here soon. Each of us has something to do.

SECOND: You're so right. I'll keep him strapped down all day long and perhaps even gagged, and —

THIRD: Will you shut up, too. . . .

SECOND: That's something you don't have to say to me. If it weren't for that creep, I wouldn't even open my mouth. I've got enough to do as it is. (Showing his old clothes.) Just look at that mess, will you, more holes than a sieve. . . . this has to be mended, this is still in good condition but it'll have to be turned inside out. This one — if only we had a laundry. If I've said it once I've said it a thousand times. . . .

THIRD (throwing an inkwell at him): Will you shut up you shitass.

(FIRST dashes over and picks up the inkwell, sniffs it, shakes it, holds it up against the light, and then hides it in his mattress, and starts observing his plants again. At the same time:)

FOURTH (floundering about beneath the straps): You're wonderful, you're so wonderful, you really are. (THIRD hits FOURTH while SECOND, who until this moment has stood there dumfounded, touching his lips:)

SECOND: Blood, you've drawn blood. (runs over to FIRST) Look what he did to me, look.

FIRST: Yes, I see, old boy, I see. (Rummages around in the mattress and pulls out a small jar.) Circle, segments, calices: here is the ointment!

SECOND: Who the heck wants your ointment. (menacingly): But someday I'll —

THIRD: You shouldn't threaten people. It's a double sin.

SECOND: (Showing him his lips) Just look!

THIRD: It's only a scratch. It won't take long to heal. There are other things to worry about. These pages speak volumes. If some day I could only perceive the end of our abilities and our intuitions.

FIRST: We're working towards it. . . .

THIRD: And yet antagonisms, which tend to have a real power, manage to assert themselves even in the conscious.

FIRST: An obvious importance, a rather similar uncertainty surrounds both the conscious and external objects.

(Enter the CHIEF amid sudden silence. Walks over to FOURTH's bed, unties him, and hands him his breakfast bowl. FOURTH hastily gulps down his food while the CHIEF waits. Meanwhile, FIRST says to the CHIEF:) If only you'd say something to him. You remained for such a short time. You know, every so often a kind of anxiety, an anguish comes over me. . . . a fear of not quite succeeding (pause). . . . ever again. (pause) If only you could do something. It can't be absolutely impossible. (the CHIEF takes back the bowl from FOURTH and exits, but before the door closes:)

THIRD: (shouting) Don't forget what we've told you.

SECOND: Untie me, he says untie me for the whole day.

FOURTH: (roaming about the room) It's not true, it's simply not true.

SECOND: It is true. And what can I do? I pity him, he's pathetic.

FOURTH: I'm pathetic, that's right, I'm pathetic.

FIRST (turning to his bed, rediscovers his jar of ointment): This ointment has its own little tale to tell.

THIRD: Don't you get started now.

FIRST: It's necessary.

THIRD: It's awfully annoying. Not now.

FIRST: It's necessary. Don't get annoyed. Just listen to me.

Generosity, obedience, sacrifice. For every conversation that hasn't taken place. . . . Think about this, I just want to say think about it.

THIRD: Stop it! Not now.

(Meanwhile THIRD and FOURTH have been roaming about. Now SECOND goes over to FIRST who holds up his ointment. FOURTH takes advantage of his distraction to sneak up from behind and pull his hair; then, laughing, he takes refuge in his bed. SECOND and FIRST speak almost simultaneously.)

SECOND: Creep, fink, swine, I'll —

FIRST (dragging SECOND over to his niche): C'mon and show me your injury, show me.

SECOND: Go away, will you! Give me that ointment. (Upon getting it, SECOND hurls it far away. FIRST dashes over to pick it up and puts it back into his mattress.) That finky creep, I'll — (Throws himself on FOURTH's bed; they wrestle, clasping one another, and entangled in the bedclothes. Gradually the struggle loses its intensity. It becomes something like a morbid brotherly dance. When it's over, they all go back to whatever they were doing. FOURTH stays in bed, occasionally giggling to himself amid general indifference.)

FOURTH: Have you heard the great news? They're transferring me to another section. The director told me. I wanted to surprise you. But I know how I am. I remember one time: so much baggage! The director said I'll have a room upstairs all to myself. And no straps. And if I feel an attack coming — two pills instead of one, or four instead of two, or eight instead of four. (giggles) I could keep it up forever. I'll have my own private john. I've never told any of you, but I just can't manage it in bed. It disgusts me and then it simply won't come. Squeeze, squeeze, I'd like to see *you* do it. And then, lying down makes it almost impossible because the bowels have to be stretched and squeezed. The Moslems know all about it, that's why they invented the squat-down toilet. Did you know that? I've always been fascinated by the Orient. Here they're always talking about cleanliness, but you know what the johns are like. Once I saw one on this floor, and on the floor below, because the floors are all alike and so are the toilets, perhaps. The one I saw was absolutely nauseating, it was all wet and filled with scraps of paper inside; it looked like vomit; you can never tell what you'll find. In fact, I can remember one, downstairs, on the same floor as the dining room, and the chiefs go up and down. I wonder what the chiefs do all day long. They never bring our meals on time, and they're always off in a corner smoking, or else feeling up the women. That's what they do, and perhaps they even do it well. But I really think they ought to do a better job of cleaning the johns because some of them are downright nauseating. And so many people spend so much time in them, and they're always occupied. I myself have no troubles on that score. You may think I can't on account of hemorrhoids. But it's actually the position, because in a normal john I can do anything very well and very speedily. However,

when I move upstairs, I'll have a john all to myself, and nobody will be able to see, and perhaps I'll even stay a bit longer because I like to wipe myself thoroughly. Not with newspaper though, because the print rubs off and hurts; and then, it causes pimples. I only used it once — when I was in the service. But I did it very quickly. (giggles and then to SECOND:) Not like you, you stay in there for hours. (to THIRD:) He really enjoys it.

SECOND: A thousand eyes always spying on you. But in the end they carry you away. You know where? To a padded cell. Bars and mattresses, you'll be comfortable, you pig; bars and mattresses, you'll see.

FOURTH: Liar, how can you say that after all the things I do for you?

SECOND: What things! It's the truth. I'm fed up, ask anyone, go and tell the chief, he'll release us instantly.

FOURTH: Liar, slut. Just because I'm pathetic. . . .

SECOND: When are they coming for you?

FOURTH: Soon, I think. . . .

SECOND: He even answers. I'm going to discipline you.

FIRST: Don't hurt one another, for our hurt is internal, don't forget. Ever since we were separated from Truth and Life.

SECOND: Up yours!

FIRST: What a foul mouth. What a foul mouth! (persuasively) Do you know what I dreamt last night? I wanted to tell you about it: a huge flower bed full of tulips. And in the center, right in the middle of the tulips, your firm arm. Like this. Firm as a branch. Only the watch was running, all by itself. And you know what time it was?

SECOND: What are you talking about? I've never had a watch.

FIRST: It was dinner time, the time when the people on the floor below all go clattering downstairs in their wooden shoes. Listen. The instant the hand reaches the hour all of them start clattering down the steps in their wooden shoes.

SECOND: But what makes you think it was *my* arm?

FIRST: My dear boy, in a dream, you know such details immediately. Who can bother to think about them? And then, at the bottom where the arm began, the edge was all frayed and tattered. How distinctly I remember. And the bone, protruding ever so slightly. Not too much, just a wee bit. I thought to myself: the poor guy, when they wrenched it out, simply wrenched it out, as when you pull the leg off a cricket, and the white threads come out like moist guts.

THIRD (getting up from his papers to nibble on an apple): There are countries where men are hanged from lanterns. What a horrible way to die.

FIRST: I could think of worse ways.

THIRD (reading, speaking, eating): Imagine a cluster of mountains covered with fir trees. Below, in the valley, a river with a bridge spanning it, and in the middle of the bridge, on the railing, two lampposts, a man wearing a white shirt with the collar cut off, three of four soldiers in spiked helmets.

FIRST: I can't imagine anything. Your story is overflowing with benevolence. It's no use. The man in the white shirt probably won't even die.

THIRD: That's *your* opinion.

FIRST: I'm sure of it. As soon as they slip the noose around his neck, a messenger will arrive with the reprieve. Stories can be changed.

THIRD: It's not a story. (Strikes the back of his hand against the papers he is reading) I can sense a great tension here.

FIRST: You're mistaken. There's no tension here whatsoever — neither in the man nor in the soldiers, nor in the fir trees, the rivers, the bridges, the lanterns. Quite the contrary. I see schoolboys wearing mackintoshes that glisten in the rain. Dumb-struck, mute, as suddenly a black limousine drives along the deserted street flanking the schoolhouse. They all know where it will end.

(THIRD remains silent, lost in thought. In a corner, SECOND and THIRD have started quarreling over one of SECOND's old things. THIRD is so annoyed that:)

THIRD: (turning to SECOND and FOURTH) I would like your attention for a moment. I hope you die by nightfall.

FOURTH (giggling): Yes, yes, I'll see him pass the door to my room. Or rather, I'll hear him through the wall. They'll open up the big gate in back to let the hearse in. The dead are buried like garbage.

FIRST: Garbage is incinerated.

SECOND: So are the dead.

FOURTH: Exactly.

SECOND: You, however, are going to die all alone in a padded cell.

THIRD: (imperiously) You'll have to excuse me. I've got some notes here which I *must* work on this morning. You know I don't have much time left. These notes are of immense importance. I'm certain that you know why. I must therefore demand the respect due not to the man but to the office. Do not compel me to resort to odious measures.

SECOND (lowering his voice): All alone; in a padded cell, bars and mattresses. One morning, the Chief will come to give you your pill, and he'll have to use the handle of the spoon to open up that big, fat trap of yours.

FOURTH: It's not true, you're just trying to scare me. You're jealous because I'll be all by myself, in peace and quiet. (to THIRD) You tell him, please.

THIRD: What shall I tell him? That I haven't managed to finish anything? That I'm so far behind in my work. It *will* be a padded cell, I hope they lock all of you up in it.

FIRST: Me, too?

THIRD: You, too.

FOURTH (growing excited): No, I'm going there alone; and it's not a padded cell; I'll take only my own things and —

FIRST (to FOURTH): Excuse me. (Then, to THIRD) Having realized the necessity of recalling the serious accident that occurred at the side of the village fountain on Friday, the twenty-second of April, on which date Lorenzo was struck directly in the chest when a dead birch tree collapsed on him. He died on the spot, to the astonishment of all. Four or five bystanders pulled the moribund man out from under the trunk and brought him home. The authorities arrived and found him dead, and he was buried the next day. A death. An unnecessary accident. It was brought to light afterwards that a steamshovel had damaged the roots of the tree.

THIRD: Stop teasing me. We're done for, here. I can imagine the rest.

FOURTH: I will be all by myself in peace and quiet. When is the chief calling for me?

FIRST: When the chief comes for you, it won't be pleasant, I can tell. There'll be two of them and perhaps they'll carry you off on a stretcher and one or two

flights are enough to damage you.

SECOND (to FOURTH, perfidiously): Are you happy?

THIRD (to FIRST): What do you want? I think we've all had enough.

FIRST: Does he say you ought to keep quiet? And abandon us?

SECOND: Abandon us.

FIRST (raising a fearful hand, to SECOND): Beware.

THIRD: Stop it! Stop it, all of you. (to FIRST) And you — Strip naked, go to the back, break your knees against the wall, scourge yourself.

FIRST: You're wasting your breath. Some day you'll all complain. . . .

THIRD: There's no sense of dignity here, no heroism. . . . nothing.

FOURTH: Why should we complain? How do you know. . . .

FIRST: I know a lot, don't forget. It's a kind of salvation. If you'd stop associating with him all the time (pointing to SECOND) and stick to me a bit more. See, arise, come. (Dragging him towards the niche) We have so much to learn, and we know so little. Just see how much you can learn from this humble growing sweet-basil.

SECOND (at a distance, mimicking him from memory): Observe the intense green of the stalk and the perfect alternation of the veins.

FIRST: Shut up, one-arm.

FOURTH: One-arm!

SECOND: One-arm, one-arm. How can you believe it? Look, two arms. One and two, one and two. (Hits FOURTH lightly) One and two. . . .

FOURTH: Don't touch me; go away.

FIRST: Wonderful, just tell him, there's the street, tell him.

FOURTH: Get your hands off me, don't touch me.

SECOND: And you say to me: unstrap me, unstrap me, touch me, and I touch you. One and two, one and two.

FOURTH: Off with you, accursed one-hand, get thee behind me.

THIRD: Quiet! Visionaries, fanatics!

SECOND: Chief.

THIRD (shouting): Chief, chief.

FOURTH: Chieeeeeef!

ALL: Chief, chief, chief.

(Enter the CHIEF, wordless and indifferent as usual. Seizes FOURTH who is still shouting, straps him to the bed, and gives him a pill. Next he takes SECOND and drags him away. Long pause, then:)

FIRST (approaching FOURTH): It's that bastard's fault. Did he give you the pill?

FOURTH: I've got it under my tongue.

FIRST: Spit it out. (takes the pill and hides it in the mattress.)

THIRD: Vipers, when will you finally stop punishing that poor wretch for your own misdeeds?

FIRST (Ignoring him, to FOURTH): Do you feel better? I'll loosen the straps.

THIRD: Don't you dare. I think it's the least they can do to that loathsome creature; and if you try, I'll be the first to call the chief this time. Always punishing

and punishing for your cheap little wrangles. With all the work I have. Good-for-nothings, failures.

FIRST: Tell it to *him* (indicating FOURTH) not to *me*. With my background, and I don't mean to boast, and *no* political intrigues. Everything with humility. *You'll* be the one to send him to a padded cell, don't forget. . . .

FOURTH: That's not true. He made it up to scare me. The padded cells are downstairs, and the director said I was moving upstairs. He said upstairs, to a private room. Otherwise he would have said downstairs, but he said upstairs, he said a private room. . . .

THIRD (to FOURTH): If only you'd go. I can't stand the sight of you any more. Your voice gets on my nerves, it's sickening. In this place, each of us has his dignity to defend.

FIRST: You poor wretch, who are you to talk about dignity? What do you measure it by?

FOURTH: Listen to him.

THIRD: You dare to interfere in a discussion of this kind, you and your accomplice the professor here —

FIRST: Who is whose accomplice? Would you like me to talk? To spill everything? Shall we tell the truth just this once? Shall we tell everybody how the Minister spends his nights and who with?

FOURTH: Yes, yes, let's; you're wonderful, oh how wonderful you are!

FIRST (throwing himself on his knees): God, what are you making me say? The only truth is that our unhappiness is within us, in the separation of truth and life and in the vast distance that separates us from the Kingdom of God, without which none of us can build the City of Man. Where are those who bring the bricks. . . ? (He looks around and then collapses sobbing.)

THIRD (to FOURTH): Do you know what I'm thinking? That the director's office is two floors *below* the padded cells and that in any case he would have said upstairs, in any case.

(FOURTH, moans and tosses about beneath the straps)

FIRST: The day of lightning and thunder: when each one of you shall finally have ashes in your bones. And until that moment of purification arrives, what can we do? Vanity. We wait, foolishly laying waste our powers. . . . Yea, (eyeing THIRD) I repeat, foolishly laying waste instead of gathering ourselves, twittering, with the wings we have or could have with so little effort.

THIRD (to FOURTH): Just look at that fanatic. All that wailing and weeping is appropriate to the ragamuffins who need it. And you still have faith. You don't realize that not even an atom of our environment resembles his miserable fantasies. As if there still existed a human consciousness capable of that type of action, ideal norms, imitations of life, ersatz! (to FIRST, suddenly) You wreck from the past, has-been, cork, fragment! And perhaps even a mystifier.

FIRST: Hit these poor shoulders. They're meant to be beaten. But do you know how? Joyfully! For in your words I see the proof of my invincibility. And in this card game beyond life you can be sure you won't have the best hand. The cards have been changed, but you were *not* on the alert, you blind wretches. I may be tied down, as you say, but I am universal and everlasting.

FOURTH: I have listened to your words and accepted your ideas; I believe, I believe!

THIRD (ironically): Insignificant universality. Be content. You already constitute a school. Christ more or less began in the same way.

FIRST (collapses, sobbing): Oh, God, God, God, God, God, God, God. . . .

THIRD (to FOURTH): God, God. You disciple you, where do you keep your sandals of humility? Underneath your blanket? (Poking about in FOURTH's bedding)

FOURTH: (still strapped down): Leave my bed alone. Don't touch me. I don't want anybody touching me anymore. Especially you. They won't even shoot you. You'll be killed by a birchtree. And you'll crap in your pants. The smell will be nauseating.

(The door opens, SECOND enters)

SECOND (to FOURTH, pointing at FIRST): Is he crying?

THIRD: He's crying.

FOURTH: Yes, he's crying.

SECOND (to FIRST): You're crying for me, aren't you?

FIRST: For Man, for us, for Truth in shreds.

SECOND: You're crying for me. Because they hit me. I, who had no father, no mother. A babe-in-arms, I was abandoned naked on the steps of a church, and there an old woman found me. Then she died, leaving me a tiny room and a few rags. At night, my sole companions were the worms playing concerts in my wooden bed. I was all alone and underprivileged in the slums of a big city; the sirens and the roofs of cotton-mills. The February fog —

THIRD: Will you stop it, you imbecile. He's weeping because he's dead, finished, gone. He's all dried up. (to FIRST) You desert you, you shard!

FOURTH: Shard, shard, but when are they coming to unstrap me? It doesn't matter to any of you. You're all free and happy, and I'm here. This is the truth. But I'm leaving you. I'm moving into a room of my own.

FIRST: Who will pay for this injustice, brethren? Let us pray for this poor suffering wretch. Let our charity be the price for his penalty. (Kneels down at FOURTH's bedside; the others gradually draw near as FIRST speaks; SECOND finally kneels down and abandons his head on FIRST's shoulder like Saint John at the Last Supper. The picture is complete.) Meekness, the fruit. Shadows, terrors, senses. He does not yield to the world. This basically is the eternally creative capacity.

THIRD: Yes, I see, I see.

FIRST: In the primal shadows of existence, a desperate energy dies out, the mirror of the crisis of Man, the mysterious oracle of a mortal danger. Each one of these indissoluble elements will lose its limits with the others and become the object of incomprehensible fears. The senses will go their way without reason, and men, terrified shadows without energy impulses, unproductive forms, glorifications of a meaningless world. No one will ask anyone else: "Who are you?" Intuitions, capacities, goods, will not cultivate individual aptitudes. But the harmonious man will have to overcome the intimate laceration without salt in his blood and without humors, leaping over the elapsing millenia without any awareness on the part of individuals.

(His voice grows terrible, admonishing.)

In my mindful and evocative imagination, I see this life which no longer succeeds in manifesting the force of its physicalness. I see the universal perpetuity of life overwhelmed by oblivion. But humanity, my brethren, will never be self-alienated, even if the terror of liberty alienates us from one another. We shall knock at all the doors of the forbidden universe; we shall illuminate all the dark corners and grope about in all times and all places and in this clash with invisible and en-

chanted walls, a gesture will be a non-dimensional point...

(During the last few sentences, the Chief has entered and stood silently at the door. When the monolog is finished, the CHIEF goes over to FOURTH, unstraps him, and exits. SECOND curls up at FIRST'S feet, clasps his knees, kisses his legs, until FOURTH and THIRD drag him away, while:)

SECOND: Fa . . . fa . . . father, daddy. . . . Kneel down, Holy. Father, kneel down, everybody.

THIRD: There's still some hope. I'll use all the means at my disposal if necessary. We'll finish everything in time.

FOURTH (daydreaming): I remember a fig tree and down below the railroad—

THIRD: Please, not now. For all our sakes. Have confidence; the hope derived from his (indicating FIRST) words is false, but we have other keys to certainty.

(FOURTH takes an old saucepan from under THIRD's bed and goes over to the niche while:)

FOURTH: My timing's always bad. Nothing more, You've got to imitate the model and then—

THIRD: Get your hands off that saucepan, it's mine.

FOURTH (surprised): But you said that whenever I wanted to—

THIRD: Where do you have to go this very instant?

FOURTH (continuing): A promise is a promise.

THIRD (convulsively): Not now, it's mine.

FOURTH: You don't even keep your promises.

THIRD: It's mine, and that's that; leave it alone.

(They scuffle breathlessly. THIRD, upon regaining the saucepan replaces it under his bed. FIRST, calm, relaxed, stretches out on his bed and smokes.)

SECOND: Well?

FOURTH: I remember a fig tree, and down below the railroad. It was always full of little boys. All of us usually making wee-wee among the reeds. Once, an old train discharged its steam right on our behinds. We were stooping in a row, and the train covered us with a scalding cloud of steam. And then we were all wet and shivering with cold.

THIRD: Will you stop!

(He is about to pounce upon him, but FOURTH manages to get away.)

FOURTH: You're the one that the firing squad will execute. You'll crap in your pants, they'll tie a black blindfold around your eyes.

FIRST (still lying down): You'll stand alone against a crumbling wall. Perhaps in an old barnyard. It will be six a.m., in a country where the sun is already blazing. Your hands will be tied, a remnant of dignity. Only a captain, the guards, and the necessary soldiers. (THIRD stiffens, and then begins pacing slowly, a bit uncertain, towards the farther wall. SECOND flings himself at THIRD's feet to hold him back.)

SECOND: Don't leave me, please, please. Don't, don't. (FOURTH pulls him away violently.)

FIRST: You'll see nothing but your feet and the granular dust on the ground.

Feet and dust, feet and dust all the way to the wall. On the wall, a long black crepe right before your eyes.

THIRD (rigid against the wall): Then I'll see them all. Stern, black visors; silver sabers.

(SECOND moans on his bed. FOURTH and FIRST stand up, their eyes riveted on THIRD.) In this outdoor prison, as I face the hard symbols of absolute power, there remains only the provocative lie which lays no claim to general assent, and yet is propaganda for the world. I do not desire your consent to my own genuine destiny.

(The sudden untimely ring of the dining room bell. It breaks off immediately.) My own genuine destiny, genuine destiny, my own genuine, my own destiny...

FIRST: Feet and dust, feet and dust; on the wall, a long, black crepe before your eyes.

(Pause, general silence)

FOURTH (all at once going to the proscenium and daydreaming): I remember a fig tree; and down below, the railroad.

THIRD (shaking himself from the wall): Do me a favor and stop remembering anything. We'll all be better off.

FOURTH: Always full of little boys. I was one of them. We always made weewee behind certain tall, green reeds. Like knives.

THIRD (hysterical): Stop it, I can't stand it anymore!

FOURTH: Once, a train discharged its steam right on our behinds. We were stooping in single file...

THIRD: Stop it.

FOURTH: You'll be the one that the firing squad executes. You'll crap in your pants. The smell will be nauseating.

FIRST: You'll stand alone against a crumbling wall. Perhaps an old barnyard. It will be six a.m. in a country where the sun is already blazing. Your hands will be tied, a remnant of dignity. Only a captain, the guards, and the necessary soldiers. (THIRD stiffens and starts to go back to the wall, hesitatingly. SECOND hurls himself at his feet to hold him back.)

SECOND: Don't leave me, please don't, please! (FOURTH shoves him away violently.)

FIRST: You'll see nothing but your feet and the granular dust on the ground. Feet and dust, feet and dust, all the way to the wall, and on the wall a long black crepe right before your eyes.

THIRD (rigid against the wall): In this outdoor prison, as I face the hard symbols of absolute power, there remains only the provocative lie which lays no claim to general assent, and yet is propaganda for the world. I do not desire your consent to my genuine destiny, but only the thought that it can assign a place to everything, even to democracy, which is the essence of freedom. Your world is rigidly subdivided into categories that come to nothing, adjusted to the authority by which they were conceived. All this is what I have proposed.

(While THIRD speaks, FOURTH pulls out a black ribbon from the mattress, goes over to THIRD and tries to blindfold him but THIRD, continuing to speak, nobly refuses. FOURTH returns to his place.)

No matter how sound a politics may be, it will always run the risk of turning into madness. Your society is already extinct? it is a crystallized object reflecting only its own brutality and harshness. Any political organism that considers its end to be the transformation of society establishes in that very act its own enemies and its own limits. But the essence of government does not signify that the parts, all parts, are not equidistant from the center. Even this man (points to himself, then with the same hand he starts to unbutton the top part of his night shirt), whom you happen to find in front of you. With malice towards none, I hastened to complete the work to which I was committed. I think I ought to speak this truth, this whole truth, now, however much humiliation you may draw from it, but without hatred and reasonably. I will not escape my fate or your ferocity, and I think that others will also be able to endure it, from the moment that I, as the first, submit, I—who despair of victory and therefore offer myself to your bullets. (He remains stockstill, his eyes shut, his mouth a black hole. The others come over to him, take his arms tenderly, and bring him back to his bed.)

SECOND: I just can't believe it. Incredible. Here he was, alive, and manly. And everything of his — faith. A hero. Alone in his work. And then he was wrapped up in his shroud, they said, speckled with his blessed green secretion. A man, do you understand? Something none of you will ever be again. Awoken unawares, executed without a trial. Murdered. Many years will elapse before his grave can be venerated. A martyr. And we? For the time being, he'll lie in a mass grave. Consumed by lime. We'll go and identify him, I and the son I'm expecting. His son. I may even be able to point out the bones; yes, those are his teeth; yes, that's his ring; if they leave them. And he'll shake his blessed hand, crying: "Mommy, mommy, is that corpse my daddy?" "Yes, darling, that is your hero. When you grow up, you'll understand why they did it, he's watching you from heaven and smiling. From that tiny cloud up there, my little cutie-pie." (Breaks into long, heart-rending sobs).

FIRST: There is a danger in all these gestures, rites, actions — material elements totally devoid of any reference, effect, or contact; degraded from moral supports to simple things: ritual executions, physical penance, satisfaction with one's duty. I'm not saying that we should renounce precise elements of form and order but rather that we should always subject them, as much as possible, to a strong sacrificial principle.

FOURTH (suddenly shrieking): No, not today, please, please. Tomorrow, I'll do it tomorrow. (Alarmed by the yell, FIRST and THIRD get up from their beds and go over to him. FOURTH, squeezing against a wall:) No, not today, I'm in terrible pain. Tomorrow, anytime you like, please. (Flutters about.) Wait just one day, please. Not today. Tomorrow.

(THIRD and FIRST grab him from behind, immobilize him, bring him to the center of the room, then towards the back, where they fasten him to the wall. His arms in crucifix position. SECOND goes over to the group, hugs FOURTH who is nailed to the wall.

SECOND: Do you remember, too, how tall he was, and handsome, and holy. (The door opens; the CHIEF, whose arm alone is visible, introduces a fifth roomer. Correctly dressed in an old-fashioned way, he has a thin moustache, perhaps a monocle and spats. The NEWCOMER enters, puts down two light

valises and the sheath of a fencing foil. As the door closes, he looks around. The four remain motionless, dumbfounded for an instant, then the group gradually loosens up. The NEWCOMER comes forward, then:)

NEWCOMER: My bed?

(The others nod silently. The NEWCOMER comes over, tests a chair for dust, but in vain of course. Then he tests the mattress, the pillows, the sheets. Points at a chair next to the bed:)

My chair?

(The others nod mutely. The NEWCOMER sits down on his bed, remains lost in thought and silent; then, noticing the general embarrassment)

Oh, please go on . . .

(His request elicits no response. After a long pause:)

THIRD: Everything is very clean.

FOURTH: It's very nice. We're alone . . .

SECOND: Free . . .

FIRST: Happy . . .

THIRD: Potent . . .

NEWCOMER: I see. But please go on with what you were doing.

SECOND: Can we be of any help?

NEWCOMER: No.

(The four others disperse mutely; while the silence persists:)

FOURTH (to NEWCOMER, trying to catch his interest): I'm being transferred to a private room tomorrow.

(NEWCOMER looks at him without responding.)

THIRD: The dinner bell will be ringing shortly.

FIRST: (who hasn't taken his eyes from NEWCOMER for even an instant, goes over to him and sits down on his bed) You'll get used to the place. You get used to everything here. We'll be more than just colleagues or brothers. The building is huge, and we never go out. We never leave our rooms except to go and eat. There are 200 of us at the tables, and the noise is awful. But we come back here right away. Everyone has his own work to do, his own things to take care of . . . Life goes on and on, just as it does outside . . .

NEWCOMER (after a long pause): Thank you.

FIRST: You're still so cold and distrustful. Open up, confess, we're—

NEWCOMER (in an outburst): There's one thing I wanted to say right off. The reason I'm only spending a few days in your room—

(The CHIEF enters, carrying a white nightshirt similar to the ones the other four roomers are wearing. He leaves it on NEWCOMER's chair. The CHIEF has a small card that he inserts into the frame with which the foot of each bed is furnished. Exit.)

FOURTH (to NEWCOMER who broke off, amazed at the CHIEF's entrance.): Don't let it bother you. They come in and out. We don't even notice them anymore . . . they're the chiefs. Everyone has his own.

NEWCOMER (confused): Uh, where was I?

THIRD (unruffled): "The reason I'm only spending a few days in your room . . ."

NEWCOMER: Oh, yes . . . this circumstance . . . uh . . . this circumstance notwithstanding, I must ask you to maintain discretion, to discreetly respect . . . I don't know how to put it.

FIRST: I understand. Don't worry. You want to say that we'll be discreet brothers . . . I suffered a great deal, too, at first. It's not easy to give up the nest of habits that each of us has been shaping for so many years, I know, and then—

NEWCOMER: I'm really not interested.

FIRST: You're very self-willed. (Standing up.) But time works to my advantage. (Goes over toward his niche.) We've seen so many, we've passed so many . . .

NEWCOMER (turns almost by chance to THIRD): I don't understand, what does he mean, time works to his advantage? I don't think it should work to anyone's advantage. What does that have to do with it, anyway?

THIRD: You're right. I, for example, do not believe in any historical or metaphysical determinism.

(Sits down on the NEWCOMER's bed, on the spot where FIRST sat earlier.) But he's right when he says that life goes on as it does outside. Do you think we should have or ought to have had different clothes, longer or shorter fingernails, darker hair? Will we be capable of the same pains and satisfactions? Come now, it's like believing in chance, it's insane. Look at these papers. (Indicates bundle of papers next to his bed.) Do you really think that I've had time to glance through them all? Nevertheless, they're important, as you yourself will come to realize . . . you'll see.

NEWCOMER: I don't think so. I'm only staying in this room for a few days, then they're transferring me.

FOURTH: I'm supposed to be transferred, too. I am. Wait for your turn. I'll have a room all to myself with my own john. They're calling for me tomorrow.

NEWCOMER: Please, pull yourself together.

FIRST (motions to FOURTH to be quiet): What's the weather like?

FOURTH: Variable. That biting cold.

SECOND (who in order to brighten up has put rouge on his cheeks): It's warm in here, we all feel well. (NEWCOMER begins staring at him insistently) It's warm here, we all feel well. I'm a bit pale these days. Don't you think? Don't you find me pale?

NEWCOMER: You are a bit pale now that I think of it. (SECOND continues to apply rouge, while:)

THIRD: I notice you don't have much luggage.

NEWCOMER: Exactly. (His attention is drawn to SECOND who, after rouging his cheeks, begins to put gobs of mascara on his eyelids.)

THIRD (following NEWCOMER's stare): Yes, of course. We've all got to prepare for lunch. The bell will be ringing shortly. It's always punctual, even though he (points at FOURTH) always complains that it's late.

FOURTH: It often does ring late, because you know what the chiefs do inside? They smoke in the corners, and they constantly occupy the toilets.

NEWCOMER (suddenly down to earth): What should we do? Shall we forgive

them? Yes, let's forgive them! (All laugh.)

THIRD: You're really very nice. I'm sure we'll soon become friends. Here, we're all indispensable to one another in a sense. We help one another as we can. Whenever we can, often, every day. What's this, a sword? (Points to NEWCOMER's foil.)

NEWCOMER: A foil.

THIRD (to all): A foil. Goodness, how grand. Our friend has a foil.

NEWCOMER: I don't think there's any need to—

THIRD: A foil. Who would ever have dreamt . . .

NEWCOMER: I brought it along to do a little exercise, whenever I have a chance.

FIRST: You can do it any time, whenever you like, every day.

THIRD: A foil. (to FIRST) Just think.

FIRST: Show us something. Don't make us beg.

NEWCOMER (jumps up, draws the foil from its sheath, and performs several fencing figures, enumerating them:)

Salut, coup fourré, attaque, esquivé, fente en arrière, coup d'arrêt, coup d'arrêt à la figure, coup d'arrêt à la main, arrêt.

(Sits down suddenly and replaces the foil.)

ALL: Marvelous. Brilliant. A past master.

FOURTH (Approaching NEWCOMER's suitcases; after sniffing them, he articulates knowingly): It's obvious they come from outside, you can smell the rain and the smoke.

NEWCOMER: Please leave my suitcases alone! And besides, it's not raining.

THIRD: (pulling FOURTH away and sitting down again on NEWCOMER's bed) In my opinion, fencing rather than boxing is the true "noble sport." It's a real usurpation of title. And what are your other interests besides fencing?

(SECOND, in turn, comes over to newcomer's valises, touches them, is about to try the locks.)

NEWCOMER: Would you leave those suitcases alone!

SECOND: I just wanted to smell the rain; don't carry on like that.

NEWCOMER: But it's not raining, and anyway I don't like people spying on me.

FIRST: You shouldn't say things like that. No one here intends to "spy" on you. What's wrong with you? Where do you think you are? The moment you came in I knew you'd be hard to get along with.

(to THIRD) Leave him alone.

NEWCOMER: That's right, please leave me alone. For the few days I'll be here until I leave the room.

FOURTH (vulgarly): Just don't leave before me. I've been waiting for years. Your turn will come after mine, in due time.

SECOND: Take your foil. Who needs it?

THIRD (persuasively): Look, you've offended them. Why did you say "spy upon?" No one here wants to spy upon you. Come now. We're good friends. We help one another to the best of our ability. We all need help so badly.

I'm willing to bet that you do, too— (NEWCOMER jumps up, goes over to the

door, bangs on it furiously. The others remain where they are, motionless and with their eyes riveted on him.)

NEWCOMER (returning): It's unbearable! What do you want? I didn't come looking for you. Is this really my room?

SECOND (indicating the small card at the foot of NEWCOMER's bed): It's written on the card.

FIRST: No, no, you're not mistaken. We're your colleagues, your friends. I even offered you a great deal more if you recall. And besides, when have you ever really made a choice? Try to recall. Anyway, that's the way things are over here. You're in this room and you have to live here. Along with us. Like him (pointing at FOURTH). He'd like to go off and be by himself, too.

FOURTH: And I will, all by myself.

SECOND: In a padded cell. (FOURTH and SECOND scuffle feebly.)

FIRST: You'd like to leave because you didn't manage to have—how shall I put it?—a prominent role, you never really helped anyone. For you see, here we all help one another. It's not so much the place that counts, nor the specific quality it may or may not have, but the condition. An extremely rare condition, impossible otherwise, and elsewhere.

NEWCOMER: Thank you, really and truly. Now, everything is clear. But please stop speaking to me, for a moment.

(Lies down on the bed, THIRD comes over.)

THIRD: Are you sure it's clear? Because I know very well that sometimes the least little thing can cause misunderstandings. (NEWCOMER nods without answering. Pause.) Incidentally, haven't we met before?

NEWCOMER: Perhaps.

THIRD: Where was it now. Let me think . . . It might have been abroad.

NEWCOMER: Perhaps, but please, I don't think I'm asking too much.

THIRD: You've done a lot of traveling, it's obvious. Just look at those suitcases. They're simply oozing rain and smoke.

FOURTH: The whole room's filled with the smell.

SECOND: You'll have to dry out those moist spots. I'm afraid the stains will remain in the leather.

FIRST: It's been raining for days, the rivers are flooding. An uncertain solution is expected. Shelters are few.

SECOND: What's to become of us?

(NEWCOMER is very surprised.)

THIRD: Hurry, it will be necessary to do something out of the ordinary.

FIRST: Yes, you're right, something out of the ordinary. Something truly great. A grand gesture of love. All of us, collectively. The limbs, I can see the limbs, scattered, decaying without heads or centers. We hardly know one another. This will give us a better opportunity and the chance for new togetherness. I shall be your guide. I, who have never drawn back before any opportunity, no matter how risky it may have been for my modesty. And you, (pointing at NEWCOMER) you, too, will be the interpreter and instigator of an action both majestic (stops at the end of his line at the two valises, stroking them lightly) and useful to mankind.

NEWCOMER (shouting): Leave those suitcases alone, you busybody. (Dashes

over to FIRST with undue speed and is about to strike him. The two are separated. NEWCOMER is led by the arm back to his bed, recalcitrant and whining.)

FIRST: I bear him no grudge, I forgive him.

THIRD (to NEWCOMER): My friend, my dear friend. Why? Why? We've offered you everything we could.

NEWCOMER (shouting): Lies, old lies! It's not raining; there's nothing to be done. Nothing.

THIRD: We're convinced of it, dear friend. May I call you that? There's really almost nothing to be done. But don't say it that way. Soon the lunch bell will ring. Perhaps the Chief will come. He often gets excited himself. (Pointing at FOURTH) Do you know what they do to him? They strap him to his bed for the night. (Stroking his forehead.) Stay here, stay here.

FIRST: And meanwhile we'll get ready.

(FOURTH and SECOND who until this moment have been holding NEWCOMER on his bed, leave him, go to their respective beds and from their mattresses they pull out waistcoats, hats, gloves, belts and other variegated and heterogeneous accessories, with which they bedizen themselves. SECOND wraps himself in his violet boa. THIRD and FIRST also dress themselves up. The stage is suddenly overflowing with gaudy, garish colors. NEWCOMER stretched out on his bed, stares at these furious doings. FIRST and THIRD don headgear that allusively recalls faraway symbols of power. When all have finished dressing.)

THIRD: All right, everyone ready?

SECOND: Let someone help you. The lunch bell is going to ring any moment. (Goes over, decisively, to the two valises and manages to get hold of one before NEWCOMER jumps up and hurls himself at SECOND.)

NEWCOMER: Get your hands off my suitcase!

SECOND: Let someone help you. (From the half-open valise, a strip of bright, blue cloth falls out. SECOND quickly grabs it. Tugging at the cloth, he pulls out a silk frock with a plunging neckline. For a split second all remain motionless, staring at the bodice. Then:)

SECOND: Exquisite, priceless.

NEWCOMER: (throwing down the valise.)

Get your hands off.

(Hits SECOND)

SECOND (returning the books): Let me tell you why.

NEWCOMER: Why what? There's nothing to say.

THIRD: I can assure you, there's not a drop of malice in him. Every person has his dignity, we know this very well.

FIRST: Every person has his story.

NEWCOMER: I begged and begged you—

SECOND (kneeling down to eye the card at the foot of the bed): It belonged to the Countess, didn't it?

THIRD: It really belonged to the Countess, didn't it?

(FOURTH goes over and reads the card.)

FIRST (moving over to his niche): Of course. It must have belonged to the Countess. She wore it on important occasions. Those in which you lose yourself, lose yourself without turning back, but with so much regret.

THIRD (to NEWCOMER): Dear friend, why didn't you say so right away? Do you think that people like us lack the sensibilities to understand certain delicate matters? (NEWCOMER, disheartened, no longer replies. His hair is unkempt, his monocle gone, his clothing messy. He is clearly at the end of all resistance.) At lunch, I shall propose a toast in honor of our friend. (All nod. SECOND has picked up from the ground an object that evidently dropped out of NEWCOMER's valise. It is a thin cord with frequent knots.)

SECOND (showing the cord around): What's this for?

NEWCOMER (babbling): I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, . . .

FOURTH (drawing close to him): I'm leaving tomorrow. Tell it to me alone.

(THIRD pushes FOURTH away from NEWCOMER's bed. The lunch bell rings.)

FIRST: This is meant for all of you. May the provided sustenance be totally absorbed. Watch out for the seeds in the grapes, the bones, the thorns. Abstain from unripe fruit, for the body has movements of delicate ventricles, and if the food is chosen, you will instantly feel vigor and sustenance in the flesh, the bones, muscles, blood, intelligence, work. The main vital organ is the heart, and it performs three movements: beating, venerating all creation, and commanding together with the brain, and thus all wills jointly obey the arms and each person does his own work.

(Intensely and purposefully so that all understand.)

For Saint John and Saint Samuel.

ALL: Amen.

(While FIRST speaks his prayer ALL go to the door and exit, including FIRST himself.)

THIRD (exiting): You can tell us afterwards. We'll have time.

(Only SECOND, upon reaching the door, turns around.)

SECOND (to NEWCOMER, who is still on the bed): Why don't you come along. Put your jacket on (points to nightshirt), put it on like this, that's the best way, for the sake of uniformity. (As NEWCOMER obeys.) Tell me about the Countess, what was her hair like? Tell me quickly, just me, before we join the others.

(NEWCOMER stares at him for a long time, and then hesitantly goes to the door.) It was long and black and hung loosely over the shoulders. Right?

NEWCOMER (stopping): Long, black . . . loosely over the shoulders. (Exits rapidly.)

SECOND (remaining on the bed): Long, black . . . loosely over the shoulders.

(Running after NEWCOMER) And her hands? How did she move her hands?

(CURTAIN)

Tony Perniciaro

After she buried her husband she rearranged the rest of the furniture.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A SATURDAY NIGHT ALL MY LIFE.

Take all the children's secrets the world over and
you'll have the blueprint for the next revolution.

Every square inch of our daily bread is measured by a slide rule.

ALL FAIRY TALES END ON THE WALL.

After he finished reading all the exit signs in school they graduated him.

SHE KNEW HOW TO WORK.
SHE PRACTICED AS A CHILD IN HER SLEEP.

Walked through empty hotel corridors knocking on doors til my hands came off.

SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER TO GO OUT OR DIE ALONE.

CAT HOUSE SIGN READ TEMPORARILY OUT OF ORDER GO FUCK YOURSELF.

He went around with a coffin under his arm and a bag of opinions in the other.

GLACIER RETREATING AT THE SIGHT OF A CITY.

When a foreman lunches with you, the flies are the first to leave.

TOOK BACK ALL HIS HANDSHAKES AND THEN CHECKED OUT.

Kept his death certificate together with his financial papers.

GRAFFITO POEMS BY PARISIAN STUDENTS

The original French texts of the following poems were written by students on the walls of the Sorbonne during the uprising in May 1968.

ITOU

I think of your soft-quartermoon-face
Of one of those soft-quartermoons-of-your-face
A modern-despair-of-the-street-face
A modern-despair-face-of-the-street
Paint it again Picasso
Paint my face again for me

I think of your unknown-equation-face
Of one of those unknown-equations of the face
A face-exposing-variable-eye
Eyes-variable-exposing-face

Paint it again Picasso

Paint my face again for me

I think of your exponential-function-face
I think of our functions-face-of-our-twenty-years
A poet's dream on the wing of your brow
A wing of your brow on a poet's dream

Paint it again Picasso

Paint my face again for me

I think of your rose-breasts-below-arcades-face
At one of those face-arcades-rose-breasts
A touch-of-dead-flesh-below-the-middle-of-the-eye
A middle-touch-below-the-eye-of-dead-flesh

Paint it again Picasso

Paint my face again for me

I think of your tightrope-walker-sidewalk-face
Of one of those sidewalks-face-tightrope-walkers
Grass in the proud-eyes-by-hand-of-the-street
A Word in those concrete-truculence-sidewalks

Paint it again Picasso

Paint my face again for me

I think of your unreal-expression-face
Of one of those unreal-face-expressions
A face without makeup on the absence of cheeks
And cheeks without face on the absence of makeup

Paint it again Picasso

Paint my face again for me

Oh! Picasso...

Your fingers paint EVERYTHING

But they misspell my face!...

THE TELEPHONE

Hello!

Hello!

Don't hang up my love
My springtime love on an autumn morning
My sunshine love in the eye of night
My waterfall love on the hill of days
My drum love in the tapering of drumsticks

Hello!

Hello!

Don't cut me off, operator
This is springtime speaking to the ear of the wire
This is the pond bursting in the grooves of the blade
This is the star drowning in the pool of my sky
This is the shredded sky in the plant of the clouds

Hello!

Hello!

Don't cut off the day with the knife of my bread
My tomb of sunlight in the prophet's iris

Hello!

Hello!

It's you my love
My love astray in the island cables
The pillar suspended from my cableway
The sleep of my stone in the gauge of my stone
The hair of the wind in the foam of the mountains
My coral oyster in the smile of seas

Hello!

My ephemeral silence in the cylinder of voices
Let's not kill the noise of the murdered day
Let's connect the phone to the pulses in our ears
Let's connect our ears back to the telephone pulses
Darling can't you hear black ghettos weeping
And flaming locusts swooping low on legs

Hello!

Hello!

My love

Hello!

Can't you hear the rifles growing in the lagoons
And tracer-bullets in the horns of my cornet

Hello!

Hello!

Hello!

Don't cut the wire
Oh my black cablegram of love

I LOVE YOU

Erling Salomsen

(Translated from the Norwegian by Jack Norris)

FOR THE POEM

The innermost essence of poetry
is concentration.

Well —
need I say more?

CNTRTN

OSTRICH

Goddammit!

—Always having to live up
to reputations

I get sand in my eyes

CONTRIBUTORS:

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