

The University of North Carolina
at Greensboro

JACKSON LIBRARY



CQ

no. 1066

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

MONROE, HAYDEN KEITH. Twenty-three Poems and Six Tales. (1973)
Directed by: Professor Fred Chappell. Pp. 86

This thesis presents twenty-three of the poems I have written which I consider best and all of the short fiction I have written to date which I wish to preserve. I consider the stories to be expeditions in search of a style and exercises in various techniques in preparation for longer fictional works. In poetry, for good or ill, I seem to have achieved a style and these poems are in it.

Both poems and tales represent notations of ideas I have tried to catch and hold, sometimes for their own sakes, sometimes in order to preserve them for later use in other contexts or in expanded forms. For instance, one story not included here later became a novella. Similarly, more than one of these poems was written to retain a mood, scene, or thought for inclusion in a novel I have yet to write.

The subject matter of these poems and stories varies considerably, although, during the compilation of these pages, I did notice an apparent preoccupation with death. This did not surprise me; it is a concomitant of another preoccupation I have. Slices of life and naturalistic portrayals of daily events do not interest me. I care more for fantasy, wonder, oddity, mystery, magic. No wonder death pops up. It is the central mystery. I only hope a few of these bits and pieces, which deal with it and other concerns, succeed in being magical for a moment.

APPROVED PAGE

This thesis, TWENTY-THREE POEMS AND SIX TALES, is submitted
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North
Carolina at Greensboro.

by
Hayden Keith Monroe

Hayden Keith Monroe

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1973

March 2, 1973
Date of Examinations

Approved by

Fred Chappell
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

I would also like to thank Mrs. H.C. Brown for typing this thesis and my wife, Patricia, who aided in the research.

Three pages and one table from above those included here have previously appeared in the Journal of Applied Social Psychology.

I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of the Department of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for their kindness in making available the facilities of the Department of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro during my stay there.

Thesis Adviser Fred Chappell

Committee Members Fred Chappell

Robert Watson

John R. Buchert

March 1, 1973
Date of Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Fred Chappell for his willingness to serve as thesis adviser and to Dr. Robert Watson and Dr. Jean Buchert who kindly consented to read the following pages as members of the approval committee. I would also like to thank Mrs. H.C. Monroe for typing this thesis and my wife, Patricia, who aided in the research.

Three poems and one tale from among those included here have previously appeared in the Greensboro Review. My thanks to Mr. Tom Kirby-Smith and the editorial staff for their kindness to me.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the English Department of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for bestowing upon me the Randall Jarrell Writing Fellowship for 1971-72 which enabled me to undertake the body of work contained in this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
POEMS	
WHAT DOES THE DREAMING FETUS DREAM?	1
DREAMS	2
THE DEVILFISH AND OTHER MISNOMERS	3
THE UNIVERSAL MUSEUM	4
BREATHING SPACE	6
THE GOVERNOR'S MAZE	8
BACTERIA	10
COSMOLOGY	12
WE ARE THE DEAD	14
THE ERROR IN THE EPITAPH	15
THEY KEPT THE DEAD	16
A SOLDIER IN THE FORTIES	17
CIVIL DEFENSE IN THE FIFTIES	19
HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS	21
I'VE GOT TO GET THE BRAIN TURNED OFF	22
MEMO	24
CONSULTATION	25
KENTUCKY	26
LINES PRECEDING CATABOLISM	27
A HALF MILE HIGH	28

OUT AMONG THE ASTEROIDS	29
SHOW AND TELL	30
BLUE WILLOW	31

Science has discovered movements of the sleeping eye.
When rapid, dreams are what signify.

TALES

OUT AMONG THE ASTEROIDS	32
THE MONK'S TALE	40
BIRDS OF A FEATHER	51
UTILITIES	59
THE PYRAMID HYPOTHESIS: A KEY TO THE REALM OF THE SUN A REPORT ON EUGENE CHAPPIN'S LATEST BOOK	67
THE BARBARIANS AND THE POET	79

And do the dying know when birth is near downstream?
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

Some say that, as the embryonic life metamorphoses and grows--
Recapitulates the evolution the species had to undergo,
So the visions, likewise, allow the unborn to be
New produce, fishy slug, trout fish, reptilian worm;
Now tailed amphibian, now rodent, now a thing with yolkate form.
Is it this vicious history that comes the fetal mind--
And its remembrance that makes the newborn infant scream?
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

No one, it may be, will ever learn what transpires in
The groves where each one of us begins--
Thus, the way is clear to speculate. And yet,
Why may the roars of fetuses not be previews
Of lives they soon will be born to?
Similarly, may not our own dark dreams
And dream-like lives perplex and haunt our heirs
As we are puzzled by those of our fetal forebears?
Why not? We know we are not and, but parents,
And so perhaps should ask of our own dreams:
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

WHAT DOES THE DREAMING FETUS DREAM?

Science has discovered movements of the sleeping eye.
When rapid, dreams are what they signify.
Thin electrodes introduced in unborn brains
Of children, floating--pastel--in the amniotic sea,
Have produced an unsuspected mystery.
The sightless eyes of larval humans
Dance in time to the established theme.
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

Is it contemplation of another life's finale
These about-to-be-reincarnated creatures see?
Does the moment of birth correspond
To the death of a body previously occupied?
As they sway gently on their liquid ride,
Do the unborn live elsewhere, kick out when they feel pain?
And do the dying know when birth is near downstream?
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

Some say that, as the embryonic life metamorphoses and grows--
Recapitulates the evolution the species had to undergo,
So the visions, likewise, allow the unborn to be
Now protozoa, fishy slug, true fish, reptilian worm;
Now tailed amphibian, a rodent, now a thing with primate form.
Is it this viscous history that owns the fetal mind
And its remembrance that makes the newborn infant scream?
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

No one, it may be, will ever learn what transpires in
The grotto where each one of us begins.
Thus, the way is clear to speculate. And so,
Why may the dreams of fetuses not be previews
Of lives they soon will be born to?
Similarly, may not our own dark dreams
And dream-like lives perplex and haunt our heirs
As we are puzzled by those of our fetal forebears?
Why not? We know we are not end, but means,
And so perhaps should ask of our own dreams:
What does the dreaming fetus dream?

DREAMS

If our true home is the dreamworld, this life's insane.
 All commerce, trade, and transit have no interest.
 The real world is sailed into by the sleeping brain.

Each time love or war or worry or schemes for gain
 Cause us to love life, we lose that which is best.
 If our true home is the dreamworld, this life's insane.

Down the long tunnel of sleep to the night domain
 Is where desire should lead not daylight, east, or west.
 The real world is sailed into by the sleeping brain.

Yet still we enshrine this life of meetings, mundane
 Business deals, lose sleep amusing a weekend guest.
 If our true home is the dreamworld, this life's insane.

This world is provincial, narrow, full of pain;
 That, full of galaxies of demons in stars dressed.
 The real world is sailed into by the sleeping brain.

Therefore seek only enough on earth to maintain.
 Relax, give in to sleep and so be truly blessed.
 For if our true home is the dreamworld, life's insane;
 The real world is sailed into by the sleeping brain.

THE DEVILFISH AND OTHER MISNOMERS

In my dream of the islands, I lay
 Upon my back on the bottom of a bay
 Looking up through clear, blue water into sky.

There the water was warm all day,
 And all around the small fish passed me by.
 Then death's wing came. I grew afraid to die.

It was the deadly devilfish, the manta ray,
 Attacking me, or so I fancied in my dream.
 This was no puny skate, no sting, and no electric ray,
 But one of the ocean things that is supreme.

It was a hollow O of mouth with wings,
 Great wings that moving, silent, calm and slow,
 Were gliding it in stately rolls and rides and rings
 And acrobatic loops, slow-motion and adagio.

Then in my dream of islands, I came to know
 This thing four hundred million years unchanged
 Was utterly benign, though in its form so strange

It had no enemies, was free to float and flow
 And free from fear to improvise its solo
 Liquid ballet flights. As to its fearsome name,

That came from creatures who were rarely correct,
 Who, against all evidence one might collect,
 Still gave themselves a name which implied
 In spite of fears and foolishness that they were wise.

I thought all this upon the floor of my dream bay.
 The unperturbed devilfish ignored all this and me,
 Ignored man's artifice and by its artistry
 Slid gracefully upon its wings away.

THE UNIVERSAL MUSEUM

I found the life we learn's a lie,
That truth is false.
I failed to die.

And everything I'd ever tried
Was taken, still
I failed to die.

My head was shrunken while alive.
The brains drooled out.
I failed to die.

And I was warned to never cry
Then shown such things. . .
But still I failed to die.

And then I learned that 'you' can equal 'I'.
They tortured you.
It murdered me.
But still I failed to die.

The best that I could do was scream.
Not satisfied
They let me sleep and have a dream.
I'll tell you why.

I found myself alone within
The Universal Museum.
Its vaulted galleries went on
Forever, labyrinthian.

Halls of science and technology
Gave way to natural history.
Birds and beasts and minerals
Encased in glass confronted me.

On some walls human skulls were hung;
On others charts of stars spread out.
In some rooms endless songs were sung;
One held the history of doubt.

Great engines towered in one hall
 And some held silence or nothing at all.
 The microscopic world grown huge was shown
 As well as styles of buttons and clothes.

At last I stood in a corner room
 Before one tiny case which held
 Three specimens of amber--jelled.
 And each contained a frozen thing.

A prehistoric wasp lay curled
 With the first. The second amber glass
 Cocooned a winged ant in death.
 And then I stared into the third.
 Within it, floating, was a world--
 Round, blue, and green--the planet earth.

I woke at dawn. What met my eye
 Was, naturally, an amber sky.
 It is not possible to die.

Then, in a small, walled cottage
 That I bought here when I desired this gift,
 Deep in a hidden grove,
 Far off from wall clocks, whistles, telephones
 Keeping any standard time,
 And even loved ones, and free spaces,
 I would adjust my metabolism
 Until my thoughts were synchronized
 With this that stuck and slow low speed
 Geology and evolution keep.

Then I could be the favored place
 Invasing hills along the river low,
 Mining for a thousand years ago
 And in this rarefied condition
 Be equally the time.

Sitting quietly, doing nothing
 I could descend within my mind
 The stone wall of the canyon, then,
 Tall doors and read the stratified,
 Expansive, were caught by river time--
 Fled slow against the yielding time.

BREATHING SPACE

The daily men at the factory gate
 Waylaid by the friendly candidate,
 The warring couples counterfeiting love
 In public, the airmen seemingly above
 Mundane concerns, but with their heavy belly loads,
 The botanist perplexed by the beauty of the dying rose
 Are learning to distrust appearances.

Such has, for these long years, been my desire:
 To apprehend--not as they do, sometimes,
 But in each moment--the subtle things
 The moment holds as amber holds
 The captured wings of insects long extinct,
 That dead a half a billion years still seem about to move.

Then, in a small enchanted cottage
 That I imagine home when I desire this gift,
 Deep in a hidden grove,
 Cut off from wall clocks, watches, telephones
 Reporting any standard time,
 And even loved ones, and from enemies,
 I would adjust my metabolism
 Until my thoughts were synchronized
 With time that stars and slow ice ages,
 Geology and evolution keep.

Then I could be the Saxon miner
 Invading hills along the river Roe,
 Mining tin a thousand years ago
 And in this rarefied condition
 Be equally the tin.

Sitting quietly, doing nothing
 I could descend within my mind
 The sheer wall of the canyon, time;
 Inch down and read time stratified,
 Exposed, worn smooth by river time--
 Find time against time yielding times.

Then I could be the calcium creature,
 Die and watch my husk sift through
 Darkening layers of deeper water
 Until it joined a million others
 On the sea-bed underwater,
 Building mountains. Then I could know
 I was a plated armoured creature
 And in the shifting plates of planet mantle,
 Attendant at the making of pangea
 When all the continents closed for a kiss.

Then I would be earth elemental
 Relieved of the burden of earthly appetites,
 Be free of love and the eating envy,
 Be free of self and of acts against nature,
 Then know I was a star that died,
 That fell in on itself, condensed
 To become a bright particle, utterly dense,
 A neutron star, or know I was once
 A great chain of stars, a whole milky way,
 A flower arrangement galaxy
 That drew its petals in violently
 To become a single bulb of flame
 Pulsing enormous messages out
 Of radio agony-affirmation
 Into the silence of the night.

Had I only the gift of sustained perspective,
 I could retrieve an old-fashioned poem
 From before these trillion-year-old pyrotechnics,
 That happened only recently,
 And tell of the time when there were no stars
 Pressure-cooking heavy metals, hydro-carbons,
 Complex crystals, and rare earths;
 A time when there was only darkness
 And atoms of hydrogen spaced throughout
 Like raisins in a raisin bread,
 Tell how these atoms congealed together
 To flash on as the pilot light
 Of the furnace of the universe
 About to cook uncountable selves
 Out of itself, in itself, by itself.

This is the sort of message I'd catch,
 If only I could, and relay on
 To cavalier poets, the old blind Greek,
 All my contemporaries so long dead
 If only I were not interrupted
 So frequently by having to live.

THE GOVERNOR'S MAZE

From here I can see the weathercock
Frozen green atop the tallest spire,
Atop the tower that holds the clock.
And, though the tower is not in view,
I know the four-faced clock is there--
Looks one way on the carriage drive
And two ways on the mansion's wings,
A fourth way toward this hedge maze where
I occupy one avenue.

This maze has walls which are alive
And corridors which may fatigue,
And therefore now and then along
The geometric paths a bench appears.
On one I sit as the tower's chime
Recalls to me the world of time,
As the passing of a bird in song
Reminds the eye by ear of speed.
The outside's known by what one hears.

But one shouldn't enter the Governor's maze
If one has an interest in outside things,
For a few small sounds and fragrances
Are all that reach the ear and nose;
And the weathercock and the vacant sky
Are all one has to instruct the eye
Save the blue-green twelve-foot walls of shrub.
The interior of the Governor's maze
Is meant for senses the five oppose.

Time here has nothing to do with time pieces.
Seasons blend into timeless seasons
As fire and water melt into snow.
Likewise, there only are forms to see here,
And forms mean nothing when viewed alone. Since, then,
The outside of the maze may not be known,
And since there's nothing graspable within,
The empty maze may stay secure from reason,
As empty yet as crowded as a mirror.

I sit surrounded by the maze,
 Within the turnings of its paths.
 My mind reflects the shrubbery walls,
 The weathercock, and someone's laugh;
 Reflects it all, is not involved.
 The Governor's maze behaves the same.
 In everything the emptiness reclines
 As I do in the maze's corridors
 Which I perceive are straight, unravelled lines.

The sweet breath of the North's equinox,
 One remembers what has seen all other years,
 The illnesses that procure winter.

If a longing for immortality creeps,
 As the undertaker wind calmly slips
 Over our borders, we must recall that death
 Is what our individuality costs.
 The enemy never dies, never changes,
 Is free of death by doing without freedom.

Each bacterium is every other,
 Given a clon of spirillum, each one
 Is every other. There is no difference.
 Time, space or number do not change this. Once
 The attributes are given, they may number
 Billion upon billion; they are as one.

Even in mutation the new tribe is
 Innumerable immediately,
 Immortal, and each member identical;
 And could we stain the bacteria a color,
 Color would cease to exist, the sun be gone,
 The world be drowned in the endless sea of them.

And medically we cannot do without them,
 A symbiotic few, for instance,
 Prevent perpetual enteritis,
 Inhabit the human gut, though role
 Is offset by the hostile three percent
 Against whom we can offer no defense.

Once there may have been minimal comfort
 Believing plagues to be the work of God.
 Now medical insurers set the odds,
 And escape engenders paranoia.
 Of course they're out to get us, and life ahead.
 We're at the mercy of each viral code.

BACTERIA

In these latitudes when the wind takes on
 A particular slant, is modulated
 With a cool olfactory information,
 The moist breath of the Northern equinox,
 One remembers what has come all other years,
 The illnesses that precurse winter.

If a longing for immortality grasps,
 As the undertaker wind calmly slips
 Over our borders, we must recall that death
 Is what our individuality costs.
 The enemy never dies, never changes,
 Is free of death by doing without freedom.

Each bacterium is every other.
 Given a clan of spirillum, each one
 Is every other. There is no difference.
 Time, space or number do not change this. Once
 The attributes are given, they may number
 Million upon million; they are as one.

Even in mutation the new tribe is
 Innumerable immediately,
 Immortal, and each member identical.
 And could we stain the bacteria a color,
 Color would cease to exist, the sun be gone,
 The world be drowned in the endless sea of them.

And comically we cannot do without them.
 A symbiotic few, for instance,
 Prevent perpetual enteritis,
 Inhabit the human gut, though this
 Is offset by the hostile three percent
 Against whom we can offer no defense.

Once there may have been minimal comfort
 Believing plagues to be the work of God.
 Now medical insurers set the odds,
 And escape engenders paranoia.
 Of course they're out to get us, and life absurd.
 We're at the mercy of each viral code.

All feeling of childish comfort is gone,
 When illness was cared for and did not mean doom.
 A fever might grow demons in our room,
 Still there was suitably wretched medicine,
 Cool hands, a stream of fruit juices, a loved one
 To assure us we would undoubtedly win.

Yesterday, on the other hand, a cold wind
 Surprised me at a corner. The day before
 A faint child grasped at my wife's hand. Today
 My wife is ill with what we mutely pray
 Is only influenza. It could be worse.
 I'm feeling faint myself, my joints are sore.
 And in the street an hour ago unwound
 A long procession, muffled drums, a hearse.

Expelled by their actions, are forced to invent
 A universe run down to reason.

Yet, though the skies display great violence
 And all things seem cast outward into night,
 And though this flight has slow and ceaseless way,
 There is no cause to panic over's death.
 The instruments that catch the distant light
 And pointing wings of weather stand upon
 That show to knowledge's periphery
 Machine only our locality.
 Unknown facility extends beyond
 What we may never penetrate, sunny,
 Descends, delirious, or drowsed.

And if there is infinity, forget
 Energy which applies to a finite piece
 Of energy confined that will unwind
 Eventually to exist. Thus, we yet
 May stay our judgment and pause to explore
 Instances of order known in our part
 Of the tiny way. In an example,
 Some replication alone would be worth.
 The restness of the periodic chart,
 The alignment of evolution, blind
 Collapsing some—all these suffice to show

What even Aristotle knew long ago:
 Order is rampant. No a laws may be
 Tomorrow a tree, the next day a man,
 Thus he was ever on in the long flow
 Of matter and its cold-wild energy.
 Nature behaves with utmost fairness.
 The planet of time best is orderly.

COSMOLOGY

Adrift in the expanding universe,
 Listening to the echoes of the antique
 Detonation that at the start sent
 The galaxies flying outward into space,
 Confounded by their red shifts, the bleak
 Second law of thermodynamics which,
 Along with the doctrine of entropy,
 Insists closed systems must grow disorderly
 Til chaos rules, the astrophysicists,
 Impelled by their science, are forced to invent
 A universe run down to randomness.

Yet, though the skies display great violence
 And all things known rush outward into night,
 And though this flight must slow and cease one day,
 There is no cause to posit order's death.
 The instruments that catch the distant light
 And pulsing songs of neutron stars upon
 What now is knowledge's periphery
 Examine only our locality.
 Unknown infinity extends beyond
 Which we may never penetrate, assay,
 Describe, delineate, or document.

And if there is infinity, forget
 Entropy which applies to a finite store
 Of energy confined that will unwind
 Eventually to stasis. Thus, we yet
 May stay our judgment and pause to explore
 Instances of order known in our part
 Of the Milky Way. As an example,
 Gene replication alone would be ample.
 The neatness of the periodic chart,
 The elegance of evolution, blind
 Collapsing suns--all these suffice to show

What even Aurelius knew long ago:
 Order is rampant. So a horse may be
 Tomorrow a tree, the next day a man,
 Thus on and ever on in one long flow
 Of matter and its twin-self energy.
 Nature behaves with utmost tidiness;
 The planet we know best is orderly;

The stars and elements are orderly,
 Predictable, and ceremonious.
 Indeed, the only thing that seeking can
 Unearth disorderly is human mind.

And even that chaotic thing in time
 May yield to the general tendency.
 And when it does, it may be favored with
 The evidence required at last to find
 The key to build a true cosmology.
 Then, out beyond the farthest stars, may bloom
 In nothingness unnumbered galaxies
 Shifted toward the violet. And that will be
 The neighbor edge of another big bang come
 To co-mingle its substance with the mist
 At the fringe of our own blast to reignite
 The infinite process in infinite night
 Of the endless rebirth of the universe.

WE ARE THE DEAD

We sleep and dream, or wake and live.
 There is no vital difference.
 Existence is a mist
 As all the chroniclers of hell
 From Dante to John Webster knew.
 When drawing on the living world
 To fashion it, they understood.
 We are the dead.

We fear, as graveyard chills attest,
 The wisest human selves
 Inhabit mausoleum shelves,
 Reclining dead in endless time
 Feel motions that the living miss,
 And know their cosmic place and fear no spade.
 We are the dead.

We are the ones who miss all things,
 The sightless eyed, the always cold,
 The ones who lack the soul.
 To cease to die we must resign
 And disengage and give away
 And ceasing motion emulate the dead
 And learn to live.

THE ERROR IN THE EPITAPH

The old woman sighed when she died and died in
 The bed she'd spent a lifetime in;
 Asleep on nights when the seas were low,
 Awake on nights when the winds were high,
 Alone on nights when the light on the fog flashed by,
 And the foghorns groaned at being alone,
 And the breakers were cold as they rolled in.

They laid her down in a graveyard where
 Over half of the stones bore her family name.
 She'd seen many mounds of loose sand raised up there
 By the sexton's spade and blown flat by the wind.
 And as time passed, the sand of her grave did the same.

The sand of her grave as it settled, was blown,
 Revealed the words she'd desired on the stone.
 They said, the Christian course is run.
 Ended is the glorious strife,
 Fought the fight, the work is done,
 Death has swallowed up the life.

But even as the mourners turned to go,
 The error in the epitaph was clear.
 Before they came, before they left, when they were gone
 The work could never end but only carry on.
 And so it has through long successive years.
 And so it does as strangers pause to puzzle out
 The dim sand-blasted messages on stone.

So underground, bent back into a bow,
 The woman lies and grins without
 The benefit of skin, which long ago
 Was leached away by the many mouths.
 Her atoms, which she knew nothing about,
 Are now dispersed through the ground and ground water.

She is in the cricket on the leaf, the leaf,
 Subterranean in worms, aerobes and
 Anaerobes, diffused throughout the porous earth,
 Infused into the diet of the reef,
 Aloft on nights when the seawind is high and thin,
 Alight on nights when the light strikes the sea and land,
 Alive when the sea birds cry and the sea gives birth,
 And at home in the cold constant waves that roll in.

THEY KEPT THE DEAD

They kept the dead close by them then--
 A churchyard next to every church,
 A cemetery for the town
 Within the city limits, and
 Small plots amid the cereal fields,
 And graveyards with their monuments
 Pointing upward to the sky
 Upon the brows of rural hills
 As if to catch the eye of God.
 And there the shrapnelled soldiers lay
 Returning minerals to earth.
 And there retired farmers' flesh
 Serves in capacity of mulch.

Those men had hardy ignorance,
 But knew at least that dust is dust.
 They did not try to hide the fact
 In nickle-plated envelopes
 And mail the dead to distant sites,
 Or mark them all the same with dates
 Disguising something once had lived
 With carven chains of numerals.

They went in for the epitaph
 As if to have a last retort,
 A final jest, or farewell prayer.
 Survivors planted flowers there
 And spent their Sundays with the stones.
 At least it kept them mindful life,
 Instead of gift, is short term loan,
 That death arrives not if but when.
 They placed their feet more cautiously
 Aware the earth's a honeycomb
 Of cells containing former lives.
 They kept the dead close by them then.

A SOLDIER IN THE FORTIES

Our father was the forties,
And we have seen the photographs
Of him when handsome and uniformed.

He watched dogfights over Britain
In Bogart suits at the Rialto,
And the newsreels seduced an enlistment.

He smoked Camels or Luckies,
Listened to records sent from home,
Played baseball on the airstrip, waiting.

Billy Mitchell bomber ground crew,
He loaded incendiaries on
(Tinian, though Wake would have been the same).

He helped doze jeeps and half-tracks
Off the atoll when the news came,
And caught a plane to the baby boom.

Arcing through the quiet flakless sky,
His trajectory was toward surprise,
After all the death to cause conception.

After all the daring-do,
The secret, guilty rooms of war,
Joseph's perplexity came to him.

Chaplains and frightened soldiers pray
To the Virgin Mary's mystery.
Fathers know the holy cuckold's doubts.

They hear mother alibis,
Yet ask when thinking of the child:
"Is he mine? What was his human source?"

Though he is familiar, he is
Still a stranger who cannot be known.
What can account for what he will become?"

Father, father forgive us,
For you cannot know what we do.
You gave birth not to one, but to two.

Our father, you were the forties.
 We children, your children, blood like you
 Are also the age we were born into,

The distance between us huge.
 But now and then the bomber whine
 Cuts through to us; we recognize you.

Beside the belly of the plane
 That held your offspring, the little boy,
 You recognized nothing, and passed us by.

The other side was dangerous.
 They'd broken our monopoly.
 The other side used the weapon now.
 The school board thought, apparently,

The bomb was not so new as that,
 Different only in degree
 From those we'd used in bombing Leavenworth.
 And those, we know, could be survived.

Down in a basement or subway,
 Heat to a wall when the thing hit
 Were presumed to be safe positions.
 And afterward, they'd dig you out.

The doughboy school board thought it out.
 They hiked us into darkened halls,
 Puppets reliving their old trench war,
 Kneeling down by cinderblock walls.

They bang the bells and watch with pride
 Our covered heads and felt relieved
 At saving us from imagined attack.
 Though children, we were not deceived.

We'd grow up with the better bomb
 And knew that if they set it off
 All flesh for miles around would melt,
 The blood would boil, and the bones jackknife.

In our closed eyes: purple weaves
 Of firestorms, our skin a red canvas,
 Radiation sickness, the bright cloud,
 Images of screams set loose.

CIVIL DEFENSE IN THE FIFTIES

The school board sought to teach the drill
And lined the grade school children up.
The school board feared the Korean war
And taught our feet a marching step.

The other side was dangerous.
They'd broken our monopoly.
The other side owned the weapon now.
The school board thought, apparently,

The bomb was not so new at that,
Different only in degree
From those we'd used in bombing Dresden.
And those, we knew, could be survived.

Down in a basement or subway,
Next to a wall when the thing hit
Were presumed to be safe positions.
And afterward, they'd dig you out.

The doughboy school board thought it out.
They hiked us into darkened halls,
Puppets reliving their old trench war,
Kneeling down by cinderblock walls.

They rang the bells and watched with pride
Our covered heads and felt relieved
At saving us from imagined attack.
Though children, we were not deceived.

We'd grown up with the better bomb
And knew that if they set it off
All flesh for miles around would melt,
The blood would boil, and the bones jackknife.

In our closed eyes: purple scenes
Of firestorms, our skin a red sauce,
Radiation sickness, the bright cloud,
Images of sermons set loose.

We saw brains bleed, gluey eyes flame,
 Burnt off arms, legs, heads, and hands.
 We whimpered in the corridor then,
 Aware that death was all around.

The cheerful school board stood us up,
 Our minds atomic whirligigs,
 Goose-stepped us back into our class,
 And told us all about the flag.

And the pencil selling cripples
 Stagg wheelchair price wars in the street
 That hydrophobic preachers
 Refused from pulpits in the gutter.

There friends are in waiting,
 Camouflaged against the mainline zone
 In clown-white faces and evergreen suits
 With teeth like razors and poison eggs.

Going home for the holidays
 To the country of the cruel,
 Who cut my right hand fingers off
 And hit the voice out of my throat,

Who have their steel ball-bearing eyes
 That shine like oily stars at night
 Upon my left hand fingers now
 Across the distance I must close.

Going home for the holidays,
 Slipping through the ice nap streets
 Into the baited neighborhood.
 I hear the owner choir begin
 To gargle with the songs my throat
 Could once produce, "Rejoice, rejoice."

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Going home for the holidays
 To the land of the thieves
 Where the beggars clot the sidewalks
 Stealing the wallets of pickpockets,

And the pencil selling cripples
 Stage wheelchair price wars in the street
 That hydrophobic preachers
 Referee from pulpits in the gutter.

There friends are in waiting,
 Camouflaged against the ominous snow
 In clown-white faces and evergreen suits
 With teeth like razors and poison eggnog.

Going home for the holidays
 To the country of the cruel,
 Who cut my right hand fingers off
 And bit the voice out of my throat,

Who have their steel ball-bearing eyes
 That shine like oily stars at night
 Upon my left hand fingers now
 Across the distance I must close.

Going home for the holidays,
 Slipping through the ice cap streets
 Into the baited neighborhood.
 I hear the corner choir begin
 To gargle with the songs my throat
 Could once produce, "Rejoice, rejoice."

I'VE GOT TO GET THE BRAIN TURNED OFF

They said that worry could be avoided
If I would only arrange to be clever.
I took the treatment but took too much,
And now I learn once it's done, it's forever.

Around me beggars on the street
Pick up money underfoot.
But civic dirt is all that I can find
And now and then, perhaps, a root.

Rumors of awards and prizes,
Falling from heaven, marked for sale,
Attracted me to the market square.
I only found a cold and wounding hail.

They told of riches for the asking;
I could not activate my tongue.
They then suggested simple desk jobs--
Sorting and filing on a lower rung.

I tried to stick it out, stay at my desk,
And did until I could no longer sit.
The job they gave my wife attacked her heart;
She had to quit.

And so last week the landlord put us out
With all we own upon the street;
A lamp, an armchair, and a sampler
Are all we've had this week to eat.

If only I could turn the brain off
It might be possible to yawn,
And stretch, and sleep. But as it is,
The lighted scenes go on and on and on and on.

I seem to have lived a thousand years already,
And yet I'm only half the way toward dead.
I've got as long to go as is behind me
And no space left at all inside my head.

I've got to get the brain turned off.
There's no more room. My eyes are getting full
And excess sounds leak from my ears,
And now my skull in back's begun to swell.

If I could simply think things one by one,
 Instead of everything at once,
 I might still try to function smoothly,
 But it's all simultaneous.

I've got to get the brain turned off.
 There's a danger of explosion.
 Man wasn't meant to be clear sighted.
 It's unfair to expose him,

Daily, to the fulminant world.
 I've got to get the brain turned off.
 I've got to shut the senses down.
 I've got to get the brain turned off.

All now, you know, we've relied on hell fare
 For special cases worth saving and love,
 Thoughtlessly, flushed and pumped the rest away,
 And with the new currette that vacuums the wool
 This wastefulness with only sustrops,
 To combat this I have proposals to make
 Arrived at (on my own time) in local bars.

It has come to me through good years
 That the flesh presents no problem at all.
 It will serve as fertilizer or dog food,
 And presents minor certain recipes,
 Therefore the bones chiefly interest me.

The ribs may be used as cricket cages,
 The tiny hands and arms or back scratchers,
 And as for the skulls, they may soon be sold,
 If the kids are hinged, as small ash trays,
 Or if left intact become the base
 As ornaments for the rear view mirror.

MEMO

What is to be done with aborted lives?
Not the already grown up ones, of course,
For their disposal belongs to a corps
From some department other than ours,
But what is to be done with embryos
And fetuses and slimy afterbirths
Conceived out of wedlock and scraped out of wives?

Til now, you know, we've relied on bell jars
For special cases worth saving and have,
Thoughtlessly, flushed and pumped the rest away.
And with the new curette that vacuums the womb
This wastefulness can only mushroom.
To combat this I have proposals to make
Arrived at (on my own time) in local bars.

It has come to me through some years
That the flesh presents no problem at all.
It will serve as fertilizer or dog food,
And gourmets rumor certain recipes.
Therefore the bones chiefly interest me.

The ribs may be used as cricket cages,
The tiny hands and arms as back scratchers,
And as for the skulls, they may soon be sold,
If the lids are hinged, as small ash trays,
Of if left intact become the rage
As ornaments for the rear view mirror.

CONSULTATION

Let's not kid ourselves, shall we? There's no point.
 Spread out a map of the empires of earth
 Dizzy with arrows, multi-colored boundaries,
 Yet nowhere does anyone share your doubts.

You have confided secret information,
 Unearthed in ways that you cannot relate,
 To learned professors, strangers, friends, your wife.
 Each of them has had his special answer
 Based on ignoring what you really said.

Only your enemies understand enough
 To use your fears to hurt you in the night.
 Is it any wonder you consult trees,
 Grasses, waters, weather with your troubles?
 They, at least, are somewhat sympathetic.

So am I. I'd listen longer if I could.
 You've said something about technique. Your hands
 Ache because you cannot get the message through.
 I understand, of course. I've got to hurry.
 I'm late for a meeting on what I worry about.
 I imagine you can find your way out.

KENTUCKY

Once on the floor of the valley
Near where the hillsides crimp greenly together,
I lay half-asleep in the farmhouse
Listening to the summer weather.

The moonlight whispered across the valley
And a rising wind lisped in the trees.
The nameless stream seemed to narrate softly
Its own journey to join the deep river that runs
Past a hundred villages' stony knees.

And then the storm came and put me to sleep
By raining on the roof of tin.
I woke to find the creek grown huge
And learned that we were flooded in.

We could have climbed up over hills,
Down which the riverlets boiled and scried,
But it was more pleasant to sit and watch
The captor creek from the porch and hear
The roars it made with its headlong tide.

They found us, when the waters sank,
Each rocking in his favorite chair,
Our playing cards still in our hands,
Our eyes fixed on the dry creek where

We still could hear the water's mouths
And still could see the torrents slide.
To them it only seemed that we'd
Been spellbound by the flood until
Our food had run out and we'd died.

LINES PRECEDING CATABOLISM

Psychologists find neurons do not renew.
We're born with the full complement and it grows.
Then the metabolic arc of life turns down,
Senility begins at twenty-nine;
Catabolism gains. The mind's less sharp
As time goes on. And so, at length, brain dies.
And so this moment is my optimum,
Before the brain shuts gradually down,
While synapses spark and all is alive.
Now is the moment to ask in clear days
Before I am reduced to the life of drone,
What is there in the universe to praise?

Astronomers find a million galaxies
That whirl their countless stars centrifugal
And spill them liquid round as novas blow.
Pathologists find crablike nebulae
Of soft-shell cancers in the viscera.
Psychologists find neurons don't renew,
And in the mirror I find myself find you--
A wordless raid, the miracle to be made.
Beneath the sky on a shell of world, the world you,
I find your eyes at dark, your legs askew.
I find miraculous the way you move.
I find what is in the world to praise and do
Before the brain shuts gradually down,
Before the stars become a cannonade,
Before the crawling death can take its hold.
Before forgetfulness can make the world a maze,
I find what is in the universe to praise.

A HALF MILE HIGH

A half mile high on the first day of spring
 A stranger doing the piloting
 In a one engine plane with the door tied with string.
 We banked to the right, and I slid down the wing
 And into the valley like sunshine.

The thinking in which I'd grown used to be clad
 Left a trail down the sky until all that I had
 Was a feeling, while drifting toward fields of green plaid,
 That the circular eye of the earth had grown glad
 That I seemed to be finally waking.

OUT AMONG THE ASTEROIDS

Out among the Asteroids,
 Down beneath the Sea,
 The Dolphins and Draconians
 Have pledged their fealty.

Their liege lord vows his answer as
 The sum of humankind
 Sleeps innocent of oath and of
 The Universal Mind.

Out among the Asteroids
 Down beneath the Seas
 In the throne room of the Gods
 With the Pleiades

The Universal Mind revolves
 Immune to flame or freeze
 Resolves each human paradox
 Combines Antipodes.

And just before we got back to the deck,
 The blue globe came up in the west.
 And my father panned and I knew then
 He was doing what mother's so often done.
 Before coming inside, he was trying to find
 The country known as Oregon that's still his home.
 And all of a sudden I felt awfully alone.

SHOW AND TELL

When father took us out to the museum,
I stood before the frail four-legged thing
The first moonmen rode on, then left behind.
It really looked quite comical.
It came, I think, from the state of Kennedy
Which is somewhere near my father's home,
A country known as Oregon.

He's told me all about those places
Where they have things known as forests and plains--
Sort of hydroponic gardens that grow
Directly on the ground; I don't know how.
My mother wishes I would learn to care
A little more about all that. My father, though,
Says we should think of what's ahead,
Not what's behind. I think like him.

Walking back we got to see the rising flare
Of the ferry taking out another load
Of provisions to the gang working on
The Proxima probe getting set for a star.
I said to my father, "When I grow up,
That's where I'm going." He said, "Yes. You are."

And just before we got back to the dome,
The blue globe came up in the east.
And my father paused and I knew then
He was doing what mother's so often done.
Before coming inside, he was trying to find
The country known as Oregon that's still his home.
And all of a sudden I felt awfully alone.

BLUE WILLOW

When I was what is called a child
And I'd muddled my head all day,
I'd go to bed and wait to dream
Where the air was cool and mild.
Where the air was cool and blue all night
Like the China on the dish,
Where the willow bent down across the bridge
And the Chinaman got his wish.

But then I left the dreams behind
And I slept with a silent mind
And friends were not as bad or good
As the ones I'd left behind
And then friends would cheat your heart away
And would call the truth a lie
And the world could not be made to make sense
No matter how hard you would try.

So I've put the pasteboard stars back up.
They glow on the walls of my room.
The nightmares and the dreams are back
And the hey diddle of the moon.
Yes, the hey diddle of the moon is back
And, though mother's not near by,
I've still got me a love by the blue willow tree
And she sings me a lullaby.

OUT AMONG THE ASTEROIDS

Out among the asteroids, there passes a long rod of light whose color no man can name. This band of radiant energy is of infinite length, describes a great ellipse through the galaxy, and passes through our solar system's asteroid belt. It is alive. Once millions, perhaps billions, of years ago a race of sentient creatures rose up upon a planet of the star Al Rakis in the constellation Draco the Dragon. For convenience sake alone I will therefore call them the Draconians. It is, naturally enough, not their own name for themselves.

The Draconians' evolution was a long and stately progress. They grew in wisdom for many millenia. They lengthened their span of life by complex biological and mechanical means. They achieved a form of co-operative group mind. Still, even at the height of this advanced stage in their development, one obstacle was yet to be overcome. Despite their great knowledge and longevity, the Draconians still died. How long and tortuous the path toward overcoming this plague was, no one can say. But it was overcome. The Draconians were able at length to transform themselves into a super-modulated form of pure energy. Whether it is proper to refer to this final evolutionary product as one or many is unknowable. Probably, given their present mode of consciousness, the distinction is meaningless.

At the attainment of this point in their existence, the Draconians left their small home-world to inhabit the spaces between stars. They have lived there now for a great time. Long ago, long after their departure from it, the planet of their origin met its inevitable end. By that time, the Draconians were already engaged upon the work that has occupied them from the time when they attained their majority to the present.

The Draconians are marksmen of a spectacular sort. The history of the planet earth (and of who knows how many others) is a history of their marksmanship. Life is their dart board. It is all a great shooting gallery in the sky. And the ammunition which the Draconians use are the cosmic rays.

Out among the last reaches of the planet's atmosphere, all is void, color, and the absence of color. It is cold and black and bright with stars and other radiation. And the shimmering radiations out there on the periphery of the endless night are rainbow flares, burning gases far off, odd lights beyond the visible. Across the spaces between stars lie shifting tides of rarefied gases and vast currents of light, energy, and magnetic fields. The cosmic ray primaries--free protons, electrons, and the nuclei of heavy elements move along lines of magnetic fields in spiral trajectories down the long night. The rays have tiny mass but high energy, which means that their speed must be very high--nearly the velocity of light. Now, the super-modulated rod of light-like radiative energy which is the Draconians not only moves at the speed

of light, it also has as part of its nature or design a very powerful magnetic field. Thus the Draconians are a core of energy across the blackness of deep deep space, and about this core, and attracted by the magnetic field, spiral the primaries of cosmic rays collected in the Draconians' journeys.

Where the Draconians pass near the earth's thinnest upper atmosphere, there they can perform their nearly supernatural shooting tricks. Under their control cosmic ray primaries, like shining evanescent bullets of very high energy and ultimate speed, break away from the Draconian core and flash against the backdrop of the perpetual night. They enter the atmosphere and, if one could follow the speeding trajectory of a single one of them, one could see this tiny sub-atomic dart do its work guided by the Draconians. In passing into the upper atmosphere it strikes atoms and triggers the cosmic ray process, slowly as you watch it in imagination but at the speed of light. And from each single speeding shot, by the cascading multiplicative process of such rays, down through the thickening layers of atmosphere, at last, a hail storm of racing cosmic rays is engendered. Finally these reach earth in a shower unnumbered, yet each one is guided and given its special motion by the nudging power of the Draconians.

Now, there is nothing abnormal or unusual in these rays. The earth is ever bombarded by showers, and one may watch their phantom trails arc across a simple cloud chamber. Many are deflected by striking atoms of gases in the atmosphere. Trillions fall on the

sea and land at all times. Some few strike growing plants and some living animals. And when one random cosmic ray, out of the millions that fall each day, by accident strikes the germ cells of matter that does what we describe as living, it may occasionally alter the atoms of the one particular cell in a gene that it strikes. This gives rise to the random mutations that account for the changes in living things. This is all quite commonly counted as part of the haphazard business of living species evolving from age to age. But what I now have to tell is different and almost unthinkable.

A single of the innumerable primary particles shot by the Draconian core toward earth causes, by the sifting geometrically growing process of cosmic rays, an incredible torrent of these to be born. And when these particles, subtly guided, reach the earth they strike simultaneously, in uncounted men, the germ plasm and strike there pre-selected genes in a multitude of infinitesimal detonations. Thereby one particular hereditary mutation in a sizeable human population is assured for the next generation of humankind at a single stroke. This is the cosmic shooting gallery and we and the other species of earth the targets upon which the Draconians take their aim.

The Draconians are the celestial gardeners and plant and prune and weed, select, and improve whole species in much the way a human gardener tends a miniature plot of land. I have no doubt that, with their incredible age and with their infinite nature and

inhuman relationship to time, they perform this special service for tens of thousands of inhabited planets. They cull the universe for viable life forms and cultivate them with patience beyond our grasp. I also have no doubt whatsoever that they have always or have often been out there turning their attention, when needful, to the affairs of the planet earth. No doubt they were the ones who invented grasslands, caused the apes to stand upright and streamline. No doubt four million or more years ago they struck our ancestors' genes with the cosmic lightning and caused the human brain to grow. Throughout our history we have inevitably been given genetic pushes at critical moments by this same agency.

The process seems miraculous, but it is not, on the Draconians' level. They maximize only possibilities. Perhaps they are even in error sometimes. There is, for example, an African primate that lived and died in the distant past. They are generally called the Boskopoids. They lived when our own archaic ancestors were barely distinguishable from apes, and yet the Boskopoids were the ultra-humans. Alongside these long extinct creatures, modern man appears gross and heavy, small brained and clearly inferior. And yet the Boskopoids all died. They lived too soon in too violent a world for their delicate and refined bodies and minds to prevail. May not this have been a Draconian intervention that was just a few million years premature? It seems very likely.

Having said this much, I feel obligated to comment on the Draconians' ultimate intentions in their husbandry, but it is

axiomatic that species as widely separated as ourselves and the Draconians have little chance for mutual understanding. Any speculation on the motives of the Draconians must be inadequate, even futile. The alternative, however, is to passively presume that, rather than being the playthings of the gods who kill us for their sport, we are the toys of an energetic species that lives, in part, in a narrow band across our solar system. Rather than give in to that pessimistic view, I will risk theorizing.

First, I have an uncanny faith that the Draconians work benignly and in the direction of progress. All the xenophobic training of space opera, with its uniformly inimical alien intelligences, argues against this. However, our continued existence argues for it. It isn't at all hard to conceive of some fairly disastrous mutations which, if organized on the scale of the Draconians' operations, would lead to species termination within a generation or two. Yet we continue to live. We have not been uprooted, though the scourging of maladaptive species must occasionally be undertaken. It is possible, of course, that this point in our evolution is a critical one. We are becoming powerful, reaching out into the universe. If we continue to be stupid and destructive, we may well be weeded out unceremoniously. More likely is the idea that even now the Draconians are in the process of altering us from weeds into something more pleasant. The difficulty comes in trying to define pleasant. It is not likely that we are being nurtured for our decorativeness. Human breeders undertake graftings and crossings in order to create larger ears of corn,

hardier roses, more lovely orchids, higher yield wheat. What do the Draconians intend us to be? Once again I warn that my answer is only speculative, but I offer it here,

Why may not the purpose being carried out in man, and any other evolving protoplasm the Draconians encounter, be the raising of that protoplasm to the point where it becomes capable of vibrating in tune with some hidden order that resides somewhere in the universe? Up to now man has been only rarely able to do it. And yet the reports brought back by mystics, poets, and others on the frontier suggest marvelous things going on out there. The difficulty up to now has been that those who have gotten even part of the way have been able only to praise their visions but not to teach others the pathway. All encounters with the cosmic vibration have been found clumsily and by accident. And apparently, one can be very close and never find the key at all. It is all groping in the darkness without a guide--or has been. The next step in our evolution may solve this dilemma by giving us a new sense that allows us to find our way into the realms of the night where the Draconians live.

It is at least possible that there is such a grand scheme at work in the Draconians' interest in us. I would be less than candid if I did not also admit that it is as possible that something altogether less exalted may be at work. It may simply be that the Draconians are lonely in their superiority and long to create a companion species, no doubt in their own image; someone to talk to

in the long dark corridors between stars. All men now living will be a long time dead when the direction we are headed in becomes clear. Still it is impossible not to wonder whether our destiny is to serve some great and unthinkable purpose in the universe or rather simply to serve the Draconians as a man called Adam was once served by his rib.

THE MONK'S TALE

When the boy was still young, the war began. So he grew up always surrounded by the noise of war. There were constant marches in the streets, the sounds of drums, banners and signs with slogans. Those who opposed the war came out in great numbers to shout when the politicians came to make lofty speeches about patriotism and faith and sacrifice. Those who favored the war were always ready to cheer and organize yet another parade.

The boy watched all of this and the sound of it reverberated in his ears, sometimes even late at night as he tried to sleep. And it all went on and on as the boy grew into a young man. It finally came to seem to him that there had never been peace, always war. It seemed the natural habitat. Nevertheless, the boy decided, when he began to near maturity, that he did not desire to serve, to fight, to die. Others from his town had gone away, and some had come back and some had not. And some that had returned were missing arms or legs or eyes. Those that were killed outright were called heroes, but the boy had known some of those, and they'd only been lazy or reckless or bullies or fools. Only their dying had made them seem valiant. The wounded who came home sat day in and day out on benches in the market square and told stories, were arrogant, lived on their pensions, and alternately impressed and frightened the townspeople with their wounds, their bravado and

cynicism. So the young man decided he would not go. If the town had no pride in him as he was, he had no desire to die for the honor.

The question the young man had to answer was how to avoid the seeming inevitability of going to battle like everyone else. He thought for a long time about how it might be done. It was his awareness of the noisiness of the war talk that finally gave him the idea. After all the years of rallies and speeches and rumors and processions, the young man's major desire was for quietude. He asked himself where he might obtain the requisite silence for a time. The answer was obvious in a moment.

On the outskirts of the town, hidden back from the road among trees, was a monastery of some order or other. Like everyone else in the town, the boy had often passed it and given it no thought. It was simply a part of the landscape--something one saw without seeing. Now, when the young man thought of it, he knew he had the solution. The war could not go on forever and, even if it did, in a few short years he would no longer be thought of as suitable for the military. A few years of quiet pretending to seek God were all that were needed, and then he'd be free.

The young man's only worry remaining, once he came to this decision, was whether the brotherhood would be willing to have him. He set out one morning in the middle of summer to find out the answer to that. The day was fine and bright, the countryside green, the roadside dusty. The young man told no one about his journey in case it should turn out that he was unwelcome.

It was after noon when he turned up the winding drive to the monastery building. As he neared the door of the building, there were only the sounds of wind and songbirds around him. In the rolling fields behind the building, identically clad men could be seen silently tending the crops. The young man had to ring the bell many times before he heard answering footsteps beyond the heavy door. When at last it opened, a brother of indeterminate age faced him wordlessly. The young man gathered his courage and managed to speak.

"I have come to ask if it is possible for me to join your order," he said.

The monk regarded the young man for a long time, then turned and motioned for him to follow. They passed down winding stone corridors, dark and cool after the blazing glare of the summer. The young man was at last shown into a narrow office and left alone with a second monk. This one was old and had wispy white hair. The boy repeated his purpose in coming.

"Outside they only care for killing, gaining wealth, noise, and chaos."

"But do you want merely to escape the world, or are you rather in search of God?" the old man asked.

"Yes," said the young man, who cared nothing for God. "Yes, I want to find God."

"You will not find ours an easy life. We maintain silence many days of the year. Except for the singing of the hymns of our

order, all speech is forbidden for three months at a time. One day every three months you may speak for an hour. You will be expected to attend daily services--at dawn and dusk--to help in the fields, to pray privately for many hours daily. There are no luxuries or amusements here. Our diet is simple. If you are not sincere, you had best reconsider."

"I want to join, but must bid my family farewell."

"Return at week's end."

The young man was full of joy as he made his way back to town. He did not dare confide to his family that his joining the order was simply a ploy. They took the news of his decision with some surprise, for they were not overly religious, but with a due solemnity. At week's end the young man bid them good-bye, returned alone to the monastery door. He was shown to a cell and given a cloak, a book of hymns and prayers to learn, and left alone. At dusk a monk knocked with a stave in the hall, and the young man followed the others into the sanctuary. There he joined for the first time the strong male voices in singing the hymns of the order and repeated the prayers. At the end of the service in full darkness, a few stars showing through the windows of the vaulted, echoing stone hall, the old monk stepped forward and motioned the young man to him.

"Brother of Grateful Surrender," the old man said, introducing the young man by the title he, as elder of the order, had selected for the young man. The dark shapes of the other brothers bowed once in silence and began to disperse to their rooms.

The cot the young man had been given was unfamiliar, he found it hard to fall asleep. He watched the stars pass the single, narrow window high in the wall one by one. Dawn came quickly. The stave rapped loudly in the hallway. The hymns and prayers were repeated as the sun came up. The morning meal was warm soup; the morning chill and damp. The young man was led to the fields by six-thirty. He tended rows of peas and beans and grain for hours with a hoe as the morning haze burned off and the day grew hotter. He was sent to walk and pray in the mid-morning, but fell asleep in the orchard exhausted. He was wakened by the blow of a stave on his shoulder and admonished by signs not to sleep but to pray. More work occupied the late afternoon. The evening meal was rice and vegetables. Then prayers and hymns and sleep.

The days progressed in this unvarying routine. The young man marked them off on his wall. He grew lithe and thin and muscular with the diet. He did not long to talk particularly, but did miss the noise and bustle of the town which he'd thought he'd hated. He was always tired for the first months and then seemed to grow used to the labor. Still, there was a revolving worldliness in him. He was not calm or peaceful. He was not grateful, nor did he surrender. When the first three months ended and an hour of speech was allowed, he noted with satisfaction that many of the monks' words were trivial. Some complained of the cooking, others requested a change in job assignments. For his part, the young monk asked simply, what of the war? He received no answer. The hour ended too quickly.

During the second three months came the harvest, the deepening of autumn, and the start of winter. More and more, on his walks across the fields, the young monk studied the flying birds, the waving grasses, the husks of summer, the life of the pond, the brook, the trees, the insects, the tracks of rabbits in the snow. When the silence was broken, he commented on the beauty of the seasons, mentioned his mind's restlessness, asked again, hesitantly, about the war, got no answer. He also listened more closely to the others. One said how beautiful the winter was. One said he was always cold. The old monk remarked that the wheel of the seasons was orderly as only God can be orderly. Silence closed in again about them.

Sometime in the next months, the young monk was handed paint and shown that he was expected to whitewash his room. The point was to efface the calendar he'd been keeping. He tried after that to keep track in his head, but soon lost count. The next day for speaking came in spring rains. The young man had nothing much to say. One monk remarked that grace rains down like the rain from heaven, sometimes gently and sometimes in lashing torrents.

When summer came it seemed like many years, but was only one. Time was behaving strangely. The prayers and hymns went on. The young monk came upon another in the fields, Brother of Doubt, weeping openly, his arms thrown open to the great cobalt blue sky. He was crying like a child and breaking his vow of silence by

saying over and over, "You are here, after all. You are here, after all. You are here. You are here. You are here, after all." At first the young man thought the other was addressing him, then understood and walked on.

The seasons revolved from one to another. Brother of Grateful Surrender truly lost count of his time in the monastery. The prayers and hymns seemed to well up out of him as naturally as springs from the earth or crops from seed. Day followed day. In the smallest blade of grass or sweet clover blossom, in the muscles moving as the work was done, in the stone of the monastery's colonnade, in the fruits of the orchard, in the wild flowers, the sky, the day, the night, the stars, the sound of the hymns being sung there seemed to be some secret hidden.

Brother of Grateful Surrender surprised himself upon one of the occasions for speaking by saying: "I do not know about God, but there is something that connects all things. There is an invisible web that holds all of us and everything somehow." He spent long hours among the plants of the earth and his thoughts were slow and serious, and it was as if meaning streamed down upon his brain from everywhere. Yet he could not understand the message. Still, he did not trouble himself--for the mystery was as ecstatic as knowledge would have been, or so he felt.

The old monk died. He was buried before dawn. The sun came up golden and ripe as the coffin was lowered into the indigo earth. And all the grey corners of the earth burst into crystal-faceted

brilliance as the last joyful hymn died away, as the sun struck the dew upon the earth, as the loam was shoveled back into the ground. Brother of Grateful Surrender could not be sorrowful, though he tried. It seemed to him somehow that death was appropriate, even beautiful.

On one occasion he was startled when, upon a speaking day, a new brother was directed to use Brother of Grateful Surrender as a model of piety. "Oh no," he said, "I am only escaping from military service." The other monks laughed gently and shook their heads. This puzzled him, and he wondered if his thoughts might not actually have become prayers through habit. He went on singing hymns, gardening, helping in the kitchen, walking to and fro among the trees. Now and then he would laugh outright at the sight of a squirrel or jay or grasshopper.

Then there was a period when Brother of Grateful Surrender felt locked within himself. Then, he would not see another soul for days, so concerned with his inner life was he. Then as quickly he would see everything so acutely that it was agony. He felt on fire to be able to express himself, to be able to break through his ignorance and clumsiness of perception. There was sense in the smallest clod of earth and beauty like fire rippling and blazing along the rows of crops, along the limbs of the brothers. This was agony--to be able to see, but not identify, to be dull in the middle of glory, inarticulate. Then he wept repeatedly and struck himself about the head. In the fields, where once he had felt only

ease and comfort, he now hoed wildly, blistered his hands, grateful for sensation of pain to take his mind off sorrow. He wandered disconsolately through the countryside and suffered and suffered infinitely and frightened the other monks. On days when they spoke, he said nothing. They feared for him and tried to comfort, but there was no comfort.

And then suddenly one night at the service, Brother of Grateful Surrender saw the way and knew great joy. It was as if he had broken through some barrier and was sailing calmly for home, or more precisely it was as if the fog had lifted only to reveal the lost and terrified mariner safely in port after all. It was God, that was all, God. On the way to his room, he collapsed.

It was only the excitement. The next day he was out again. He consolidated his knowledge and wondered how to express it. He bided his time. He grew truly calm and joyful. Often when he saw the sun on the fields or a simple dinner put before him, he would weep in gratitude. Beatitude settled upon him gently, as a bird might upon his shoulder. At last, when he was sure he had it right, he announced quietly, beaming serenely, "There is God in everything, so love is true. I love my brothers and the earth and the order in the universe." His listeners were dumbstruck, not so much at his words as at his demeanor. They had no answer. They simply stared at him and nodded.

Shortly after this revelation, by Brother of Grateful Surrender's reckoning, the folly and evil of warfare suddenly came

unbidden again into his head. It seemed to him fully three, maybe even four years since he had come to the monastery to escape war. Now, he realized, he had somehow forgotten the very existence of war. So much may happen in a few short years, he thought.

But once recalled, the idea of war nagged at him. Though it now had no power to affect him, though Brother of Grateful Surrender now found the idea of any sort of life other than his happy isolation unthinkable, still the fact of war ate at him and grew and preoccupied and tormented. He feared that the killing would still be going on even after these two or three or four or even five years. It was a terrible possibility and he wanted to find out the truth. Suddenly, he knew impatience again. He waited in anxious silence for the next day of speaking to find out if the awful travesty continued. At last, the day came. In a frenzy, he sought out the newest monk and nervously blurted out his question while staring at the young man in a very disconcerting manner.

"What of the war?" he asked as he had once before.

The young man eyed the distraught monk before him uncomprehendingly. Brother of Grateful Surrender was generally acknowledged to be very close to God, very much an example to them all. But this strange question frightened the young monk, for he did not understand its meaning. He thought it might be allegorical in intention. At last he meekly ventured a question of his own.

"What war?" he asked.

This response seemed only to increase Brother of Grateful Surrender's impatience. He rapidly explained exactly what war he meant, as if the boy were a fool. For his part, the young monk was stricken, for he was sure now that he was failing some test.

"Oh sir," he said in despair, "that war has now been over for at least twenty-five years. It must have ended soon after you came here, sir."

"Oh," said Brother of Grateful Surrender, abashed, "then now there is peace?"

"Yessir."

"And so, I am old."

The young monk nodded again, and Brother of Grateful Surrender shook his head as a slow smile suffused his countenance.

"How wonderful that is," he said. "How wonderful that is."

And the boy, without comprehension, smiled tentatively along with the old gentleman. And Brother of Grateful Surrender closed his eyes in peace.

This is a true story that took place in the province of Ch'u, during and immediately following the reign of the tyrant Shih Huang Ti from the year 220 to 198 B.C.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Mr. Lightoller emerged from the cabin at five o'clock. He wore a sweatshirt and a torn pair of pants. Paint stains covered the garments and his hands. He blinked his eyes tiredly and began to tamp tobacco into a pipe. He hoisted himself onto a barrel before the cottage and leaned back against the wall looking out across the salt marsh.

In the summer there was a daily season called twilight on the marsh. It lasted from late afternoon until ten at night when the stars came out. The only natural colors the marsh possessed were earth browns and the greens and blacks of reeds and grasses. The rest was water and throughout the day it could be silver or black. But during the extended twilights when the sky performed its long repertoire of pastels, the waters mirrored the changes. Then the world became twins--blue above and below, cerise, mauve, flame. And the great motionless birds and their images in the water stood out stark and beautiful against the silence and the shifting hues of sky and water. There were osprey and grebes, snowy egrets, ibis, terns and gulls, and the varieties of heron. Most evenings it seemed as if nothing moved across the great marsh except the colors themselves and an occasional stately waterfowl.

Mr. Lightoller's cabin perched out upon a narrow peninsula of land overgrown by reeds--a small raised place amid the flat

expanse of marshy water. In this it resembled the domed beaver homes which dotted the waters at intervals. Mr. Lightoller contented himself for some time with his pipe and the colors evolving, expecting no novelty to intrude upon this invariable routine of the evening. And yet at about seven o'clock a novelty did develop. From off across the marsh a small sound reached him and in the distance a flight of terns exploded skyward in its wake. Fixing his gaze in the direction of the disturbance, Lightoller could just make out a miniature figure. The figure was knee deep in water a half mile away. The intruder must have made a misstep and found not dry land but a mass of deceptive marsh grass. As he watched, the figure clambered up an embankment and commenced walking again.

For the next fifteen minutes the person drew closer to Mr. Lightoller's peninsula. As he watched this progress, he wondered who the stranger could possibly be and what purpose anyone could have in invading the marsh. Once the small figure paused along the shore, somewhat forlornly it seemed to the watching Lightoller, and seemed to scan the marsh from one horizon to the other. Lightoller had an urge to rise and motion but suppressed it and contented himself with watching. After a time the figure moved on. Upon reaching the finger of land at the end of which Lightoller's cabin was constructed, the stranger hesitated only briefly before beginning out it toward him. Lightoller for some reason was very surprised at this development and perhaps less than pleased to find

himself about to be altered from spectator to participant in this small drama.

Soon the sound of the person's approaching footsteps upon the reeds became audible to him. Shortly after that he began to realize that the approaching stranger was only a child, and when the distance between them closed to a few hundred feet he saw it was a little girl coming toward him. She advanced without timidity, picking her way along the weedy peninsula until she stood directly before Lightoller and his cabin where she halted. They looked each other over for a time in silence. She was about eleven years old, lanky, and dressed much as Lightoller was himself in tennis shoes, corduroy pants and a sweater. Her short hair was tangled and she looked tired. There was a certain canny self-awareness in her wide blue eyes. Her shoes and pants to the knees were dark with water from her recent adventure in the marsh. When she spoke she cocked her head to one side.

"What the hell kind of place is this, anyway?"

A little startled and aware that until now he had failed to behave in a particularly gentlemanly fashion, Lightoller gestured toward an upended wooden packing case next to his own seat.

"Would you care to sit down?"

She eyed him a moment, nodded, and slipped onto the crate wordlessly. Lightoller drew on his pipe briefly before answering her question. She dangled her feet off the crate and watched him steadily.

"It's a wildlife preserve--chiefly for waterfowl and some species of mammal," he said.

"Oh."

The silence deepened, broken only by occasional gull cries. When Lightoller could contain his curiosity no longer, he asked a question with what he hoped was sufficient casualness.

"What brings you here?"

The girl raised one eyebrow fractionally and executed a smile so perfectly, yet incongruously, cynical on her youthful face that Lightoller actually blushed at having been so obvious.

"Those brought me here," the girl said and indicated her feet. "I suppose you expect me to just tell you my whole life story right off?"

Lightoller was abashed.

"I don't know what to expect," he said. "It's just that visitors are not all that common, and you're young to be unaccompanied." He ran down helplessly and had recourse to his pipe for security.

"I can see why you don't get visitors," the girl said, looking around her with distaste. "This is some Godforsaken place."

"I would have thought it's one of the few places God hasn't forsaken," Lightoller mumbled almost to himself.

"Jesus," said the girl, "a preacher."

Lightoller had no handy retort. Again time passed uncomfortably.

"Oh, what the shit," the girl said at last. "All right. You can call me Ann. I never had an old man and my mother just died. Got killed actually. Last Monday night. It's what they call an occupational hazard. So I'm trying to keep out of the way of the creeps."

"What creeps are those?"

Again she regarded him directly and shook her head.

"Boy, are you dumb. The social worker creeps. They'll be hot to get me in an orphanage or a foster home or rehabilitate me somehow. Who needs it?"

At this point a great blue heron appeared at a majestic pace from behind a clump of marsh grass and studied them with a stern unblinking eye.

"Goddamn," said the girl, "what kind of bird is that?"

Lightoller told her.

"What are you, anyway," asked the girl, "some kind of bird watcher?"

"No. I'm a painter."

"A painter? What is there to paint around here?"

"Pictures."

"Oh," she said, "that kind of painter. That still doesn't explain what you're doing out in a place like this."

Lightoller debated with himself briefly about what to tell her and reluctantly decided on the truth.

"For a long time," he began, "social scientists knew that the incidence of alcoholism, drug addiction, psychological disorders,

and suicide among creative personalities was very high and it seemed to be steadily worsening."

"Yeah," the girl agreed, "there's a lot of that around lately." Lightoller ignored her.

"Actually, it hasn't always been that way. The growth rate of such things seems to have begun accelerating about the time of the Industrial Revolution. The curve has climbed steadily ever since and ever faster. People who worry about such things began to think that none of the really creative or sensitive people in the world would last beyond thirty if it kept up. They began to make provisions such as this. A few miles that way," he indicated a point across the marsh, "is a fine woman poet, and a novelist lives over there." He gestured again. "We'd rather like a musician, but they're afraid it would disturb the birds. In any event, I guess we're what you might call just another endangered species."

The girl sat for some time as if digesting this. The sky was turning indigo on the eastern horizon. A startlingly white bird on stilt legs considered its image in the water a hundred yards to their left.

"What's that?"

"An egret."

"You know them all don't you?"

"Only a few. More than three hundred species frequent this refuge."

"Counting you?"

"Counting me."

Again the girl was silent.

"It is kind of pretty here," she said at last. "Once you get used to it. Awful quiet, though."

"You get used to that too." The silence went on yet again.

Lightoller asked where the girl was from.

"The Richmond-D.C. Road City. Enclave 29 Northwest."

That meant she'd come nearly four hundred miles. As if reading his thoughts, the girl spoke.

"Four hundred miles in nine days, and not much of that hitchhiking either. Couldn't take the chance. They may be after me," she paused. "Or they may not."

It was then that Lightoller understood that the girl was a fellow refugee. He would give her dinner and a place to sleep. He would watch her metabolism assume a saner pace under the influence of the timeless salt marsh. He would long to find a way to allow her to stay. She would have to leave. For one reason or another that would be inevitable. She would have to go back to the clangour of the world. And when she did, her eyes would be softer and would no doubt ask Lightoller silently, imploringly-- why are you allowed to stay and why must I leave? He would not know the answer.

A laughing gull struck the water and had a morsel and floated on above the water laughing its raucous laugh hysterically. The great blue heron turned its proud head superciliously toward the two humans and gazed at them with one cold, jewel-like eye. It said.

I've gotten the men to look after me. Now, tell me, who looks after them?

"Could I offer you something to eat?" Lightoller said softly. The girl nodded once and she seemed to be crying. From over the marsh came the gull's laugh again.

UTILITIES

It was snowing lightly, diagonally to the earth. Haswell looked at the map, remembered the army map reading course he'd failed, and smiled. At length, he thought he saw the way. He put the idling truck in gear and pulled away from the curb. Three streets up on the right, he found Montrose where he'd supposed it would be.

Montrose was a quiet little street that wound uphill slightly--tree-lined, residential, and, today, snow covered. Haswell watched the house numbers. 192...196...204. He also studied the way snow covered each shrub and bush, needle and twig white. 236. He slowed, signalled, and turned into the driveway of 238. He switched the ignition off and got out.

Haswell walked to the back doors of the tri-colored van--cream, blue, and olive green. When he opened the door, it cut the stylized gold bell in the gold circle in half. He picked up the box with the phone, his tool belt, and stuck his arm through a hundred foot coil of wire which he adjusted onto his shoulder. He shut the van's door, putting back together the gold bell and the writing beneath it: The Bell System.

238 was a Cape Cod. Haswell stomped his snowy jump boots on the welcome mat as he rang the bell for the second time. The door opened. A young woman stood silhouetted in the doorway. She

was tall and thin and wore a bulky, loden green sweater, green and grey tartan skirt, black leotards and was shoeless.

"Mrs. Osmond?" Haswell asked.

"Yes, of course. Come in." She stood aside slightly, holding the door. Her voice was a warm contralto, her eyes green, her hair light brown--shoulder length and swept behind her ears. She smiled. She had a lightly freckled Siamese cat face, a slightly crooked front tooth.

"And you are?"

"Uh, Haswell, Mrs. Osmond. Now where did you want the extension phone?"

"Upstairs please. Follow me." She led the way through the living room and up the stairway. She moved lightly and well, her skirt swaying as she climbed. Haswell watched the backs of her knees and thighs and considered his fondness for black stockings. She paused at the top of the stairs as Haswell trudged up next to her.

"Now Mr. Haswell, give me the benefit of your experience. We can either have the phone in this hallway..." She moved ahead of him again and opened a door. It revealed a sunny bedroom with a very large quilt-covered feather bed with painted head and foot boards. "...or we can put it in here. Which do you think?"

"I've never much seen the point of a phone in the hall unless there are people who'll be using it that you wouldn't want in your bedroom. If it's just for you and your husband, I'd say in here."

"Fine. Can I get you anything?"

"No. I'll just go to work."

"Do you mind if I sit and watch, Mr. Haswell?"

"No."

"Because I've always been fascinated by phones, you know. Isn't it amazing the ways we're all a part of each other?"

Haswell put down the phone and belt and the wire, unzipped his heavy army parka. He lay this last across a tiny, child-sized rocking chair. He also lay there his floppy, Alaska style headgear. He was in flannel workshirt, fatigue pants stuffed into jump boots. He strapped the belt on, clanking.

"Now, I'm afraid if you want to watch you're going to have to follow me around for a little while."

He glanced up at Mrs. Osmond. She was leaning against the door jamb, her arms crossed beneath her breasts which Haswell noticed now were small and nicely rounded beneath the bulky knit.

"And what do you mean we're all a part of each other? Isn't that what you said?"

He passed her and moved down the stairs.

"Yes. I mean we're all connected here. I think about it a lot when I'm home alone in the afternoons."

"I don't think I quite understand yet," said Haswell, sticking his head out the door to see where the line from the street entered the house. He couldn't tell from the front door.

"I'm afraid I'm going out for a minute, Mrs. Osmond."

"Wait for me." She disappeared only to return in brown loafers a moment later.

"Should probably wear a coat."

"I'm okay," she said.

They stood in the drive. Haswell shaded his eyes. Mrs. Osmond's hair blew over one eye. She hugged herself and stood on one foot.

"I mean think of the ways I'm connected to my neighbors. The same pipes bring us water and take away the sewage. The same wires bring us electricity; the same pipelines gas to keep us warm."

Haswell turned back toward the house. She shut the door behind them.

"You were right. I should have worn a coat," she said. "God, it's cold out there." She brushed her hair behind her ears. Haswell glanced down at her. Her chilled nipples could be seen clearly beneath the sweater. He looked away with difficulty.

"Where's the basement?"

"Beneath the house," she smiled.

"How do I get there?" he asked sternly, but actually amused.

Through the kitchen, down a flight of stairs. He found the box almost immediately.

"All right," he said, "back up." He led.

"Do you see what I mean?" she asked when they were back up in the bedroom. "We're all connected together by pipes and wires and

roads and train tracks. You and I and the President and the warden of Leavenworth and a barber in Arizona. I think that's amazing."

"Yes, I guess it is in a way," said Haswell, who had the phone out of the box and the bottom off of it. "How long a cord do you want on it?"

"Oh, I don't wander around too much when I talk--five or ten feet. Whatever's standard."

He attached the cord, then began fiddling with the insides of the phone. He took out a small notebook which he consulted.

"What are you doing now?" Mrs. Osmond asked.

He turned his head. She was standing over him looking down. He looked up from his kneeling position and allowed his eyes to stray to her legs. He looked back to the phone.

"I'm setting your number on this phone."

"See there," she said, sitting on the corner of the bed. "Now that phone is me. It's just gotten its personality."

Haswell smiled slightly as he screwed the base back on the phone. He then took a ratchet screwdriver from his belt and inserted an eighth-inch drill bit. Holding the square junction box next to the baseboard, he marked through the two holes with a pencil, then drilled the holes quickly with the tool.

"That's a pretty tricky gadget," said Mrs. Osmond.

"Yep."

He screwed the box in place. He attached the wire to it and began running the wire along the baseboard stapling it in place as

he went. When he came to the closet door, Mrs. Osmond helped him run the wire over it by holding it taut and standing on tiptoe while he, on a chair, stapled and looked down into her upturned face. Finally, he reached the wall facing the driveway with the wire. He used an electric drill to make a quarter inch hole through to the outside. He snaked the wire through.

"What's next?"

"I have to go outside, Mrs. Osmond, and screw some guides onto the wall for the wire to run through, then drill into the basement and tie in there."

"Could I make you a cup of coffee or tea while you do that?"

"That's very kind. Anything you're having."

In the kitchen, after Haswell completed the tie in the basement, Mrs. Osmond brought their cups of tea to the table.

"I think it's a shame more people don't realize the things we all have in common. Here we are, all linked together by this network of phones and roads and mailmen and TV, and yet none of us feels we can really get in touch. We feel isolated even though we're all together. Even though we're all right next door to each other and all interconnected, still we can't seem to get in touch and in accord about anything. And it's because we don't stop to think about it. Right, Mr. Haswell?"

"Could be."

He sipped his tea; Mrs. Osmond sipped hers.

"What's left to do?" she asked.

"Just attach the phone upstairs and test it."

"You're not going to climb up a pole?"

"No need to. This isn't a new line at the street, just an extension."

"How interesting. That is, I'd never thought of that before," said Mrs. Osmond, waltzing up the stairs in the lead again. "Extension is a very interesting word for it. It's just what I've been talking about. The same idea."

Haswell bent down to the baseboard junction.

"I've been trying to get my theory of this thing across to the people who matter, the ones directly involved--mailmen, truck-drivers, gas men, water men, meter readers, electric company people, and now you," said Mrs. Osmond from behind Haswell.

"Umm humm," said Haswell, screwing home the final connection. "That just about does it," he said, turning back to Mrs. Osmond by the bed.

He stopped. Mrs. Osmond was bending slightly, her skirt in her hand, clad in sweater and leotards only. She lay the skirt on the floor slowly.

"Mrs. Osmond."

"My name is Jennifer Osmond. I live at 238 Montrose," said Mrs. Osmond straightening up. Her hands went to her waist. Slowly she inserted her thumbs in the waistband of her black tights and began to pull them down her legs. An equilateral triangle of sandy

brown hair came into view. "And I'm concerned about people being cut off from one another these days, and I'm doing my part to do something about it."

She bent forward, raised one foot, bent the knee, and pulled off the tights from that foot, standing slightly knock-kneed as she made the maneuver. She placed her one, now naked, foot on the tights and lifted the foot still in them, pulling free. She turned to the bed and turned down the covers. She turned back to Haswell, who was standing with his mouth open. She crossed her arms, hands on the bottom of her bulky sweater, and in a delicate butterfly action pulled the garment inside out over her head. She dropped it onto the rug and sat down on the sheet, gently rolled in between the covers. She lay on her side, her small breasts visible, her head on her hand, leaning on her elbow.

"Just think, pretty soon I'll be part of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. A trunk line to the world. It is the electronic age, isn't it, Mr. Haswell?"

She rolled onto her back and with one long leg swept the covers off of her. She raised her knees and parted her legs. She turned her head toward him, her hair fanlike on the pillow.

"Well, come on Mr. Haswell. I'm anxious to be integrated into the Bell System." She smiled a small smile.

Haswell started forward instinctively, clumsily. He put down the phone on the night stand as his hands went to his heavy belt.

"Why Mr. Haswell, bring the phone with you," said Mrs. Osmond.

THE PYRAMID HYPOTHESIS: A KEY TO THE REALM OF THE SUN
A REPORT ON EUGENE CHAPPIN'S LATEST BOOK

Throughout the two century-rise of the modern science of archaeology, the great archaeologists have all seemed to possess four common and irreducible traits--luck, scholarship, patience, and intuition. One need only think of men like Schliemann, Evans, and Wooley to see that this is true. Patience and scholarship are, of course, sine qua nons if one is even to aspire to the difficult calling of archaeologist, but alone they are not enough to insure success. Patient scholars are the journeymen of archaeology. But they would be lost without the Layards intuiting the proper mounds under which to discover Palaces of Assurnasirpal or Rawlinsons transferred by lucky chances to the precise spots where Darius inscriptions are waiting to be translated.

In light of this, the career and latest book of Dr. Eugene Chappin become doubly interesting. For years Chappin has been a tantalizing figure. He has always seemed to friends, colleagues, and even lay observers to be hovering on the brink of greatness. Yet he never quite crossed the divide which separates the merely talented from the inspired. Year after year has passed and the small fraternity of archaeology has held its collective breath and wondered at each new step in Chappin's work, "Will this be it?"

But the breakthrough has never come. Chappin has had patience, luck, and indisputable scholarship to aid him for the past twenty years, but there has always been lacking that tiny intuitive leap which his followers have waited for. Now, at last, he has written a book, a footnote actually to his massive seven-volume disquisition upon Tuxtla--the realm of the sun he stumbled upon so long ago, which might give him claim to having leaped the intuitive spark gap. In this review we will examine that claim, but first perhaps a brief overview of Chappin's development would be in order.

First, Chappin always loved books. At the age of fourteen he read two which decided his future--Breasted on Egypt and Hiram Bingham's account of his discovery of Machu Picchu high in the Andes. Chappin was enthralled. For the next fifteen years he bathed in archaeology, art history, ethnology, exotic languages. His progress toward the doctorate was slow simply because he took one year for the grand tour of classical and Near Eastern sites and three for a continuing dig in the deserts of Jordan. Nevertheless, he did obtain his doctorate at the age of twenty-nine from the University of Pennsylvania. He was already at that time regarded as a distinguished scholar and went directly from graduation aboard a plane bound for Cuernavaca. His destination was a conference on Mesoamerican civilizations, but he also intended a tour of museums and sites throughout Central America.

Here the element of luck entered Chappin's life. In this century the dates of the beginnings of civilization in the Americas have been steadily pushed backward in time. Perhaps the most famous example of this, prior to Chappin, was the discovery and identification of an entirely new civilization--the Olmec--which preceded both Nahua and Maya and flourished between 1100 B.C. and 400 B.C., a thousand years prior to the classic Maya period.

At the time Chappin visited Mexico, there was general agreement that the Olmec had been the first American civilization. There was no evidence for thinking otherwise. Still the origins of the Olmec was a secret yet to be unlocked. They seemed to have arrived at their sites along the coast--La Venta and Tres Zapotes--in possession of a complete and coherent civilization. No one knew from where. Archaeologists with whom Chappin spoke could only guess. One guess was the Tuxtla mountains some sixty miles to the interior. This theory was bolstered by the fact that some of the stone used in the Olmec pyramids was a volcanic basalt readily available only in the Tuxtla range. Also, the most perplexing Olmec creation, an enormous fluted cone of earth, was thought by some to be an imitation of the volcanic cones common in the Tuxtla area. Unfortunately, the likelihood of discovering possible pre-Olmec sites in the Tuxtla mountains was slim also due to their volcanic nature. It was very probable that any pre-Olmec sites now lay buried beneath tons of lava. Nevertheless, Chappin set out for the Tuxtla mountains.

It was luck that sent him there and luck that he became lost and luck that he ended one night in a remote village tavern where an Indio peasant in his cups used the phrase 'the old place'. Chappin began asking questions and after a hard hour or more of overcoming the peasant's superstitions by the use of cajolery and cash he obtained a promise that two of the villagers would undertake to guide him to the 'old place'. Chappin was barely able to control his excitement as he tried to sleep that night. Finally like all the men before him he was to have his site. He hoped it would be a fine one. Titles for the article he would write announcing his discovery to the world flew through his head: "An Early Olmec Site," "The Tuxtla Mountain Origins of the Olmec Civilization," "Olmecs and Pre-Olmecs."

The next day the erstwhile guides were sober and nervous. Chappin was obliged to raise the fee he would pay them before they would reluctantly agree to go through with the expedition. They told him it would be four days in and four days back. More money was doled out for sufficient provisions. They began. By the fourth morning after climbing free of dense jungle into black basaltic mountain terrain Chappin's guides were frightened again. They pointed the way up a steeply angled slope but refused to accompany him. They would wait. Chappin shrugged into his pack wondering whether they would or not. The gravelled slope was difficult. He slipped back a number of times. At last he inched near the top of the ridge. Raising his head above the rim, he found

himself looking into the bowl of a dead volcano. The crater was eight hundred yards in diameter. It was a hundred yard drop to the lake which gleamed in the crater. In the center of the lake was an island. And upon the island stood a fantastic array of ruined buildings, monuments, sculptures, paved courts, walls, towers all in a style that seemed, at that distance, alien to Olmec, Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, and Mixtec cultures. Chappin was thrilled by the strange beauty of the place. He scanned the interior of the cone for an easy means of access but found none. A descent would have to be made by rope. Reluctantly, he abandoned the idea of such a descent for the present. Rather he moved cautiously around the lip of the crater taking roll after roll of film through a telephoto lens. He then retraced his way down the slope and pressed the anxious guides to return him to civilization as quickly as possible. This they were pleased to do.

Chappin flew immediately to Mexico City and developed his pictures. If anything they increased his excitement. The ruins, viewed through the long lens, did indeed seem to belong to no style previously noted. Further, because of their spectacular setting on an island within a volcano's crater, they had escaped the major headache of Central American archaeology--virtual burial in the dense overgrowth of tropical jungle. The site lay as if only recently abandoned. No laborious clearing of vegetation would be required. Chappin selected the most sensational of the photos and wrote immediately both to the University of Pennsylvania and to a friend at

the Smithsonian requesting financial support for the projected investigation and excavation of the site. The nature of the photos was such that the response was swift and generous.

Chappin has been at the site now for twenty-two years, piecing together the story of the city he has variously called el sitio antiguo, la ciudad dentro del tazon, and el reino del sol. His findings have been presented in the seven volumes of The Realm of the Sun. They represent luck, patience, and scholarship, but the intuition has until now been absent. Chappin has told everything he has learned, and the mystery has only deepened.

Briefly, the city in the crater seems to have been the product of an unknown civilization antecedent to the Olmec. Radiocarbon dating of ashes discovered in a massive altar bowl have placed the abandonment of the city at roughly 3700 B.C. which represents a quantum leap backwards into time for American civilizations. As with the Olmecs the culture in the volcano seems to have sprung up fully developed and, more oddly still, seems to have begun and ended mysteriously within the space of a single generation. As with the Olmec, the bar and dot dating system and the complex cyclical calendar are in evidence. As with the Olmec, very intricate artistic offerings seem to have been constructed and then buried immediately. A further peculiar feature is that no traces of human remains have been found. All of this and much more has been exhaustively reported in The Realm of the Sun, but no possible explanations set forth.

Now in The Pyramid Hypothesis: A Key to the Realm of the Sun, Chappin has at last proposed explanations and brought the missing quality of intuition to bear. What he suggests is in keeping in audacity with the spectacular nature of his site, its fantastic architecture and sculpture, its great workmanship, and its unsuspected and unprecedented age and maturity.

Chappin begins with an explanation of the diversity of ethnic stocks represented in the sculptured portraits of both the crater civilization and the Olmec. He suggests that the land bridge at the Bering Strait had a counterpart running between South Africa and Tierra del Fuego and that in distant prehistory various peoples entered the Americas from opposite directions. This, he contends, would account for the negroid features of some portraits, the aquiline features in others, and the appearance of the epicanthus fold--a mongoloid characteristic--in still others. This much appears to be pure speculation. The rest of Chappin's conclusions seem to be based in part on the deciphered glyphs of the crater civilization. These remain, thus far, only partially readable as their language seems to represent a root tongue from out of which both Nahua and Maya dialects later emerged. Since there are now very few scholars with facility in translating the crater glyphs, and since Chappin himself is the acknowledged master, much of what he claims concerning their content must be taken on faith for the time being.

One fact is indisputable. The crater people seem to have pioneered the preoccupation with time and astronomical calculations

of time which epitomizes virtually all Mesoamerican cultures. It is Chappin's contention that in the fourth millennium B.C. an intellectual, artistic, and spiritual elite arose and that these were the crater people. This elite apparently felt that it had discovered the key to immortality--a concept which plays a large part in Maya mythology and, indeed, in the mythology of all ancient cultures. It was the crater people's belief that the place beyond time in which the creator, Ometcotl, lived called Tonatiuhican, the third heaven, the realm of the sun, was unobtainable. Chappin quotes a Mayan myth. "Measured was the time in which the grid of the stars would look down upon them; and through it, keeping watch over their safety, the gods trapped within the stars would contemplate them." Working from this fragment and certain glyph evidence at the crater site, Chappin has concluded that the elite Tuxtla people discovered the method for reading the grid of the stars and making the leap out of time into the third heaven. The method consisted of a spiritual discipline, the building of certain monuments in prescribed places at appointed times to take advantage of a propitious arrangement of the universe. If all were right--the timing, the spiritual readiness of the participants, the monuments' placement and workmanship--the people of the crater would be transported into the realm of the sun, the place beyond time. And, Chappin suggests, the building was correct as well as the astronomical calculations. The crater city was constructed within a single generation, then abandoned and

allowed to fall into ruin. The abandonment signifies success. The crater people leapt into the realm of the sun, ascended to immortality.

As might be imagined, the exposition of this extraordinary feat comprises the bulk of Chappin's book and is supported by much quoting from Tuxtla crater glyphs and other Mesoamerican myths. The remainder of the book is given over to a consideration of the ramifications of the alleged act of transcendence and is the source of the book's title, The Pyramid Hypothesis. This hypothesis is no less audacious than the central thesis of an elite tribe transcending by spiritual, architectural, and mathematical means, time and mortality itself.

The pyramid hypothesis concerns reactions to the crater people's achievement in escaping the confines of flesh. The non-elite, Chappin says, must have been aware of the preparations at the Tuxtla site, the people's preoccupation with time, astronomical observation, the sun and of their sudden disappearance and so success. They would also have been aware of the architectural components of the ritual particularly the central artifact at the crater site, an oddly asymmetrical tower or pyramid.

Over the centuries the peoples left behind would have tried to emulate the crater people's feat of finding a doorway in the sky leading to the realm of the sun. This, Chappin insists, accounts for the Olmec site at La Venta with its mock volcano, pyramid, and buried figurines. Still other peoples would have

thought that their own calculations suggested the erection of monuments at far more distant points to coincide with the next opening of the heavens. Unlike previous theorizers who have suggested an Egyptian origin of the cultures of America, Chappin suggests an American origin of Near Eastern culture. "Is it not clear," he asks, "that the step pyramid in Egypt and all the later Egyptian monuments represent an attempt by American migrants to find the place of the next heavenly opening and there duplicate the feat of Tuxtla?" And so, Chappin suggests, rumor or migrants would have reached the ancient Mid-East and thus constructed the Ziggurat of Ur and the gardens at Babylon to mimic the artifacts found in the jungles of Central America in the hope of striking the correct combination of time, position, and construction in order to achieve escape from earthly existence. "May not the settlements at Pompeii and Herculaneum have been founded because of some hazy intelligence concerning the significance of volcanos? What of the sacred well at Chichen Itza? Is it not an obvious imitation of the volcanic lake at Tuxtla? And the Maya pyramids and the Aztec and the famed circular Maya observatory also at Chichen Itza, and the Easter Island heads; are they not all evidence of vain attempts to emulate the crater people's exodus into the third heaven?"

It is a grand and poignant conception Chappin has set forth, this explanation of most of early civilized history as an attempt on the part of various peoples to rediscover the doorway into the

realm of the sun. The Olmec, he reasons, were closest to the crater people and their attempt to duplicate the feat was therefore closest in terms of architecture. As time and distance and the unreliability of word of mouth intervened, the attempts to duplicate the crater success became less and less accurate, more and more ponderous and derivative, dictated by guesswork and hope rather than knowledge and science. Failure followed failure until the conquest of mortality became merely a myth. Thus, the crater preoccupation with time and its measurement and transcendence was soon replaced by the Egyptian obsession with death. At last so much time and garbled reporting ensued that the Aztecs were reduced to practicing barbaric human sacrifices atop pyramidal structures in the name of the dimly remembered--now superstitiously venerated--realm of the sun. From Mesopotamia to Machu Picchu, from Stonehenge to Karnak great pyramids and observatories rose and then crumbled and fell into ruins as calculations proved wrong. The whispers of immortality in the realm of the sun grew more fanciful, bitter, and disappointed until at last disbelief reigned and civilizations founded on hope fell into chaos. The secret had existed once, but it remained a secret. The knowledge had existed, but was never rediscovered. Egyptian priests, Nahua balan, Persian astronomers, desert prophets, Minoan architects all sought to discover a clue in cut stone, in the night sky, in the passage of time. The secret eluded them. They died. We all continue to die.

Whether or not this is all an evidence of soaring genius on Chappin's part or unfortunate dementia cannot be said with any assurance. It will be for future investigators to examine Chappin's documentation, his grand hypotheses. For the time being all that can be noted is that visiting scholars who return from the Tuxtla site invariably remark on Chappin's twenty-hour days, his ceaseless probing attempts to translate and understand the crater glyphs, his frenzy to unravel the clues scattered about him on ancient, broken, weathered stone, his aspect of a man pursued. The reason for the behavior is now clear. He is fifty-one years old. Time is running out. The grave beckons. Chappin, at least, believes what he has written.

THE BARBARIANS AND THE POET

History remembers Claudius Claudianus, if it remembers him at all, as simply a poet at the time of Rome's decline. He attached himself to the circle of Honorius, the addled emperor, and Stilicho, the Vandal defender of Rome. Between the years 394 and 404 A.D., he wrote poems in praise of Stilicho and in scorn of his rivals, poems to the glory of the eternal city, poems upon any subject that looked lucrative. By this means Claudian amassed a sizeable fortune and earned a place in Trajan's forum in statue form. His one great surviving non-occasional verse is "The Rape of Proserpine." Most accounts assume that the poet died at the time of Stilicho's assassination in 408 since he never is mentioned again in the standard annals. This view, however, is erroneous.

Claudian was a wise man. After nearly fifteen years in the poetic wars, he decided to ease into retirement beginning about 405. He bought a modest villa on the southern outskirts of Rome, began declining commissions for laudatory verse, kept his friends in society and the Senate, and devoted himself to his library and his grape arbors. He was known to a select circle as a gracious host, scintillating conversationalist, and accomplished student of history. The wines his servants bottled under Claudian's direction were deemed, at best, barely adequate, but his friends would never

have considered saying so to the poet's face. Claudian was valued not for his ability as a vintner, but for his wit and style and for his insights into contemporary society. More than one senator was known to seek his counsel on perplexing issues. One of these, Disarius Vespian, almost surely was instrumental in saving the retired poet from the purge that followed Stilicho's fall.

This same Vespian arrived at the poet's villa on an evil day in the year 410. Following Stilicho's assassination, the Visigoth Alaric, who already held sizeable territories in Cisalpine Gaul not to mention Macedonia and Thrace, began his inexorable advance upon Rome itself. By 410 the city was in a state of siege, food was running low, Alaric was delivering a series of orchestrated ultimata. The Senate was in near collapse, disaster appeared imminent, and Vespian was seeking his friend's advice and solace for, perhaps, the final time.

He found the poet to the rear of the villa, lounging next to his tree-shaded pool, nursing a hangover. Vespian shook his head sadly as he neared his friend. Claudius Claudianus looked older than his years and thin. Vespian realized that he must look much the same. The food shortage was beginning to be acute. As the senator neared the poet, the latter raised one eyelid painfully, smiled wanly, and motioned his friend to a seat on the low wall bordering the pool.

"Talk softly, Vespian," the poet said. "My brains are fragile this morning."

"Revelling last night?" the senator asked.

"Hardly." The poet attempted a laugh, but it dissolved into a wince. "Or, if so, a very private one. I would give my eyes for a decent meal. There's so little food about that most of my dinners these days consist of wine washed down with wine. I'm getting sick of my own vintages. Last night I did, literally."

Vespian knew his friend's moderate habits well enough to realize that a serious depression must have been required for the poet to get himself into such a condition. The cause was not difficult to divine. As if to confirm the senator's private guess, Claudian asked bemusedly about what the Senate's response would be to the Visigoths' latest ultimatum.

"Then you've heard?"

"No, but your visits these last months have coincided rather neatly with major catastrophes."

"Am I that predictable?" the senator asked.

Claudian shrugged.

"I should have said the fortunes of the empire are the predictable part." He described a downward spiral with one index finger. "What is it this time?"

"That unwashed Barbarian swine..." Vespian began loudly.

The poet moaned feebly and hunched his shoulders up as if to protect his ears.

"Gently, Vespian, gently."

"Sorry. But it is infuriating. The arrogance of the man. We have given him twenty tons of gold and silver, practically everything else of value in the city. He demands more. Aullus was sent as emissary. You know him?"

The poet nodded.

"He said, 'What will be left to us?'"

"And what did Alaric answer? I'm considering collecting barbarian sayings."

"He said, 'Your lives.'"

"Pithy."

"Oh, there's more. Aullus threatened resistance by a million men, and Alaric replied, 'The thicker the hay, the more easily it is mowed.'"

"That's excellent."

"Excellent?" the senator shouted. The poet turned white.

"Sorry."

"Vespian, you're losing your sense of humor. Tell me, what does the Senate propose to do?"

"I have no idea what we can do. I've heard rumors they're beginning to eat children in the city." The senator closed his eyes in disgust.

"There can't be much meat on them," Claudian said.

"How can you joke?"

"As an occasional Stoic, I believe in accepting the inevitable calmly."

"But, why is it inevitable? Or, rather, how did it come to be inevitable?"

"That's rather a large question. Do you really want an answer, or were you simply indulging in senatorial rhetoric?"

"I'm prepared to listen if you really have an explanation. It will, at least, pass the time."

"Vespian, you have the makings of a Stoic yourself." The poet adjusted himself upon the wall. "All right, I'll pass the time for you."

"This Alaric became inevitable a long time ago. He represents after all, Rome more than you or I do. The empire is made up of 70 million. Of those, how many are Romans? One million? And how many are Italians? Six million? Why is it surprising that the majority should desire to possess Rome itself? We are not Rome; they are. This famine is evidence of that. We relied on the barbarians for everything. Our mines were in their territories. Our crops were grown by them. Even in the time of Pertinax, Italian farms were being given free to anyone who would work them. No one would. It was easier to rely on the barbarians to raise our food for us. We have plundered the world, Vespian, in order to live in luxury. Now the plundered are about to become the plunderers. The slaves have all gone over to the barbarians. There they are not slaves. What remains are you and I, the amiable incompetents. We can't do anything for ourselves. And you and I are not even truly representative. Think of most of Rome, the self-indulgent, hedonistic fools."

"I admit what you say may be true. But to give in to the barbarians is repugnant. I would rather be conquered by anyone else."

"I may be about to shock you, but I can't share your distaste. In most things the barbarians are considerably less corrupt than Rome. They are courageous, strong, clever, and not rich enough to be too immoral or lazy. I wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that this Alaric conceives of himself as saving Rome from decay and internal ruin. He might be right."

"I wouldn't advise you to talk this way to anyone else," the senator said. "It might well be interpreted as treason."

"No doubt. It might also be true, however."

"Perhaps. Another true thing, though, is that if these Visigoths do take the city, they'll knock your statue down."

"Yes, that is one unfortunate aspect of it. They seem to have absorbed most of what is good from the empire, but not a love of art. They seem to associate it with our decadence. They might even be partially right in that. You do recall our friend Silvitius paying 600,000 denarii for a carpet?"

"Yes."

"You may also recall a friend of yours paying almost as much as that for a Senate seat. The barbarians seem to equate government and art with corruption and corruption with wealth and wealth with rape. From their point of view, the latter connection is certainly an accurate one. I must say if I were a Visigoth, I'd

certainly feel within my rights to take Rome if I had the power to do so."

The senator shook his head and rose to go.

"I admire your ability to sympathize, but it frightens me. Someone with your attitude who was less inclined to philosophize and more inclined toward action might well open the gates of the city. And then where would we be?"

"Where we will be soon enough in any event, Vespian. Dead."

"True. But for the time being, I intend to keep trying to stay alive." The senator smiled. "To that end, I must be on my way. I hope to be able to scrounge an egg from somewhere for the family's dinner."

"Best of luck."

Claudius Claudianus watched his friend depart. He lay for an hour longer alone in the sun, then rose and summoned one of his few remaining slaves. He had the slave fetch a bottle of wine, poured a goblet full for each of them, and made a more or less momentous suggestion. He advised the slave to creep that night near dawn down to the gates of Rome, to open them, and to usher Alaric and his horde into the city. The slave was aghast. The slave was not so aghast that he failed to comply.

The Visigoths swept into the city the next morning. In the carnage that followed, Vespian, along with most of the rest of Rome, was killed. The head was severed from the body of the statue

of Claudius Claudianus. The poet was dead by his own hand when the Visigoths reached his villa in the afternoon. By evening one of the barbarians was installed in the villa and was entertaining in the highest style. The host and his guests concurred in the judgment most of the poet's friends had shared. The poet had bottled a truly terrible wine. This fact did not prevent the Visigoth host from pouring his guests glass after glass, nor deter them from drinking it cheerfully down.