

Introductory notes

Although “Exfoliation”, analogously to a classic dramatic performance, has a plot, climax and conclusion, this action is based not on the logical, but emotional and associative links. It is not the plot that plays the key role (in spite of its being “dissolved” in the performance), but categories and metaphors, being the conceptual stem.

Units of the theatrical language, split and irrelevant at the first glance, merge into a strange conglomerate. This foliated form renders the idea of a splitting absolute, a broken mirror where for a moment the protagonist sees the reflection of the real World. To render, to reconstruct the absolute becomes his only need. However, as the action proceeds, the character realizes that it is hardly possible, as he feels himself starting to decompose.

One of the key allegories of “Exfoliation” is *the child*, an unbegotten infant inside a placenta (hence the painful haunting symbolism of the childhood). In spite of the psychoanalytical hypothesis of the fetal felicity, “golden age” of the unconscious, this infant is haunted with pre-natal unrest and dismay; or rather the myth of the fetal bliss in “Exfoliation” is merged with existential horror. The “political” layer of the action is in some way correlative to it, with its permanent metamorphosis of liberalism and fascism appearing to be interacting elements of one anti-personal universal called *the spectacle*.

In its turn, *the placenta* is a meaningful metaphor itself, rendering the very awaiting of the birth which never happens (one of the symbols of the placenta is the egg). This state of the prelude is close not only to the child, but also to *the artist*, the two of them being hypostases of the composite image of *the passenger*. During the performance the word “passenger” is only once pronounced on the stage, however, like the prelude (which has no mention in the libretto), we can feel its presence in the action. Another implicit category is *the play*, a revolt against the spectacle. *The play* in many ways predetermines the anarchic buffoonery of the plot implementation.

The image of the artist transfers the prelude and fetal existence to the plane of art. For the artist, the birth is directly connected with obtaining *the authenticity – the presence*, which is the thing he seeks in the play. The artist grows older, yet he does not feel the presence and never leaves the placenta.

Within the spectacle the art becomes a subject of sale: hardly has it been born it is already displayed in a *shop-window*, a glass stage where the artist is doomed to play the part of *the mannequin*. The never born artist feels his gradual transformation into to a dead doll, a sort of an execution.

The stage action taken as *an execution* is another sustained metaphor of the performance. Like at a shadow show, the main character is not an actor (there is no actor for the audience), but his blurred silhouette; the artist must commit metaphysical suicide, sacrifice himself in order to implement his conception.

First Layer — The Ash

The infant gets an illusion of birth, an impression of the Beginning. The symbols like a factory whistle or lines from the first sura of the Koran (together with excessive introductions, various prologues, intentionally dragged out for almost half of the layer) are the first introduction to the state of the prelude.

Second Layer — The Spectacle

Plunge into the world of *the others*, existence in *an envelope*, life by meaningless rules, substitution for the reality. Musicwise, the Second Layer is the most composite and diverse, as the music reflects the internal dissociation. The symbolism of the play overlays the symbolism of the spectacle, in the artist's mind they interchange and blend into each other. Thus, the megaphone, which used to serve as a means of delivering the scream, blends with repressive instruments of the spectacle; the typewriter prints not the artist's thoughts, but the script of his life, composed by someone else; the shop-window substitutes the placenta, and the state of the prelude the passenger is doomed for blends with feelings of a condemned one.

Third Layer — The Mannequin

The artist turns into a dead doll. The execution theme comes to the foreground, slightly pushing aside all other plot lines. Musicwise, the Third Layer seems to be solid, and its monotony is grotesque as compared with the previous two layers. However, the mannequin's death in the epilogue should not be taken only as an expected outcome of the artist's quest. This univocacy of perception is to a substantial degree disturbed by the dialogue about the caterpillar.

The symbol of the last stage of the passenger's psychological transformation is logically not a child — it is an old man. This old man rummaging through his own mind understands that the real tragedy is within: he is unable to stop his search of the presence and ever believe in his birth. At this stage the metaphor of the prelude is raised to a higher level: all and any canvases, texts or plays will always abide by the law of imperfection, they are doomed to never be completed.

*Anatoly Riassov,
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Translated by Julga Heiligenbeil in 2007

EXFOLIATION
(libretto)

Notification

I painted the scream; I took the canvas and stepped into the shop-window. This seemed to be the only way to get the image over to nameless passers-by. The dusty shop-window was large and bare, and a man with a canvas was supposed to draw attention. But it was hard to see anything through the branched streams of rain running down the glass. Moreover, most people did not look in my direction at all. Seldom had they stopped to take a glance at their reflections in the glass or adjust the hat, – the only chance for me and the canvas in my hands to catch their eye. Those who noticed the canvas were desperately few, not more than one person in a week, and after a few seconds they looked away listlessly. In the mean time the rain would not stop. On the contrary: day after day, the cascade of drops would cover the glass with new pale layers. The grey rings would blend into sophisticated patterns. The street was becoming unrecognizable as I watched it, my vision blurred like that of a sleepy drunkard. I had no doubt that it was no better from the outside. Most likely, one could catch a glimpse of a blurred figure, distorted shape, not more than that... Hardly anybody could make out what I was holding in my hands, and virtually nobody could have made out what was painted on the canvas. Moreover, in such a hurry as they were, their silhouettes fleeting past the wet glass. And then a morning came when the water stains turned into rime, the street was seized with cold. The glass was meaningless now; the only difference from a wall was that through it some fleeting shadows could still be seen. But I could swear that nothing could be made out from the street. The thick curtain of the white and blue pattern was hiding my scream from passers-by. The painting was beyond the reach of their glances. I spent about a month

in the shop-window, still hoping on thaw, but the ice crust grew thicker on the glass. Only once there came a miracle. I did not even believe my eyes: I saw a clearance appear under a child's palm in the corner of the snow curtain. A little girl was looking inside through it with curiosity. Little by little she was melting the ice with her warm hands. I tried to smile at her, and failed; my lips only twitched. Nevertheless, I was overwhelmingly happy, as I had not seen a living creature for more than a month. The girl noticed the canvas and began examining the painting carefully. She appeared to be the first human who understood why I had been standing in the shop-window all the time. And in that very moment somebody – apparently her father – grabbed the girl's hand and led her to the other side of the street. She turned back several times before vanishing out of sight. The canvas fell down from my frozen hands. I tried to pick it up but suddenly realized that I could not even move a finger. I had grown out of moving completely. Within those months I had turned into a mannequin*.

* Hereinafter the word mannequin is treated as an animate noun.

Glossary

Artist (a term borrowed from J. Joyce) – the main hypostasis of *the passenger*.

Authenticity – everything that is beyond *the spectacle*.

Drops – human lives.

Envelope – a grimy grey substance of ash and icing snow; a protective shield that helps to survive in the world of *the spectacle*.

Mannequin – an actor caught into the glass framework of *the shop-window*.

Others (a reconsidered term by J.-P. Sartre) – *passers-by* and *mannequins*.

Outspitness – a sensation constantly experienced by *the passenger*.

Passenger (a reconsidered term by F. Kafka) – a creature in the state of *the prelude*. He is neither a *mannequin*, nor a *passer-by*.

Passer-by – an indifferent spectator, *the mannequin's* correlative in the reference frame of *the spectacle*.

Placenta – an artificial form *the passenger* is enclosed in.

Play (a reconsidered term by F. Schiller) – opposition to *the script*, a riot against the rules of *the spectacle*, a way to obtain *the presence*.

Prelude – the state of mind of *the passenger* trying to comprehend *the presence*.

Presence (a reconsidered term by M. Heidegger) – acquisition of *the authenticity*, emancipation from *the script*, which is possible only through destroying *the spectacle*.

Scream (a reconsidered term by A. Artaud) – search of *the play*.

Script – the sequence of events predetermined by *the spectacle*.

Scenery – dead items within the space of *the shop-window*.
Shell and *dough* – the stuff *the placenta* is made from.
Shop-window – the theatrical field designed by *the spectacle* for *the artist*.
Spectacle (a term borrowed from G. Debord) – the world of the false, the ordinary, the dead. *The spectacle* includes both *the shop-window* and *the street*.
Street – the auditorium, the site of *passers-by* beyond *the shop-window*.
Tears (a reconsidered term by S. Beckett) – *the passenger's* companions. Manifestations of *the prelude*.
War – a social situation triggered by *the spectacle*.

Prologue

Roar of the wind. Screams of gibbons. Figures in black gowns. Dim candlelight. A muezzin chants the Fatihah.

Low voice: When he starts, he starts when, when starts he, when he starts speaking, I know, I do know, when he starts they will **JACK IN**, when he starts they will jack in everything, when he starts, and they will, they will listen.

Declaiming voice: When he starts the night, he starts right at night, but whose night might he start? He will start the night...

Wild scream in the two-line octave

Megaphoned voice (*twitching and pattering*): When he starts brilla... when he starts, when he starts speaking, I know, they will jack in, when he starts, they will listen, when he starts, I do know, I, when he starts, they will feel, all in all, when he starts, when he nights, when he, he, he, no eyegd mignachnyyort mindosreutschen dorgues nouduwaydes, nevezrusch sia! Noschurtz noa minnosreutsch gagates ynschnot meikneuts sinnuadegan NO!.. NO! but me, them, when he starts, they will feel, when he starts, they will feel, nounuwaydes nevetzrusch, they, they will feel, they will feel... ALL IN ALL THEY WILL FEEL BAD.

First Layer: The Ash



Heartbeat

The yellow spit
Of a new edict
Is
 En-
 -shrouding
The thin branch
Of a languishing, sodden
MIND.
Mind

Hands holding a blue cloth show out of a window. The cloth flutters in the wind against the sky, and then falls down on the camera lens.

Flickering images of buildings, bridges, tunnels, corridors, through yards, wires, handrails, half-moons, umbrellas, human silhouettes, eyes.

Tattered drops
Are clinging to the glass
Knocking at the window,
Counting and anticipating
But it is only one
They can count to
But it is only one
They can count to...

Episode with the cloth repeats in black and white. Opera vocal.

A child's voice:

One, one, won't you wake me up
One, one, won't you wake me up

Wake me up
Wake me up

When I'M DEAD.

A woman's voice:

“A” three hundred and forty three – the sixth, factory whistle.

Factory whistle. A naked child lies on the stones in fetal position. A legless man in a wheelchair is driven along a narrow passage.

Repeated Whisper:

**Slowly past the lurid walls
Effusing the frowy fear
To be crawling along the corridor to Those.
To be cherishing own dust with lava mold and
bloody ream**

Declaiming Voice (*over the Whisper*): Down the slimy walls of an abandoned frowzy well, slugs of thick yellowish spit are crawling. Spit of the Moon. The heart is bleeding in the chest of a weakened soul. Blood growls in the skies of flesh. Clots of love.

Carrion.

Don't you bid me farewell
Don't you bid me farewell

One, one, schmuck, scum,

If that mockingbird won't sing...

Schmuck, sucker, one... (*the words are spoken monotonously through a megaphone*)

If that mockingbird won't sing...

Lights! Black out! Voice to monitors! Hey, soundman! Damn ya wake! Sober up!

**Slowly past the lurid walls
Effusing the frowy fear
To be crawling along the corridor to Those.
To be cherishing own dust with lava mold
and bloody
rea...**

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAA

Explosions. Hands take an unbroken egg out of a piece of wrinkled dough which looks like a human brain. Crackle. Stroboscopic light. Somebody throws up.

A man's voice (*deliberate, with pauses, each phrase culminates with dances to the stroboscopic light*): You shall be executed on a Great Day. The whole town will come to see. I've already run out of free passes to your execution. Many of them will climb the fence trying to see anything. But why are you shaking? Are you cold?

A woman's voice: Last night...

Idiot man: What?

A woman's voice: Last night an angel came. A maid with silver wings, she was beautiful like a goddess. She stepped down from Heaven. I saw her come in through the window. She was smiling at me (*idiotic laughter*). I was lying on the damp ground by a pit. The ground was terribly cold and damp. She took out a spade and hit me in the face with the shovel (*accent on a cymbal*). The goddess started to push me down into the grave.

Disco. The dancers jump, waving their hats. Blinking red light.

Idiot man: And then?

Idiot woman: Then?

Idiot man: Yes, yes, what was next?

Idiot woman: Then I woke up and walked about the room. I'm scared.

Idiot man: It was nothing more but a dream.

Idiot woman: Yes, but you see, my forehead is cut, and it hurts... And why is it so dark out there?

Idiot man: I wonder when you are going to understand that we have blinded you. No light for you anymore.

More dancers join in. The dance becomes more vigorous.

Metronome. Melodious tune. Traces of placenta show through a sheet of paper.

Adolf Hitler's declaiming voice: Es koennte nicht anders sein, als wir uns verbunden! Und wenn die grossen kolonnen unserer bewegung heute siegen... Dann weiss ich ihrschliesst euch an den kolonnen an! Vor uns – nicht Deutschland, in uns marchiert Deutschland! Und hinter uns kommt Deutschland!*

*Rousing cheers. Chants: "USA! USA! USA!"
Shout: "Motherfucker let's go!" Short dances.*

Episodes from films by Trier and Tarkovsky.

Outside the fence dawn is breaking. Outside the town's hedge. New dawn is pouring down on the grassland. It washes the bosom of the earth with golden showers, with golden tears. The earth conceived her...

The needle grates the disc. Heartbeat. Breathing sound.

A child's voice: Would you like to see me dying? No? But you have no choice. I will die inside you.

Stroboscopic light

* The only way for us is to unite! And if today the mighty columns of our movement win, then I know that you are joining in! Germany is not in front of us. Germany is marching inside of us! And Germany is following us! (Ger.).

Little sparks from a lighted cigarette
Scatter in the dark
Flickering fury. Smell of tobacco smoke.
Cloudy smoke.

The space is woven of silence
I feel the oncoming.
The space is woven of silence
I feel the oncoming.
The space is woven of silence
I feel the oncoming.

Sun, Sun

Hobos dance tango.

Sun, Sun

*Colour balloons soar into the air.
Petards burst with serpentine and confetti.*

Defloration of the sky.
The stub burnt a hole in the washed-out bed sheet.
Defloration of the sky.
The stub burnt a hole in the washed-out bed sheet.

Pop chorus. Long dances to some soft entertaining music.

Defloration of the sky. The stub burnt a hole...

African drums. Bagpipe. Jew's harp.

Trigger hatred.
Bait the bride.
Drive to frenzy,

Freezing hot ice.
Knead the dough of revenge.
Failed to visit the bride.
Drive wild.
The sightless has sung.
Caught blindness.

This is a legal edict, you are doomed!
Why are you clutching at the sky?
It's so silly. So absurd...
You are ridiculous.

Whom will the hammer of anger be discharged upon?

Red paint spattered on the placenta spreads over the white cloth in a strange hieroglyphic pattern. Soldiers march. Two babies-twins in a plastic bag. Swarming worms. Episodes from documental footage, old Soviet movies, films by Bunuel and Antonioni.

**Dig into holes, counting weeks,
Nourish the hope with a trembling prayer,
Look into mirrors - faces of the leprous:
Upon those who took the poison of freedom..
Cardinal sin.
Cardinal sin.**

God is a mystical mistake.

**The phthisis of damp streets
Spits a smile into my face.
A priest and a headsman
Mount the scaffolds,
The first one with an axe.
The first one with an axe..**

An insect creeps over the egg taken from the brain.

A birdie on the scaffold knows no fear.
The collar is read, the shirt is black,
Wind has torn the raven's neck,
The eyes are evenly soaked in grief.

Why does the cry
From the triple-tree
Re
minds

me

so

much

Of the shout of glee

*Syrupy youths sing lasciviously.
A mirror swaying in the wind. Collapsing buildings.*

An old man's voice: Whatever you may say, still it's so damn nice to come home right after work. Have a bath, shave, and take a snooze.

*Rastaman chants
Folk chants.*

*Early in the morning I shall hit the road,
I shall melt my annoyance down in the fog.
Gently I shall wake the dawn,
I shall put her plait into my palm.*

*I shall throw scarlet sparks
Of fiery dawns into the dark
I shall throw handfuls of light
Of fiery dawns into the night*

*Earlier disco rhythms and youths' singing repeat.
A young woman smiles ecstatically as she lies on a vintage settee.*

A grimacing dough mask. A needle stabs the egg. A smile. A child in a plastic bag. Quiet weeps. Hysterical cries. Long dances. Scissors cut the paint-spattered paper with the placenta image. Obscure terrifying whisper.

**IN THIS VERY MOMENT I AM MOST
INTERESTED IN THE THEATER.**

Second Layer: The Spectacle



Those actors who participate in the action sit down on little chairs and direct their eyes to the wide screen.

Rustle of pages

Teacher of mathematics (*reading a book*): The Spectacle grows artificial flowers.

Teacher of drawing: But it's possible to grow natural ones...

Director (*devours the teacher of drawing*): No, we don't need natural flowers, trust me, I am the director.

Teacher of mathematics (*continues reading*): The school is a manifestation of the Spectacle. The Spectacle whelms the whole life space.

Heels knock on the parquet

Teacher of mathematics: Item one: the classroom. Item two: the dolls. Where are the dolls by the way?

Schoolgirl: I am the best pupil in my class. I am always the earliest to come. Oh, someone is coming; I wonder who could that be, maybe it's the teacher?

First schoolboy: No, it's only me.

Second schoolboy: What's this? Where am I? Am I really in this room again?

First schoolboy: Oh yes, here you are again. My congratulations! You have recovered. You've rejoined us. I am so happy to see you! And today I've got something for you! Catch it (*throws the duster*)!

Second schoolboy: Hey, what's that duster (*throws the duster back*)?

First schoolboy: The service taken!

Schoolgirl: This duster is your brain, dummy.

Teacher of mathematics (*speaks through a megaphone*): Take your seats! Let the lesson of mathematics begin. So... who is present? Or rather absent. The axiomatic of the Spectacle does not provide for the category of presence. Do you remember it? Who can explain what the presence is?

Schoolgirl: It's a survival of the past, a rudiment.

Teacher of mathematics: I can agree that the presence is a survival of the past, but not a rudiment. Who knows what it is?

First schoolboy: I think... er... as far as I remember, this is called an artifact. I think so.

Teacher of mathematics: Yes, this time you're right. It is exactly AN ARTIFACT!

Second schoolboy: And in my opinion, the presence means acquiring authenticity (*a mourning-cloak butterfly takes wing from his hands*)

Teacher of mathematics (*the butterfly lands on her head*): Authenticity? Trash (*drives the butterfly away*)!

*Suddenly a new character appears in the classroom.
It's an ungainly giant.*

Second schoolboy: Hello, giant! And they say I have recovered, and you will never come back again...

Giant: They don't want me to come back. I'll tell you what: throw your textbook away before it kills you.

Teacher of mathematics: Ha-ha-ha! Gotcha, at last! The Spectacle turns giants into palm-standees (*the giant turns into a little man, standing on the palm of the teacher's hand*).

The teacher cleans the blackboard.

Now, let's continue, take your textbooks. Each particular constellation of the Spectacle requires ambivalent decora-

tions. The Spectacle grows artificial flowers, scrupulously modifies little mechanical dolls into adult mannequins. And those who suffer from the transformation, they simply are affected and need treatment. These are the incommutable laws of the Spectacle.

Suddenly the classroom door opens.

Teacher of drawing: Excuse me please...

Teacher of mathematics: Stop! It's my lesson!

Teacher of mathematics: Oh my God... I just wanted to show some paintings to the children. I just thought... they've had already enough of mathematics. There are other subjects as well, drawing for instance...

The teacher dissolves into the air. The director's hand sweeps the scraps of letters, the words he said have disintegrated into.

Director (indignantly): Hm, drawing... It's the high time this useless subject was abolished!

Teacher of mathematics: That's right!

Director (striating the glasses): By the way, what is going on here? Where is everybody (*falls down suddenly*)?

A group of schoolchildren (leaning over the director's body): The dolls are ready to replace the mannequins. Welcome to the Spectacle!

Children's laughter. Long jolly music. Dances.

One more moon
Pours down its light
On the floor, having failed
To inform
Against me.
Masticate motivations,
Heed exhortations
Of another spiritual uterophilite.
The indifferent diffidence
In own existence,
In need for the voice,
In competence of breathing.
We are the fletching of a feather
Once shot with an arrow
Wormed the arm is with veins
Torn is its furrow.
One more moon
Pours down its light
On the floor, having failed
To inform
Against me.
Wormed.

Pause.

- Sit down, please... Sit down, please!
- Thank you.

Tapping of a typewriter. Laughter.

**— Sit down! Sit down! Sit down! Sit down,
down, down... Sit down...**

*Scrape of a chair. Eggs frying on a pan. Rattle of a wooden abacus.
Squeak of scissors.*

I don't have to pay for anything; they have already paid for me. Everything is paid for. And I have no worry. It's so very convenient, when you don't have to pay for anything! The point is that it's really convenient... You see, when I don't have to pay for anything, I have... I have no worry... No worry... Flash! And it's gone! And me... I have no regrets... Indeed, it's so very convenient when you don't have to pay for anything! That means, that means no... No worries, no troubles, none of that kind, it just disappears... And what is most important, it's... **THIGHS!** The point is that... Just that we need some, some basic... Conveniences we need... Some conveniences... Like... For everyone's, for each and every one's convenience... **And she, she would say: thighs-thighs!** Yes... Say... not for everyone, but, say for each single person... To be convenient... So that... **And she would, she would say: thighs. Thighs, that's what she would say.** Then there'll be no worries, no troubles, no spiritual unrest, no woe, — all that stuff, it will vanish, disappear... **Bitch! Jerk!** You oughtn't to be grinning like that; by the way, you'd better believe me... **Thighs, that's what she would say.** It is true... **What the hell, she has thighs, my ass! She... That's what she would say to me: thighs-thighs! THIGHS!** Please gentlemen be quiet, you're in the theater, by George! (*Rattle of a coming train*) **A suitcase, huge leather suitcase (voice from the megaphone). Put three hundred thighs into the suitcase... Someone has**

left it here. That's... Someone has lost it here. That's what she would say: thighs-thighs... Maybe it was you? Thighs... She would say... Me, the suitcase. Three hundred thighs... I didn't even ever touch her never... Matter of fact I am a suitcase. She would say thighs-thighs... Three hundred thighs — to put into the suitcase. She would tell me... **Leather, leather, black.** Dear passengers (*the voice of a peddler*)! **A-suit-case.** I would like to bring to your attention fascism. **A huge leather suitcase. Fucking bitch!** She would tell me to put three hundred thighs into a suitcase. Somebody has left it here. Somebody has lost it here. Fascism for a reasonable price. **Why on earth would I care to put three hundred thighs into a suitcase? Matter of fact, it's me, the suitcase.** Ordinary... **She would... Three hundred thighs to put into the suitcase... Thighs-thighs... Leather, black.** The thing is I don't need it, so I'd like to sell it to you. **What's there in your suitcase? Come on, show it! Quick! Show me what's there in your suitcase! Thighs, that's what she would say: three hundred thighs.** Fascism almost for free! **Come on! She would say: thighs-thighs! Ah, there are thighs! Black leather thighs, they are in your suitcase! Who needs fascismus vulgaris for a reasonable price?! How did they get in there? Bitch!** Fascism almost for free! **And she would say:**

thighs... How come I should pay? A most ordinary fascism! **Who on earth said that I need to pay? Cheap! Fascism! It's a crime! It's fascism! She would say: thighs-thighs... I'm not gonna pay!** Cheap fascism! **Miss... Miss... Please put it in the minutes! No, everything is written here! Look!** Fascism! It's a most ordinary fascism... Care for one? I'm not gonna pay! **Don't pretend you're a jack-in-the-suitcase!** Cheap fascism! Almost for free! Fascism! He-he-he-ha-haaa! He-he-he-ha-haaa! (*a mad yard keeper laughs as she shoots an air rifle at the balloons under the ceiling*). We're just bloodhounds! I had thirty women... Seackd. Seackd. We're just... *Can I help you, sir? How much money is there on you?* We're just bloodhounds! We're just... Seackd. Seek dead! Seek dead! **Care for gay-video? Three hundred thighs to put into the suitcase... Miss! A huge black leather suitcase! Cheap fascism! A black leather suitcase. Down! Down everyone! Down, mouse! Down, mouse!**

All voices merge into thick hubbub, wherethrough Pink Floyd's «Nobody Home» emerges. Rattle of a running man's footsteps. A squeaking door slams. The crowd catches run, which gradually turns into dancing. The hobos throw off their rags and become a group of colorfully dressed dancers. Disco rhythms. Stroboscope.

*Toy clowns hang
above a crib.
A naked man lies
on the stones
in fetal position.
A hand squeezes
an egg, and it bursts
with blood. Swarming
scorpions. Vietnamese
soldiers try
to march apace. Egg
yolk spreads over
a TV screen.*

**Brought to shame by imperfection.
Abused by a violent fear.
The thin crust of the mind,
The sleek pulp of slumber.
The yolk of the Sun
Spreads over the screen.
Attendants, your time is up!
Oh come now, it can't be so soon...**

Pop vocals:

Suspension dots are cleft,
Suspension dots are cleft,
You, me,
You, me.
Ground and tattered by the pain,
Ground and tattered by the pain.

Catholic chorus:

Loose the nerve is, loose the nerve is. Loose the nerve is,
loose the nerve is. Non serviam*. Loose the nerve is, loose
the nerve is. Loose the nerve is, loose the nerve is. Loose the
nerve is, loose the nerve is.

Tolling of bells.

Priest's voice: In nomine Patrol, et Fillet, et Spirited
Sanity. In nomine Patrol, et Fillet, et Spirited Sanity. In
nomine Patrol, et Fillet, et Spirited Sanity. Balmy!

Carefree vocals:

Like a fiery needle,
Onto the firmament I fall;
The nerve is hanging loose,
Like a broken string of a bow.

* I shall not serve (Lat.).

Like a fiery needle,
Onto the firmament I fall;
The nerve is hanging loose,
Like a broken string of a bow.

Vibraphone solo. Hard guitar riffs.

Blinding the eye with a knife gleam,
Showers weave their pattern of steel,
Decayed clouds are flaking down
From an ancient unclenched fist.

The brain is laced
With bienséance;
Glossy with silent meekness,
It's been digitalized.

*Dancing hippies. Boxers at the ring.
Women discus-throwers. Ballerinas.*

Like a putrid carrion
The eye rots away
As it waits for
Ripened losses.
Like a putrid carrion
The eye rots away
As it waits for
Ripened losses.
Ripened losses.
Ripened losses.
Ripened losses.

Dim blue light.

***In a month it's gonna be
one bloody year since he's been drinking.
Tormented in the morning, raging by the night.
But it's not for the first time; he's gonna be all right...***

***Rage will calm down... He'll be up and about...
He'll be up and about... Rage will calm down...
And he will not hang himself, God willing.***

*The sombre dim blue light turns blindingly bright. Stroboscope.
Long dances.*

Cool voice: Page twenty six, exercises from five to eight.

Red pulsing light.

Lisping voice of an idiot: How do you do!

*Death-metal vocals. Grinding of guitars.
Cacophony yields to Russian folk chants.*

***Not blessed, I shall rise up,
Not to the fields I shall go, but to a dark forest,
Not through the gate, but by dogs' paths.
Not blessed, I shall rise up,
Having not crossed myself I shall leave
Not through the gate, but by blackbeetles' paths.
Not blessed, I shall rise up,
Not to the fields I shall go, but to a dark forest,
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Not blessed, I shall rise up,
Having not crossed myself I shall leave
Not through the gate, but by blackbeetles' paths.***

Pagan dances. Jazz improvisation. Gothic chant.

Megaphoned outcries: March! March! Obey! Ready!
Aim! Fire! Sit! Down! Get'em! March! March! Obey!
Ready! Aim! Fire! Sit! Down! Get'em!

Sufi glossolalia.

Short pause.

It's a fever, nothing more,
It's just a malaise.
The conductor's lost the score,
But he has started already the shaman dance.

It's a fever, nothing more,
It's just a malaise.
The conductor's lost the score,
But he has started already the shaman dance.

Guitar solos. Pop vocals, like those in Soviet cartoons.

A seeking eye,
Lost
In the arrogant labyrinths of rust,
In the hectic palaces of pale madness.
Drop by drop squeezing
The rainbow of tears
From its soaked canvas.
Leaving colour...

*Pompous coda à-la hard-rock of the 70-s.
Sounds of the piano dissolve in silence.*

Third Layer: The Mannequin



Flute. Twitter. Sufi chants. African drums.

I adjure you with dismay.
Cramps crumple the time,
Leprosy is chipping
The shell of an undead grin.

African drums. Exalted dances.

A large room (something between a room and a prison cell). Dim light. White stockings and rusty chains with a knotted old violin and crumpled pieces of paper hang loose from a ceiling beam. In the center there is a little chair, a self-made table, on it - a burning candle-end and an old typewriter. A man sits at the table. He's wearing a white shirt, old-fashioned spectacles with one temple split off, a tumbled hat. To the right of him there is a small metal trunk heaped with scraps of paper. To the left - a wide podium. On the podium's wall hangs a dimly lit portrait (the image is obscure). Behind the podium a tightly closed small door is lit with red light. Pieces of paper fall down from the ceiling. The man puts a new sheet of paper into the typewriter and a little bit nervously sets to typing. Now and then the keys get stuck, so he has to separate the metal types manually. To the right, in the background, in front of a wide brick wall there is an old cask with a rusty metal frame on it, a

*Bonfire crackle.
Tolling of bells.
Howling of the
wind. Wailing of
sirens. Sounds of
a harp. Cries.*

vulgar statuette of an angel at its base. The scenery can hardly be seen, as the stroboscope is flashing constantly.

It becomes visible only when frequent flashes yield to dim blue light that slowly grows brighter.

To the right of the podium light shines behind a white cloth, through which a shadow play emerges (a silhouette with a frame in the hands)

A ballerina dressed in white appears on the podium. She moves gracefully, arching as she dances. The man adjusts the spectacles and looks around.

A small black-robed creature gets out of the trunk (either a midget or a child). The midget walks slowly around the table, a candle in his hands. The man stands up at the table; he smiles in an unpleasant manner as he makes pauses in typing. The violin and the stockings sway in the wind. Clouds of dust smoke above the floor.

Sound of footsteps on gravel. People in black gowns hold torches. Priests clank chains.

Sounds of a piano. Two priests wind a rusty chain round the neck of a condemned man who is holding a candle of green wax.

Low-frequency accents. Thick singing through the megaphone (the language reminds English).

Sounds of an electric guitar.

On the screen in the right part of the wall the following image is projected: two men in severe black suits and white ties open and close the rusty valve of a huge ventilation duct by pulling in turn special metal cables. Pieces of paper fall down on them from the valve, colorful in the light of fluorescent lamps.

Meanwhile the blue light grows still brighter. The man takes his head in his hands. A hanged mannequin descends slowly from the ceiling.

The small door in the background cracks open, letting out blinding light. The man closes his eyes. In the opening the ballerina dances in clouds of dust. Pieces of paper fall down from the ceiling. The mannequin swings to and fro. The stockings and the violin flutter. The midget sets afire the page in the typewriter.

No sooner than in a minute the light fades, as well as the video projection. The midget puts the candle back onto the table and creeps back into his chest. The shadow play dies out. The candlelight turns into a torch. The page is ablaze. The man keeps printing. Sparks fly above the typewriter.

Chorus:

Absit omen!*
Absit omen!
Absit omen!
Absit omen!
Absit omen!
Absit omen!
Absit omen!

Sounds of a string band. The metal noose tightens on the convict's neck.

Soloist:

Viva la Guerra!
Viva la Iglesia!
Viva la Sangre del sacrificio!**
Viva la Guerra!
Viva la Iglesia!
Viva la Sangre del sacrificio!

And drops are still
knocking
on the glass.
And drops are still
knocking
on the glass.

* Let there be no ill omen! (Lat.)

** Hail to the War! Hail to the Church! Hail to the Sacrificial Blood! (Sp.)

The bright light yields to the stroboscope. Pieces of paper fall from the ceiling. The man takes the remaining parts of the page out from the typewriter and throws them up to the falling ceiling. In the flashing sparks the mannequin keeps swinging in its noose.

The candlelight dies out. The typewriter and the candle end in the candlestick keep smoking for about a minute.

*One of the priests
snuffs out the
candle in the convict's hands. The
sound of footsteps
dies away.*

The old icon.
Its severe countenance
Covered with wrinkles of cracks,
Reminds so much of the grey mask of Flora,
Bleak and unimpassioned,
Yet without its weary, torn pathetic features.
Without traces of beauty.

Overtone singing.

Black and white frames: a naked old man in fetal position; people rushing asunder; a legless beggar sets off on a little trolley by pushing with his hands off the asphalt; vociferous choir; the conductor swings his wand slowly; Arab families run out of a long archway, trying to hide from explosions, losing their things packed up hastily; a shaven man bangs an enormous metal frame with a stick.

Dim light of a huge lamp. Under the lamp two figures sit, they are wearing black gowns, their faces hidden under dough masks.

- Are you asleep?
- It seems to me.
- Seems - what?
- It seems to me that I am not.
- How are you now?
- Don't know. Where are we?
- Don't know. Don't remember. Why?
- I think I feel better. There must be a window open. The wind is so cool. It blows from the window over there.
- No, there are no windows here.
- Oh yes, indeed... How goes the enemy?
- I don't remember. Long.
- What do you mean by "long"? I'm asking what time it is.
- Oh I see. I don't know, we don't have clocks, do we, why do you keep asking? Does it really matter? Why do you ask?
- I feel better. I do feel better. I feel revitalized.
- Great. Really. It's really great.
- Do you have a cigarette?
- It's a non-smoking area, as if you don't know.
- It's just for the fun of it, from sheer habit sorry, from sheer habit... By the way, how are you?
- Frankly speaking, even more screwed-up then before.
- Why?

- I'm suffocated. It seems to me that quite soon we're gonna run out of air. Completely out of air.

- Knock it off, there's still plenty of oxygen here. Besides, you can hold your breath. It's not that difficult to learn.

- The artificial flowers.

- I can. Wanna see?

- See what? Do you want to show a flower?

- No, I mean, how to hold one's breath.

- No, no, don't, I know...

- Darkness makes faces at me.

- At me too...

- Look, it seems to me that something has nested inside my brain. Some creature, you see... Like a caterpillar or a centipede.

- Does it bite?

- Not a bit. It just creeps in there, but it's so awfully annoying.

- And what about your dream?

- Which dream?

- Has it come back?

- Oh, this one... Haven't seen it for a couple of days. I've even started to forget about it. But that's what it wants; it wants to get past my guard. None of that! That trick won't come off! Nothing doing! I see it damned first! It won't fool me! I'm not the one I used to be! I know its ways very well now! First it disappears, vanishes, but then it will always turn round again. Inevitably it comes back. Inevitably... Just like this centipede - it calms down for a while, and then starts swarming again.

- I'm scared. I look at the artificial flowers and they frighten me. Yesterday one bud fell off, just as if it were alive, alive, you see?

- Throw them away. I've been telling you.

- There is nowhere to throw them, you know.
- And do you hear the drops?
- No. Which drops?
- How come you never hear them? How come no one but me hears those damned drops?
- These are not drops. It's quicksilver.
- What?
- Quicksilver.
- What are you talking about? Which quicksilver?
- Quicksilver from a broken thermometer. We're inhaling it. They say it's not healthy.
- No, I don't believe in quicksilver. We didn't break any thermometers.
- Maybe not we...
- Who else? There wasn't anybody except us here.
- You sound so sure, may be you can tell where we are?
- It's against the rules! It's against the rules. Why do you do that? It makes my head ache. I'm feeling weak. There's a caterpillar, feel it, there's a caterpillar. It moves. You can even see it - the skin ridges. How can I get rid of it? Maybe I can spit it out?
- You won't.
- Yes, I won't. I feel weak. I feel weak again.
- So, the faces... You know, when you look into the darkness it may seem for a second that there is a crowd in front of you. They are leaning to look into your face, but you don't see them, only feel their stares. And they burble with laughter. Their faces gleam with sweat.
- And I fancy coal. And water with specks of moonlight.
- Specks of moonlight. What is it?
- I don't know. It's something that I see in the darkness. Everyone have their own hallucinations.

- And I cannot lift my head from the pillow, the caterpillar starts swarming again.

- Sleep some more.

- Indeed, maybe I should sleep more. Wake me up when we arrive.

- And what if we never arrive?

- Then I will wake up without your help, as usual.

- All right.

- So, deal?

- Deal.

- Sure?

- Sure.

- And why have we changed parts?

- I don't know. It must be making everything more interesting. Not so boring.

- You think it's so easy to understand my character?

- No, but I shall try. And will you be able to play my part?

- I don't play. I am you.

- Oh yes, I forgot. For an instance I forgot that you don't exist.

- But you feel my presence, don't you.

- Of course.

- How come I don't exist, but you feel my presence?

- Very easy: I do exist, but I don't feel my presence.

- And I neither exist, nor feel my presence. Funny, is it not?

- And do you feel my presence?

- I think I feel something like your presence, but it's not you.

- You know, that's what seems to me too!

- It's not you; it's some kind of illusion.

- And do you remember my name?

- Of course not. Do you?

- I've never known the names. Just like your artificial flowers that lose buds, they are so pointless.

- And why do you ask then?

- Don't know. I wanted to play you up. What if you invent a name for me and pretend that it has always been mine. I wanted to see if you would get away with it.

- That's funny. I find it funny.

- Me too.

- So you see, that's why I said that it's an unusual day. It was not for nothing that I felt revitalized. Not for nothing.

- You think so?

- Absolutely sure, believe me. Believe me.

- I don't believe you.

- Why?

- Because I've understood one thing.

- What is it?

- Do you know what this illusion of your presence means?

- What?

- It means that I know who you are.

- Of course you do. I am you.

- No, you are not me at all. I know who you really are. You are the caterpillar in my head.

Fade to black

Episodes from movies by Tarkovsky and Artistakissyan.

The net masker is mysteriously calm, only his eyes are hazy with evanescent doubt. He swept away the bones from the altar and sat down faintly, leaning to the whirlwind.

Episodes from animation films by brothers Quay: a man's head is being severed and to its place a doll's skull is adjusted.

Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon...

Prayer: Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder. Enrobed the night in shroud, embodying obedience to the dying moon, with a guillotine's impartiality awaits the grinder...

Declaiming midget: The element withdrawn! The element withdrawn! The element withdrawn!

Thunder of a piano falling down the stairs.

Melting mannequin.

Fade to black.

Epilogue

Tapping of a typewriter.

The youth of filth, an acorn falls
Into the mellow earth on the carnival night,
A leper actor drags himself to the scaffold,
The withered script crunches on the teeth.

The curtain of skin, wrinkles and pleats,
Only the tear of a faint scream
Twinkles from under the grease-paint
And fades away again.

Trailing bowels of trains, joints of wagons,
Epaulets and rails, ribs of the grills.
Envelopes of smiles like poisonous nectar,
In the city encasements we acquire the shape.

Night moths are getting into the nostrils
Of the ancient dawn that breaths his last gasp.
Glossy plastic, bugs are swarming.
Chips of the Cross are like acaridae
Under the skin.

The mannequin with lipstick make up is being dissembled. Stroboscopic light. Figures in black gowns. Pink noise. Jazz melodies can hardly be heard. A winking yellow eye. Hissing of the megaphone. A smoking typewriter. A dirt splattered head screams. Burning celluloid. TV snow. Curtain down.

2003 - 2007