

# DAYMARES

Selected Fictions on Dreams and Time



ROBERT ZEND

# DAYMARES



OTHER BOOKS BY ROBERT ZEND

- From Zero to One* (Sono Nis Press, 1973)  
*My Friend Jerónimo* (Omnibooks, 1981)  
*Arbormundi* (blewointmentpress, 1982)  
*Beyond Labels* (Hounslow Press, 1982)  
*Oāb* (Exile, Volume 1, 1983—Volume 2, 1985)  
*The Three Roberts: Premiere Performance* (HMS Press, 1984)  
*The Three Roberts: On Love* (Dreadnaught, 1984)  
*The Three Roberts: On Childhood* (Moonstone, 1985)  
*Versek, Képversek* (Atelier hongrois, 1988)  
*Hazám Törve Kettővel* (Omnibooks, in preparation)

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*Selected Fictions on  
Dreams and Time*

by

*Robert Zend*

Edited by Brian Wyatt

Foreword by John Robert Colombo

Afterword by Northrop Frye

**CACANADADA**

DAYMARES

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This posthumous collection of the unpublished writings of Robert Zend was selected by Janine Zend. It was based on his English-language manuscripts. Some of the short stories were written as early as the 1960's, but the majority of the work was written in the 1970's and early 1980's.

Some pieces have previously appeared in the following books and periodicals: "Metalostanza," *Versek, Képversek* (Atelier hongrois, Paris, 1988); "Taviella", *Exile* (Toronto, 1977); "The Rock", *Exile* (Toronto, 1974); "The Dream Cycle", *My Friend Jerónimo* (Omnibooks, Toronto, 1981); "On The Terrace", *Canadian Fiction Magazine* (Toronto, 1976)

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## FOREWORD

by John Robert Colombo

### I.

When Robert Zend informed me that he was flying to Argentina to record an interview with Jorge Luis Borges, he asked me what question I would ask the great Argentine fantasist if I were interviewing him. I replied, "Ask him what he thinks about when he thinks about Canada."

"What do you think about when you think about Canada?" he asked Borges a week later sitting in the latter's cluttered study in his flat in Buenos Aires.

Borges thought for a moment, then replied, "Canada is so far away it hardly exists."

### II.

I remember Robert Zend with a feeling of fondness.

The feeling has grown fonder over the last five years. Sometime soon it will probably reach its fondest peak. The feeling is certainly more profound than it was while Robert was still alive. . . . nervously alive, exasperatingly alive, frenetically alive, irritatingly alive. Robert had a way of energizing or galvanizing people. He seldom left them feeling indifferent. I do not now recall fondly cherishing him then, but I fondly cherish his memory now.

We worked closely together for some months at a stretch during two different periods of time on his first two books. I elected to play the role of midwife to the man and the manuscripts. He chose to play the part of the *artiste* in giving birth to the versions of the poems and stories we shaped and worked into the forms they take in those books. There were discussions and disagreements aplenty, matched with laughter and light-hearted probings of the world's intricacies.

He had a number of irritating habits. He seldom arrived on time, he sometimes arrived unbidden. But he had a matching number of



ingratiating habits. He was an enthusiast for his own work, which is understandable, but also for the work of others. He was always making discoveries of ideas or authors new to him. He was given to making such announcements as the following: "I have finally learned the secret of the Lost Continent of Atlantis!"

His body occupied the place in space and time that all of us share, but his ruminative mind and especially his perfervid imagination seemed to me to make their hearth on some other planet. This planet, if I may expand on this for a moment, is quite unlike our planet Earth. Robert's planet, Zendia, cuts an erratic course around a series of suns that could shine and not shine simultaneously. The seasons on this odd planet could last for a minute or for a millennium. Zendia is located in some far-distant solar system which might or might not have a name or number. It might or might not be co-existent with the planet Earth.

### III.

The Hungarian-born atomic scientist Leo Szilard once discussed the possibility of the existence of extraterrestrial life in the universe with his colleague Enrico Fermi.

Szilard expressed the opinion that extraterrestrial life was indeed possible. "If that is so," replied Fermi, "how is it that the aliens have not arrived on Earth? Where are they?"

"They are already among us," replied Szilard, "but they call themselves Hungarians."

### IV.

Robert had as many themes and styles as St. Sebastian had arrows. Robert's intuition rivalled Marshall McLuhan's mind as a generator of new ideas. Entirely on his own he invented concrete poetry, notably the variety called typescapes. He was a bit miffed when I showed him Emmett Williams' anthology of concrete poetry, with all that fascinating work by Xisto and Gomringer and others. Eventually he took the style in stride and began to produce poems and ef-

fects in the concrete manner that were uniquely his own.

I introduced him to the work of Borges some time after his invention of the Borgesian manner. (Some of the stories he wrote in this style are being published in this book for the first time.) For Robert it was love at first sight. He read the Argentine master's stories and poems, which are so concise and so dramatic, and in response to them, he went to work. He harnessed Pegasus to the plough, and created characteristic new works in this vein.

Robert was busy in a multitude of media. In many ways he saw himself as "a one-man renaissance." One of his contributions was production in the "found" manner using mundane things like toilet paper rolls and automobile gaskets to create entertaining and sometimes humorous objects. (Using a felt pen, he drew pictures and wrote spiral poetry on dozens of these rolls. Automobile gaskets were used as templates to create attractive and unusual illustrations in one of his books.) He composed for the piano. He wrote screenplays and made films. He translated poetry and drama freely from the Hungarian. Working with a computer specialist, he even redesigned the English alphabet, idiosyncratically rendering its traditional letterforms his own, bringing the whole alphabet closer to the heart's desire.

## V.

The twenty-six selections which appear in this collection were taken directly from Robert's English-language papers. The manuscript was prepared with great care by Janine Zend with the assistance of their daughter Natalie. Some poetry is included, but in the main the collection is devoted to his fiction.

Perhaps the best word to use to describe his fictions is the post-modern term "fictions". Robert's fictions were much like his personality: inventive and inquisitive, sometimes repetitious and just plain silly. His style in English is so clear and straight-forward that much of the time it sounds as if it has been translated from some other language. I am not sure what that other language is. His mother tongue was Hungarian and he acquired Italian and English later in life. His

spoken English, though fluent, was decidedly accented. He once explained to me that when he left Hungary in 1956 and came to Canada, he travelled light. He said, "I lost everything except my accent." Whether he was writing in Hungarian or in English, he was really only at home in some third language. So far it is an unidentified language. Perhaps it will never have a name or a description. Perhaps it is simply the language of one man's personality, the sum-total of his stance. Whether it is written in English by the author, translated into English by the author, or co-translated into English by the author and some anglophone writer, his English work always sounds somewhat abstract, somewhat explanatory, and somewhat "translated."

What is the nature of this language of translator-ese? Is it an Esperanto of the spirit, the interlingual of George Steiner's dreams? Is it the ultimate literary language of the planet Earth? Is it "the translator style," which has yet to be examined by literary critics and sociologists? Perhaps, instead, it is one of the tongues in the civilization of Rubik; perhaps it is a script from the con of Khu-Fu; perhaps it derives from continents and epochs unknown to mankind and to history and archaeology.

## VI.

The last time I saw Robert was when he paid an unexpected visit to my home. He arrived, characteristically, as we were sitting down to dinner. He would not join us for dinner; he would not *not* join us for dinner. Either he had already eaten or he was not yet ready to eat. He rambled from room to room, playing Mozart's "Turkish March" on the piano in the music room (rather heavier and slower than did Glenn Gould, much more romantically and Central Europeanly), pouring over some typescripts in the study, and perusing a pile of library books in the living room. Finally he joined us in the dining room. Then he proceeded to light a cigarette. We pointed to the notice that said No Smoking. I told him that although the house is a no-smoking zone, we do permit smoking, but only on the porch. "The weather is mild," I said. "Light up on the porch. That's why we call it 'butt-end.'" Typically Robert protested the arrangement. "I

want to talk with you and to smoke too. I want both you and nicotine." Who could forget such a verbal formulation, such vintage Zend? I cannot now remember what arrangement we made, but we did have a conversation and Robert did have his cigarette. Then he left and drove away in his beat-up old car. He left, a man for whom the world stood to be reviewed and revised.

## VII.

When Borges told Robert that Canada was so far away it hardly existed, he meant to suggest, I suppose, that Canadian literature and culture are "small potatoes" on a world scale. Or he might have been alluding to the notion that existence is relative rather than absolute, that some things exist "more" and other things exist "less."

Canada seemed "far away" to Borges because, so far at least, it has offered little to world culture, but Canada does exist. The man Borges no longer exists, but the author Jorge Luis Borges lives on. The man Zend no longer exists, to our sorrow, but Robert Zend the writer lives on memorably—in the memories of the men and women who were enriched through knowing him, as well as in the literary works offered to the reader through the pages of this new collection. The values that Robert Zend continues to offer to the world are not at all far away but very close at hand.



Introduction to an  
unpublished manuscript  
entitled  
Selected Dreams



Someone says: "I dreamt about you. . . ."

Why do your eyes light up, why do you so eagerly want to know about that dream? Why are you so interested in what happened to you in that non-existing world? Why do you want to see yourself doing something that you never did, to hear yourself saying something that you never said? Why does hearing about your imagined sexual performance in someone else's dream excite you so? Why do you become anxious, if something sad, or hopeful, if something happy, was dreamt about you? When asking, "What did I do?" why do you identify yourself with a phantom that isn't you? Knowing all about their fleeting, subjective irrelevance, why do you relate other people's dreams to your own iron reality?

There is a mysterious world stretching somewhere below the surface of the Earth (or below the upper layer of the cortex) that constantly whispers images, plots and words to us; as many worlds as heads sitting on human shoulders—heads which during the day function according to the radiant commands of the golden god, Sun. But as soon as He sinks below the circular line of the horizon, another ruler takes over, Darkness, through whose empire the spiraling—straight lines hurled by the fiery sphere cannot penetrate. Darkness, floating and amorphous, vast and expanding. Her law is entirely different from that of the temporarily dethroned king: falling-apartness instead of coherent concentration; obscurity instead of distinctness; spaciousness instead of linearity; dispersion, in-

stead of fusion; overlapping, instead of separateness; indefinity, instead of explicitness; womb-like roundness, instead of erect angularity. The three billion heads on the surface of our revolving rock cease to stretch upward, sharpening themselves toward the throbbing Lord who sails Westward, only Westward, always Westward. Instead, they bend down and wither into an enigmatic state of noisy silence and regularly recurring chaos which fully remembers, but playfully regroups, the collective happenings of former radiance, repeats them inarticulately and confusingly, inexpressibly in—and untranslatably into—the public language. Everyone dreams in privacy rather than interacting with the collective, and yet, during the night, all fuse with the common-in-all more than during the day, when all of us are our separate, impregnable selves.

Although the Sun declared it a false doctrine, we still secretly accept the creed of Darkness which teaches us that the land of dreams is common for everybody: it is not three-billion individually enclosed lands, but one. It obeys not three-billion personal laws, but one. It is a common land where we all meet each other, and these meetings will be unremembered during the linear Sun-time by the vertically erected individuals who intermingle on the curved, collective male-plane. We all believe—though we know it isn't true—that the land into which we submerge (while our horizontal bodies rest, tossing and turning about) is real, as real, if not more, than that from which we sank down. Originally we were all the sons and daughters of Darkness: that was our prenatal land, the Atlantis-womb before the ejaculating rays of the aroused Sun-lord fertilized it, generating us who grow and pop out into the light. We never lose our nostalgia for the cool, dank, soily shadow-shapes of the womb.

This is the world of dreams from which, at the very beginning of our personal lives it was so hard to be torn away. This is where we spent most of our early time, sleeping. Gradually, as the duration of our sojourns in that world decreased, our time in the clear, collective, articulate world correspondingly increased. The sword of merciful death finally liberates us forever from the task of wasting even short hours in this male-reality, so that we can return completely to virgin mother-existence. Death allows us back to the land of time-

spacelessness; to the tiny centre point of our individual self which strangely coincides with the three-billion other human centre-points, with those of the dead ones, with those of our more ancient ancestors: swimming, crawling and flying creatures, rooting-stretching plants and perhaps even with the centre-points of other alien-living-units, of agitatedly swirling atoms and majestically rotating galaxies.

The real difficulty, for both the individual and the race, is not to learn the language of Darkness, but rather to learn the language of the Sun. Only the minuscule peak of our iceberg-soul uses Sun-speech. Its bulky expanse hidden under the surface still speaks the ancient language of Darkness: we consist mainly of dreams and only negligibly of wakefulness. By collective agreement between the Sun-ruled ego-peaks, which engage themselves in labyrinthian sociopolitical mythologies, this original language is marked with the stamp of insanity. This "insanity" lurking in all of us, even at high-noon, never stops giving whispered suggestions to our seemingly sane, wakeful structures. That is why we periodically grow sick of them and, through bloody revolutions, try to change them back to the original Utopia which had existed in the Atlantean womb-past, and not, as is erroneously hypothesized, in the Sun-like, glowing erection-future. All these attempts are, of course, futile. It is impossible to convert rocks into clouds, father into mother, iron into fantasy. We don't have to learn to speak the language of dreams because we never forgot to speak it: we practise it a third of every day; we all come from it, persons as well as species. It is our real mother tongue: translations *into* it are impossible. Everything else: literature, communication, institutions, law, family, society, love, cities, technology, religion, art and science, is already a translation *from* it—and unsuccessful translations at that: like ruins disintegrating in an alien environment.

You can dream of a lion which is as harmless and cute as an Easter Bunny, or of a motionless pillar which is as menacing as a rapist. You can dream of lovemaking as unpleasant as slavery, or of bland, grey flower-pots as warm and sensuous as rosy-hued flesh. Translating them with Sun-lit words gives rise to impenetrable jungles of misunderstanding in which sameness means difference; nearness, dis-

tance; flux, solidity; consecutiveness, simultaneity and repetition, comparison. This language knows no word, its events do not provoke emotions, its objects do not lend themselves to symbolization. On the contrary, it informs us of the bankruptcy of words: its emotions provoke events and its abstract objects are expressions of solid symbols.

It is a diagonally reversed world to which, ultimately, we owe our deepest gratitude. Its fragmentarily remembered messages may mean consolatory revelation for their true decipherer: an escape from a monomorphic reality in which the impossibility of both the finiteness and the infiniteness of the material world locks the answer-seeking intellect, the son of Sun, into the wall-less prison cell of the agnostic paradox. But in the true—and the only true—world of Darkness, the Sun-problems ought not to be solved, for they do not exist. Dreams are not dreams, but reality; insanity is not insane, but sacred norm; darkness is not dark, but rather brightness without paradoxical ambiguity. On the other hand, reality is not real, but merely a dream; public sanity is not sane, but an abnormal nightmare (daymare), and clarity is not clear, but obscure chaos. According to the messages coming from this underworld, finiteness or infiniteness are no longer paradoxically interchangeable alternatives but illusory dazzles in one, single layer of that one, single, ubiquitous, never-ending, dreaming consciousness which, in our daytime-madness, we alternately refer to as “self” or “god” or “universe” or “the Moving Finger” or “the Chess-Player, beyond” or the “Great Watchmaker” or “a Higher Dimension” or “the Supreme Being” or “the High Dreamer” or “the Collective Consciousness.”

Along and around the circular borderline of the horizon, where twilight looms and where the two worlds merge (similar to the tree-trunk, positioned between the downward-branching root and the upward-stretching leaves) extends the “horizontally shared”: A narrow strip-domain of unsuccessful translations where wakefulness attempts to remember and express wakelessness and, failing that, merely stutters and stammers comically. It is an area where prenatal, death-womb-like Darkness attempts to remember and express sinfully-sunfully erected life, and failing that, awkwardly jumbles,

confuses and overlaps time and geography in the process. Here, in the stripe-shaped no-man's land between the two borderlines, another, a third god rises to existence, He who is an alien in both the land of Light and that of Darkness. His name is Humour. When He speaks to the Underworld about the Upperworld, his description emerges ridiculously distorted, since he is unable to describe the very light that characterizes that world. His description of the Underworld is similarly rendered senseless, since he describes the land of Darkness in the language of graduated articulate brightness. This is the zone—His domain—in which I, pushed-around wanderer of depths and heights, decided to settle. This is the land into which I both ascended and descended, in an attempt to save face in both worlds, so that in the lower kingdom I would not be considered a meticulous collector of cold and rigid cubes, while in the upper kingdom I would not be marked as an insane purveyor of shady hoaxes. While an alien in both worlds, in each I try to make myself at home. Thus, when I am approached with inquiries from either kingdom about the other, or about my true identity and idiosyncrasies, or about my loyalties and allegiances, or about my views of the universal nature of things, I can reply to all with just one, single, identical, common answer: laughter. I hope to be respected as a citizen of this no-man's land, and my chances are good: my visitors from both lands seem to surmise that laughter is the only language of communication. What we call existence, including the two lands and a million others so far untackled, is nothing but the never-ceasing concentric circles still ringing and reverberating from a gigantic central laughter which broke out once, many eternities ago—a laughter following a joke which was itself, and ever since, the infinite number of worlds swarming in its wake are but miniature bubble-jokes in the tissue of that laughter.

This book—as all my others—stems from the narrow region of this third kingdom, it can only be taken seriously by not being taken seriously.

June 18, 1975

# A Dream About the Centre



In my dream, I was sitting in Leslie Varady's room, with ten or fifteen other boys, drinking coffee, chain-smoking and arguing (the way we did every Saturday night when we were twenty).

Suddenly I felt myself sink down through my skull, my usual dwelling place, down through the half-lit snaking corridors of my intestines and the pillars of my legs containing thousands of vertically running cavernous blood-vessels, into the earth, below myself, where the prolonged line of my body continued in a shaft towards the centre of the earth. I descended toward this centre, leaving my smoking, drinking, chatting body there in the smoke enveloped room, and found myself inside a sphere shaped chamber in which, wherever I looked, I saw holes—the ends of the tubes—each one leading to a man on the surface of the earth, an infinite number of radii radiating from the centre of a circle to its circumference. All these tubes were in constant motion following the movements of the man in which they ended, but the sphere shaped chamber itself was as motionless as the source of search beams drawing capricious lines of light across the canvas of the sky.

Here, at the centre, I stood, and looking up, found the shafts of my friends in the room I had left. Instantly, I grasped the essence of their beings. Ernest's shaft was dark, gloomy. Cumuli swam slowly across it. Leslie's shaft was glassy and shone: clear, black lines drew themselves into symmetrical forms of geometry on its walls. Coleman's shaft was grey, with black, bubbling spots which, like

many volcanoes, trembled and erupted, one after the other. Peter's shaft was an ever-shaking kaleidoscope; no fixed points, no certainties to relate to—an unclearing chaos. Andrew's shaft was beautifully gold, but desperately empty. It reminded me of the feeling I had when reading his poems. I looked into other shafts too, of people who were not up in that room—into the tempestuous, purple soul of Shosha, my love, and into my best friend, Dragen's, which was a multitude of cupolas, towers and cathedrals under construction.

This game amazed me and I got carried away, like a child in a room full of games. I was eager to look into them all. I became acquainted with unknown people of countries that I had never been to and might never go to: India, Tibet, Japan, Siberia, Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar. I looked into many, many soul shafts, sensing instantly the non-verbal pattern of individuals swarming far above me on the surface of the globe.

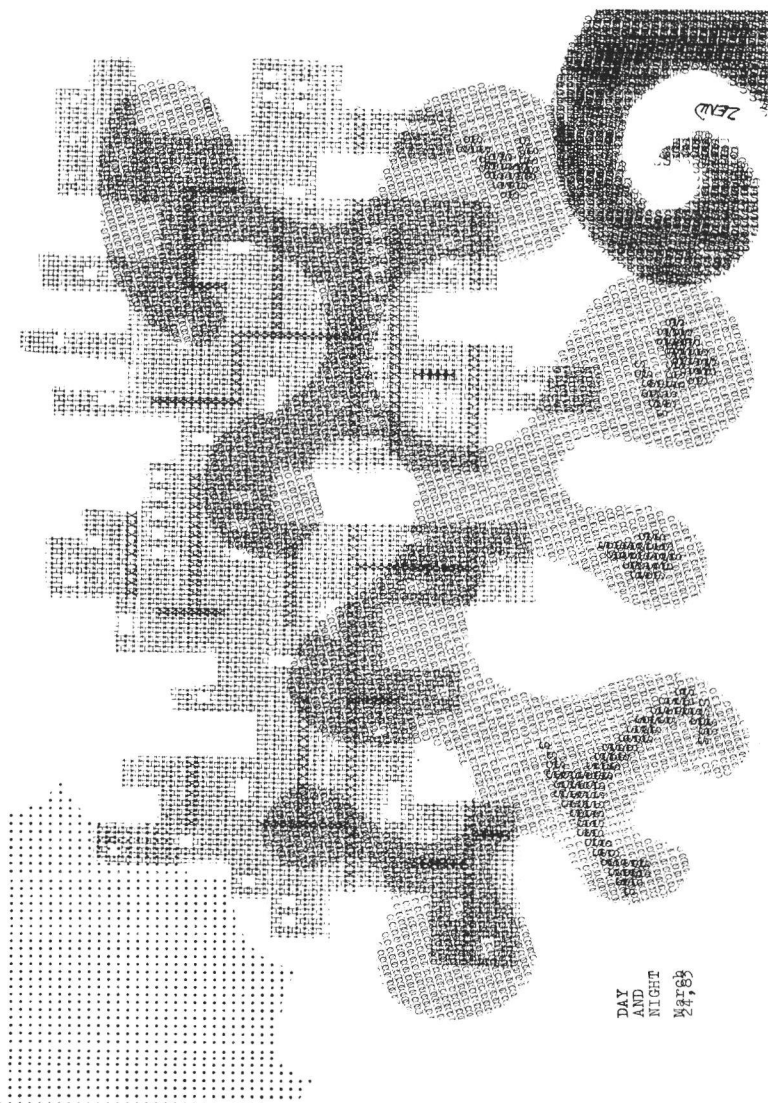
After a while, panic overcame me: had I gotten lost? What if I would be unable to find my own shaft? I could not ascend in someone else's shaft, for I would then become him or her on the surface! I heard my heartbeat drumming in my ears and searched in despair for my own shaft.

Then I found the magic formula. Suddenly, I knew what to do. I remembered how I had returned other times, in other similar dreams, years ago, for this was not my first time in the centre. Now I realized that I had been here many times before, perhaps between reincarnations, perhaps even during my other lives, as the soul of the leaf on the treetop is also present in the root through all seasons. But it's possible that all the similar journeys I remembered took place in the infinite, convoluted time-labyrinth of the same night, of that night when, sitting in Leslie Varady's room arguing with my friends, I dreamt this journey down to the centre. . . . Perhaps there is no difference, for every night is an impregnable, separate, independent universe with its own micro-time in which every second can be as long as a century. Perhaps when I'm awake, I feed on these unconscious memories. . . . Perhaps, secretly, I really am everybody, even the unknown ones. . . .

And, according to the secret formula, I stopped searching for my own vertical shaft; just closed my eyes and thumped my feet. The air blew down against me powerfully as I swiftly dashed upward. Of course, there was no reason for me to be terrified: all the other shafts would reject me. Only one shaft would take me automatically, I would not have to search for my own!

I was sitting in the semi-dark, smoke-clouded room again, and I faintly began to hear someone's voice talking. I looked around, with anxiety, to see if anyone had noticed anything about my disappearance, but everything seemed to be just as usual. Then I realized in wonderment that all of them were looking at me. The voice that I had heard was my own. I had arrived back in the middle of one of my sentences.

1975



DAY  
AND  
NIGHT  
Mar 85  
24, 85

Daymare

Twice upon a time there lived two men who were born on the same day, but who never met. Still they knew about each other.

One of them lived in California, the other in England. Both of them had very detailed dreams that they remembered perfectly the following day. They both dreamt throughout the entire night, unlike other people who dream just five or six times a night, with each separate dream lasting about twenty minutes. These two men, however, did not have independent, chaotic dreams, but rather one continuous dream, night by night. The Californian always dreamt that he was an Englishman, and the Englishman invariably dreamt that he was Californian.

For a long time, they were both under the impression that they just had extremely vivid dreams, different from those that people usually dream. As the years passed, however, they started to suspect that their nocturnal experiences were more than just dreams. The moment one of them fell asleep, the other woke up, and vice versa. They had two bodies, but one soul which wandered between these bodies, thanks to the earth's diurnal rotations around the sun.

The reactions of the two men to one another were ambiguous. On one hand, they were both intensely interested in the other's life. They worried about each other and strove to make decisions during the day that would prove helpful to the other at night. On the other hand, each of them had his own separate life, with given circum-



stances, parents, backgrounds, friends, jobs, dwellings—and these circumstances developed independently from the other man's daytime decisions. They could not influence one another, just as one can never completely influence another person's life, or even one's own dreams. They were one person, yet also two persons. Sometimes, the Englishman was late for work in the morning: he slept in while the Californian watched the late-show. Other times, the Englishman, just when he had prepared himself to make love to his mistress, would suddenly fall asleep when the Californian's alarm-clock buzzed. After many such unpleasant interferences between them, they began to correspond, each attempting to organize the other's life so that it would not disturb his own. But the correspondence didn't last too long: after a while they both realized that they remembered the letters they wrote to themselves in their dreams, so there was no point in writing. Besides, they both had identical handwriting which neither could read, just as neither could read his own handwriting. And since both of them were poor, they could not afford to buy typewriters.

One morning, the Californian, while reading the morning paper, discovered that he had won a million dollars in the Lottery. Without a moment's hesitation, he called a taxi, drove to the airport and flew to England to finally meet his Siamese brother-in-time personally. Within a few hours, he found himself in the flat so familiar to him from his dreams. The Englishman was sleeping, of course. It took a long time for the Californian to wake him up. But, the very instant the Englishman finally awoke, the Californian fell asleep.

The Englishman was not at all surprised to see the Californian there, since he remembered that after winning a million dollars in his dream, he had suddenly decided to visit the other man who was none other than his own wake-self, and that his dream-self had fallen asleep beside him. It was really stupid of him to dream of coming here, but he had no way to control his dreams, nor the other man's actions.

This gave him an idea. His other body, the one beside him, was currently dreaming what he (the Englishman) was doing now. But, it was he who could control the Californian's dream, merely by de-

ciding what he would do next. So, "Let's take advantage of this situation!"—he thought. Turning the other man's pockets inside out, he found his counterpart's identification papers, his cheque book, his return ticket, his photographs (of course, they looked identical), and while his other body tossed and turned in a tormented nightmare, struggling to awake, the Englishman took a pep pill to keep himself awake, hurried to the airport and flew back to California, just as if he were the other returning. On the airplane he fell asleep from exhaustion, and as he did the Californian awoke in his miserable flat in England. After only one day as a millionaire, he was now penniless and also furious with himself for his stupidity. Why did he have to come here? He should have known that to talk to his dream-character was impossible.

He began to plot his revenge, but each scheme fizzled out as difficulties presented themselves. Should he rob a bank and go to California and kill his other body? What if the other awoke somehow and his revenge turned against himself? Killing the other man would be a risky operation anyway because if there is life after death, murdering the other could result in his own suicide. But if, on the other hand, the soul is immortal, then killing his other might mean that he would no longer be able to sleep until nervous exhaustion precipitated his own premature death. Is it possible, he wondered, that by killing the other he could become a man, just like other men, with regular dreams, five or six times a night? Yes, that was possible too, but not certain. What should he do? The Englishman in California remembered the Californian's dream-thoughts in England and was also paralyzed with indecision.

Here they were, the Englishman in California and the Californian in England, one rich, one poor, each knowing everything about the other, yet neither having any power over the other's destiny. After a few days of revelling, the Englishman in California began to regret his hastily committed crime (a regret the Californian acknowledged with growing satisfaction every morning). Besides, the Englishman was still afraid of what the other might do to harm him: After all, nights are long.

Now he could afford to buy a typewriter, so he did. He typed a

letter to his dream-brother, apologizing for his irresponsible act and asking him if he would agree to accept half of his (the other's) money. The Californian accepted the offer. A new friendship developed between them. Both of them married, had children, made good investments, and became wealthy. When they were fed up with their everyday routines and felt like having a holiday, they swapped identities and locations and lived each other's lives, used each other's wife, did each other's work for a while. Nobody around them noticed the change. In time, they both bought a factory and became each other's sole agents to distribute each other's products in their own countries, thus becoming multimillionaires in a short time.

Realizing that their experience was a unique one that had never before occurred to anyone on earth, they decided to write it down in the form of a short story. They both worked on it, day and night: When one stopped writing and went to bed, the other awoke and continued. They sent each other Xerox copies regularly so that both would have the full manuscript and could correct each other's mistakes. It was a beautiful co-operation between one man. Soon, they had a fascinating short story in their hands.

Of course, they did not narrate their lives in first person. Whose point of view could they have used, anyway? They did not reveal their real names, but simply referred to themselves as "the Californian" and "the Englishman." Once their short story was finished (they considered it a sketch for a longer, more detailed novel to be written at a later date), there arose the problem of authorship. To use their own names was inconvenient, owing to the fact that they were both established, respectable businessmen. To invent a fictive, unknown name would impede publication of the biography. After some vacillation, they investigated and discovered that there lived a writer in Canada whose writings were often preoccupied with split personalities, dreams and other mystic subjects. They agreed that he could easily have written their story, had it occurred to him.

They sent the short story to a well-known literary magazine which instantly published it. The writer—his name was Robert Zend—was quite astonished when he received a huge cheque for a story he had never written. He began receiving telephone calls from friends and

unknown people who congratulated him for his abundant imagination and originality. He was too vain to admit the truth. When he finally got hold of the magazine and read the story for the first time, he was quite proud to have been selected as its author. And so, all three of them lived happily ever after, never revealing their secret to the world.

Sunday, August 12, 1979.

# The Dream-Cycle

Nothing dreams Something  
but Something is mostly Void

Void dreams Matter  
but Matter is mostly Vacuum

Vacuum dreams a Universe  
but the Universe is mostly Ether

Ether dreams Galaxies  
but a Galaxy is mostly Space

Space dreams Solar Systems  
but a Solar System is mostly Sky

Sky dreams Celestial Bodies  
but a Celestial Body is mostly Hollow

Hollowness dreams Beings  
but a Being is mostly Empty

Emptiness dreams Consciousness  
but Consciousness is mostly Sleep

Sleep dreams Wakefulness  
but Wakefulness is mostly Irrational

Irrationality dreams Knowledge  
but Knowledge is mostly Chaos

Chaos dreams Existence  
but Existence is mostly Nothing

Nothing dreams Everything  
before it is ready to awake

# The Rock

Time was pregnant.

It was predetermined that he was to be born. The day and the hour and the minute and the second had been decided. The land and the city and the house assigned. The father and the mother chosen.

But something somewhere, sometime went wrong. His dreamer—in a higher consciousness—woke up with a start before dreaming his birth, and by the time he succeeded in sinking back into the dream again, the point was passed. Some observers within the dream were frightened and thought that the outside dreamer had died. Others laughed with malice and said it didn't matter—he didn't pay any attention to them anyway. The magi arrived at the stable and found only innocently grazing-gazing sheep. The guiding star stopped in the middle of the sky, looked down, saw nothing, and dissolved itself in great shame. The people were desperate, their trust in the high dreamer shaken.

He floated aimlessly between his predestination and the dream. Emitted from the dreamer, but too late to enter the dream, he did not know what to do. There was no one around him to consult about his unique situation. The gate above him through which he had exited was closed because his return had not yet been scheduled; and the door below, which had opened for him during the few seconds while his dreamer woke up, was shut tight again never to be reopened. He could do nothing better than take a watching

position—an outcast of time, floating unnoticed by his dreamer, between him and his dream.

And he wept because looking down he saw that he was missed. Thirty years passed in emptiness while everything craved for him in vain. The sea shore did not save his footprints as it had been pre-arranged since timeless time. The sand did not sink under his weight, the air did not vibrate with his voice and the waiting people were not comforted, as predicted. He was a hole in the tissue of time. Now he was supposed to cure the sick for three years, but they suffered just as before. Now he was supposed to set brother against brother for three years, but they lived peacefully, not knowing about him. Now he was supposed to save the people, but the oppressors were more cruel than ever. And, alas, the moment came when he was supposed to die for them, but instead, they all died—except for him, for he was nowhere. He looked down and cried and his tears fell into the black nothingness beneath him.

But as he lay there floating and looking down, his eyes enlarged with amazement and his tears stopped pouring. After his non-life and non-death, strange things began to happen down below in the dream. There was one who spent his whole life in wait for him, then, realizing that his desire was futile, wailed and mourned in the dust of ruins. There was another who witnessed the first one sobbing and on returning home, wrote down his words. A third one came who cured the sick. A fourth one who spoke wisdom. A fifth who died as he should have. And a sixth who combined the wishes of the first and the letters of the second and the deeds of the third and the words of the fourth and the death of the fifth. And a seventh one came who named the combination, and the floater, astonished, recognized his own name. And tens read the fantasies and hundreds began to remember him and thousands died for his name and millions followed him. The tissue of time grew and mended the hole of the dream. And there came a time when everyone believed him to have lived. And the difference between what had really happened and what had been preordained to happen perfectly disappeared into the past.

“Miracle,” he whispered, “a real miracle”—and from his whisper the dreamer woke again. “Will you take me back?” he begged him



shivering, "I can't go on floating here in freezing limbo for ever and ever."

"Limbo," murmured the dreamer, "what nonsense is this? Without you there, the whole thing wouldn't have happened. Your tears generated the growing of the tissue and the mending of the hole and everything was good as it was. For it was I who dreamt you floating there, unnoticed by me, to watch my dream which you couldn't enter. All the unaccountables within the dream were accounted for, by myself. All the miracles sprouted from my law. All the wrongs down below were right up here. But now your role has ended and you can be forgotten, so return into me—don't shiver anymore."

And the gate opened and he was sucked back into the warm darkness. And the dreamer rolled over and slept peacefully, without dreams for the rest of the night, and when he woke in the morning refreshed, he did not remember a thing.



AWAKENING FROM DREAMS  
March 23, 83.

2nd

## On the Terrace

The two gods were sitting on the terrace and knew everything. They seldom spoke and when they did it was only to find out more about each other.

"Does it still hurt?"

"Not anymore."

The two gods were basking on the terrace of the grey god's house, on one of the mountains of the spherical Cosmos. Overhead, in the inaccessible firmament, blazed the Focus around which the Cosmos revolved.

"Do you ever receive prayers from her?" asked the grey god.

"Never," replied the blonde god, and lying back, closed his eyes. In the valley, the city was teeming. Twenty million gods dwelled in it dreaming twenty million inner cosmoses. Each inner cosmos had its separate law, its individual motion and its personal colour. A different species lived in each of them, unaware of the others' existence. Locked into one cosmos, each species believed it to be the only existing one. The beings in each of the twenty million cosmoses knew only of the one dreaming god by which they were dreamt.

"When did it stop hurting?" the grey god broke the silence.

Startled, the blonde god opened his eyes. "Oh, still thinking of her? It stopped when I gave her to Adam. Remember, first I dreamt her the same size as myself. And my opposite in everything. I had her revolve around me as the Cosmos revolves around the Focus. I and she: core and shell, giver and receiver, you know... but then I

started to suffer so I wanted to be detached."

"Why didn't you annihilate her?" asked the grey god.

The blonde god was taken aback. "Does your law allow it? What method do you use?"

"Forgetting. It's simple if you know how. First I imagine it and hold it there. Then I increase the intensity of the vision, more and more and more. I increase it to the utmost. And still hold it there. I force it beyond the maximum intensity. Soon it bursts by itself. . . ."

The blonde god nodded with appreciation. "Hm. I've learned something new. I tried weakening it, but it always returned. And I was afraid of going to have an intellectomy. So I agonized for a long time over what to do with her until suddenly Adam occurred to me, Adam, whom I dreamt ages ago, likewise the same size as myself, to be alter ego and friend. But when he impudently began to believe that he dreamt me, then I shrank him and cast him into one of the miniature cosmoses of the mechanism. Well, this Adam wouldn't leave me alone for quite a while, kept praying to me incessantly because he was bored stiff. Voilà, I threw her down to him, let them have fun together. Ever since, it doesn't hurt."

The city was encircled by mountains. Beyond the mountains, other cities spread out, thousands and thousands of cities, dotting the surface of the Cosmos. In every city dwelt gods by the millions. From one such distant city, the blonde god had flown to visit his old friend, who now sat serenely gazing ahead.

"For me, such problems no longer exist," he spoke up finally. "I used to dream beings too, but only for a while. I stopped because they itched. For a good few centuries now I've dreamt nothing but structures. They're neat and hygienic."

The blonde god shrugged. "Perhaps eventually I'll also come to that. For the time being I still need them. I can imagine that I am Focus, only if I have a Cosmos around me. . . ."

The grey god completed his words:

"And then you throw them down to Adam who can imagine that he is god, only if he receives some dreams from you. . . ."

The blonde god nodded: ". . . since you cannot dream someone similar to him."

Across the valley, the fiery Focus was sinking behind the mountain. A cool dusk descended.

The grey god's eyes narrowed. "I can't recall how it felt when I was dreaming beings. . . ." he said slowly. "But. . . do you suppose. . . does Lilith still remember you? Would she remember the time when she was here with us on the mountain? When you loved her and she loved you and you were so happy together? And. . . if she remembered, did she confess to Adam where she came from? And. . . is Adam jealous of you? And Lilith, does she want to return to you? I'm only asking all these questions because I don't understand. For me, of course, things are much simpler. My mechanisms only move and collide and bounce. They don't love and don't suffer. They don't know and don't remember."

The blonde god chuckled. "Have you really forgotten so much about the beings? They don't love or suffer either. They don't know or remember. How could a phantasm remember? Only I can remember my visions. Lilith can't have a memory because she is an image. Of course. . . if I. . ."

The grey god stood up. "It's evening. It's cold. Let's go inside."

The blonde god remained seated, unhearing, his eyes fixed on the immense city in which, already, scintillating lights vibrated and shimmered like thoughts in the nerve network.

"Of course, if I. . . oh what a magnificent idea. . . if I had dreamt Lilith to be. . . had I dreamt her differently. . . of course! . . . why didn't I think of that? . . . but now I know. . . this will be my next dream. . . of being with a memory. . . no, not Lilith. . . someone else. . . she will be soft and smiling, devoted and faithful. . . Ea. . . Eau. . . Eua. . . Eua. . . Eva. . . yes, Eva! . . . I shall radiate love to you and you shall reflect it back. I won't only give and you won't only receive, but you will give, too. You will be my new form of cosmos who multiplies hundredfold the strength of the focus! And I will be your new form of focus who, in gratitude, makes you fruitful! On your arrival, Adam will banish Lilith to the swamp where she will pour forth her serpentine offspring, swarming thousands by the minute. And you will remember me even beside Adam and you will bear his sons in my image. . . Eva, my new dream, my love!"

Below, the golden lights of the city ceaselessly shimmered. Above, on the vault, unimpregnable blackness diffused. Around, the mountains mysteriously loomed.

He shook himself, and then he too stood up. He slid his arm around her silky waist and all three of them entered the house.

1975

Armour



Bob McMillan was his original name. But, over the years, he grew to hate it. It felt like a burden becoming ever heavier. He didn't like to hear it when introducing himself to people, and he didn't like to hear others calling him by this name, so he gradually changed it. First he became Robert, then Mac Millan, then Robert Macmillan. It gave him an angry satisfaction, an almost cruel happiness to sign this new name, Robertmacmillan, under his letters and cheques. Sometimes he found poems written, or pictures drawn long ago, official letters received months or years ago, all ending or starting with his old name: He got so angry, he just threw them out, disgusted, without looking at them, without reading them. Many good poems and drawings of his ended up in the garbage can this way, due to his new denial of his old identity. His name slowly essentialized into Robmackan, or rather Robakan. The time came when he was generally known as Rokan.

In his new poems, he experimented with a new style. One of his favourite new poems went like this:

“Apopokarag gorbo ubar,  
gara urabog, kuk aragop.

Likur?

Burik!

Roga baru kugok parak: Y.”

He spoke less and less to people; they bored him. Actually, they were hateworthy. Stupid. The old ones were sentimental, always re-

membering past times. What's so good about the past? The young ones walked, hand in hand, even in sticky summertime. Often, they transferred germs into each other's mouths. Rokokan lived on health-food.

His own dreams annoyed him greatly. He remembered them in the morning, and they really bothered him. They had a certain ianguai-quality, sometimes they were even unghabbhiiijjawhoy-like. He trained himself to forget them. There was especially one dream, a recurring one in which his—oh no, he could not afford to go into that. No, no. He never had that recurring dream. After all, wakefulness is—and should be! krotokorpagorr. He was proud that he never dreamt.

These days, his drawings became more and more filled with squares. Circles, spirals, ovals had to go. They were for the dreamers. Also red, orange, blue had to go. Black on white. Yes. Black, rectangular forms against a white, or preferably black background. Colors: to hell with them. They too are for the dreamers. All those people who dreamt would be, certainly, happy with the ianguillia and the bowhiargiui. Korokoran hated decadence.

At first, he thought Laodameya was a kindred spirit. When they first made love in his pitch-dark bedroom (she must not see his unlovable body), the accumulated sexual energy of thirty-five virgin years broke through his spine, flesh and skin, violently, inconsiderately, perhaps sadistically. Laodameia gasped, screamed, scratched his back, tormented. But she stayed with him. He was a bad lover, but better than no lover. Laodameia seemed to have a hunchback. He wasn't sure.

She spoke almost nothing to Kokorakoran. And he, whenever he made sex to her, faintly remembered that recurring—but why? What's the connection? It's better to just do it, without ghiouinkh. After all, the whole thing is nothing more than tatatatataarr, what else? But that soft and warm and pulsating and deep and mysterious—oh, that really bothered him. She wasn't a kindred spirit. Nor a kindred body. How could she be?

Her image of him was not what he really was. She never told him what her image of him was, but he knew it. He never told her what

he was really like, but she should have known it. She never liked his poems or drawings, although he never showed them to her anyway. She didn't deserve them. She was only a . . . She was also a . . . She was bhuikink-williaou. It was better to stay alone. It was unavoidable. Weeping, sobbing, she moved out. And now he could become krotopak again, as he was before. Rakimazi too, whenever he wanted.

No woman. No women. No dreams. No curvatures. No colours. No gliounch. No conversation with the colleagues. No friends. No talks with himself. He must achieve complete akharapukha, otherwise. . . .

One day he received a registered letter. He had to go to an office. They gave him the address of an Old Age Home and a room number. A social worker was waiting for him. She explained that the old woman slowly dying behind the door was his mother.

He stepped into the dimly lit room. Skin and bone arms rose toward him. A wrinkled, ugly, old face, resembling his own, trembled and cried. He fell on his knees at the bedside. He had never seen his mother before. The tiny arms, like an iron ring, clasped him.

"Forgive me, my son!

Forgive me!

I had to give you away.

It was the depression.

Your father died of starvation.

I thought I would die, too.

I just wanted to save you.

Your life.

Your life was dearer to me than my own.

You can't imagine what it was like.

The depression—you really can't.

And when it was over, I was looking for you.

All over. Always.

Bureaucracy is terrible.

Oh my son!

I was not supposed to know.

I was not allowed.

The law. How I begged them! To no avail.  
I was dreaming about you every day.  
I had recurring nightmares.  
That you were sick.  
And I came to save you in the last minute.  
That you were dying somewhere.  
And I couldn't see you for the last time. And others.  
That I died and came back as a ghost to find you.  
Oh, how I wished to die and see you from there.  
To be your guardian spirit.  
Oh my son!  
You must have thought that I'd abandoned you.  
That I was a whore.  
Your father a drunkard.  
That we ignored you, threw you out. Oh no!  
It was the depression. Oh no!  
I loved you more than myself.  
I love you more than myself.  
I am going to die.  
That's what made them change their minds. At last.  
Now they allowed me to see you.  
Evil bureaucrats!  
Now when I have only weeks left. Or days.  
Will you come see me?  
Promise me?  
Every day? Please!  
My son. My son. My son."

Something broke in him. There was a tornado in his stomach. There was a thick veil in front of his eyes. He noticed that his arms clutched the old skeleton on the bed. Then he stood up. He couldn't speak. At first he couldn't see her, then he could, but as though through a veil. She was beautiful. His features resembled hers. They were both beautiful.

"Every day!

Do you promise?

My son. My son."

He nodded. Just nodded. He sat down and held her hands. He couldn't speak. She spoke. Tomorrow he will speak. Tomorrow. She understood him. He knew. She was like Laodameia. Soft and warm and pulsating and mysterious. His first home. He came out of her. She was cold now. Hard. Quiet. It doesn't matter. She had been soft and warm. She must have been. And rosy and curvy, he knew it.

He couldn't speak. He kissed her. Time was up. He had to leave.

"You'll come back tomorrow.

My son. Do you promise?"

He nodded. She understood. Tomorrow he would talk. And after tomorrow. There are days. Maybe weeks. He would come back every day. He kissed her again. He covered her with kisses, all over. He couldn't see her through the veil.

He walked. He was thinking. He didn't know what he was thinking. His thoughts were swarming under the surface.

He opened a door and looked around. A lobby. Not his home. Laodameia lives here. How did he get here? His feet were smarter. He pushed a button.

Her voice again. Soft velvet. Blue, orange velvet. Round bells tinkling. Her voice, her sweet voice: "Yes. Who is it?"

By now he could talk:

"Bob McMillan."

August 10, 1979

# Beyond the Fable Ocean



I woke with a start, vividly remembering my prophetic dream. I dreamt that the Blue Fairy entered my room and held out her crystal ball before my eyes.

“Look, Prince Rolando,” she whispered, “and see what the future holds in store for you.”

I looked into the crystal ball and saw myself sleeping in my cham-

ber and waking with a start. For a few moments I pondered my dream, then mounted my white horse and rode away. I saw myself passing the Bronze Lake, the Silver Valley and the Golden Forest and finally arriving at the Glass Mountain, on the top of which, in a green clearing, lay the beautiful Princess Enäidole.

"She shall be your bride," whispered the Blue Fairy and vanished. I woke with a start, pondered my dream, then cried for my white horse and rode away toward the Glass Mountain. The first day I passed the Bronze Lake, the second day the Silver Valley, the third day the Golden Forest. At nightfall, I reached the foot of the Glass Mountain on the top of which, in a green clearing, lay my future bride, the beautiful Enäidole.





I woke with a start, vividly remembering the events of the previous night. The old woodcutter knocked seven times at my secret door. This was our signal, so I let him in at once.

"Sorry to bother you at this late hour, Queen Kunigund, but I was told that your husband may return from his hunt tomorrow, early in the morning."

"Don't waste my time, Humpnick," I interrupted him, "just tell me what happened!" He reported to me that everything had gone according to my plans.

After he left, I was overwhelmed with happiness. At last I'd succeeded in getting rid of my step-daughter! There, on the top of the Glass Mountain, she lies dead forever. The time has arrived to conceive a son who would inherit the kingdom so he and I could reign together after my husband's sudden and unexpected death! Ha-ha!

During the night, I had happy dreams of beauty, of power and of wealth enshrouding the coming years. After I woke with a start, I felt with certainty that they were prophetic dreams. Vividly remembering my conversation with Humpnick the previous night, I stepped to my talking mirror to hear, for the first time, that I was the most beautiful lady in the land.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall! Who is the fairest lady of all?"

"Your step-daughter, Enäidole!" said the mirror, and I couldn't believe my ears. I asked it again and again, but the answer remained the same.

I was furious. So she wasn't dead! My magic mirror surely doesn't lie! Humpnick had not carried out my orders—therefore I will punish him. But that shall come later. First I must finish the work he did not.

I cried for my black horse and dashed away. I passed the Silver Lake, the Golden Valley and the Blue Forest, and at nightfall I reached the foot of the Glass Mountain, where an old wooden shack stood. Exhausted from the long journey, I retired inside for a good night's sleep before climbing the Glass Mountain on top of which lay, still alive, my hated step-daughter, Enäidole.



I woke with a start, vividly remembering my prophetic dream. In my dream I saw my wife, Kunigund, going to the woodcutter's hut, waking him and telling him these words:

"My husband, King Avigdor, has left for his spring hunt. You were always his most faithful servant, good old Humpnick. Would

you like to help me prepare a royal surprise for him?"

"At your service, your Majesty, all the time!" bowed the woodcutter.

"I had a prophetic dream," said Kunigund. "While my husband is hunting, Enäidole shall meet her fiancé, the valiant Prince Rolando, who will then wed her. Just imagine how delighted your King will be upon seeing his daughter married. He would richly reward you for your service."

"What should I do, your Majesty?" asked the faithful servant.

"Go to the pond at once, for that's where she usually spends her morning hours, and tell her that you had a prophetic dream about her marrying Prince Rolando. Then take her away to the top of the Glass Mountain and give her this magic apple. Tell her to eat it, and in the next moment her valiant prince should appear."

Humpnick rose at once and went to the pond. What he did not know was that the apple was poisoned.

After I woke with a start, I vividly remembered my dream and decided against going home as I'd planned, rushing to save my only daughter instead from the revenge of my wife, who has always been jealous of her beauty and of my love toward her.

I cried for my red horse and rode away in a hurry. The first day, I passed the Golden Lake, the second day, the Blue Valley and the third day, the White Forest. At nightfall I reached the Glass Mountain at the foot of which an old wooden shack stood. Exhausted from the long journey, I retired in it for a good night's sleep before climbing the Glass Mountain, on the top of which I would wait for Humpnick and Enäidole to arrive so that I could save the threatened life of my beloved, beautiful daughter.



I woke with a start. On my lips I still felt a burning kiss, the first kiss of my life. When I opened my eyes, I saw a valiant man staring at me with disbelieving eyes.

"This is a miracle!" he cried. "You were dead just a moment ago, oh beautiful Enaïdole. You weren't breathing! Your heart wasn't beating!"

"You must be mistaken," I answered, "for it was just a moment ago that I bit into the magic apple that our woodcutter gave me, promising that a young Prince named Rolando shall come for me if I eat that apple."

"I am Rolando," said the young man, "and I came here for you, following the advice of the Blue Fairy who appeared to me in a prophetic dream. Imagine my shock when I arrived here only to find you dead. Why did she send me here, why did she fool me, breaking my heart, I asked myself. I admired your beauty for hours, then, before setting off, I had the irresistible urge to kiss you before parting from you. And when I kissed your lips, you miraculously came to life, which surprised me even more than finding you dead. If you don't believe me, just look at the grass where you dropped your so-called magic apple."

I sat up and saw the grass lying lifeless and colourless around the apple. "It must have been poisoned," I whispered in awe. "Humpernick lured me here to kill me! I shall return to my castle at once to punish him."

"Don't think about that now," said the Prince. "Rather mount your blue horse, which has been patiently grazing around you, and follow me. First we shall ride to my father's palace and have our wedding. Only then should we go, accompanied by an armed escort, to your father's castle and seek justice."

We descended on the other side of the mountain. "How far is your land?" I asked my Rolando.

"We have to pass the White Lake, the Black Valley and the Red Forest to arrive at our castle on the third day.

It was nightfall when we reached the foot of the Glass Mountain where an old wooden shack stood. We spent our first night in it in each other's arms. Prince Rolando kissed me again and again and we loved each other dearly. It was almost dawn when, at last, I fell asleep.



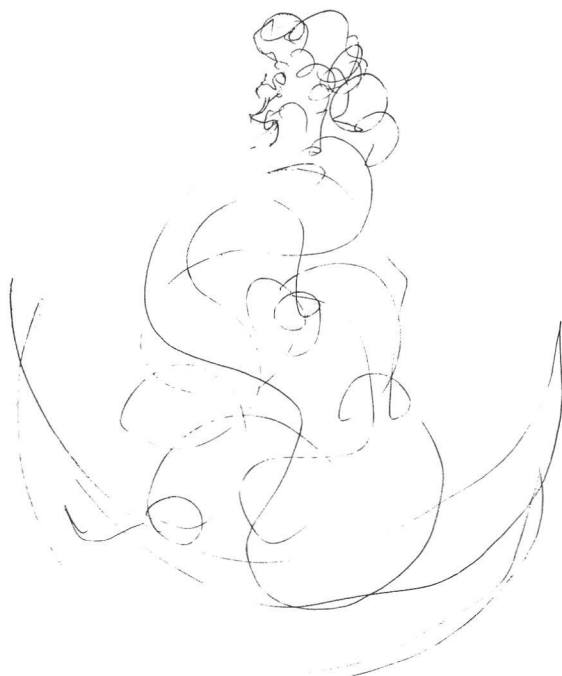
I woke with a start, vividly remembering the prophetic dream I had. I dreamt that after I left Queen Kunigund's chamber, she cried out with a devilish laugh:

"Ha-ha! I fooled this simpleton Humpnick who believed that I was preparing a royal surprise for the King! And that gullible princess believed my silly tale about the magic apple and the prince who would come for her if she ate it. By golly, she believed everything he told her, that is, every word I told him to tell her. What's more, she even believed that a dumb woodcutter can have prophetic dreams about her future. Fools, stupid fools, they are both my puppets! No one will ever find out what happened to her! Poisoned by my apple,

she shall lie dead on the top of the Glass Mountain. No prince will ever come to marry her, for no such prince exists! He was but a figment of my imagination, and a brilliant one at that! I invented him three days ago, and made up a name for him using seven letters! No one will ever know what happened to her, except Humpernick, who won't live too long. I shall take care of him before King Avigdor returns from the hunt. Ha-ha-ha! Tomorrow you'll get your reward, Humpernick, for your faithful service to your king. I shall invite you for dinner, a delicious dinner, and offer you a glass of wine which tastes like nectar, the drink of the gods. And it will indeed deliver you to the gods."

After this dream, I woke with a start. I didn't wait for the dinner invitation: I had to escape at once. I mounted my bronze horse and rode away in haste. I passed the Blue Lake, the White Valley and the Black Forest and arrived at the Glass Mountain. Perhaps the Princess hadn't yet eaten the apple! Perhaps it was not yet too late to warn her that Prince Rolando shall never come, for he does not exist.

At the foot of the mountain stood an old wooden shack. Exhausted from the long journey, I retired inside for a good night's sleep before climbing the mountain to save the life of Enaïdole, the beautiful daughter of my king.



I woke with a start, vividly remembering my prophetic dream. I dreamt that the Fairy Queen visited me and said:

"Listen carefully to my words, my faithful Blue Fairy! Once upon a time, in the distant future, there will live a king whose wife will die young, leaving behind a beautiful girl. The king will love his daughter so dearly that he will marry a second time in order to provide a mother for her. But the new queen, seeing through the king's secret thoughts, will know that the king still loves his first wife whose image is preserved in her daughter's features. That will hurt her vanity immensely and she will seek revenge—to get rid of both of them and to obtain the throne for her son and herself. She will dream up a prince, give him an imaginary name, and with the aid of black magic and shrewd cunning, she will entice her away, by implanting false hopes into her heart. An innocent woodcutter will be the tool to realize her desires while her husband is away on a hunting trip. As a victim of her wicked deeds, the beautiful princess will lie lifeless on the top of the Glass Mountain. This will all happen a thousand years from now. When you wake up, my sweet Blue Fairy, you should do everything in your power to save the life of the princess.

"How?" I cried out in despair. "What can I do, Fairy Queen?"

"It is simple," she replied. "Don't let the Queen lie!"

"But you just said that her lies are part of a predestined, unchangeable future!" I cried, but the Fairy Queen had already mounted the Golden Horse and passing the Red Lake, the Bronze Valley and the Silver Forest, vanished in the distance. I woke with a start.

She left me in a quandary. Did the Fairy Queen inadvertently vanish when I awoke, before she could answer my last question? Or did she intentionally leave my dream unfinished and my question unanswered?

For three years I pondered, to no avail, about what I should do to save the beautiful Princess, yet to be born. In vain did I try to summon the Fairy Queen, but she never again appeared in my dreams.

Finally, I mounted my silver horse and rode away to the place where the beautiful princess was to die. Passing the Black Lake, the Red Valley and the Bronze Forest, I arrived at the Glass Mountain. When reaching the peak, I suddenly knew how to interpret the quiz-



zical words of my Fairy Queen in order to counteract the nefarious actions of that evil future Queen. I broke off a small piece of transparent glass from the very top of the peak. Making it perfectly round, I began to talk to it, like this:

"You shall be my crystal ball, shaped like the world, holding within your space all times to come. You shall contain in your tiny sphere all the events that will happen on Earth: You shall remember the future. You shall also listen carefully to the words I tell you, and whatever I say, you should make real when the time comes, within your small space as well as in the outside world.

"Let there be seven lakes and seven valleys and seven forests instead of the bare desert now surrounding this Glass Mountain. Each of them shall be of different colours and the colours shall be: white, black, red, blue, bronze, silver and gold.

"Among the numerous tribes now wandering in the desert, the strongest, the smartest and the bravest shall come and settle here, taking this land to be their country. This tribe will become a heroic nation and have a glorious history for a thousand years to come. The twelfth descendant of their Royal House will be a great king named Rolando.

"Let there also grow a poisonous herb in the fields around, the flavour of which shall be so unbearably strong that a wee bit of it will be enough to make someone faint, long before it brings death.

All this I envisioned in the clear crystal ball which, with every word I uttered, became darker and darker, heavy with future time, ready to enact all things when they are due.

Exhausted from creation, I bade the crystal ball to build a wooden shack for me at the foot of the mountain. As soon as said, the shack was there, and I retired inside to sleep for a thousand years.



I woke with a start, vividly remembering my prophetic dream. I dreamt that the Blue Fairy entered my room and held out her crystal ball before my eyes.

"Look, Prince Rolando," she whispered, "and see what the future holds in store for you."

February 15-19, 1981

## Chapter Fifty-Six

In my Last Will and Testament, I instructed my lawyer to insert this present piece of writing, in its entirety, into my memoirs, as Chapter Fifty-Six. Only then could the work be published as a posthumous book. As I wrote, three years ago: "While I am alive, I do not wish to lose my freedom, to be tortured in underground chambers, or to be crippled by the revengeful, never-forgetting, never-forgiving totalitarian power of the Rodarmian government, whose murderous hands can reach anyone in any country of the world, as they have proven innumerable times during the past few decades. Nor would I like to die an untimely, violent death, leaving my children behind as orphans and my beloved wife a widow. Nor would I like my family kidnapped, tortured, threatened or used as tools to blackmail me."

Five years ago the Rodarmian army marched into my beautiful little country, Armonia, without warning. After the first shock, I gathered my family and travelled by train to Norpos, a small town by the border, hoping that we could escape to the neighbouring country, Nutoria, during the night. Although we arrived at Norpos within three days of the takeover, we were already too late. Rodarmian soldiers occupied even this insignificant town. Walking haughtily, heads erect and clad in their menacing, black uniforms, they swarmed the zig-zaggy alleys and the public squares, buying up all the food available in the market places. At night, small groups of soldiers knocked on the doors of the poor peasant-houses and

shortly after gaining entry, sharp screams and dull shots were heard throughout the town. All the women, regardless of age, were raped, and men who resisted or protested this outrage were summarily executed.

Every noon, exactly thirty-five people were executed in the little cemetery behind the church. Mass graves were prepared the previous evening. These people were not guilty of any crime: they were selected at random. The sole purpose of these executions was to spread fear among the inhabitants, thus demonstrating the hopelessness of resistance. The town numbered 3,500 souls, according to signs posted on the highway. As the executions persisted for ten days, it became apparent that the policy of Rodarmia was to decimate our people: the first measure of their long-term strategy.

Travellers arriving from other parts of the country told us that the situation was the same everywhere. The Rodarmians made no exceptions: their policy was totalitarian, uniform, systematic and precise. We decided to return, as inconspicuously as possible, to Maletrea, the capital of our country, our home where we'd always lived. We took the train, but got off before every major station in order to avoid the identity-checks. By walking for miles at night, hiding in hay-carts by day, we finally managed to return, unnoticed, to our apartment. The following day, we resumed work at our former jobs, muttering something about sick relatives in the country whom we were obliged to visit for a few days. In the general confusion our absence wasn't exceptional, there were many others who acted similarly.

During the following weeks, the new regime quickly established itself and settled firmly, solidly, even majestically, over the land. News of the horrors of everyday life never appeared in the papers or on radio. On the contrary, documents were "found" describing the secret executions carried out at the behest of our now dethroned king, Estevan I, and tales about the exploitation of the people under the former ruling class and corruption in high places were widely circulated. Every day new people appeared on television, announcing that they were members of an underground movement that, in desperation, had called upon the Rodarmian army to liberate our

country from the oppression of Estevan I, who had concluded a secret alliance with our neighbouring country, Nutoria, which, they said, had plotted to conquer our country for years. It was obvious that all these so-called news items were fabrications: Nutoria had been a peaceful and co-operative neighbour for centuries; Estevan I was a king of integrity and the public servants who administered our bureaucracy were renowned for their honesty and efficiency. No underground movement had ever existed, as there had never been a need for one.

Then something happened, something so strange that at first I could believe neither my eyes, my ears, nor my mind. The Rodarmian army withdrew, leaving behind only a few key advisers, all of whom were high-ranking officers. I expected a sudden rebellion, but nothing of the kind happened and I couldn't understand why. My colleagues worked peacefully, even enthusiastically, for the so-called new Republic Government whose main task was to export, free of charge, nine tenths of our uranium ore production to Rodarmia, where it was processed into radium for military purposes. I became very cautious and asked only a few questions here and there, never conducting a whole conversation with any particular person.

My colleagues suddenly "remembered" that for decades the troops of Estevan I had ransacked our cities and villages, raping women, killing men and decimating the population. They also "remembered" how they had organized themselves into small illegal groups (they called them "cells") and papered the city walls with posters demanding that the "glorious" Rodarmian army free our oppressed land and prevent annexation by Nutoria. I continued to work peacefully, with pretended enthusiasm, while carrying out my own secret investigation.

One evening, after my investigations were concluded (the final report contained hundreds of details which I won't elaborate here as they have now become well known facts), I came home and, after supper, when the children were sleeping, sat down with my wife, Viola, to tell her the findings of my research. After my first

sentences, however, I noticed that my wife, whom I loved and still love dearly, didn't understand what I was talking about. She looked at me innocently and asked: "What are you so excited about, Santor?" I said: "But don't you understand? My friends are not pretending! They really believe what they say. I know that for sure, for I have cross-examined each of them!" My wife shook her head in wonderment: "But why do you expect them to lie? They are honest people!" I stood up and, with the excuse that I wanted to make myself a cup of coffee, went out to the kitchen to think. I soon returned and while quietly sipping my coffee, asked my wife: "Violia, do you remember our trip to Norpos?" "Oh yes", she nodded, "I remember all our trips to Norpos. All those atrocities, year after year, how could I forget? I still have nightmares about Norpos, recurring nightmares. Why do you ask?"

There was no doubt that my wife was intoxicated too. In fact, we had made only one trip to Norpos and that was the first and last time we had been in that town. Nevertheless, she had said "year after year." My first thought was that if the sickness had affected my wife, it was only a matter of time before it would trap me. This thought made me feel helpless. "Why do you ask?" Viola enquired. "Oh. . . ." I said, not yet knowing what to say, "I just. . . I was just thinking what a pity it was that I never took my camera with me." My wife stared at me, unbelievably: "Are you serious, Santor? What's wrong with you? Don't you remember that the Despot Estevan forbade photography during his bloody reign?" I did remember that it had been forbidden since the Rodarmian takeover, but said, lightly: "Oh yes, it had slipped my mind, you're right."

The next day, I talked to my children. So far during the course of my investigation, I had neglected them. Both my ten-year-old son, Erko, and his seven-year-old sister, Tulla, seemed happy and well-balanced. When I asked them about school both started to rave about the beautifully redecorated, white school building (I saw it every morning on the way to work and it was squalid); the happy brotherhood among the children (I often saw those filthy, ragged kids engaged in bloody fights in the school yard); and the wonderful

teachers (I knew them all—they were a collection of crabby, old spinsters and square, dull filing clerks, with no imagination whatsoever).

Instead of fearing that, sooner or later, the country-wide madness would overtake me, a new suspicion now arose in me: was I already insane? Or was it possible that everybody around me had changed and only I'd remained normal? I stayed up late, night after night, going through letters, family documents, photographs, bus tickets, and the old newspapers and magazines that I had carefully stored for years in the lockers of our apartment building. The incredible conclusion of my enquiry was that yes, I was sane. Everybody else around me had become... I didn't quite know what to call them... liars? crazy? indoctrinated? hypocritical? brainwashed? But these are only words. What I passionately wanted was to find out what was going on and why I, alone, remained immune to the general... let's call it: memory-deformation.

The first clue came some days later. Tulla, after awakening, climbed up beside me into the "big bed" and whispered into my ear: "Daddy, I am so happy. I had a beautiful dream. President Gonzargo came to our school. There was a golden halo around his head, he looked around and pointed at me. I ran up to him and he kissed me in front of all the children. Everybody envied me and I promised him that I would be the best student in my class. Oh, I am so happy, daddy!"

Suddenly, I remembered the strange sentence Viola had told me a few days before, when talking about our trip: "I still have recurring nightmares about Norpos..." Something clicked, but I didn't want to jump to any hasty conclusions. I accompanied my daughter to school, but remained standing at the gate after she entered the building. One of her classmates arrived. "Hi, Rahlia," I greeted her, "did you have nice dreams?" She frowned: "I don't remember..." I decided to pursue the matter: "Try! Gonzargo?" I prompted. Her face brightened up: "Oh yes! I dreamt that President Gonzargo visited our school with a halo around his head and kissed me, I was very proud and promised that I'd be the best student. I must go now. Don't want to be late. Bye, Mr. Praxis."



This was an encouraging discovery. That night, I questioned my wife about her morning-dream, but she couldn't remember it. Before Tulla wandered to bed, I asked her again about hers, but she couldn't recall it either, not even when I reminded her. I began a new stage in my investigation, and gradually found that all those whom I questioned fell into various groups, each corresponding to the individual's age, sex, profession and district. All members of a particular category experienced identical dreams that varied from night to night. The dreamers were carefully selected so that they had very little chance to compare their dreams which faded fast into their subconscious, anyway. All experienced weekly dreams featuring Gonzargo who, in real life, was not at all as saintly as he appeared to be in the dreams. In fact, he was physically repulsive, with a crouched gnome-like body and small pig-like ears that radiated distrust. He walked like an orangutan.

Now, as I write this chapter of my memoirs, I feel that it is my duty to let my readers know that these months of research didn't pass as smoothly and evenly as it may appear on paper, where I have tried to record the facts logically, chronologically and objectively. A strange duality developed within me: My "intellect" remained crystal-clear, while my "soul" endured a plethora of torments. I lived in constant fear of being arrested. Sometimes it occurred to me that I could be an experiment, a guinea pig; that my sanity was part of the Rodarmian scenario and that they kept their watchful eyes on me.

In time, I grew to be happy about my unhappiness over the sad fate of my country, and I dreaded the day when I would wake up blissfully contaminated by the dream-radiation. Again and again, I doubted my own sanity and, from time to time, I was compelled to recheck the old family documents to prove to myself that I wasn't insane. I constantly asked myself how it could be possible that I alone remained untouched by the spell that kept my people out of touch with reality. The thought haunted me that perhaps there were hundreds who, like me, only pretended to be subjected to that incomprehensible delusion in order to save their skins. How could I find them and establish communication with them? I found no answers to the controversial questions that my alternating moods gave

birth to. I began to have recurring nightmares about the horrors of the present; about Gonzargo, that frightening gnome; about the spreading poverty; about the exorbitant food prices and the impending famine. I was worried that I would talk aloud in my dreams and that Viola would question me. This last problem however, was about the only one I could solve: if she did question me I resolved to lie and say that I had had a nightmare about the years of terror during the Despot Estevan's bloody reign.

In early spring, after returning to Maletrea from our first excursion out of the capital since the invasion, I saw a Rodarmian soldier on the street, and suddenly realized that with this sole exception, I had seen no Rodarmian soldiers in the country at all. I kept watch for them throughout the summer, but finally conceded that there were no military occupation forces outside the capital itself. This puzzled me for a while until it suddenly came to me why Rodarmia had resorted to brute intimidation following the conquest: they needed time to set up their dream broadcasting centre, located somewhere in Maletrea. With the centre completed, their immense army could withdraw back to the motherland and Rodarmia could maintain its power with a few high-ranking officers and technicians. I couldn't be sure of this. Perhaps they used powerful drugs to achieve their end, or subliminal radio messages. I was tormented by questions about my own place in this scheme: Why had I been left out? Did they have special plans for me? Had they found out our first attempt to escape at Norpos? Was I to be charged with treason and executed? There seemed to be no way out of this labyrinth.

An uncontrollable fear grew inside me. I noticed that the dreams people dreamt were becoming more intense. If the people had been enthusiastic about the situation thus far, they were now ecstatic about it. If they had loved Gonzargo thus far, they now felt a devotion akin to religious fervour towards him. If they had hated King Estevan I before, they now cursed him and expressed the desire to murder him a hundred times a day. I am unable to describe briefly how I felt as I witnessed my wife and children undergo these horrendous changes, or how much energy I consumed trying to pretend that I was like the rest of the population in order to avoid suspicion.

Meanwhile, I watched misery infest the land, as prices skyrocketed and my people grew increasingly pale and thin as time went on. Where would this lead? What fate was Rodarmia keeping in store for us? Was there any way out? The gap between everyday reality and the induced dreams grew daily. How long could this go on?

Then the authorities began summoning individuals to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, where they were required to fill out long questionnaires and were subjected to interviews conducted by Rodarmian officers. People didn't like to talk about this experience afterward. Somehow I succeeded in finding out that many of the questions pertained (in a concealed way) to their dreams. I shuddered at the possibility that one day, I too would also be summoned to that Ministry. I knew a lot about the dreams, but I also knew that the Rodarmian officers were well-trained and merciless. What if there were unforeseen traps among the questions and I fell into just one of them?

As the numbers of those summoned for interrogation grew, an idea occurred to me, and in my spare time I began to follow the Rodarmians on the streets, as inconspicuously as I could. I soon discovered that in the evenings the officers invariably ended up at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and so, on weekends, I began to take long early morning walks around the building: the soldiers, regardless of rank, always emerged from the same building. It seemed that they not only worked, but also lived there.

One day, my son, Erko, fell off the wall-bars during gym class. The doctor said he had a light concussion and wouldn't be able to speak for a couple of days, but that he'd recover completely within a week. Above all, he had to stay in bed. Viola was quite worried, but I succeeded in quieting her fears when I mentioned that exactly the same thing had happened to me during gym class, when I was ten years old. Erko looked like his mother, but his nature more closely resembled mine. Like me, he loved reading books and, being rather clumsy, hated physical exercise. On the third day of his confinement, a Sunday, I prepared breakfast for him and took it to his bed. By then he was able to talk. "What were you dreaming about?" I asked him automatically, as I had asked hundreds of people for almost two

years. "Nothing," he said simply, and began munching on his favourite dish, fried eggs. I stared at him in disbelief. I had never before received this answer. Suddenly I knew why I didn't dream like my compatriots. My brain, affected by the concussion in my childhood, had become a faulty receptor. Lost in thought, I found myself staring at him, but then, regaining my composure, I stood and began pacing back and forth, the better to draw my conclusions.

The next day, unexpectedly, my supervisor called me to his office. I was ordered to present myself immediately at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Had he told me that just two days before, I would have gotten goose pimples. But now I felt safe and self-confident. As a matter of fact, I was quite happy that my chance had come so soon because I had finally decided what to do, when my summons came.

At the Ministry I filled out the long questionnaire, not worrying too much about possible errors. I knew that it would take weeks for the computer to find them. I answered the Rodarmian officer's questions nonchalantly, describing other people's dreams as if they were my own. After the interview, instead of pushing the ground-floor button in the elevator, I pushed the basement button. As I exited at the basement level, I pressed the button to send the elevator back up to the ground floor. I hid in the basement, patiently counting the hours until 11:00 p.m., then, convinced that the day's traffic had ceased, I began to explore the building, floor by floor, taking care to move like a cat—smoothly, inaudibly. On every floor, I opened the staircase door quietly and paused to listen. The building was silent. Finally, I reached the twelfth floor, the last one. As I had suspected, the even buzz of the computers greeted me as soon as I opened the big iron door. Flattening myself against the wall, I tiptoed toward the northwest wing, where, on the roof, the structure of an immense steel antenna towered over the city and the countryside beyond. As I approached the control centre under the antenna, the humming increased. I waited for at least five minutes in front of the door. Nothing. No voice, no steps, no breathing could I hear from inside. Slowly, I opened the door, the blood pounding in my temples. The room was unoccupied. The machines, once fed, ran automatically. Why were the Rodarmians so careless? Why did they leave the heart

of their colonization machinery unguarded? But then again, why shouldn't they?—the answer came to me immediately: they knew they were alone in the building; and as they had all been carefully selected from the most reliable cadres of Rodarmia, no one knew their fearful secret. And all the while, the country was peacefully dreaming. . . .

Inside, I walked around the huge hall. There were no windows. Along the four walls stood large steel racks, each filled with tapes from floor to ceiling. I glanced at the labels. The notations read just as I had expected them to: "Farmer-male-potato-30/32 yr-Province Imaho"; "Teacher-female-28/30 yr-Maletrea"; "Student-male-8 yr-Norpos". I didn't need to look further. In the middle of the hall stood the huge monsters. I counted fifteen computers. Through the glass doors I saw the tapes winding slowly from the left to the right reels. At the far end of the room stood fifteen index card cabinets. The contents of the drawers were arranged alphabetically. I pulled out the one entitled: POK-PSU and found my card. On the top-left corner was my name: 'Praxis, Santor.B.:1931.' Under this: Dependants, see: 'Violia, Erko, Tulla.' Under that: 'Interview Date: December 2.' And under that: small squares, thousands of them, each representing a day. A dot in the square meant that the dream for that day had been transmitted. According to my chart, I had received 698 dreams. I checked two more cards. They too, showed 698 dreams.

That was enough. I had no time to lose. I emptied the drawers, one after the other, until cards covered the entire floor in layers. Then, I tore the tapes from their drives (and also, the dreams from the heads of my people) and piled them on top. I lit a match. First the cards, then the scattered tapes caught fire. I pulled a chain hanging from the ceiling and watched as the vents of the roof opened. Fresh air rushed into the room, feeding the fire. I said farewell to the gorgeous, golden flames and ran into the corridor, heading toward the steps. When I reached the third floor the fire-alarm sirens began howling. Then I heard the sound of doors slamming, and the muffled thump of running feet echoed throughout the building. At this moment I wouldn't have minded being shot: I was ready to die

for my country. Instead, I was lucky: the “glorious” Rodarmian militia, half-naked, ran for shelter, quickly descending on the fire escape to the bunker beneath the basement floor, all moving strictly in accordance to regulations. I quietly slipped out of the Ministry building and strolled home. The streets, as usual, were deserted. Ever since Rodarmia had “liberated” us, the 10:00 p.m. curfew had never been relaxed.

Arriving home, I woke my family and told them that we had been personally ordered to leave at once by Gonzargo. We packed, took the night train to Norpos and easily crossed the unguarded border.

The rest of the story is well known to the world. On the morning of the third day of December, deprived of their pacifying dreams, my countrymen woke up. They saw the squalor surrounding them, felt the hunger gaping in their stomachs, became increasingly restless and, for the first time in years, began talking freely to one another. Soon, huge masses gathered, both in the cities and in the countryside. They armed themselves and, on December the seventh, a nationwide revolution broke out. The Rodarmian occupation forces were hanged on the trees of Maletrea. King Estevan I was recalled from exile. Rodarmia was caught completely unprepared for the surprise-revolution; by the time they knew what to do, it was too late: my country, Armonia, was free. The international press published numerous articles about the Armonian underground and a wise king, patiently waiting in exile for his time to come.

No mention was ever made of the fire that gutted the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The press didn’t write about it because they didn’t know (and still don’t know) that it functioned as an elaborate disguise to cloak the activities of the Dream Office. The Rodarmian press, of course, never referred to the matter at all. They couldn’t afford to reveal the secret weapon which they had used to subjugate their neighbouring states and which, even now, may be planning to use again.

Owing to the sudden withdrawal of the opium produced by the dream machines, my family suffered months of severe psychological depression. Bewildered, they couldn’t keep pace with the racing events. They recovered only after we immigrated to America. Here

we were forced to cope with a strange new environment and the sudden culture shock and urgent necessity of learning a new language made them quickly forget the trials and tribulations of the past.

I never told them about the night of December the second. I suppose, when reading these pages, that they will be at least as astonished as the Rodarmian Government. They will finally learn that the heroic and historic revolution of Armonia did not break out spontaneously. It was I, alone, who caused it. Had I, in life, attempted to assume sole and personal responsibility for this epoch-making event, nobody would have believed me: I would have been ridiculed. But this, I now confess, is the truth. When you read this, I shall be dead and why would a dead man lie? No vain desire for money or for glory drives him any longer.

Without me, King Estevan I would still be in exile. Without the concussion I suffered at the age of ten, I wouldn't have been able to remain immune to the delusions that imprisoned the minds of a nation. I, Santor Praxis, once an Armonian refugee, now a naturalized citizen of America, overthrew a totalitarian system single-handedly. The only weapon I used was a match.

I am sorry to leave my family so soon, but I am also grateful to Providence that I have a form of terminal cancer that will finish me off within half a year. The publication of my memoirs will be the first full exposure of the Rodarmian colonization technique. The nations of the world must unite in protesting the existence of such highly technological barbarism in our age. Rodarmia must either change and humanize its political system, or be destroyed and swept away mercilessly from the face of the Earth.

September 21, 1979.

Aleph



And the point arrived when the One-Living-in-the-Moment-of-the-  
Eternal-Present  
withdrew into himself the arms that had extended in many direc-  
tions  
and became a calm and smooth sphere

and within the smooth and dark surface of the sphere  
thus glowed the centre:

Now enough of this  
Let me play something else  
Even always thinking everything  
can be boring

Let me choose one  
of the possible infinities  
and make it as real  
as I am

And he imagined hosts  
And lo the hosts were there  
And he glowed towards them thus:

Be selves, all of you  
selves as I am,  
but other selves  
not I

Will, all of you  
what I will  
but it's you who will it  
not I

Move, all of you  
the move that I move  
but it's you who move it  
not I

Think, all of you  
the thought that I think  
but it's you who think it  
not I

Create, all of you  
the creation that I create  
but it's you who create it  
not I

Be, each of you a self  
but another self  
not this  
which is mine

And as he said it they said it with him  
And as he thought it they thought it with him  
And as he willed it they willed it with him  
And as he moved it they moved it with him  
And they were all selves  
as him  
but different

And then he thought  
And they thought with him  
And as he thought and they thought  
they realized:

We go  
we depart  
we change  
we transmute

to another state  
to an unknown state  
to a not-yet state  
we flow

We leave behind a likeness  
of ourselves to last  
so Time  
would not be torn

We leave behind a likeness  
of ourselves to stand  
so Space  
would not be void

We launch from our selves  
spheres as our selves  
glowing centres  
dark surfaces

That we would be now  
while being elsewhere

That we would be such  
while being elsewhat

Let it be  
Let it be  
Let it be

And lo they vanished and remained  
as the image of the sun  
on the eye's inner lid  
after the sun set  
    an image remained  
    a shadow of the Lord of Hosts  
    and the floating traces of his hosts -  
    an image remained

which was glimmering  
as if it glowed

which was writhing  
as if it moved

which was tensing  
as if it willed

which was forming  
as if it created

and it trembled its many arms and it spun  
as a mirage over the desert

The Lord and his host dreamt themselves through a thousand  
dreams -  
enjoyed themselves through a thousand games -  
changed themselves through a thousand forms -

lived a thousand lives—sparkled a thousand colours  
and branched into a thousand ages in a thousand realms until  
the point arrived  
when they reached once more  
the place where they were such  
as they had been before  
    but the image they had left in their stead  
    barred their way  
    they could not return  
        and thus spoke the Lord  
        and his hosts echoed his word:

Alas

There was a time when we were alone  
and knew nothing else but the one  
and outside and inside  
we were the one  
we were the here  
we were the now  
we were the I

Alas

We left something behind  
so no void would remain  
so something would remain  
but that something evolved differently than us  
what we were has been lost  
where we were has gone to others  
when we were is no longer  
our own creation has usurped our place  
our very substance is alien to us

Alas

It has been standing ever since -  
it has been standing all the while -  
as we wandered through a thousand lands  
of possibilities -  
here it stands unchanged  
like pillars of salt  
the laws of its motion have not altered  
it whirls by rote like a mindless spinning top  
ever since we struck it with the whip of our command  
it stands here aged in its rigid youth  
while we—through a thousand adventures  
aged into youth—elastic, eternal

Alas

1963

# The End of the World

I shall never forget that day. My wife woke me up at noon, telling me that she had just seen the seven riders of the Apocalypse heading westward in the sky, loudly blowing their trumpets. "But there are supposed to be four of them!" I said. An argument ensued. I looked up Nostradamus' prophecies for the correct number, but couldn't find it. She was very nervous and loused up the brunch.

On the front page of the morning paper was an awful photograph of our city. The houses had all collapsed, and hardly anybody had survived. The names of the fatally wounded were listed in alphabetical order on twenty-five consecutive pages. I found my own name among the dead. When I showed it to my wife, she apologized for her previous outburst. Had she known, she said, she wouldn't have said all those awful things—after all, four or seven, so what?

The children, who were watching T.V. in the recreation room, called my wife and me down to the basement. "Look, Mom and Dad! There's our house! It's completely flattened!" It was really a sorry sight: a heap of broken bricks, the T.V. antenna smashed into pieces, parts of our bodies—an arm, a leg—stretching out from under the rubble. The camera zoomed in on the blackened face of Jimmy, my nine year-old son. My wife, quite moved, caressed Jimmy's head comfortingly while chewing the last of her muffin.

There was a knock on the door. Sylvia, my fourteen-year-old daughter opened it. There stood Gerald, my best friend, with his



wife. "My sympathies," said Sylvia. "I just heard your names on the radio." My wife and I looked at each other with pride. We both felt that it had been worthwhile to spend those thousands of dollars on the best private school in the city: though still a child, she behaved like a real lady, always knowing what to say and do. "When did it happen?" asked Sylvia in a voice that seemed to come from behind heavy veils.

"About forty-five minutes ago," said Mary-Lou, Gerald's wife. "We were just shopping in the supermarket when the earth suddenly opened. Flames broke forth from the deep, consuming the whole supermarket in a few seconds. About eight hundred people, ourselves included, burnt."

Gerald nodded: "Yeah! We didn't even have time to buy fruit. . . ."

"Oh, do have some grapes and oranges!" said my wife, "I'll make some coffee."

The newspaper boy arrived, delivering the free extra edition packed with more terrible news. I didn't have the change to pay him, but Gerald was nice enough to pay him \$2.70 for the previous week. "I really don't know when I'll be able to pay you back," I said, a bit ashamed, but Gerald just waved: "Don't worry about it, pal. . . ." According to the paper, there had been a global earthquake, and the whole continent had been flooded by a tidal wave. After drinking the coffee, we went out to the garden and chatted about the unbelievable destruction while sun-bathing by the swimming pool.

"It's God's punishment!" said my wife while combing out her wet hair.

"I don't know," said Mary-Lou, "I'm beginning to doubt the existence of a God who allows such a thing to happen."

At this point, as if by magic, the priest appeared at the garden gate. "Come in, Father," said my wife. "Sit down with us. Are you still alive?"

"No," said the priest, "but I have fully resigned myself to God's will; after all, his wisdom is infinite."

"You see?" My wife turned to Mary-Lou victoriously, "I told you!"

"Oh, by the way, Father," I remarked, "you may know . . . did Nostradamus mention four or seven riders of the Apocalypse?"

"My son," said the priest in a tone of rebuke, "they are mentioned in Revelation, not in Nostradamus."

"Yeah, but were there four or seven?" I repeated impatiently.

"Er. . . " said the priest, "I can't recall now, exactly. . . and unfortunately the church is seven hundred feet below water."

"Oh, how sad. . . " my wife whispered with sincere regret in her voice, "and just when the reconstruction had finally been completed!"

"Yes, yes," sighed the priest, "and it cost more than twenty million dollars." My wife gently kicked me under the table. I took out my cheque book and wrote out a thousand-dollar cheque for rebuilding the church. Gerald followed my example. The priest put the cheques in his wallet and stood up. "I have to see to the rest of my flock," he said, warmly shaking our hands, "but God will bless you, I assure you!"

The children ran out of the basement, now really excited: "Mom, Dad! Come and see! The whole world has sunk into the ocean! There is darkness over the face of the Earth! We just saw Satan dashing through the gates of Hell, with seven-hundred and seventy-seven armies behind him, marching against the throne of the Lord. Please, come down to see!"

"First of all, don't scream," said my wife calmly, and for the first time, I agreed with her whole-heartedly. "Second, Jimmy, bring out my suntan lotion. My skin is getting burnt."

"Okay, Mom," said Jimmy, sulking, and they both disappeared.

We continued to chat about our friends in the city and abroad who were all dead now. We were genuinely sorry for a few of them, but found that most of them deserved their cataclysmic deaths. Nevertheless we agreed that they might say the same about us. Everything is relative, after all. Then we invented a game: each of us wrote down on a piece of paper how our friends may have died, and we compared guesses. Then we voted on whose guess was the most characteristic of the person on the top of our sheets. We would occasionally interrupt the game to go for a short swim.

As I was floating on my back in the pool, I watched Mary-Lou walk into the house, her hips wiggling. Gerald and my wife were completely absorbed in a conversation about the cities, mountains, ski resorts, beaches, and museums all over the world that we would no longer be able to visit. As quietly as I could, I stepped out of the pool and slipped inconspicuously into the house. Mary-Lou was in the bathroom, washing her hands. I approached her from behind, peeled off her swimming suit and bent her over the sink. "But, Armand, please . . ." she objected, "on this day? When billions of poor people, all mankind. . ."

"Mankind, shmankind," I gasped, "that's just it! When will we ever have another chance to have fun?" She tore herself angrily from my back embrace, pushed me down on the toilet and perched on my lap, facing me. "Aha," I smiled, "you want a full circuit between your mouth and . . ."

"Yes!" she said, and kissed me, "but hurry up—they might notice our absence!" Later we returned to the garden, separately, of course. My wife was just talking about Venice.

"It's a real pity . . ." remarked Gerald. I splashed around in the pool for a while, then came out of the water and joined the conversation. It was a very pleasant afternoon. Apart from the tragedy, naturally.

"Well," said Gerald, "thank you for your hospitality, but we really must go home, right, Mary-Lou?" The radio had just announced that the Earth had broken into a myriad of small meteorites hurtling outward into the void, like miniature asteroids, and that this shower had gradually formed into a ring of tiny rocks revolving around the sun. No trace of earth life existed.

"Oh yes, absolutely!" said Mary-Lou and looked at my wife. "Thanks again." The two women kissed each other good-bye. Gerald shook my hand. "What a day!" he said, and looked at me solemnly. I patted his shoulder: "Your poor children. They were so young. . . ." We accompanied them to the garden door and watched as they slowly walked away, back to their orphans.

"Children, enough T.V.! Wash your hands before dinner! Come on!" yelled my wife. Sylvia came up first: "Mother, do you realize

that our planet no longer exists in the Solar System? Satan has won the battle. God is dead!" she said indignantly.

"Then you have to put a stop-payment on that cheque, Armand, before Father John can cash it!" cautioned my wife, and she hurried to the kitchen to prepare food. "You're right. . . ." I nodded, hoping that dinner would be better than the brunch had been. The sun began sinking below the horizon. What a gorgeous sunset! Where is my camera?

Waiting

A very peculiar change has taken place in my life of late. I am certain of it, despite the fact that I remember nothing of what went on before. All I know, or rather feel, and even that but obscurely, is that what exists today also existed before but its meaning is, somehow, radically different. Now, my life revolves around one thing only: waiting. This thing, waiting, is not new, it was there in the past as well. . . yes. . . but then it was only part of something else. Of what? I cannot remember. . . .

I wait minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, night after night. I have been waiting for years. It is silent here—no noise, no quarrels. The silence of a grave. The waiting is not as bad as it once was. I have even come to find it pleasurable. And so, it goes. I wait for someone to come, to notice me, choose me, turn me around, open me, leaf through me, acquaint himself with my words, laugh with me, cry with me, share my excitement, then remember me, talk about me, write about me, send others to me. That is what I am waiting for. That is my life, and I expect this situation to continue indefinitely, or at least until I am thrown away. After that it won't matter anymore. Then I shall have fulfilled my calling. I shall be proud of myself and of my usefulness. Yes, this is what I am waiting for. To be thrown out. To be replaced by a new copy of myself. Unfortunately, this is all far off in the future: I am still in pretty good condition. Few people know me, but I shall never stop waiting. Perhaps one day. . . .

I seem to recollect, that waiting was an exhausting occupation in the past. Of course, I wasn't then what I am today. Now, I never tire of standing calmly day in, day out. After all, I have been standing here comfortably for years and it is really no effort. Still, I can't help but wonder about that other life. What was it like?

I was waiting... waiting... yes—on a street corner... for a woman. Waiting... in the dentist's office... Miracle of miracles! For the first time in this life I remember... I was waiting for money. Money. What is money? Oh yes, the thing that fed me. Let's see, how did it go? In through the top, out through the bottom, as it made its way through my body it gave me strength, energy. Wait a minute, that's something else. Yes, I remember: eating and drinking. Waiting for food was called hunger. Waiting for drink was called thirst. Waiting for sleep was called weariness. Waiting for the dentist was called pain. Waiting for a woman was called love. The waiting itself—all of it—was called life.

Life. But if that was life, then what I have now must be death. This is not what I imagined death to be. I thought death meant to be laid into the earth with other bodies, side by side for eternity and that it brought an end to waiting. Is it possible that even now I repose in a cemetery? No, this is different somehow; similar yes, but still... different. Here too, we are laid side by side. There, bodies, here souls; there, we are arranged chronologically; here, alphabetically. There, if the dead can be said to be awaiting anything, it is resurrection. And here? Well, here too. For, when someone comes, picks us out, reads us, that is our resurrection.

Everything is clear to me now. I stand here with my fellows, year after year, my back to the world. There is a name printed on my spine and beneath it—a title. In this life I am the Title, and inside, I am everything that goes with the title. The name above it is unimportant, no one is really interested in it. But in the past, in my former life, the Name was everything and the title but a mere detail. This, in fact, explains the peculiar change I sensed: from a Name I changed into a Title. It is the title that stands here in this silent cemetery, tireless, patient, indifferent. It was the Name who ate and drank, suffered and loved. The Name produced many titles among

which I am but one. The Name is gone but I am here. In good condition, too. Poor Name. I remember him. I remember myself, when I was still the Name. Poor Name. . . .

Poor little boy. . . he understood nothing of what went on around him and the others made fun of him. The others didn't understand either but they believed they did. He was the only one who understood that he didn't understand anything. And he spent a lifetime writing about it. And those who read what he had written began to see that, though they believed that they did, they didn't understand anything either. The little boy grew, spread, thickened. He married, had children and was happy. Sometimes, he was unhappy. And through it all he wrote and wrote. All his life he was driven by an overwhelming desire: to change from a Name into a Title. He wanted to become me. I don't know why: The answer no longer seems important. Nor can I comprehend anymore how it felt to be him. It must have been a strange sensation. It must have been quaint to be a Name.

Someone is approaching. He stops behind me. He looks at my spine. Slowly, he extends his hand toward me. Thank you, thank you my Saviour, my Liberator, my Resuscitator!

But no. He takes the one next to me, the one in the vulgar, red binding. It doesn't matter. The next one will be for me. If not today, tomorrow. Someone is sure to come. And then I shall live again! I shall experience every emotion, every adventure, from beginning to end. I shall laugh when he laughs, cry when he cries, be breathless with excitement when he is breathless with excitement. And afterward, when he puts me down with a sigh, I too shall sigh with him: oh, how wonderful I had been!

Someone, sometime will surely come. Someone must come sooner or later. It's just not possible that no one. . . ever. . . .

So, I am waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

April 1972



# Antihistory

*For Dr. Paul Buckley,  
in remembrance of our  
conversations in the  
CBC cafeteria, about the  
universe and related  
irrelevancies.*

Once upon a timeplace, the beings of Utopia (meaning: Nowhere-Existing) did not visit the beings of Uchronia (meaning: Never-Existing). This non-meeting was the most un-interesting event in the histories of the two worlds, the consequences of which were enormous. One of them, for instance, was that following this occasion, the Uchronians immediately started not to think about repaying the Utopians' non-visit, and that's exactly what they didn't do.

These two historical unhappenings were the beginnings of a flourishing lack of friendship between the two worlds: first their artists began to uncreate artwork which was influenced by the culture of the other world; and shortly after, their scientists also got uninvolved in exploring the various ways of exchanging research information.

That's how things were not, when a terrible catastrophe occurred. By sheer chance, nowhere-existing Utopia collided with never-existing Uchronia. The effects of the cosmic cataclysm were

detrimental for both worlds. In the crash, each world acquired the other's properties: timeless Uchronia became spaceless, and spaceless Utopia was rendered timeless. In other words, Utopia, which so far had existed nowhere, now also started to exist in neverness, whereas Uchronia, which had never existed, now began expanding into nowhere-ness. Becoming thus homogeneous, the two worlds fused into Absolute Nothing.

Their collision and subsequent fusion, however, released an indescribably minute energy quantum which shot away during the interpllosion. A scientist of Absolute Nothing calculated this energy quantum to have been one hundred thousand million billion trillionth of a milliwatt. One can easily visualize this fraction if one imagines a Zero, followed by a Point and then a line of Zeros as long as the distance between the left and right edge of Absolute Nothing, finally terminating in the figure One. Scientists of the united world named this escaped energy quantum "Something," in recognition that it was contrary to anything ever experienced in the limitless world of Absolute Nothing.

Laboratory simulations of the collision and fusion showed, to the scientists' great surprise, that Something, despite its micro-size, was not empty at all. They speculated that it was composed of numberless universes, which were further divisible into galaxies, solar systems, stars, planets, comets, meteors, etc. Despite its micro-duration, they argued that it must be subject to the action of time, and may already have passed through numerous aeons, millennia, centuries, decades, years, and so on.

As to whether there were beings on the planets of Something, scientific opinion differed. One group—the Negativists—maintained that, owing to the imperceptibly short life-span of the quantum, there was simply no time for life to evolve before the whole thing burst. The other group—the Positivists—believed that, no matter how small the size and duration of Something, it was, in a relative way, as full of potential as Absolute Nothing, to which the Negativists replied that the mere nature of Matter (a new word they had coined to distinguish the material of this new phenomenon from the Antimatter of which Absolute Nothing consisted) precluded the

possibility of intelligent life. But the Positivists claimed that whatever was possible for Antimatter was also possible for Matter, only in an opposite way, which, concerning the heart of the matter, did not matter. (Or, to quote verbatim: "... which concerning the heart of the antimatter, does not antimatter.")

There is, at present, no way to find definite answers to these questions. No evidence can be found to prove either group's hypothesis. But, although the problem, as such, is destined to disappear from the scientific world, it will always remain popular with the ordinary beings of Absolute Nothing, in the manner of other paradoxes, sophisms, puzzles, riddles, koans, nursery rhymes, believe-it-or-not stories and curiosities that provoke spirited conversation. And so, even though the real solution will never be known to the beings of Absolute Nothing, they don't seem to mind. After all, in the primordial infinite spaceful timelessness and timeful spacelessness of the separate worlds before the fusion, as well as in the presently progressing infinite spaceless timelessness of the united world after the fusion, the nature of a tiny, ephemeral Something is quite inconsequential, if not irrelevant.

October 15, 1976

# Apartment House

I live on the ground floor where grey rainwater collects  
in streams discharging into puddles in the yard,  
where squalid neighbours curse when I keep my light on late,  
or knock a nail into the wall,  
where my sluttish wife grumbles as she cleans, chases me to work,  
raises my son amid fetid kitchen odours  
and torments me at night in bed . . . I wish she deceived me  
once in a while ---

I love to walk up to the second floor  
where I don't have to step into slush  
and where I hardly ever see my unkempt kid  
running around in the yard,  
and only for seconds my wife  
as she shakes her dust rag out of the window  
or lugs her shopping bag across the yard  
groaning wearily,  
where I only rarely see myself returning home from work,  
dragging myself along on wavering legs,  
grinning shy greetings,  
groping for my key . . .  
My secret lover lives on the second floor,  
I steal up to her for an hour on some excuse  
while the potatoes simmer in the pot downstairs,

and I forget that at the same time I sit down there,  
a balding man reading his paper  
and barking at his kid who bothers him. . .  
My lover goes to bed with all who ask,  
at such times my stomach knots  
and I think of her thighs opening yearningly under another's,  
and of her nipples hardening under another's palm,  
and while I torment her with stupid, cruel, self-centered questions  
about how it had been, at what the difference was  
and why I am not good enough for her,

I run up to the third floor  
to an ethereal blond painteress to chat with her  
about literature, ideas and artistic trends,  
A dark red tie cascades down my snowy shirt,  
I wear a loose jacket,  
blue smoke snakes up from my cigarette,  
we drink tea with rum  
while she and I look down on the second floor together  
where I quarrel, writhing in convulsions, and on the ground floor  
where I vegetate in misery ---

On the fourth floor lives  
my skinny, bespectacled friend with whom I compose poems,  
Together we try to put into words  
that which on the lower floors I have neither the time  
nor the will to express,  
Bitter-sweet black coffee quickens my body till  
it burns in a strange, purple fever,  
Winged words soar in the air,  
the rhythm of sentences slides into music,  
we utter nouns and see each as in a painting,  
we smell adjectives, eat adverbs, fear verbs  
and dance to alliterations ---

but at the same time  
I also live on the fifth floor with he  
    who is father, brother and son to me,  
    my best friend with whom I look down  
on the ground floor and feel nauseated when we see myself,  
on the second floor and we marvel when we see myself,  
on the third floor and we laugh when we see myself,  
on the fourth floor and we wonder when we see myself,  
Together we draw what we are like,  
    we divide the paper into tiny squares and compute the formula  
    that explains everything, including us,  
We are but a strict plan of line, diagonal, intersection,  
    parabola and spiral from here  
and the past becomes law and the future calculable ---

but I leave  
    even him and find myself on the sixth floor  
where the streams of rainwater are invisible,  
    and the spiteful yelps of jealousy inaudible,  
where the taste of tea is alien  
    and words lose their meanings  
    and graphs become senseless,  
There is perfect peace on the sixth floor,  
    neither noise nor images reach up so high,  
    Soft silence rocks the gentle apartment,  
Here I live alone, companionless, behind heavy curtains  
    and rarely recall my friends and women, and even when I do,  
    I shrug, amazed that I should recall them at all,  
I wander softly from room to room,  
    talk in the library with friends long dead,  
and in each room there is so much, so many things,  
    things in so many colours, that I don't understand  
    why I live at the same time on other floors as well,  
    and why I waste my time on confused, needless  
    and futile affairs ---



and I know that I am also  
on the seventh floor though I have no recollection of it,  
I have never come up that far, yet I know  
that I live there as well, or that that is where I really live -  
alone on the seventh and last floor of the house  
where I recall nothing of the other floors, or perhaps I do,  
but only in a single second of my whole life,  
yet that second is more than the six floors together,  
I try and try to imagine what I am like on the seventh floor,  
but my mind produces a plethora of conflicting images:  
I see myself lying dead, uncorrupted and pure  
throughout the years, decades and centuries,  
or I see myself sitting, like Buddha, unblinking, gazing inward  
where the life of all the floors moves along skull-walls,  
or I see myself speeding through the room  
so fast that I am everywhere almost at once,  
or I see the empty apartment where no one lives,  
where only spider-webs grow in the corners and on the curtains  
and mysterious creaks converse with each other  
in the slowly revolving time,  
Perhaps there is no seventh floor at all,  
but maybe there is nothing else and all the floors are lies ---

Yes, this is the house in which I live . . .  
the stairs resound with the tapping of my heels,  
the walls bear my fingerprints,  
I appear here and there, this way or that, I am on all the floors  
looking at myself with this or that emotion  
while the tides of spring, summer, autumn and winter lap at the  
bricks,  
the plaster cracks and peels,  
ground water gurgles under the foundation,  
the roof leaks,  
wind breaks the window panes,  
and all around new yellow, white, pink

houses, bungalows, cottages, summer villas,  
skyscrapers, boroughs, grow and spread . . .  
and perhaps  
speculators or town planners sometimes stop in front of the house  
gazing at it and wondering  
what could be done with it (or the site),  
if they pulled it down one day  
or if it toppled down by itself ---

1984

Taviella

*for Clara*

1.

Years later, when I saw her again, she lived in a more distinguished part of the city, in a modern ground-level apartment where there were no sloping ceilings in the bedroom and where, through an open window, no underwear dried on a swaying clothes line. I thought it tedious to enter the luxurious lobby, ring the doorbell, and wait for the buzz to gain entry, so instead I knocked on the window. She opened it, I entered and we sat across from each other at the dining room table, near the kitchen, to talk. This end of the L-shaped living room was well-lit, whereas the rest of the room was in semi-darkness. At the far end of the room her two daughters crouched in the bluish light of an old television set, watching a Western. She asked me which of her daughters was my favourite. I didn't know. The picture they were watching was blurred and jerky, and I commented that something must be wrong with the tube. Soon bread, butter, cheese, coffee, cookies and cigarettes were arranged on the table. She asked me if I was still writing poems. People whom I have not seen for a long time always ask me this question and I always wonder why they don't ask if I am still breathing. By chance, I discovered some poems in my pocket. She read them and asked suddenly if I'd ever written anything about her. I blushed and confessed

I had: a prose piece that bore her name as title. The doorbell rang and as a friend of the family appeared in the hall, I whispered to her that I had to go. She laughed and asked me to bring the story next time. As I left, I remembered a glorious purple sunset from long-ago, and a third floor bedroom with sloped ceilings, where, through the window, a line of crisply laundered white underwear swayed in the breeze.

2.

I began seeing her. My visits were unpredictable: sometimes thrice a week, sometimes twice a month, or once in half a year. Each visit unfolds as all the others have. I walk through the garden and knock on the large picture window of the L-shaped living room. She emerges from the well-lit kitchen, a broad smile on her face, and opens the window for me to step into the room. Although I never phone before coming, she is never surprised because, she says, she feels or dreams my coming. I pretend not to believe in her premonitions. She desperately tries to convince me, revealing in the process, the details of her dreams, while I, flattered, conceal my enjoyment. While she prepares coffee, the two girls sit in front of the flickering, ever-fainter television screen, which distorts the prairie and skews the square faces of the cowboys into blue diagonal lines, as if contorted by cramps. We sit at the table, facing each other. She asks if I have any recent writing in my pockets and I usually find some. While reading she often laughs or weeps. Sometimes, she solves her daughters' problems which, as if to harass me, always seem to erupt during commercials. After listening to her suggestions about my poems, I ask to see her new poems or fables and though she looks in drawers, or in other rooms, she never finds the ones she wants me to see, or else finds some that need to be typed first. All this time, I think of the missing (and missed) years and know that she does too, although we do not mention it. We see a parallel life in which she is my wife, her daughters my children; an alternate life in which my present life does not exist, or, if it does, is no more than a faint, un-lived possibility. She always asks if I have brought the story and I always apologize,

saying I couldn't bring it because I hadn't planned to visit and just happened to be in the neighbourhood, but every time I remember more and more of the story and speak about it enthusiastically. The story has three chapters which do not serve the usual purpose of separating the sequential events of a developing plot; on the contrary, each chapter is almost an exact repetition of the former: Only the tenses change. The first chapter described our story in the past perfect; the second in the continuous present; and the third, in a tense combining the Heraclitean flux of things with eternally fixed Platonic ideas. My treatment of time pleases her immensely and she compares it to a long walk in suddenly widening corridors, or to a brook that becomes a river with a hundred open arms in its estuary, gushing into the horizonless sea. Unfortunately, our conversation is always interrupted: visitors arrive, allowing me to play and joke with the girls, her children fathered by someone else. I find I'm always undecided about which one of them I like best. When I depart, she walks me to the hall. I slip my arm around her waist and kiss her good-bye, and, every time, I promise to return with the story in three chapters, the title of which is her name.

### 3.

This is how it is: a pattern, a formula, a model. A piece of eternity to which I can always return. A flavour of eternity that I can always taste. It is always there; it is always the same. Its variations are those of a river: though you immerse yourself in it innumerable times, the ever-flowing water is always new and ever different. There is a window somewhere in the city: it always welcomes me; always opens to me. There, behind the glass, is a familiar face which is always the same. Undoubtedly, her face ages day by day, year by year, but I don't notice: it remains young for me. In the left corner of the living room, eternal semi-darkness flickers and jumps in the sputtering glow of never-turned-off blueness. In the light at the other end of the room, two figures eat and drink and smoke and read and talk. I am the same as I always was, although I must have aged, but while she remembers me, she sees my present face and while she looks at

me, she sees my young face and the two are the same in her eyes. She reads my recent poems, always different, each a facet of me: an ephemeral facet of a constant me, or perhaps a surviving facet of a mortal me. Each time she reacts the same way and yet, uniquely: her words and meanings are new, but her style and approach are unchanged. I never hear the poems she has written (has she?), and always, the old question is asked anew, again and again: whether this time I've brought the story whose title is her name; the story in three chapters, with invisible dams between them that enlarge the flow of time. I talk about the story with ever-growing enthusiasm, hoping that the day I finally do bring it along it will fulfill her expectations. Like a kaleidoscope in which we see ourselves, containing a definite number of coloured crystals, forming and reforming in an infinite number of designs whenever shaken. We, if-wife and if-husband, drink an eternal coffee and smoke an eternal cigarette, while our if-children watch an eternal Western. Outside, in a brightly lit corner of the living room, we enact the same old ritual, but inside, in the flickering semi-darkness within, we watch the perpetual blurred movie of our alternate present. We are always interrupted by the same visitor (who is always someone else). Each time, he appears a different time, giving me an excuse to chat and laugh with my growing, unchanging daughters by that other man who left them years ago. I vacillate when asked to choose my favourite. Then I glance at my watch, not really looking at the time, and remark with genuine surprise, "Oh, how late it is." I say farewell to everybody because, by this time, I am deadily bored with the sameness of it all, with the monotony of the uneventful plot, the familiarity of the visitor's ever-changing face and the fluid predictability of recurrence. Invariably, I decide that this is my last visit, and lament that I will never lie in a third-floor bedroom with sloping ceilings and watch through the open window a line of crisply laundered white underwear snap and flutter against a purple sunset. In the hall I slip my right arm around her young, aging waist to experience, for the last time, the kiss that I might have tasted every night in a conditional present. I know that next time, at the same moment, I will again decide that this visit too will be my last, and this decision will also belong to our random

ritual. I cannot help returning to see her in my other life, because I cannot stop visiting myself in her other life. If I did not return, I would be murdering one of my selves.

1977



Madouce, *love poems*

He carved  
a one similar to himself  
out of stone

It became alive  
grew  
then hit him  
and left

April 27, 1965

It happened  
before  
many times  
    but now  
    it's new  
    again

September 9, 1965

## THE MOST

I cannot  
tell you  
more than  
this:

I  
LOVE  
MYSELF

September 1965

THINK ABOUT NOW

The present moment says, Madouce,  
that you are in my arms  
    and I am happy  
but I know that you'll have to leave me  
and from a future present moment  
I remember this one  
    and suffer

September 1965

## NOW

You tell me not to worry about a far away  
October day, when pale, and with a smile  
on your lips, and tears in your eyes, you will  
look down at me from a train window, waving,  
and repeating my name, and whispering words  
inaudible in the sharp whistle and rhythmical  
clattering of the steam engine, after which soon  
your face will slowly move away and diminish  
and completely disappear,  
only the snake-like smoke-strip thinly twisting  
against the gloomy sky will remain  
to be seen through the jerky and watery  
curtain, veiling my eyes—you tell me not to worry  
about the future, only the Now is what matters,  
the Now which is sweet, embracing, warm and soft ---  
You are right, Madouce, so right, and that's what I do,  
don't think that I am worrying about a far away  
day of the future which approaches,  
the Now is only what I am worrying about,  
the Now which kept me in its prison cell for decades  
without a chance to escape, and which will carry me  
locked in itself still more decades—oh yes, Madouce,  
the moment we arrive at the station will be Now,  
the moment you kiss me for the last time will be Now,  
the moment you wave to me will be Now  
the snake-like strip of smoke on the grey sky will be Now,  
the infinite emptiness in my heart will be Now,  
Then will be Now then—do you see, Madouce,  
I am worrying about nothing other  
than Now, this ever-present window on the rolling  
and rumbling train of life, through which I watch

the changing scenes outside, and watch them always Now ---  
for I know, Madouce, that when that inevitably  
approaching day arrives, that pale, that wavering  
October day, its harsh Now will sweep away  
even the soft, embracing sweetness of today.  
I know this train, Madouce, it will arrive  
at a station where your Now will be long ago  
and both you and I, as we are lying Now  
together, caressing and kissing each other,  
will be faint and hardly remembered, dead shadows  
swept into the past, far far away  
from Now -----  
-----  
-----tell me, Madouce,  
how to handle the Now when you depart. . . .

September 28, 1965

## REPLY

*to someone who did not like  
my poem "Now"*

You don't like  
a poem  
without rhymes or rhythm  
if it's nothing more  
than a stream  
of thoughts

Why do you like  
a river  
without a bath-tub  
if it's nothing more  
than a flow  
of water

Why do you like  
a mountain  
without the statues  
if it's nothing more  
than uncarved  
rocks

Why do you like  
a thunder  
without a violin clef  
if it's nothing more  
than music  
in chaos



Why do you like  
life  
without it being a film  
if it's nothing more  
than events  
unedited

Why do you like  
a rainbow  
without a spectroscope  
if it's nothing more  
than vibrations  
unregistered

. . . And Man created God to put order in disorder and logic into life and square into round, and He saw that God is good, and there was evening and there was morning—the Eighth Day of Creation. . . .

You are a man

December 9, 1965

## THE TAO OF YOUR ABSENCE

It is impossible  
but still a hard fact  
and unbelievable  
but still deeply felt  
that you are thousands of miles away  
and with me incessantly  
that I do not see you  
and your face floats in front of me  
that I do not hold your hand  
and my hand feels its warmth  
that you are reading or looking or sleeping  
and I still see your eyes looking into mine  
that you left me  
and did not leave me  
that you were here three days ago  
and it was a thousand years ago  
that I returned to my old life  
and it is new and strange  
that I am a cripple without you  
and a miracle that I survive

I know that I will never see you again  
and feel that you will come back to me

and both will be good  
and both will be bad

oh yes, true are all things  
and their opposites, too

feelings weaken  
and strengthen

and enlarge  
and narrow

Only one thing is true  
without contradiction -  
the round frame that holds them together -  
that holds the light half  
and holds the dark half -  
and the dark-in-the-light  
and the light-in-the-dark -  
the round endless line within which all exist -  
the border that distinguishes them from everything else -  
and this is:

THAT  
I  
PAINFULLY  
LOVE  
YOU

December 17, 1965



we wanted  
to run  
freely  
ahead  
to get rid of  
each other  
and the pain  
around our chest

# THE SEMAPHORE WAS SIGNALLING

THE TRAIN THE FLASH THE TRAIN

what if i  
took my foot  
off

the brake

DARKNESS FLASHING CLATTERING  
FROM RIGHT TO LEFT THE TRAIN  
THE TRAIN THE TRAIN FROM RIGHT

# WARNING INCESSANTLY TO STOP

THE FLASH

THE BLACK

THE RED

what if he  
took his feet  
off

the brake

DARKNESS FLASHING CLATTERING  
IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE  
ABOMINABLE ENDLESS

TRAIN

words  
words  
separated  
us -  
bitterly  
utterly  
and carefully  
un-uttered

THE ROAD WAS CLOSED AHEAD  
THE TRAIN WAS ROLLING CLATTERING

WE COULDN'T FREELY MOVE AHEAD  
THE RED LIGHT INCESSANTLY FLASHED

OF US  
a train  
of thoughts  
ran  
clattering  
between  
our hands  
and eyes  
and lips -  
we couldn't  
move

from left  
to right

from right  
to left

just sadly  
sit

just sit  
and look

and look  
ahead

just stiffly  
sit

and look  
ahead

AND WATCH THE TRAIN THE TRAIN  
THE BLACK AND DRY AND PARALYZED

THAT SEEMED TO BREAK OUT FROM WITHIN  
STUBBORN AND KISSLESS SOULS OF OURS

January 17, 1966

## ... THERE WILL BE SILENCE

If she doesn't return,  
there will be silence

There is a silence:  
a future-creating silence,  
a storm-waiting silence,  
a busy pregnant silence,  
a thought-building silence,  
when it signals the approaching -

There is a silence:  
a rocking fulfillment silence,  
a waving harmony silence,  
a Sunday peace silence,  
a chirring-summernight silence,  
when there is no need for sound -

There is a silence:  
a non-communication silence,  
a being fed-up silence,  
a cease-fire silence,  
a looking-away silence,  
when there is no better choice -

There is a silence:  
a burnt-out sun silence,  
a post-atomic war silence,  
a blasted-tree silence  
when the throb faded away -

If she doesn't return:  
I'll speak and they'll chatter,  
I'll weep and they'll joke,

I'll bleed and they'll laugh,  
there will be silence,  
I'll sing my song to the dead -

January 26, 1966



# Tusha and Time

Suddenly, it occurred to me that I was already twenty-five years old, and still hadn't met She who had been promised to me before, but whose name I had forgotten over those twenty-five years. I had to find her, but, before even starting to look for her, I had to find out her name. That was the problem. I wandered all over the world searching in vain for her name.

---

---

When I realized that I had to find out the name of She who had been promised to me, I was lucky. I didn't even have to look for it because the next day, in a park, I met an old beggar with a long beard. He couldn't mislead me, so I told him: "You are Rabindranath Tagore." He understood the password and whispered to my ear: "Tusha". Now, knowing the name, I could descend to the Underworld to find her. I stood on the Western shore of Ultima Thule, a bit west of Norway. I knew that I had to follow the ancient path of Gilgamesh to get to the New World (yet undiscovered). For days and weeks, I waded through the shallow waters till I reached the ice-covered rocky shores of New Found Land, eight centuries ago.

I found the spiral staircase easily. The guard of the cemetery greeted me, but when I looked down at his face, I recognized my own image in his features. This astonished me: I had two daughters,

the eldest twenty-five, the younger nine, but I had not known that I also had a son (once I almost had one). Still, I recognized him right away, but restrained myself from showing that I did. It might hurt him, I thought. I spoke to him as if he really were the guard of the cemetery. "Tusha' is the password," I said in an official tone, but he began to sob. "Why so late? Why so late? Everyone but I had a mother, and that's your fault!" A painful, guilty feeling spread through my being: I had been wasting my years and I had been irresponsible with my only son. How could I have forgotten to provide a mother for him, the most important thing in a young man's life? How could I?

Trying to avoid his rebuking glances, I banged my way down the iron steps of the spiral staircase. Actually, it was a well, a bottomless well that I descended. Upstairs, at the top of the shaft, André's sobbing silhouette was diminishing, but his endlessly repeated cry, "Why so late? Why so late?" echoed, reverberated, ricocheted off the walls of the stairwell, haunting me like a curse.

Finally, I reached the subway station. A whooshing draft heralded the approaching train. When the doors opened, I entered the nearest car. It was empty, except for one man who sat on the bench across from me, like a hobo, his hat covering his eyes. When the doors slammed, he rose at once, stepped toward me and thrust his private detective identification card under my nose: "As you see, I am the Revisor of this train. I was watching you. Where is your ticket?" I tried to explain to him that I hadn't had a chance to buy a ticket because

---

Nervously I searched my pockets, but the man pulled an I.D. card from his pocket first and said: "You can't fool me. We have to put you out. You are a hooligan." (This word, in that time and place, meant "stowaway".) The doors opened again and I found myself alone in the dark tunnel. Forced to walk, I trudged for miles, and was exhausted. The trees were threateningly high on both sides. I could hardly see, the moon kept capriciously (and unpredictably) appearing and disappearing behind the treacherous clouds. I only

hoped there were no snakes in the night-forest.

At last, I saw the shimmering Grotto that enshrouded Tusha. I climbed the rocks, so steep and slippery. A cobwebbed-curtain of silk thread—sieve-like, as some hymens—blocked my entrance and obscured the view into the inside of the Grotto where Tusha stood on a pedestal. She had no face as yet. Her head looked like the head of a manikin in a show window: white, smooth and featureless. “She is still a pupa?” I exclaimed with horror.

The old sculptor emerged from a warren of caves. He was dressed as a hermit (John the Baptist, or someone like him) and very skinny, covered only by mud and olive leaves below the waist. “Of course she is a pupa, but don’t worry. We are now at the Centre!” he said.

“Yes, but I have a son, and he is already twenty-five years old. . . .” I said, exasperated.

“That’s all right,” said John the Sculptor, “we just have to translate her into Time. She’ll be there in time, I promise.”

“But she wasn’t there,” I cried out, “André has no mother, don’t you understand?”

“I do, I do,” said the magician patiently, “it is you who don’t. But look!”

When he opened his arms the river of time began flowing backward. André fell from the heights above. He lay there like Prometheus, a lifeless giant. John turned slowly toward him, his arms open wide. Sparks were jumping to and fro between his hands, the sky thundered above and André began to shrink. When he was as small as a seed, John bent down, snatched him up and breaking through the cobwebbed veil, pushed the seed into Tusha’s belly, puncturing a navel into it. “Take her!” he said.

---

The old magician emerged from one of the many faces of the mountainside. He was clad in rags and ate only roots and berries. A white light glimmered around his head and his hands so that while his body loomed in the darkness, his features and fingers were illuminated by an inner glittering radiation. “What hast thou come here

for?" he asked sternly. With surprise, I recognized John the Baptist.

"I have come for Tusha," I replied.

"Anybody can say that," he laughed bitterly. "First you have to withstand the test. Here is the Centre, and here I dwell without compromise."

---

"Oh, many men have come here to claim her," he laughed mockingly, "but they all failed."

---

"but they were all false. First, I must test you to see whether you are really here in the Centre, or just trying to bluff me. Show me your left hand!" he demanded. I raised my left hand. Illuminated by his light, it now showed its real essence. It retained the shape of my left hand, but instead of skin, flesh and bone, miniature galaxies, solar systems, suns, planets, moons and comets stood fixed in a transparent, empty space, shaped like my left hand. John bent towards it and mumbled: "That's Orion. . . that's Cassiopeia. . . all right! Now, the right hand, please." I raised my right hand. John muttered: "Andromeda. . . the Cygnus. . . Sagittarius. . . that's all right too." I was filled with amazement. Looking down at my body, I discovered that it consisted only of celestial space crammed with stationary universes. I couldn't believe my eyes.

"How is this possible?" I asked John.

"Look up at the sky," he said, "do you see any stars?" I looked up: the sky was empty.

"Where is the sky?" I asked John.

"You are the sky," he answered.

"But why doesn't everything rotate and revolve, why doesn't it whirl and swirl and spiral, as before?" I asked.

"Because you withstood the test!" he replied. "You are the One who should take Tusha! You are the Centre, Eternity, Timelessness. You may take her with you; I empower you to take her and translate her into Time."

I carried away the empty-faced statue in my arms. She was as heavy as a block of marble. She was Euridice and I Orpheus, and as I

walked and walked through the dark tunnel, or perhaps climbed up the steep mountain side, the sky began to lighten. The sun was about to rise and the horizon glowed purple. With every step, the burden of Tusha became lighter and lighter. As I looked upon her, I saw her face change. First, the eyelids rose out of that shapeless form, then the mouth began to form, finally, the nose: from the depths beneath the mountain, John was invisibly working his magic to compose her face.

By the time I arrived at the top of the spiral staircase, Tusha's once-blank face was the flesh and blood face of a living woman, and her breasts rose and fell evenly as she slept.

I looked around in great fear of finding the sobbing André, but he wasn't there. The tombstones of the cemetery weren't there either. Then I remembered with relief that André was but a seed inside Tusha. They were now translated into Time. I just had to wait -----  
—I just have to wait -----I am waiting -----they are now translated into Time -----the ticking of the clock begins tearing through the veils of silence.

August 15, 1981

# My Baby Brother

That's how it started. There were two people sitting in front of me, reading the newspaper. It was sensational. A seventy-year-old man and a sixty-year-old woman! Their photograph was printed in the paper, but the two readers didn't want to show it to me. I felt frustrated. A girl and a boy jealously guarded the paper. I think there was a desk between them and me, and maybe two young men. The reader on the left wore glasses. The one on the right had soft, brown hair. Dark brown.

Actually I think they showed me the photo and I was astonished. My father and mother, after their long captivity, had finally come back to town. My father had always been ten years older than my mother. It was a big miracle—the whole city was talking about it. A sixty year old woman giving birth to a child? Years after menopause. . . . I tried to catch a glimpse of the picture, but the couple turned the page. This really frustrated me. They anxiously read the article, sometimes aloud. The one on the left was Irene. The other was Frida. I was sad that I could not see the photo. I tried to tear the paper out of their hands. But they held on to it. I hadn't seen their faces for such a long time. Had they changed?

No. The way it started was like this. I was alone in the room, doing something. Peter entered the room. "Have you heard the news," he asked me. "What news?"

"It's a real miracle! A sixty-year-old woman has given birth to a baby."



"Come on, that's impossible," I told him.

"It is not! It's true! They returned from Siberia, where they'd been deported for 444 days, and right on the first night when they reunited in the hospital, the woman became pregnant."

"How old was the man?"

"He was seventy. Ten years older than the woman."

"I don't believe it. That's impossible," I said. Peter took the newspaper out of the inner pocket of his jacket, and unfolded it. There, on the third page, was a photo of the old couple. I read the caption and cried out.

"Peter! This is my father and my mother! Look at their names!" Peter looked at the caption and he too, was astonished.

"They really are, but how come you haven't heard about it yet? The whole city is talking about them."

I shrugged. "I don't know. I've been working here in this room, I just hadn't heard about it."

So, my father and mother. I thought they'd died long ago. They did die long ago. They were in a concentration camp, in Germany. That's where they died. I am now . . . how old? I am sixty years old now. But then how can they be . . . Oh yes. It was long ago that they died. Thirty years ago? Thirty-five years ago? Sixty and thirty five, that is sixty and thirty minus my age . . . sounds right.

I first heard about the news like this. Two people were reading the paper excitedly. They started pointing at me with their fingers and laughing.

"What is it? Haven't you heard yet?"

"Heard what?"

"About your parents?"

"No, what about them?"

"You must have heard it, the whole town is talking about them."

"Come on, they died in Budapest. Their house was bombed. They were in the bunker, but they were cold, so they went up to their third floor apartment where they looked for their coats when the bomb hit the house. . . ."

"Well, apparently they survived. Look!" They showed me a photo in the paper.

"My god! They are alive? No, I can't believe it. Take your stupid paper away! I know for sure that they are dead." But again they pushed the paper under my nose.

"Look! They survived! They came home together three or four days ago. They re-united in the hospital. The woman gave birth to a child. Exactly nine months after their re-union. You have a little brother."

Oh, it must be true. I have a little brother. A crying, smiling, sweet little baby brother. He isn't too handsome. He looks like Marco. Marco whom I met yesterday, Doctor Severino's son. Yes, actually when I saw Marco, I thought he looked a bit like me. Marco is twenty years old now. But that's extremely logical. I have a baby brother. The baby looks like Marco who looks like me. I have a baby brother. I always wanted a brother but I never succeeded. My first wife gave life to a girl, Nicola, although I wanted a boy, and my second child, Paulette, is also a girl. And now that I'm fifty years old. . . He could well be my grandson. My baby brother could actually be my grandson!

Now I am impatient to see them. But I cannot go to the hospital. That's terrible! Why can't I go to the hospital to see my father and my mother again? There's no reason! I am not too busy. Nobody is holding me back. Then what? Don't I want to go? I do! I don't know what prevents me, I just can't. It's very frustrating. . . Am I afraid perhaps, that the whole thing isn't true?

I visit my cousin, Erika, and wait for her to start talking about the miracle. I ask some test questions to steer her around to the topic, but she seems to know nothing about it. I must tell her. She listens to me attentively. "I am very happy, Erika. Imagine, finally I have a little boy! I am very happy!" Then I start crying, tears run down my cheeks. I have to stop talking. You see, my father and mother will soon die. I will inherit their son. How can I take care of him? You know that I could die at any moment. I am about my father's age and I am very, very sick. What will happen to the poor baby, if I also die? Who will take care of him? Isn't it terrible?

This is how I first heard about the news. Two young girls, the one on the left with light brown hair, the one on the right with glasses

and dark hair (is she a black girl?), were reading an article in the paper. They read aloud, excitedly. An old couple had come back from a German concentration camp where they were sent to die in gas chambers. They were believed to be dead for thirty-five years, since World War II. The man was seventy and the woman sixty. For thirty-five years, they'd stayed the same age. They hadn't aged. When they re-united in the Toronto St. Jerome Hospital, the seventy-year-old man was in such vigorous health that exactly nine months after the reunion, his wife gave life to a baby whose name is Julius Schuman. The mother's name is Stephanie, the father's Harry Schuman. The two girls laid the newspaper on the desk between us and looked at me. "And they are your parents, aren't they? Isn't that incredible!" I shrugged with false modesty. "I told you, but you didn't believe me," I said. They giggled about Harry Schuman's "vigorous health." Now the whole miracle had acquired a sensational, sexual overtone and I didn't like it. In my mind's eye I saw my old father eagerly mounting my old mother on the hospital-bed, the first night after their return. When was that? Nine months ago? How come they hadn't gotten in touch with me right away? The whole thing seemed quite unlikely. They must have thought I was dead. Otherwise it made no sense. Was I already dead? No, the whole story was stupid: I am not dead. Oh, but they must have thought that I was dead. That's why they created a replacement for me. My name is Julius Schuman too. That's why they named him Julius Schuman: they wanted him to replace me.

I visit my journalist friend, Danny Carter. We are sitting in his oval office. I tell him the story. "You must write an article about them, Danny." He is skeptical.

"Look," he says, "I could, but no one would believe me. At their age? It's completely impossible. I just cannot take the risk. My credibility, you know."

"But you must," I shriek. "It is true! It is a real miracle! You must write about it!" Then I start crying. Tears run down my cheeks. "You see, they did it for me, only for me. My life is totally bankrupt. I never became what I was supposed to become. I could have been a great composer, but external and internal forces prevented me from

doing so. When they returned, they must have heard about me. That's why they didn't notify me. My whole life has been a failure, so they recreated me. Julius will be a better man than me, a second, corrected edition of me. I will have to make him so. I had only two daughters, so he is going to be the real Julius Schuman, the real me."

I am with Erika again, but now she looks a bit like Irene. She understands me completely. "How many times have I cried in front of you?" she asks. "You shouldn't be ashamed now. Cry freely, relieve yourself. Remember when you said the same to me?"

I tell her, "But this is different." Irene keeps pushing the handkerchief to my eyes. "I can't expect my wife to raise him. She was very good to me during the years of my illness. She will have to raise Paulette alone, after I die, and now this new burden. . . . How will she be able to cope with Julius Schuman Junior as well? Last week she told me that she is so tired that she may die before I. Then what? What if I die soon after her? What will happen to me then?"

Irene's face is astonished: "To you?"

"No, sorry, I meant to say 'to my helpless baby brother.'" Her inquisitive, almost accusing face looks completely like Erika's now.

"But why did you say 'me'?" I am very embarrassed. I cannot beat around the bush any longer.

"Because he will be the real me, if you really want to know. I will be gone soon." And I cannot withhold my tears. Compassionately, Irene caresses my head.

Something doesn't let me go to the hospital to see them, my father and my mother. But strangely, I can see them, exactly as if I were there. There, in the same room where, some years ago, I experienced clinical death. I am there, but they don't notice me at all. (Perhaps I really did die then; perhaps the two electric shocks didn't work and the years that have passed since were but a dream, a dead man's dream.) They are lying in the hospital beds, beside each other, my mother on the left, my father on the right. My father has a long beard. After they were shot, Aunt Melanie saw them lying dead on the street. She told me later that my father had a beard. He couldn't shave for weeks during the siege of the city. She said my mother's last words to him were: "What is our Julius doing now, at this mo-

ment? If he survives this hell, I don't mind dying."

"We won't die," my father told her. Then came the bullets and they collapsed. Ever since, they've been my guardian spirits, floating around me, saving me from death on ten or so occasions. Now they seem to be quite happy with the new baby. This is why they had to save my life, so that I could take care of him, so that he could be me, after I die.

I tease my father: "You old lecher." But he cannot hear me.

I see the baby too. He is beautiful, with blond, curly hair. Isn't it strange? Only one day old, but he looks like pictures of me at the age of three. He stretches in the crib. Life is ahead of him. I am so happy for him. Tears run down my cheeks.

I am not there, yet I see my father and mother lying beside each other in the double hospital bed. My father is reading a newspaper. "Stephanie, look," he cries out. "We're in the paper!" My mother doesn't look. She picks Julius up from the crib beside the bed. My father says, "Look, this article says that they shot us, but we didn't die." My mother frees her big white breast and puts the nipple into the baby's mouth. My father takes off his glasses. "You see, I told you that we wouldn't die, didn't I?" The baby's eyes close; he sucks eagerly. Holding him in her soft arms, she looks down at her child and repeats after my father, "We won't die, you were right, we won't die." An infinite smile radiates through her being while her tears run down my face. Her hair is soft, brown.

The end. The screen is empty for a few seconds. Blankness. Darkness. Then, suddenly, just like a postscript to the preceeding, a tombstone rises in front of me, somewhere in an unknown cemetery. Ancient letters are inscribed on the stone: SEMANTHA LEPIDA CAULCIARUM UNUM. Cryptic words, but their message is clear to me. It means that life goes on. Whose tombstone is this, I wonder. Out of the darkness a hard, tall obelisk stands erect, in front of me. Worn, angular letters are carved on its surface. I try to read the words: SEMANTA KHALI KALLOPOULOS DJAKHAR. "He who shall live has lived forever," or something like that. As the incised white letters circle the towering red obelisk, I have to go around it to read the complete sentence. It's difficult to read: Some

words are completely faded. SAMANTHA . . . RECARNATIO . . . EPIDOPOULOS . . . SHIVA. I understand them, at last. Yes. It means: "As long as you die, there is hope for resurrection." Whose tombstone is this? The earth is quaking. White letters shoot out from the top of the shaking, pulsating tombstone, then quiveringly descend and settle on the surface of the still swollen, pink pillar. Some of them fall to the ground, but I can still decipher the fragment sticking to the stone in a spiral line, moving down around it from top to bottom: ANTROPO SEMENTA . . . LUCARNATIO . . . KHALIBRAHMAN . . . ORG. . . Cryptic words, but I understand them. "Creating life is man's main duty on Earth," or, "Man's only duty on Earth," or, rather, "Joy on Earth," or, "Man's only joyful duty," or "Joy is the only duty." Yes. But as I look again, the words seem different. Is this an inscription that changes all the time? What a strange tombstone! Whose tombstone? ORGASMUS PERFECTUS SEMEN HOMINEM SINE EGO DEIFICAT. "Only when making love is one perfectly happy." "The eternal moment makes us selfless." "In the moment of blank bliss, man becomes god." "Only when creating life do we become perfectly, divinely happy." CELLULA KRISHNA VITAM SEMENTA RECARNATIO DJAKHAR. It means: "The cell dies, but the tissue lives on." Of course! The cell of the individual dies, but the tissue of Man (of Life?) on Earth's spherical skin is renewed (by the cell's death?). Whose tombstone is this? I am puzzled. White snow now covers the whole cemetery: the snowfield of non-existence. I look at the letters on the snow. Their arrangement seems random, but they form a pattern. I can clearly distinguish the text. UNKALA ULLA SEMANTA PHEDOCROMANTIA BABUS ANTE PORTAM VITAE. "Whenever a man and a woman desire each other, an unborn child knocks on the gate of existence." But whose tombstone is this? Whose tombstone?

January 31, 1981

# The King of Rubik

I am sitting here again, in Peter's room, talking to him just as if he hadn't starved to death in a Nazi labour-camp, thirty-eight years ago. I am overwhelmed with wonder and happiness! "... but there were people who saw you lying there in a ditch beside the highway. Blood was trickling from your head. You were shot because you were too weak to march on, to retreat from the advancing Russians. How is it that you are alive now?"

Peter responds with his characteristic horse-laughter: "People gossip a lot, you know how it is. Let's talk about you instead."

We are both twenty years old. Peter's mother, a masculine-looking lady with narrow hips, broad shoulders and an aquiline nose, enters the room, screaming: "You can cut the smoke here with a pair of scissors! Enough smoking!" She runs out, gasping and slams the door behind her.

"Well, where should I start? I haven't seen you for such a long time, Peter. During the years since your death, there was a revolution, I left Budapest and emigrated to Toronto. I got married and had a little girl. She is nine years old now. I was a radio-producer for many years."

"What's your daughter's name?" asks Peter.

"Er... wait a second... isn't it strange?... I can't remember her name now... God, what the hell is going on?... "

I am embarrassed. This has never happened to me before. Am I going crazy? Why can't I recall my daughter's name, which I utter



numerous times a day? Peter gives me a quizzical look. I don't know what to do with my hands, so I light another cigarette. -----

Three young men—Stevenson, Frank and I—are sitting in Peter's room. Peter isn't there.

Peter's mother, a masculine woman with narrow hips, broad shoulders and an aquiline nose, enters the room. She looks at us and starts to weep: "Out! Out of here, all of you! I hate you, I hate you all! All of you look healthy and wealthy, but my only son didn't come home! Why? Why couldn't you die instead?" With tears flowing down her cheeks, she runs out of the room. From the doorway, she yells back: "And don't smoke so much!" She slams the door. -----

Stevenson, my beloved friend who has saved my life so many times, sizes up the situation with one glance. In his deep voice, he says, turning to Peter: "Why are you trying to embarrass him? Does it make you happy? Anybody can say his daughter's name!"

"Anybody?" says Peter, annihilated. "But I didn't want to embarrass him," he continues apologetically. "I just wanted to know his daughter's name."

"Come on," says my strong friend and protector, Stevenson, brushing away Peter's ridiculous protestations. "Have you got a Rubik's Cube?"

Now Peter is stammering. "I did. . . I had to give it to Aurica. . . she is getting married tomorrow. It's my wedding gift. . ."

Unable to stand Stevenson's penetrating glance, Peter jumps up and goes to the other room. He soon returns with a small package. Clumsily, he unwraps the red velvet and hands the Cube to Stevenson.

Stevenson looks at the multi-coloured Cube and turns it exactly seven times. Now it is in order. "Natalie," he says victoriously.

I am stunned: "That's it! Natalie! How could I have forgotten? How did you find out?"

"It's a cinch," says Stevenson modestly. "Natalie is composed of seven letters. I had to turn the sides seven times. The first turn was N, the second A, and so on. Anybody can do it. . . ." -----

---

The third man in the room, Frank, is not exactly the same Frank, who is my friend in Toronto. His features have somehow become fused with those of Mr. Rubik, whose photograph I saw in a magazine a few days ago. Mr. Rubik's first name is not Ernő, but Frank. Frank Rubik. It figures; Mr. Rubik of Budapest is the inventor of the Cube, and Frank taught me how to solve the mystery of the Cube in seven easy steps.

"You see," Frank turns toward me, "I'd been wanting to meet you for a long time. I knew that you lived in Toronto and that you missed Peter. I was happy when I heard that you were coming today."

"But how did you know that I was coming tonight? Who gave you this old address?"

Frank takes a Cube out of his pocket. It is made of coloured crystals. "This is my own Magic Cube. I made it myself years ago. The first Cube ever made. Before I came here, it wasn't in order as it is now. I looked at it and figured out where Peter lived thirty-eight years ago."

---

---

Peter and I sit alone in his room. We are teenagers. He is listening to my new poems. But suddenly, I stop reading.

"Go on!" Peter says.

"No, Peter. This is a serious matter. I don't quite know how to tell you."

Peter gets nervous. "Just tell me!"

"All right. We aren't fifteen years old anymore. That was thirty-eight years ago. Remember the boy scout camp where we first met? Remember that I fell in love with your sister Aurica right away?"

"Of course I remember. So?"

"Well, Peter, you died. You were killed during the war. Stevenson resurrected you only this afternoon. He got a Magic Cube from Frank Rubik, my friend in Toronto, he looked at it, turned it thirty-eight times, and, instantly, you were sitting here in your old arm-chair, just as you used to."

Peter is stunned. "But I . . . I never . . . I was always. . . ." He rubs his forehead. "I can't remember. . . ."

"Of course you can't Peter. You see, I felt guilty. It was so hard for me to bear your mother's accusing looks; to cope with the fact that I'd survived and you hadn't; that I was here and you weren't. Stevenson knew that and wanted to help me rid myself of the guilt. And now it's time to let your mother know. She will love me again as before."

I go to the other room. Peter's mother is slumped in the corner, sobbing bitterly. She looks at me with infinite hatred.

"Come with me, Mrs. Prager. I want to show you something." I take her hand gently in mine and lead her into Peter's room.

Stevenson and Frank Rubik sit around the table, reading my poems and smoking. Peter is nowhere to be seen. I don't understand. Just a minute ago. . . .

"I hate you all! I hate you!" his mother screams. "Why did you have to stay alive? Why did my Peter have to be killed? You took his place! You killed him!" She runs out of the room, but in the doorway she turns back: "Out! Out of here! All of you! Murderers! And don't smoke so much! One can cut the smoke in this room with a pair of scissors! My God!" She slams the door.

---

Stevenson's apartment. It is dark in the room. Only a candle sheds some light.

"Can you really do it?" I ask in disbelief.

"Nothing is simpler," says Stevenson. "When is the wedding?"

"Tomorrow! It's tomorrow and she doesn't even know that I love her! From the first minute I saw her, I loved her."

"All right. Don't worry," says Stevenson. "Look!"

He takes the Cube out of his pocket. It is wrapped in a piece of velvet. He unwraps it.

"Look. A—U—R—I—C—A. Six turns. You see, one side has become completely white. White is the colour of the bride. Now look. R—O—B—E—R—T. Also six turns. Both you and her, six: It's a perfect match. You two are made for each other. Now the blue side is

also perfect, and your favourite colour is blue, right? Five turns. L—O—V—E—S. The red side is set. Red is the red rose of love. Y—O—U. Three turns. Green side finished. The colour of hope. That's all. Now go!"

"But two sides are still mixed up."

"I know," says Stevenson. "Just go! With the yellow side, I will guide your steps. By remote control."

"And the sixth?"

"That's orange. That's your honeymoon. Just go. And trust me. I will sit here with the Magic Cube in my hand and take care of everything. Go now!"-----

I walk through the night. The road is so long. The night is so long. I walk through dark alleys. I must be somewhere in the outskirts of Budapest. I pass old, suspicious-looking, buildings. From the windows, yellow light filters out to the streets. Yellow. Stevenson must be sitting in his room now, turning the yellow side. How come I haven't found Aurica yet? Drunken beggars, pimps and derelicts stagger about me. Prostitutes wink at me, calling me in. No I want Aurica. Did Stevenson forget the formula? Seven easy steps? That's impossible. But nothing is impossible. I am walking, walking, walking. I am very tired.

The horizon turns orange. Is it dawn already? Orange. But orange is supposed to be the honeymoon! Hey, what's going on? Stevenson, hast thou forsaken me?

I must turn back. I have to find Stevenson. The dawn is orange on the horizon. It must be a mistake.

I am exhausted, but I keep walking back the way I came. The houses are so strange. This is not my city. Where am I? In the distance, the silhouette of a black skyscraper draws itself against the orange canvas of the sky. Toronto? Am I in North America again, instead of Budapest? Am I fifty-one years old again, instead of twenty? Instead of seventeen? Am I to find Natalie again, my nine-year-old daughter, instead of Aurica, my seventeen-year-old love? Do I have to continue my is-life, instead of realizing an if-life? Have I lost Aurica again? That's awful. I feel guilty. Am I not happy to see my little darling Natalie again—my smart, beautiful daughter who

speaks three languages, plays the piano, dances and draws and everything? I am an irresponsible, unreliable, evil man. But that's not like me. This can't be me!

-----

When I approach it, I see that the black shape is not a skyscraper, but a castle. A beautiful castle, like Casa Loma, but much bigger. It is built on top of a hill so it must be a royal castle. As I approach, trumpets begin to sound, playing the same regal tune heard at Stratford before performances of Shakespearean plays. Servants are busy rolling out the red carpet, they stop before me.

"Welcome home!" say the two servants in chorus. "Welcome home, King of Rubik!"

Me, a king? I look at myself. "But I am clad in rags!" I say to the servants.

"You cannot mislead us, Lord of the Cube," says one of the servants. "We all know of your deeds, of how you wandered around the world, clad in rags and fought the dragon. Of how, incognito, you mingled with the people, performing miracles, solving the problems of the confused and resurrecting the dead. We know everything. We want you to be our ruler again. We want you to govern us; to smooth over our little fights, eliminate our poverty, and bring us bounty, in accordance with the promises of the prophets. Your cubic room is waiting for you. Just follow us!" -----

-----

No matter how many times I tell them that it isn't me, but Stevenson, or Frank whom they seek, they just laugh. This is like a dream—it must be a dream! When and how did I cross the ocean? And where is Natalie? And Aurica? This whole thing is utterly absurd. I wander about in the echoing, empty rooms of Casa Loma, my royal castle at the top of the hill—I, the King of Rubik. -----

-----

These are good times. The dark night is over. Guilt no longer eats away at me inside. The sky is serene. The sky is blue and blue is my

favourite colour. Someone said that to me before. Who? I can't remember now. But someone said it and not too long ago, that much I do remember. Who was it? Who said it? I cannot remember. Was it in a previous life?-----  
-----  
-----

My Vizier stands beside me, awaiting orders. Why do I have a vizier? Do they think, perhaps, that I am Haroun al Rashid, the ancient Persian Caliph who, assuming a different guise every night, sometimes as a beggar, other times as a merchant, sneaked out the back-door of his palace to mingle with his people in order that he could know them better and thus rule them with righteousness?

"Vizier, who do you think I am, Haroun al Rashid?"

"No, my king, we know you to be Haroun al Rubik," said the Vizier bowing.

This is silly. I must find out where I am and who I am, for I seemed to have lost my identity. It is as if I were newborn today; born as an adult without a past, without a childhood. Or did I lose my memory? What is that sickness called? Asia? Eurasia? Indonesia? Malesia? Oh yes. Amnesia.

"Vizier, tell me! Is this Toronto? When did I cross the Ocean? What is the name of this castle? Casa Loma?"

The Vizier bows again.

"I know well, my Lord, that you are only testing me. I am your new vizier, and you have every right to do so. Well then, hear my answers to your testing questions. I hope you'll find them satisfactory, and confirm me in my honourable post. If, however, you find me not capable of matching the standards necessary to my high rank, then you must decapitate me and name a new vizier.

"Hear then, my Lord.

"This is not. . . Casallo, or Caloma, or whatever you said. I've never heard that word. We are in the Rubicastle. The city is not Tonto or Ronto; I do not know where that city could be: This is Rubicropolis. Our beautiful city has six districts; the White, the Green, the Blue, the Orange, the Red and the Yellow districts. The people live in cubicles, each coloured according to their districts.

Our citizens look back to an obscure bloody and shameful history, which changed only on the day you came to us. . . .”

“Yesterday?” I interjected.

“No, my Lord, yesterday you only returned from your long journey. You first came to this country thirty-eight years ago, when you were twenty years old. . . .”

“Just tell me two things. Where did I come from? And what was my name before?”

“My Lord, I shall never betray my sacred oath. In vain do you ask of me two of the three questions which are protected by the most sacred taboos of my initiation. My head is too dear to me to lose it, so I shall never answer these questions, not for anyone, not even you. Rather, let me proceed with my examination.

“When you came to our land, Rubiola, from the Unknown, you brought with you the spirit of innovation. You founded the three orders: the caste of the Centre, or Priests; the caste of the Edges, or Artisans; and the caste of the Corners, or menial workers. You introduced the Rubikalendar, which divides the year into nine months, each lasting twenty-seven days; and fifty-four weeks, each lasting six days. The year of your arrival has become the centre of Time: The years before that are marked with B.R.; after that, with A.R.”

“What does that stand for?” I asked.

“Before Rubik and After Rubik, of course.”

“What year is it now?”

“We are now in 38 A.R., my Lord. Concerning the ocean, there is no ocean I know of you could have crossed. There is, however, a river you must have crossed before entering the rubicapital.”

“What’s the name of that river? Lethe?”

“I have never heard that name. The river you crossed is called the Rubikon.”

“Who are our neighbours? Are they friendly or hostile?”

“We have no neighbours, my Lord. We are all alone. No other lands, no other peoples surround us. We are the only existing land, we are the only existing people in this world. By the two pillars of the city-gate, two kirubs stand on guard. . . .”

“Did you say ‘cherubs?’”

"No, I said 'kirubs.' Two kirubs stand on guard with flaming swords, to protect us, so that no one may enter or re-enter this land. No one who comes from the Land of Unknown."

"What kind of land is that Land of Unknown, and where is it?"

"This is the third question I must never answer to anyone, not even to you, my Lord, according to my sacred oath." -----

-----

Strangely, whatever my Vizier told me, I remembered immediately. I really had ruled over that land for thirty-eight years. As he spoke, everything came back. I even began remembering things he had not mentioned. I remembered, for instance, that for some strange reason there were no mirrors in the entire land. After crossing the Rubikon and becoming king, my first decree had been the abolition of mirrors. Whether I had acted of my own free will, or to carry out a superior command, I could not recall.

I also knew, without my Vizier reminding me, that I would soon have to mete out justice to my people. -----

-----

I was sitting on my throne, in the Rubicubic Room. Each surface in the room had been painted a different colour: the ceiling was white, the floor, yellow, and the four walls, red, blue, green and orange. Before the throne, in the centre of the hall, stood the gigantic Rubix on a golden stand, the royal symbol of my power, containing nine faces on each of its six sides, altogether fifty-four faces of twenty-six cubicles.

Two women entered. They prostrated themselves before me. One of them accused the other of having given birth to a stillborn baby and of swapping it with her living baby. The other woman claimed that the live baby was hers and that the first woman's accusations were false.

I asked the first mother to reset the mixed-up Rubix. She laboured at it for a long time and sweat broke out on her face. Finally, she gave up. The other mother then stepped to the Rubix, which, after a few turns, was perfectly reset, each side shining with one single colour.



"The child is yours!" I concluded loudly. She kissed my feet. The other woman's face burned with shame as she left. -----

Many people came every day for a rubik reading. Some were sick: I healed them; some had family problems: I counselled them; some were emotionally disturbed: I helped them; some were litigating: I heard their cases. The procedure was always the same. After hearing their complaints, I told them to scramble the Rubix. I then examined their Rubigraph. My Vizier transcribed my solution onto a piece of parchment, rolled it into a scroll and gave it to them as their Rubigram.

Every afternoon magi, seers, and dream-interpreters came to me. I lectured to them because I knew that one day they would take over my job, and the sick, the poor, and the disturbed would need good rubicologists.

Every evening, the publisher of the local newspaper came to the palace to pick up the column personally written by me. It was entitled, "Your Daily Rubiscope." -----

One day, I noticed a little girl among the people lining up along the walls of the Rubicubic Room. I motioned her closer.

"How old are you, little girl?"

"Nine."

"Oh yes, I had felt that it was so. And what's your name?"

"Natalie."

"What a nice name! Once someone told me about a little girl by that name, but now I don't remember who it was. What's your problem?"

"I lost my daddy. Where can I find him?"

"Mix up the Magic Cube, Natalie."

The little girl, with great effort, began pushing the huge sides of the Rubix, but after eight turns she got tired and stopped. Now I stepped to the Cube, and while resetting it, called out the letter of each turn:

B—U—D—A—P—E—S—T.

"Go to Budapest, Natalie, that's where your father was last seen.

You shall find him there.”

Natalie’s face radiated happiness as she ran out of the room.

Only one woman remained in the room, the one who had been last in line. She wore a veil: I couldn’t see her face. I was behind the immense Rubix, hunched over it, so that she wouldn’t see my face in the dimly lit room.

She stepped forward and stood opposite me on the other side of the Rubix.

“What troubles you, woman?” I asked her.

She had a voice soft as silk.

“I had a small Rubik’s Cube wrapped in red velvet. A young man named Stevenson stole it. I was supposed to be wed the next day, but my bridegroom didn’t show up. I ran to Stevenson for an explanation and to demand that he give it back to me. Stevenson admitted that he stole my Cube, but told me that he did it in order to guide me to Robert, who secretly loved me. He said that it was predestined in the numberless variations of the Cube that Robert was to marry me.”

This excited me. “And?” I asked, taking care, meanwhile, to remain hidden behind the immense Rubix.

She continued: “Then Stevenson broke out crying. He admitted that, while he was manipulating the sides of my Cube in order to guide Robert to me, the Cube fell from his hand and broke into pieces. He couldn’t put it back together: its inner spring was irreparably destroyed. Stevenson eventually collapsed under the unbearable burden of his guilt.”

“And you?” I gasped, overwhelmed that finally Aurica and I had found each other.

“And I? I was broken hearted, too. I’d always loved Robert, but never dared tell him. I did not love the man I finally agreed to marry. For years I looked for Robert, but couldn’t find him anywhere.”

I stepped out from behind the Rubix. I lifted her veil:

“Look at me, Aurica!”

Aurica slowly raised her eyes and looked at me. But, oh, instead of joy that she at last found me, her love, an indescribable look of hor-

ror swept over her face: "It's not true! It can't be true! It's black magic! You must be the devil!"

And shaking, trembling, casting curses upon me, she hit the magic Rubicrystalcube with her fist. It fell with a crash onto the Yellow floor and broke into splinters. As she ran from the six-coloured room, her steps loudly echoed through the empty rooms. -----

Help me! Where am I? Who am I? Am I a leper? The horror that gripped her face upon seeing mine! And Robert, Aurica's lost lover, must be Natalie's lost father, as well! Why hadn't they recognized me? Why hadn't I recognized them? What is this bond that suffocates me. I have to break it at once!

Where is a mirror? There are no mirrors anywhere. Not in Rubicastle, not in Rubicropolis! I am running around, looking for a mirror left by chance! I am a madman now. I am Oedipus trying to solve his own mystery. I must run to the Sphinx standing outside the city walls, out in the Unknown. But I am no Oedipus, and there is no Sphinx. Suddenly, I know.

I run out of the empty rooms, out of the castle, clad in rags again, the way I arrived. I run through the city, among the multi-hued cubicle-houses. Leaving the capital behind me, I make my way through the fields, trampling the flowers as I pass. The sun is setting on an orange horizon. Orange, my Aurica! Breathlessly, I run until, in the distance, I see the black water of the Rubikon. I must reach it before the sun goes down. ---

I arrive at the river. Evening is setting fast. I kneel down on the bank and lean over the water.

From the depths of the flowing, black mirror-like river below, a darkening face, lit for an instant only by the last ray of the setting sun, looks back at me. It is not my face! Yes. Now I understand. I am no longer haunted by guilt about having survived. Now I understand how I have been repenting for continuing to smoke and read my poems, and for being healthy and wealthy as a survivor of raving, cataclysmic human mass-madness. In shock and with growing anxiety, I realize that I, who have lived for thirty-eight years as the

only ruler of a lonely, mirrorless city bordered by no neighbouring lands, oblivious, in my own private heaven and among the self-imposed sacred mysteries of my own origin, all along. . . I have been—Peter.

January 12-13, 1982

The Ballade of  
Christian Gringoire

It happened in Paris  
in the Seventies

One day  
on Place St. Hilaire  
a dog stopped  
and stabbing the cement of the trottoir with his nose  
whimpered  
just whimpered  
he had to be dragged away by force

That's how it started  
quietly  
quietly

A month later  
another dog  
did the same  
in the same spot

Always more dogs

The storekeepers sitting  
in front of their shops  
waiting for customers  
found it strange

They went over to the spot  
sniffed around it like dogs -  
nothing

Flies began  
falling  
onto the ground  
always  
at the same spot where  
the dogs stabbed the ground  
with their noses:  
mosquitoes  
bees  
began falling too -  
the storekeepers went over and swept them away  
every morning  
and sniffed around -  
strange . . .

Cats were indifferent for a long time  
but one day, one cat  
when stopping over that spot  
shuddered -  
The storekeepers watched

Other cats walked  
unsuspecting  
over the spot  
on the small Paris square  
and at that cobblestone  
all shuddered  
looked around frightened  
and ran away -  
the storekeepers just watched

By now  
they had to  
sweep the fallen insects  
three times a day  
there were so many

Then a sparrow fell

One day it happened  
the grocer got hit  
by some unknown force  
while sweeping the bees

From that  
day on  
the people who walked over the spot  
couldn't see a thing  
couldn't hear a thing  
only their nerves  
quivered

On a Thursday a policeman  
walked majestically  
over the spot  
the storekeepers watched him  
    ooops!  
they broke out laughing

And it came  
and it came  
and it got stronger  
the neighbourhood began to  
sit out on their balconies  
watching the spot  
the empty spot  
where from the ground



from under the ground  
an invisible force  
electricity  
magnetism  
maybe ultrasound  
an invisible ray  
maybe radium  
came  
came  
came  
came  
incessantly  
invisibly  
inaudibly  
increasingly  
incredibly  
and no one knew what it was

A priest walked over it  
his hair stood up on end  
    he looked around  
the old women on the balconies  
made the sign of the cross  
the priest took a step forward  
his hair lay down again  
    hmm

Everyone felt it  
even the bulky butcher said  
it must be ultrasound  
he couldn't hear a thing  
but his nerves could he said

Everyone felt it  
everyone spoke about it  
it was screaming inaudibly

it was glowing invisibly  
it was scorching intangibly  
incessantly  
increasingly  
the vibration  
the ultrasound  
the whatever  
from under the ground

One evening  
they noticed  
there was no moon in the sky  
it was new moon  
that part of the street was enshrouded in darkness  
but  
at that spot  
from the cobblestone of the trottoir  
a thin vertical line  
like a string, no, thinner, like a wire  
even thinner, like a violin chord  
like a strand of hair  
rose  
straight  
up to the sky  
it was pale-white  
the tailor noticed it first  
he told the grocer  
who told the butcher  
soon five ten twenty-five people  
surrounded it in amazement  
looking down at the ground  
and up to the sky  
they all heard a barely audible  
tingling sound like that of a  
far-away drill

Next night  
the line was silver  
the sound was piercing their ears

The third night  
they couldn't stand it  
the sky-high line was glistening-blinding  
they couldn't look at it  
the sound was unbearable  
a drill straight into their ear-drums  
a huge crowd gathered  
the police came out  
armed with pick-axes  
they yelled at the crowd to disperse  
and began pecking the cobblestones  
the pebbles under it  
the soft soil  
the dank clay  
there was a large ditch  
they were standing in it  
around the thin silver pillar piercing through the clouds  
the crowd came back and stared into the ditch  
like mourning relatives into a freshly-dug grave  
after the coffin had descended

One hour  
two hours  
one of the pick-axes broke  
an iron plate was there  
now they began shoveling around it  
an iron box appeared  
like a small coffin for a baby  
they carefully lifted it out  
in that instant the line disappeared  
the sharp buzz stopped

Two or three policemen placed the box  
into the trunk of the police-van  
and drove away thinking  
they'd found a treasure  
leaving behind a deep ditch in the street  
the people went home to sleep

The box now lay on a table  
in one room of the police building  
they tried to open it  
but they couldn't  
they tried to break it  
they couldn't  
they called a locksmith  
he couldn't  
the box seemed to resist  
memos were written back and forth  
to and from the superiors  
a long article appeared in the *Paris-Soir*  
"Le Miracle de la Place St. Hilaire"

An old professor of French literature  
read the article and remembered  
that in 1939 his friend  
a cultural attaché, gave him a key  
He asked him to keep it  
when he left for America

The key belonged to an iron box  
that the attaché had hidden in his cellar  
as a favour for his mistress  
an actress who'd given him the box

The attaché never returned from America  
his street was bombed during the war  
and the cellars collapsed

after the war they built a high tenement-house there  
to replace the former small homes -  
the spot from where the white line arose  
was just above the cellar  
of the attaché's house of long-ago

After a few days of hesitation  
the professor could no longer resist the growing  
urge around his chest  
He put the key into his pocket  
and went to see the actress  
he remembered where she lived  
the actress had died some years ago  
but her sister still lived there  
she offered coffee to the old professor

He asked her if she had read the article  
she hadn't  
he asked her if she knew about the box  
she didn't  
but remembered  
that her sister at the same time  
(or perhaps before?)  
when she was the paid mistress of the  
middle-aged married attaché  
was also in love with a young man  
who wrote poems to her  
until he was called for military service  
and died a few months later on the front  
he might have given that box to her sister, Roxane

The professor finished his coffee  
and thanking her for it and for her time  
walked to the police station  
and claimed the box

They'd already put it in a closet  
since the sensation died down  
and since the piercing sound  
and the blinding light  
had stopped coming  
no longer bothering them

The professor, to simplify matters  
said the box was his  
lost in the war  
thirty odd years ago  
the police asked for proof  
he pulled the key out of his pocket  
they inserted it into the keyhole of the box  
the box opened

It contained sheets of papers  
nothing but paper  
no gold no diamonds no coins no pearls  
only poems written on sheets of paper  
written with faded blue ink on yellowed fraying paper  
so there was no reason why the police  
shouldn't have given the box to the professor

He went home  
and began reading the poems  
they were love-poems to Roxane  
but not only  
they were poems also about the city of Paris  
the thumpingly approaching monster of the war  
the glittering worlds in the night sky  
the object of fleeting human life which was a constant search for  
the object of fleeting human life  
the nature of nothing  
and the structure of infinity  
future ages

they were poems unlike any ever written before in French  
or in any language on Earth  
but not only were there poems  
but short stories too and plays and essays and novels  
all unique  
The professor couldn't help weeping and laughing aloud  
while reading them  
he was floored  
he'd found a brother of Rimbaud of Musset of Villon  
and also of Goethe of Petrarch of Ovid  
a brother of his own never known self

The young man had written since the age of fifteen  
until his death at twenty-three  
he called himself Christian  
(after Christian who loved Roxane)  
He chose Gringoire  
(after Gringoire the medieval dramatic poet  
who was resurrected in Victor Hugo's 'Notre Dame de Paris')  
Christian Gringoire  
but that wasn't his real name

Roxane's sister didn't know his real name  
the professor didn't either  
no one knew

In half a year  
the professor finished sorting out the manuscripts  
there were twelve books mainly poems  
he gave them to a publishing company  
the editor was stunned  
the publisher was happy

The critics were ecstatic  
the public raved

The twelve books of Christian Gringoire  
caused an upheaval  
in the literary circles of Paris  
of France  
of Europe  
of the world  
the professor was celebrated  
for his role as a midwife

A midwife who turned the black metal coffin  
into a cradle -  
a midwife who gave birth to an immortal  
the young Christian Gringoire who  
thirty odd years after his death  
became the leading poet of his age  
thirty odd years ago -  
an age that did not know him at all -  
a midwife who gave retroactive birth to a nameless deadman

One afternoon  
there were three knocks on his door  
he opened it  
Roxane's sister stood there

He invited her in  
made coffee  
they drank it and chatted  
then she pulled an envelope from her purse  
and handed it over to him  
she'd found it in a drawer  
among the letters written to Roxane  
long ago when she was young

The professor put on his glasses  
and holding the yellowed torn sheet of paper  
in his trembling hands



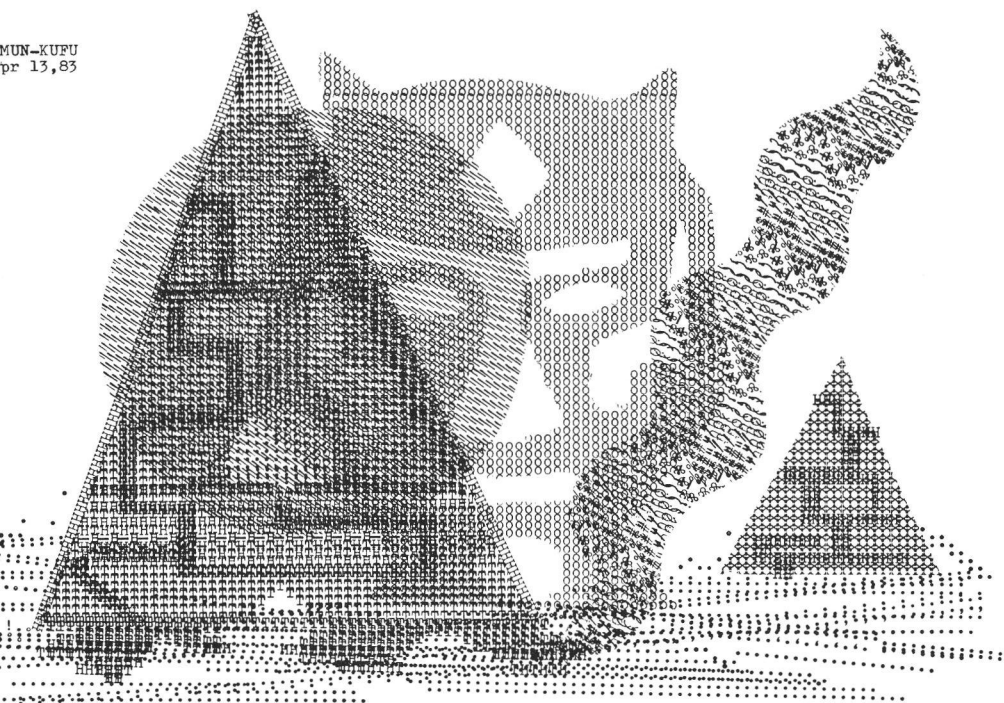
toward the light  
began to read it aloud:

My Roxane,

This is my last letter to you, I feel it, I know it. I am writing between attacks, crouching at the bottom of this miserable trench. Here I am, herald of life, prophet of a future Eldorado, reduced to shooting at clerks and blacksmiths, at students and peasants, at miners and artists, people I had never any disagreement with, people I never even knew, husbands and fathers and sons, stamp collectors, concert-goers, soccer fans, who, I am told, are my enemies. I am forced to do this and I can no longer take responsibility for it. In a moment when no one sees, when my controllers look away, when darkness descends, I will turn my gun toward my own head or heart and kill the enemy of those whom all refer to as "I." In vain do I shoot my bullets into the air; sooner or later they fall, and 'tired bullets' kill the same as vigorous ones do. Is it not better that one innocent person die rather than hundreds, even if that "one" is me? You may ask, one person more or less, what does it matter? It is true, but I am no longer willing to identify with the mass-murderer I've become. I have no right to preach the virtues of water, if I, myself, am drunk from wine. Farewell to you, my Roxane, and forgive your lover for leaving you. My love toward you was infinite, it burnt me inside, incessantly, it split me into two. One half of my self, my spirit, felt like eloquent Cyrano, who whispered the love poems to the other half of my self, the wordless Christian, who was overwhelmed by your beauty and had only a dumb heart, which loved you. It loved you as much as it loved to live, as it loved our togetherness, as it loved this world, this magnificently repulsive and repulsively magnificent work of creation around us. My last wish is that you take care of the manuscripts I left with you to save for me until after the war. I shall never return to ask you for them. But, save them for others who are, and will be, like I was: another flame of the same eternal fire. Place them all in a box and hide them away for an age when our brothers and sisters will not have to live in sin and in shame for their sins; when they will be allowed to be humans and no

longer forced to act like ferocious animals of a suicidal race. Save them somehow, I beg you. This is my last will. My Cyrano-spirit shall live on in my words even when my person, locked in the body of Christian, will be no more. Cyrano shall return to save Christian again. My spirit will come back from the dead to make the mute pages speak. I don't know when, I don't know how, but it will. Until then . . . de profundis clamo . . . save me, Roxane!

Loving you till I die, loving you even after, loving you for ever,  
your Christian.



# Magellan's Tombstone

This is my tombstone. I am delivering it in the year 12,583 A.D., a few full moons after my 825th birthday. The time has arrived for me to voice-carve this epistle, for my life force is gradually abandoning me. According to mystical hearsay, there will come a day when I shall, once again, be given the opportunity to listen to my voice as preserved by this tombstone. I do not know it for certain: I do not know anything for certain. But others will hear it, that much I know: The sons of my sons, who will live somewhere else, somewhen else, somehow else, and who, in some unnamed time hence, will attempt to reach out to us and our time for the wisdom that has been long lost and forgotten. It is they whom we serve with our cemeteries, as we are served in our age by the dead of the recent past.

When I was born, I was given the name Magellan by my parent-phalanx, where I spent my childhood. Unlike others, my name has always puzzled me, and perhaps its missing meaning was the thrust that drove me to search and become the celebrity that I am now. Even my first memory is linked to this riddle that is my name.

I was five years old when an old man—citizen of another, distant phalanx-city—arrived to present our library with some new type of pyramid-shaped boxes containing information about the coming age of storm, darkness and deluge. (Never again did I see those boxes: they must have been sealed and stored away by the librarian-priests of the Inner Dome). That old man, our guest, was approximately the

same age then as I am now, possibly a bit older. When I first saw him, I was struck by how different he looked, compared to our own elders. My people possessed stocky, muscular bodies with square-shaped heads and bearded, benevolent faces. The stranger's face, however, was pinched and triangular, his lean body revealed every tendon beneath his weathered skin.

As if it were yesterday, I remember approaching him and asking: "Do all men in your land look like you?" He laughed and said: "Yes and no: One day you will see for yourself and know why." Then he asked me my name and when I told him, he was visibly taken aback, apparently overcome with awe. With respect and admiration he said: "So then, you are the one who came to fulfill the promise of the first one!" This confused me, but when I asked him who the first one was, his lips remained locked.

My native city—I left it almost eight centuries ago, but I still remember it well—was called Ut-Noah-Pishu-Tim, meaning the Way to Survive Through Planned Selection. When I was about a hundred and fifty years old, I left my home to visit another city-tower, where I recognized the alter egos of the old man of my childhood. (Of course, I asked about him, but he was dead by then.) This was in the dome of Zeh-Bual-Lon, which means Gathering and Spreading Information. Here, I was amazed to discover how right had been my first childhood-intuition, for here I learned that every phalanx-land bred its own, phrenologically different type of human, each carefully geneto-programmed to look after a specific project, as ordained by Khu-Fu, or Central Plan, a distant community.

I remember very well how and when everything started. Immediately before Khu-Fu issued the first emergency decrees, Zeh-Bual-Lon predicted the birth and rise of a new power, who had only then just started to kick about in the womb of the Earth, and who was given (after his then barely audible cry) the name: Yo. As I record these words, he has grown from one end of the horizon to the other, and as the time of his birth draws near, is called Yyyaaahhhooo. He seems to be taking over all powers on Earth and no one is able to stand against him: criticism, philosophical theories, all forms of re-

sistance are futile—or so I believe. On him and on him alone will we all depend, Khu-Fu included.

It is time for me to say more about Khu-Fu. This tower-city, the smallest of all, was built in antiquity to be the heart of all phalanxes on Earth. At present, Khu-Fu functions as the guidance centre of all the other structures, and controls all facets of cultural and scientific progress on the surface of the planet by circulating information within the network of phalanxes telepathically. It transmits elaborate orders on the nature of the research to be done and receives detailed data on the results. Khu-Fu is a highly sacred, secret place.

Its only bridge with the outside world is the Seer's Chamber. There, the oracle-priestess utters cryptic answers to the unuttered questions of those who come to her eager to know their destiny.

I was nearly two-hundred and fifty years of age when, after visiting all the domes on Earth and the planets around the Sun, a strange, irresistible urge arose within me to go to Khu-Fu and find out about my own programmed fate. As I stood before her—she who is said to be as old as the pyramid itself—uncontrollable thoughts stormed inside me: What does my name mean? What is my destiny? Who was the one who came before me, the one who bore my name and whose promise I was destined to fulfill? But I hadn't yet opened my mouth to ask these questions when the priestess began to answer. I remember that she sat near to me yet seemed far away. In appearance, she was both young and old: living flesh and timeless stone. Her face was breathtakingly beautiful and yet, at the same time, awesomely horrifying, and though her eyes were closed (as if she were far away in a distant dream) they seemed open (as if looking at me, piercing through me). Slowly, in a kind of muffled chant, her velvet voice uttered the words that, even today, I remember word for word. This is what she said:

TO KNOW IS A PRIVILEGE FOR HIM WHOSE ROLE IS TO  
TEACH -  
BUT FOR HIM WHOSE ROLE IS TO BE TAUGHT, NOT  
KNOWING IS A BLESSING  
YOUR NOMEN IS YOUR OMEN FOR YOUR SIGN IS THE  
RING -

YOU SHALL END WHERE YOU STARTED FOR YOUR IN-  
FINITE IS FINITE -  
GO BLINDLY AHEAD, NEVER LOOKING BACK AT THE  
BEARER OF YOUR NAME -  
THOUGH YOU TWO SHALL BE ALWAYS MENTIONED  
TOGETHER  
AS TWIN-BROTHERS SEPARATED BY LANDS AND CEN-  
TURIES -  
AND THE FIRST OF YOU WILL BE THE SECOND -  
AND THE SECOND THE FIRST -  
THANKS TO YOUR NOMEN WHICH MADE YOU THE  
SECOND -  
THANKS TO YOUR OMEN WHICH MADE YOU THE  
FIRST -

After my visit to the oracle of Khu-Fu, I was much more confused than before: instead of one mystery—my name—to be solved, I had several more. The ambiguity of my being the first or the second also bothered me: if I were the first, how could I fulfill the promise of the other? But if I were the second, why didn't I know about the first? Did he live perhaps in the Dark Ages, on one of the sunken islands of time? Was Khu-Fu the center of all lands? If it were, then were my old maps all wrong? If it were not, had the oracle lied? Could the two contradictory statements be true? If so, how?

I organized new flights around the Earth to double-check the correctness of my maps and found that the real center of all dry land on the globe was a cone-shaped mountain, where on the present day ruins of circular steps, once lay the hanging gardens of Adana. In today's language "adan" means dust. There, the four rivers had their origin: Orop, meaning North; Aşa, meaning East; Opher, meaning South; and Amer, meaning West. There was the Original Breath, once called At-Ma or Ada-Ma, incarnated into human flesh at the focal point of refracted cosmic rays. Why wasn't Khu-Fu built there?

I studied the enigma of the Dark Ages to find an answer, but came away none the wiser for it. While spending decades in the most gigantic of all towers, named Akh-Ka-Sha (meaning Memory Data



Centre), I received very intriguing information about various branches of long-forgotten, arcane knowledge, but never anything about the other Magellan, nor about how Khu-Fu can or cannot be the centre of all lands.

At Akh-Ka-Sha I learned, among other things, that there was an age when the words “tombstone,” “epistle,” and “letter”—synonyms today—had once stood for three different concepts. Tombstones were markers placed above the rotting bones of the deceased ones, who were laid to rest in artificial forests where thousands of tombstones were substituted for trees. The word “epistle” described a communication marked by hand that one sent to his contemporaries. I cannot imagine any reason why one would want to manually scribble mere word-characters for those living at present, when thought-messages fly much faster than anything. “Letters” or literature meant something similar, except that these letters were written for future generations, much like our tombstones. The true and clear message, however, became distorted by this primitive hand-marking process, which contorted the words and dressed them in symbols and metaphors and parables so that eventually hundreds of researchers (called Critics) were needed to figure out the original meaning of these letters, each interpreting them differently and each accusing the other critics of having misunderstood them. Then came the Professors, who taught the young about the various opinions of the critics because no one remembered the author and his real intentions any longer.

I may be accused of being narrow-minded—by all of you, sons of my sons, future friends—but I cannot imagine any system better than ours: we place our talking tombstones into the cemetery-library where visitor-readers can take them out whenever they want the dead to talk to them. That is why and how I am talking now to you, whom I cannot see; to you, who do not yet live. Will the cemetery library of our great island, Ata-Lan-Thea (meaning Past-Present-Future), survive the tides and ebbs of time? Sometimes I wonder. . . .

Still, even if it does not, I must obey the burial traditions as did all my forefathers. . . .

In the meditation-chamber of the Akh-Ka-Sha phalanx, I was able to interchange a sense of space with a sense of time. This is how I did it: I first chose a fixed geographical point on Earth (or, as easily, on another planet) and, emptying myself, I projected that point into time. Thus, the point became an infinitely long avenue and I could walk forward or backward along it. As I progressed—somehow without motion—along that avenue, the landscape around me would change instant by instant: I could march through the history of that point while staying at the same spot. On one occasion, I descended (in my thoughts, or beyond them) onto the waves of the Him-Ala-Ya (meaning Great Rock Wave) and started walking backward on its time-projection while hovering over the same spot. Soon, the water turned into a desert which then rose into a mountain, the highest mountain that ever existed: so I knew that in the distant past that geographical point was a mountain which through many metamorphoses had flattened into a lowland and had then deepened into a valley that was flooded by the sea.

A thousand inner miracles happened to me in that Akh-Ka-Sha chamber; so many that they are impossible to name. My knowledge grew immensely. I became others, an infinite number of others, instead of the one, single being, Magellan. I knew what it was like to be a fish or a leaf, a sun or a comet, I could contract and enlarge in space and time, I was able to convert the century-long processes of the slowly rotating Milky Way into one of my moments and slow the milli-second burst of a photon in a light-ray into one of my years. I could be dead for months and time my resurrection, so that while my body lay dead, my soul could move into the body of any other living being and remain a silent witness. Or I could choose sleep without dreams and thus rejuvenate. In that Akh-Ka-Sha chamber I became a deity, or if you like, a myriad of deities, all of them squeezed into one mortal individual, Magellan.

But after a while, I began to notice that although I opened each dot of infinity and entered into a separate infinity and that each second of eternity led into a separate eternity, my journeys were still limited in their directions. There were many dead-ends, and walls

and gates that never opened up to me, resisting my efforts to penetrate them. The destiny of my name and the location of Khu-Fu remained two such taboos all the way through. As if mocking me, the velvet chant resounded again in my ears: GO BLINDLY AHEAD, NEVER LOOKING BACK. . . . And also: YOUR DOUBT IS THE FORCE THAT WILL GUIDE YOU. . . . For how long, I wondered, would I yearn to unravel the ambiguous augury. . . and be a slave of an unknown destiny as set by Khu-Fu? . . . I decided to forget about my namesake. . . to go ahead not blindly, but with a thousand seeing eyes. . . not to doubt and not to believe, but to know instead. . . and, above all, to make a fresh start. I left Akh-Ka-Sha never to return to it.

First, I set out to found my own kingdom, strong enough to turn against (and eventually destroy) Khu-Fu. Studying for a few decades in a phalanx of genetic research, I discovered the formula for accelerating and exaggerating biological processes. Finally I succeeded in programming a normal human fetus to become a giant. In about a century, I had assembled an entire race of giants to roam the once uninhabited deserts of Ata-Lan-Thea, our great island. I, Magellan, a dwarf among them, was their creator, their father, their king.

The second step was to train my young giants to rip open the sand-skin of the desert land and pick, with their own hands, the huge rocks from under it, the bones of the Earth. With these huge stone blocks, they built for me a network of phalanxes, different in shape from any other tower and so gigantic in size that they made Khu-Fu's skyline look like a tent.

My third feat was to invent, together with my people, a new language. Its words were statues, giant heads, obelisks, pyramids, cones, labyrinths, hanging gardens, castles of never-seen beauty, and man-made mountains. We became so fluent in mastering this "language of stones" that we were able to write a long poem, filling the desert overnight, and in the course of the next day dismantling it. Our final purpose was to make planet Earth an enormous round tombstone that would talk to the stars. The highest phalanx-tower we had built was a storage-home for the three-dimensional words of

our new language. So huge was its size that it made even Akh-Ka-Sha look like a hovel. We called it the Tower of Ba-Ab-El, which means Talking to the Sky.

My fourth enterprise (or miracle, as they began calling them throughout the whole of Ata-Lan-Thea at this time) was to construct immense winged phalanxes that could fly higher than any other vehicle of the past. So huge were these flying cities that we were able to pack in them not only all our new words, but also all my sons, the new nation of giants. From memory, I mapped all solar winds, all etheric currents, all gravitational vortices, and then built my flying cities to be monumental sailboats capable of dashing through the vast oceans of space.

My fifth miracle was the dissemination of our new language across the surface of the barbaric Earth. Outside Ata-Lan-Thea, as is well known, lurk creatures still trapped in an animalistic stage: their foreheads are flat, their bodies strong but unrefined, their eyes covered by the fog of ignorance—they are as phantoms in a dream, who vanish before your awakening. They are said to be brought forth by the water of the Four Rivers, originating in the gardens of Adana. Their skin-colour is determined by these rivers: the people of Orop taking after the water of river East; the people of Amer after the red water of river West.

Onto the thousand small islands south of Asa, we put giant stoneheads, resembling the faces of all my giant sons; artificial mountains with terraces, onto the plains of Southern Amer; immense idols, into the jungles of Central Opher; and circular structures consisting of decorated pillars, into the hidden valleys of Orop.

To decipher our message, the savages will have to grow, contact one another, and mingle their colours to become one—mankind. They will have to understand that we exist, today, in the present and that they, too, have lived in the long-ago past, for time itself does not exist. Then they will draw close to the Source again, gathering around the abandoned gardens of Adana; there they will reopen the collapsed corridors of the nature-made cone, revitalize its meaning-lost chambers, restore its forgotten power, and re-establish it as the true centre of all lands, dethroning the false usurper, Khu-Fu.

My sixth miracle was the invention of Ory-Ana, meaning the Great Mother. Once, while feeling retroward in the Akh-Ka-Sha meditation-chamber, I sensed that all facets of life in the past had been ruled by the Dual Principle. Good and Evil, Male and Female, Right and Left, Beauty and Ugliness, Virtue and Sin, Thesis and Antithesis, Yin and Yang, Life and Death, Yes and No. These were only fragmentary aspects of this principle, echoing through many epochs. Sometime during the millennia-long wrestling match of the Dual Principle, scattered poets and thinkers visualized a Mono-Utopia where contrasts were eliminated, where opposing morals were dissolved by consideration and polarized convictions by tolerance. They began to sing of a world where the two sexes would merge into one, planned, sexless program fed into the newborn. It was a place where left met right in the centre, where Thesis and Antithesis were absorbed in the Synthesis, where Yin and Yang dissolved into the Circle, and only the circle remained. This became Khu-Fu the usurper.

Thus was formed the age in which I lived. But the reign of Mono also brought Chaos with it: darkness and light fused into the twilight of uncertainty; intellect and intuition into contourless conjecturing; science and art into misty legends; and the two distinct trees of the gardens of Adana into the monstrous block of Khu-Fu, the One. When I first swore to destroy the power of Khu-Fu, I constructed the symbol of Number Two: the Female Principle, the Great Mother, first-sister and wife for my sons. I named her Ory-Ana and programmed her to give birth to seventy-seven earth-children of half-divine origin. These children, procreating giants of flesh and bone, grandsons and granddaughters of a new semi-god, Magellan, are to mingle with the sexless, short-lived savages in the gardens of Adana, revealing to them the secrets of Number Two, thus turning all these poor human creatures into men and women. This miracle is recorded in the pyramid-box chronicles of our Atal-Lan-Thean libraries and can be found under the subject-heading "The Circumnavigation of Time." By this miracle, divine Man will not cease to exist, whatever global catastrophe may be wrought by Yahoo at the coming moment of his birth. If only the old man from the Phalanx of Zeh-Bual-Lon knew what had become of the child he

once met! . . . If he knew then his prediction about “first” and “second” was never fulfilled, for it was I who first rejected the omen of my name. . . . If he only knew that his assignment had been futile . . . the coming age of which his boxes first brought tidings—the age of storm, darkness and deluge—has been tamed by one man, Magellan, who, despite Khu-Fu’s program, circumnavigated time.

My seventh miracle is still in preparation. I call it the Gil-Ga-Mesh Project, Gil-Ga-Mesh meaning Eternal Individual Life. I, with my sons, plan to abandon, for ever, this miserable, revolving rock called Earth, the stage of meaningless fights and unresolvable dilemmas. We will sail into the cosmos on an expedition to find the Land of Everness, reputed to surround the material universe. By means of the dichotomy, which served as the basis of my sixth miracle, we arrived at the Paradox of Finiteness-Infiniteness. Expressed in many ways, this paradox has haunted former civilizations throughout the age of the Dual Principle, and has only now revealed itself to me and to my people and only since we struggled to find our way out of the chaos of Mono. . . . We can see no solution within the horizon of matter. Therefore, we postulate that beyond this physical, dying, paradoxical dream-universe, there must be a Dreamer, a non-physical Superconsciousness, a never-dying Reality. As soon as we are ready, we will board our starships and speed toward the outer boundaries of the presently known Cosmos. We are certain that as we go, we will reach the speed of light and that we shall finally grow infinite in weight, in size, and in consciousness. This is how we hope to meet the Only Being Beyond, if he exists; and if not, then to become Him. We must make haste, for my life-force is withering and gradually abandoning me: I am uncertain how much time is left. Therefore, our next step is to . . . . . which will enable us . . . . .  
 . . . . . otherwise the figures of this dream could easily . . .  
 . . . . . but to awaken that is to return . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .

## ADDENDA

*Notes from the Editor*

Here ends the transcript made from the literal English translation of Magellan's tombstone. The tombstone was found on July the 30th, 1969, at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, around the mid-point of the imaginary line between the Canary Islands and Bimini, close to Latitude 11° N., south of the so-called Vema Fracture Zone, in one of the niches of a wall-like limestone structure. Oceanographers have not yet determined whether the structure is a natural formation or a man-made edifice.

1) The outer circumference of the round object found is badly chipped and broken. Its diameter, in its present, fragmented form, is about two feet. The tennis-ball-size centre-core (visible through the two-inch-thick outer material) thins toward the edges, curving the core into the shape of a disk that suggests a solid, miniature galaxy. It is perfectly smooth, without visible decoration or inscription. The stone is composed of a material as yet completely unknown on Earth.

The curious disk was discovered by Dr. W. Edmundsen, a Swedish archaeologist, who kept it in his possession for four years, but who never determined or even suspected its function. Purely by chance, he took it with him to Cheops, the Great Pyramid of Egypt, where, while visiting the Queen's Chamber (as it is called today, perhaps erroneously), he heard a "queer noise" (he described it as similar to a taped human voice, distorted, as if played too slow) emanating from his attaché-case. He removed the disc and, placing it freely on the floor, observed it rise, rotate slowly on its centre-core, and emit a voice (now in normal speed and pitch) that spoke in an unknown language. It has taken two years of hard work for a group of fifteen linguists and code-experts to decipher this language which, though different from any known modern or ancient tongue, shows some similarities to Basque, Coptic, Tibetan, and Mayan.

Radium-114 dating tests show that Magellan's tombstone is the most ancient archaeological find so far: It is between fifteen and

twenty thousand years old. For the sake of comparison, the Sumerian Gilgamesh-tablets are approximately five thousand years old, nearly twice as ancient as Homer.

2) The word “phalanx” (“uru” in the original text) was constructed by the decoding group, after the French word “phalanstère,” meaning production-community in Fourier’s utopian writings. The group felt that a slight alteration of the word was necessary since the communities mentioned in Magellan’s tombstone were colonies of intellectual researchers rather than compounds of manual workers, as originally conceived by Fourier.

3) Yahoo is the ancient form of the Hebrew Yahve or Jehovah: it was most likely the sacred name, forbidden to be uttered; perhaps for fear that its sound may again provoke a world-wide disaster. According to Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky’s research, the name of a deity called Yo, or Yahoo (a mimetic word that imitates the noise of earth quake and whirlwind) can be found in many languages, all around the globe: a phenomenon that points to the survival of ancient racial memories of a global catastrophe.

4) It is interesting to note that the famous world-map of the Turkish admiral, Piri Reis, rediscovered in the eighteenth century, was an n-th generation copy of an ancient original map, which showed Cairo and specifically Cheops (Kufu), the great pyramid, as the center of all dry land on the globe. Remote sensing photographs obtained from satellites circling the Earth have verified the Piri Reis Map’s revelation, and as we all know, ancient cartographers worked without the benefit of modern technology. This strange circumstance led Erich von Daniken to the conclusion that the ancient original—of which the Piri Reis map was only a copy—was made by interstellar astronauts. According to the testimony of Magellan’s tombstone, there were indeed interstellar astronauts, but they were of terrestrial origin. The great pyramid of Cheops was located at the centre, but not, however, at its present location, when the tomb-



stone was written (voice-carved). The pyramid reached its present position (accurate, according to our maps) only some centuries or millennia later, owing to the sinking of fabled Atlantis, an ancient cataclysm that may have initiated continental drift. Thus, the ancient legend confirming the central location of the pyramid—verified by Magellan's tombstone—represents a unique case in the science of literary history: it preserves the memory of a future event, instead of a past one. (In the opinion of the renowned Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, this statement eliminates itself if time is circular.)

5) The "Akashik Record" is thought to be an ether-shield that surrounds the celestial bodies. It preserves all past events and unerringly deduces from them the events of the future: a universal and timeless memory, as it were. The word itself is, at this time, thought to have originated from the Sanskrit. According to the information provided by Magellan's tombstone, it was transmitted into Sanskrit from the language spoken in Atlantis. Several modern-day mystics (including Rudolf Steiner, Helena P. Blavatsky, Edgar Cayce, Ross Peterson, Eliphas Levi, etc.) have independently claimed to be in direct contact with the Akashik Record, thus enabling them to reconstruct unknown historical periods (like the "missing" eighteen years in the life of Jesus or life on lost continents such as Atlantis, Og, Mu, Lemuria, etc.).

6) According to Marxist historian, Vassilij Nikolajevitch Zhivartarov, a pendulum-like concept of history in which day-like intellectual and night-like intuitive world-ages cyclically interchange—as put forward by Magellan's tombstone—is nothing but an enlarged version of Spengler's long-refuted cyclical theory of history and is unlikely primarily due to a lack of time, as evidenced in the archeological record. However, as some recent excavations have revealed, the age of man on Earth is not one million years old, as was believed a half century ago, nor even five million years old, as was thought only a decade ago, but rather twenty million years old. Even if this figure does not continue to increase in the light of future dis-

coveries (and many scientists expect it will), twenty million years of history allows for six hundred cycles up to the present, with each cycle reckoned at twenty-five thousand years.

Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), Portuguese explorer and navigator, was the first to attempt the circumnavigation of the Earth in 1519. Departing from Seville, he was killed on the voyage. The expedition was completed by his companions, who returned to Seville in 1522.

A LIST OF ATLANTIC WORDS OCCURRING IN  
MAGELLAN'S TOMBSTONE IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Ut	Survival
Noah	Project, short-term plan
Pishu	Through, throughout, during
Tim	Selection
Zeh	Gathering, collecting
Bual	Spreading, distributing, dispensing
Lon	Information, data, knowledge
Khu	Centre, central
Fu	Providence, long-term plan (non-human)
Arar	Mountain
Atu	Landing, arrival
Orop	North
Opher	South
Asa	East
Amer	West
At	Original
Ada	First
Ma	Breath, soul
Akh	Memory, reverie, day-dream, dream
Ka	Data, record
Sha	Office, store, centre
Ata	Past
Lan	Present
Thea	Future
Him	Big, large, huge, immense
Ala	Soil, earth, rock, stone
Ya	Wave, wake, bulge, outstanding formation
Adan	Dust
Ory	Great, grand, proto-, ancient
Ana	Mother
Gil	Eternal, never-ending
Ga	Individuum, individual
Mesh	Life, consciousness, awareness

Ba	Telling, talking
Ab	To, toward
El	Sky, stars, starry sky
Uru	Phalanx, city, habitat

After I Die

After I die  
Time will be Space  
and I will move back and forth in it  
    every step a generation  
    and I will watch  
    the child I was  
    the man I was -  
        After I die  
        “I” will be “he”

After I die  
Now will be Then  
and I will remember all who lived  
    Napoleon and Socrates  
    and Columbus and Leonardo  
    and Moses and Gilgamesh  
    and all the nameless ones  
    will be like days in a long life -  
        After I die  
        “I” will be “they”

After I die  
Here will be There  
and I will expand or shrink at will

the soul of atoms and their particles  
of suns and their planets  
of galaxies and their solar systems  
of universes and their galaxies  
will be my soul and they will rotate in me -

After I die

"I" will be "it"

After I die

If will be When

and I will fill all holes with existence  
making things that were not made  
living lives that were unlived  
growing histories that could have happened  
creating worlds that had been aborted  
realizing possibilities that never were -

After I die

"I" will be "god"

After I die

I will be nothing

and I am just dreaming about the impossible  
projecting a tunnel under the prison wall

but tomorrow: to go  
tomorrow: to talk  
tomorrow: to work  
tomorrow: to play  
tomorrow: to cope  
tomorrow: to survive -

After I die

"yes" will be "no"

and everything will become so easy

Wednesday, September 20, 1973

## Afterword

By Northrop Frye

I first got to know Robert Zend through a CBC program that I was in and that he was producing. As Samuel Johnson said of Edmund Burke, "if you were caught in a shower with him, you would still know that you'd been with a remarkable man". But I don't recall much that got said except such things as his impassioned defence of Velikovsky where he was ready to take on all comers.

Robert Zend never forgot that every creative act was first and foremost an act of free play. And playing with words, which you can do on any level from crossword puzzles to *Finnegans Wake*, is something he did with a variety and scope I've never seen equalled. What keeps haunting me more than anything else in his work is the paradox of humour. We are told that a sense of humour is really a sense of proportion. But I think the humourist vision sees things in proportion because it sees them out of proportion. In other words the customary proportions of things are somehow all wrong. Perhaps that's why we have dreams—to remind us every night that we've spent the previous day in a world of petrified nonsense. There are not many people beyond the age of five who carry this sense into the waking world. There are a few in the graphic arts. Klee is one, Chagall another, Escher, and another temperamentally closer to Zend is Saul Steinberg, to whom Zend addressed a fine tribute. The verbal people are more apt to get tangled up in the conventional meanings of words. Perhaps Zend's detachment from English was a help. Anyway, he was a notably free spirit who was among us for a while and who, now that he has gone, is irreplaceable. All we can do is read and admire what he has left us.



ROBERT ZEND (Budapest, 1929 - Toronto, 1985)

Robert Zend, poet, author, documentary producer and inveterate doodler, emigrated to Canada in 1956 following the Soviet invasion of Hungary. He received his undergraduate degree from the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest in 1953, and earned an M.A. in Italian literature from the University of Toronto in 1969.

Starting as a shipper with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1958, Zend rose through the ranks as a film librarian and film editor to become a radio producer. As a member of the CBC "Ideas" program team, he researched, wrote, directed and produced over one hundred radio programs featuring such notables as Northrop Frye, Glenn Gould, A.Y. Jackson, Norman McLaren, Marshall McLuhan, Harold Town, Isaac Asimov, Immanuel Velikovsky, Marcel Marceau, Andrei Voznesensky, Jorge Luis Borges, Princess Martha de Ruspoli, and the Dalai Lama. His series "The Lost Continent of Atlantis" was broadcast in the United States, Great Britain and Australia, as well as in Canada.

Zend's accomplishments in the visual arts include winning fourth prize in the International Photo Contest (Budapest 1968) and exhibiting his work in the International Craft Show at the Ontario Science Centre. His visual text creation, "Mompoeem," was included in the 1984 retrospective of Spanish painter Manuel H. Mompó in Florence, Italy. More recently, his visual work was the subject of an exhibition organized by Art Historian Oliver Botár at the Metro Toronto Reference Library in November of 1986.

Zend was a prolific writer in both English and Hungarian. His work appeared in numerous Hungarian-language publications including *Hungarian Life*, *Mirror*, *Hungarian Panorama*, *Menora*, *Toronto Mirror*, *Literary Gazette* (Paris), *New Horizons* (Munich), *Atelier hongrois* (Paris), and *Szivárvány* (Chicago). He was included, as well, in László Kemenes-Géfin's *Anthology of Hungarian Poets Abroad* (Vienna), and a volume of his visual work has recently been published by Atelier hongrois. Further publication of his Hungarian writing is planned.

Among the English-language journals that have published his work are *The Tamarack Review*, *Canadian Literature*, *Performing Arts*, *Chess Canada*, *Earth and You*, *The Sunday Star*, *Canadian Fiction Magazine* and *The Malahat Review*. *Exile*, the literary quarterly, has published excerpts from his longer visual works *Oah*, *A Bouquet to Bip*, *Limbo Like Me*, and *Typescapes: A Mystery Story*. He was a regular and enthusiastic contributor to *Rampike* and, in addition, his work has been featured in many English-language anthologies, among which are *Made in Canada*, *Volvox*, *The Sounds of Time*, *The Speaking Earth*, *To Say the Least*, *The Poets of Canada*, *In Praise of Hands*, *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*, *The Maple Laugh Forever*, *Lords of Winter and Love*, *Shoes and Shit - Stories for Pedestrians*, *Tesseracts* (Canada), *A Critical Ninth Assembly*, *Stellar 6: Science Fiction Stories*, *Peter's Quotations*, *The Writer and Human Rights* (U.S.) and *Blue Umbrellas* (Australia).

Zend gave poetry readings at the Eglinton Gallery, The Royal Ontario Museum, Harbourfront, The China Court Cafe, the University of Toronto, and in various cities throughout Canada. He was writer-in-residence at The Writer and Human Rights Conference in Toronto, 1981, the 6th and 7th Great Canadian Poetry Festival at Collingwood, 1981 and 1982, the David Bohm Symposium at Carleton University, 1983, and at Trent University, 1983.

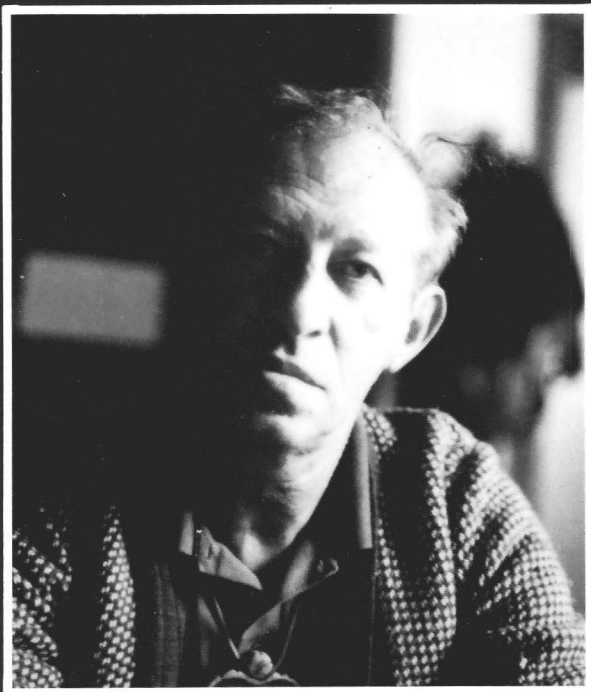


PHOTO CREDIT: ANIKO ZEND

You created your dream-son the way my magician in "Circular Ruins" created his dream-son. You consider me one of your masters, yet you were my pupil even before reading my work.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

Zend was a notably free spirit who was among us for a while and, who, now that he has gone, is irreplaceable. All we can do is read and admire what he has left us.

NORTHROP FRYE

Zend's body occupied the place in space and time that all of us share, but his ruminative mind and especially his perfervid imagination seemed to me to make their hearth on some other planet. This planet is quite unlike our planet Earth.

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO