

## Explanatory Notes to Donald Barthelme's *Sixty Stories*

### Margins

- p. 2 “objective correlative”: The phrase comes from T. S. Eliot’s 1922 essay “Hamlet and His Problems”: “The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.”

Carl Maria von Weber: German Romantic composer (1786–1826).

*As a Man Grows Older* by Svevo: Italo Svevo was the pen name of the Italian novelist Ettore Schmitz (1861–1928). *As a Man Grows Older* was published in 1898.

- p. 5 “Villon . . . ‘If I Were King’”: In the 1938 film, Ronald Colman starred as the fifteenth-century French poet François Villon.

### A Shower of Gold

“The piece is clearly inspired by all this fake existential language that was around at the time. . . . The key line is ‘How can you be alienated without first having been connected? Think back and remember how it was.’ The logic there, I think, is sound. . . . I’m very fond of the barber having authored four books called *The Decision to Be*, as if he had any choice.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

- p. 7 Graybar Building: Abutting Grand Central Terminal on Lexington Avenue in New York City.

- p. 11 “Like Pascal said, ‘The natural misfortune . . . can console us’”: From *Pensées*, Section II, The Misery of Man Without God, #139, “Diversion.”

Nolde: The German expressionist painter Emil Nolde (1867–1956).

- p. 12 “The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian”: Debussy’s score for Gabriele d’Anunzio’s 1911 sacred drama.

the “Romeo and Juliet” overture: By Tchaikovsky, 1869.

“Holiday for Strings”: 1944 hit by composer David Rose (1910–90), which was also the theme song for Garry Moore’s and Red Skelton’s TV shows.

- p. 13 AIR: Artist in Residence

p. 15 “the Olivetti showroom on Fifth Avenue”: “Someone had permanently mounted in front of a store one of those flat Olivettis, on a stand, and it was there even at night when the store was closed. And they put a long piece of paper in it, and people used to type messages and so you’d go see what crazy things people had written on the Olivetti today.”  
—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with Jo Brans

“Golden Earrings”: Song by Raymond B. Evans, Jay Livingston, and Victor from the 1947 film of the same title, with Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland; a hit for Peggy Lee.

p. 16 “My mother was . . . and my father a shower of gold.”: Danaë, the daughter of the king of Argos, was impregnated by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold and gave birth to Perseus.

“I was noble in reason”: *Hamlet*, Act II, scene ii

### **Me and Miss Mandible**

p. 18 *Sounds of Sebring*: Riverside Records issued annual albums of racecar sounds from the twelve-hour Sebring Grand Prix beginning in the mid-1950s.

p. 24 Who are these people, Debbie, Eddie, Liz . . . such a predicament?: The Debbie Reynolds-Eddie Fisher-Elizabeth Taylor love triangle was the tabloid story of 1959.

p. 28 the Old Guard: Napoleon’s elite imperial guard.

### **For I’m the Boy**

The original title was “For I’m the Boy Whose Only Joy Is Loving You.” It’s a line from the Al Dubin-Harry Warren song “Remember Me,” written for the 1937 movie *Mr. Dodd Takes the Air*.

p. 31 th’ curlew’s cry an’ th’ white giant’s thigh: Probably alluding to Longfellow’s “Robert Burns”: “Songs flush with purple bloom the rye/The plover’s call, the curlew’s cry/Sing in his brain.”

### **Will You Tell Me?**

p. 38 —Go peddle your hyacinths, Hyacinth girl.: See Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: “You gave my hyacinths first a year ago;” “They called me the hyacinth girl.”

It is a portrait, Hubert said . . . of their development.: From Mikhail Lermontov’s introduction to his novel *A Hero of Our Time* (1840–41).

p. 42 Charles started to cry. He had been reading Bergson.: Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Charles must have been reading Bergson’s *Laughter* (1900), which articulated his theory of comedy. Bergson is mentioned again in “Rebecca.”

p. 44 Joel S. Goldsmith’s books on the oneness of life: Goldsmith (1892–1964) was a spiritual teacher whose books include *The Infinite Way*, *Practicing the Presence*, and *Consciousness Is What I Am*.

The Cow on the Roof: Darius Milhaud’s 1919 composition *Le boeuf sur le toit*, which took its title from a Brazilian popular song, has lent its name to a Paris restaurant.

p. 45 Pard: Bridge players’ jargon for partner. But see Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” in which the word means a chariot-pulling leopard: “Away! away! For I will fly to thee/Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards/But on the viewless wings of Poesy,/Though the dull brain perplexes and retards . . .”

### **The Balloon**

p. 46 the Plaza: Located at 59th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City.

p. 50 Gallery of Modern Art: Located at Columbus Circle. For an account of this folly, see Tom Wolfe’s “The Luther of Columbus Circle,” in *The Kandy-Colored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*.

p. 51 Bergen: On the west coast of Norway. It’s also mentioned in “Grandmother’s House.”

### **The President**

p. 52 “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue”: By Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five, 1927.

*The Gypsy Baron*: By Johann Strauss II, 1885.

p. 55 Town Hall: A concert hall on West 43rd Street in New York City.

his mother’s summer journey: See “Paraguay.” Jane E. Duncan’s *A Summer Ride Though Western Tibet* was published in 1906.

dandymen: “Dandies” were like sedan chairs, carried by native “dandymen.”

### **Game**

p. 58 USAFI: The United States Armed Forces Institute offers correspondence courses.

*p. 60* “Guten abend, gute Nacht”: The familiar lullaby.

**Alice**

*p. 61* the hinder portion scalding-house: This seems to be one of those passages in which Barthelme attempted what he called “a pointillist technique.” In a 1981 interview he told J. D. O’Hara that “what you get is . . . merged meanings, whether from words placed side by side in a seemingly arbitrary way or phrases similarly arrayed . . . ‘Petronius mothballs.’ Of course you can do this all day long and the results will be fully as poor as the specimen furnished. Still, it’s a North Sea to be explored.”

mutton-tugger: Possibly some obscure bit of dialect, but more likely Barthelme’s pulling the wool over our eyes.

harmonica rascal: Borrah Minneville’s Harmonica Rascals performed from the 1920s to the 1950s.

*p. 62* battologized: repeated excessively

Malachi . . . Buck: The Old Testament prophet Malachi castigated such abominations as adultery; in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Buck Mulligan’s real name is Malachi.

*p. 63* Poujadist: Refers to the French right-wing political movement of the 1950s.

*p. 64* gree: An archaic word for goodwill or satisfaction.

Tinguely: The Swiss kinetic artist Jean Tinguely (1925–91).

*p. 65* ligamenta lata: In the Baldy-Webster operation to correct a tipped uterus (a condition mentioned later in this story), the ligamenta rotunda is pulled through the ligamenta lata.

oolfoo: Possibly “fool” using a pig-latin form of slang called “center slang.”

axiologist: Axiology is the branch of philosophy concerned with values: esthetics, ethics, religion.

deontologists: Ontology is the branch of metaphysics concerned with existence.

the New School: The New School for Social Research, on West 12th Street (near Barthelme’s former apartment on West 11th Street).

*p. 66* Primary Structure: The sequence of amino acids in a protein.

Klinger: The German painter and sculptor Max Klinger (1857–1920). This 1881 aquatint is in the Museum der Bildenden Künste in Leipzig.

Dr. Haacke: Possibly the German artist Hans Haacke (b. 1936).

*p. 67* Women’s House of Detention: Formerly on Greenwich Avenue in the Village.

*pneumatiques*: Messages sent by Paris’s system of pneumatic tubes, finally closed in 1983.

### **Robert Kennedy Saved from Drowning**

“There’s nothing real in the Robert Kennedy story whatsoever, with one single exception—where Robert Kennedy comes into a gallery and looks at a painting and makes some joke. . . . That actually took place, because I was in the gallery, and I believe it was a Kenneth Nolan show. . . . It was a story I wrote in Copenhagen, about a year before he was assassinated, I believe. I always want to put a date on that story when it’s reprinted so that people won’t think it was written after he was assassinated.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman. The title alludes to Jean Renoir’s 1932 film *Boudu Saved from Drowning*.

*p. 70* MÖBEL, MEUBLES: furniture

*p. 71* Karsh of Ottawa: The Canadian portrait photographer Yousef Karsh (1908–2002).

*p. 74* Sidi-Madani: South of Algiers.

*p. 76* Poulet: Literary critic of the Geneva School Georges Poulet (1902–91).

*p. 77* Marivaux: The French playwright Pierre Marivaux (1688–1763).

His flat black hat, his black cape . . . his mask: The description sounds like Zorro, the Mexican Robin Hood, mentioned in “The Abduction from the Seraglio.”

### **Report**

*p. 78* Isambard Kingdom Brunel: British engineer (1806–59).

*p. 79* the cuckooflower, the doctorfish: Yes, they both exist.

*p. 80* banjo splint: So does this.

“Nothing mechanical is alien to me”: See the Roman playwright Terence:  
“Nothing human is alien to me.”

*p. 81* surd: A sum containing one or more irrational roots of numbers.

### **The Dolt**

*p. 88* The man had gone off to Seville, to see if hell was a city much like it: See George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, Act III: "As saith the poet, Hell is a city much like Seville."

### **See the Moon?**

*p. 90* Rutherford: The British physicist Ernest Rutherford (1871–1937).

*p. 91* I wrote poppycock for the president of a university: "I did, in fact, while working for the university [of Houston, around 1960], write some speeches for the then president."

—Barthelme, in a 1971–72 interview with Jerome Klinkowitz

Fantastic metaphysical advantage: "There's a physicality of color, of an object present before a spectator, which painters don't have to project by means of words."

—Barthelme, in a 1980 interview with Larry McCaffery

Fragments are the only form I trust: "It's a statement by the character about what he is feeling at that particular moment. I hope that whatever I think about esthetics would be a shade more complicated than that. Because that particular line has been richly misunderstood so often . . . I have thought of making a public recantation. I can see the story in, say, *Women's Wear Daily*: WRITER CONFESSES THAT HE NO LONGER TRUSTS FRAGMENTS . . ."

—Barthelme, in a 1970–71 interview with Jerome Klinkowitz

Komsomol: The Soviet Union's communist youth organization.

*p. 93* He was a ballplayer, semi-pro ballplayer, for a while: "My grandfather was, early in his career, a semi-pro ballplayer. . . . He traveled around and played for the Atlanta Seagulls, or whatever the devil it's called, and ended up in Galveston where he settled down and went into the lumber business."

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

Skinner box: Behaviorist psychologist B. F. Skinner's apparatus for conducting conditioning experiments on lab animals. It was popularly confused with his "baby tender," a crib like a larger hospital incubator.

I have a battleship I can't use: "The passage . . . where the narrator compares the advent of a new baby to somebody giving him a battleship to wash and care for was written the night before my daughter was born, a biographical fact which illuminates not very much."

- Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O’Hara
- p. 94* Palestrina: A sixteenth-century Italian composer of motets and masses.
- Gog: In the book of Ezekiel, the king of the land of Magog; the two are also mentioned in Revelation.
- the Elgar: “Pomp and Circumstance” by the British composer Edward Elgar (1857–1934).
- the Coral Sea: The World War II Battle of the Coral Sea took place in May 1942.
- Pusan . . . Chorwon Valley: Both are in Korea. “I was in the army for a couple of years. Luckily I got to Korea just as they signed the truce, so I didn’t have to do any fighting, for which I’m profoundly grateful. But I did spend sixteen months there on the side of a hill.”
- Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman
- p. 95* hot curry from great galvanized washtubs: These reappear in “The Sergeant.”
- P. 98* “Upon what does the world rest?”: See, for one retelling, John Locke, “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding”: “He would not be in a much better case than the Indian . . . who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was—a great tortoise: but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—something, he knew not what.”
- “If there is any value that has value?”: Proposition 6.41 of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951).
- p. 99* Minnesota Multiphastic Muzzle Map: The Minnesota Multiphastic Personality Inventory is (or was) often used to screen job applicants for emotional stability.
- “Stella by Starlight”: By Victor Young, with lyrics by Ned Washington.
- The Conservatory* . . . Plenosova: Both ballet and dancer seem to be a Barthelme inventions.
- La Géomancie et la Néomancie des Anciens*: By the thirteenth-century scholar Gerardus de Sabionetta, first published in French in 1615.
- p. 100* Distant Early Warning System: NATO’s Cold War–era radar system in Alaska and Canada.
- “Mr. W. B. Yeats Presenting . . . Queen of the Fairies”: Satirical cartoon by Max Beerbohm (1872–1956).

Aristide Maillol: French sculptor (1861–1944).

“Beautiful day”

“Certainly is.”: This same exchange appears in “The Zombies.”

### **The Indian Uprising**

“It was in part, obviously, a response to the Vietnam War. It was in response to certain things that were going on in my personal life at the time, and a whole lot of other things came together in that story. I couldn’t really sort it out for you more clearly than that.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

“[The speaker] is besieged by very much more than Comanches, but also by Comanches . . . The arrows of the Comanches but also sensory insult, political insult, there are references to the war there, to race, to torture, jingoism. . . . The crowding is part of the design, is the design.”

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O’Hara

*p. 102* Mark Clark: World War II military leader.

Fauré’s “Dolly”: The “Dolly” suite by Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) is an 1898 piano work for four hands, in honor of a young girl’s birthday.

*p. 103* hollow-core door: “Taking a hollow-core door, making a table out of it, or using it for a bed, so forth and so on, is sort of a thing that people did when they were very young, and usually when they first got married and got their first place—because it’s cheap, you know. . . . It should evoke a kind of man-woman-youth complex.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

Korzybski: Polish-born American semanticist Alfred Korzybski (1879–1950). His “general semantics” rejects the Aristotelian notion that words are equivalent to what they stand for.

*p. 104* Chester Nimitz: World War II military leader.

We sent more heroin into the ghetto, and hyacinths: As in “Will You Tell Me?”, an allusion to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: “You gave my hyacinths first a year ago;/They called me the hyacinth girl.”

“The heroin is really . . . a political comment on the fact that we allow the heroin traffic in our country to exist. If we wanted to get rid of it, I suspect we could get rid of it. . . . In a way, the heroin traffic is paralleled by the Vietnamese war.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

George C. Marshall: World War II military leader.



p. 105 “The rest is silence”: The last words spoken by Hamlet.

Skinny Wainwright: World War II military leader.

“A former king of Spain . . . Bordentown, New Jersey”: Napoleon’s brother Joseph Bonaparte lived in Bordentown, NJ, from 1816 to 1839.

p. 106 Patton: General George S.; World War II military leader.

Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Left-wing American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.

Frank Wedekind: German playwright and actor (1864–1918).

p. 107 Gustave Aschenbach: The protagonist of Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*.

Emory Roth & Sons: A New York architectural and engineering firm.

### **Views of My Father Weeping**

“You go out aimlessly with rifles. . . . Say no game appears, and then you have this goddamn thing in your hand. Its entelechy is to shoot, so you begin shooting at tin cans and so forth and then there’s a vermin—the armadillo is more or less classed as vermin. And what I really wanted to end up with, but didn’t end up with, is the guy and his father shooting at each other, which . . . should be a shock to you as you get to that point in the story. . . . You get from the casual to the fundamental issue, which is quite something.”  
—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

p. 117 condylarths: Extinct, horsy-ratty looking mammals about the size of a cocker spaniel.

p. 118 Lensgreve: A count.

### **Paraguay**

“Every writer in the country can write a beautiful sentence, or a hundred. What I am interested in is the ugly sentence that is also somehow beautiful. . . . Probably I have missed the point of the literature business entirely. But ‘Paraguay’ is for me a hint of what I would like to do, if I could do it.”  
—Barthelme, in the 1974 essay “On ‘Paraguay’”

p. 122 Biblemann: An apparently fictional composer.

p. 125 Le Corbusier: See Introduction.

p. 126 lost-horse principle: Alludes to the lost-wax process, a method of casting using a wax mold that melts away during baking .

wrasse: A marine fish.

p. 127 dimidiation: halving

golden section: A ratio between two portions of a line, in which the lesser is to the greater as the greater is to the sum of both.

p. 128 Brownian motion: The irregular movement of small particles in a liquid or gas.

### **On Angels**

p. 129 Swedenborg: The Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772).

p. 130 Gustav Davidson, in his useful *Dictionary of Angels*: A reference work published in 1967.

quetzal: The royal bird of Central America.

### **The Phantom of the Opera's Friend**

The novel *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux (1868–1927) was published in 1910.

p. 133 *Don Juan Triumphant*: The Phantom's fictional opera.

p. 134 Christine: The chorus girl loved by the Phantom.

The acid: In Leroux's novel, the Phantom was born with a deformed face. In the 1943 film starring Claude Rains, he had been scarred by acid.

p. 135 *The Secret of the Yellow Room*: Leroux's 1907 novel, published before *Phantom*.

"*All men that are ruined . . . natural propensities*": Edmund Burke (1729–97), in his letter "On a Regicide Peace."

p. 136 Dr. Mirabeau: A leader of the French Revolution and famous libertine, the Comte de Mirabeau (1749–91).

### **City Life**

p. 139 Porter Street: Alludes to the realist painter Fairfield Porter (1907–75).

a picture of a tree with a crescent moon cut out of it: Magritte's 1955 painting *Le 16 Septembre*.

p. 140 Pascin Street: Named for expressionist Jules Pascin (1885–1930).

p. 144 New Yorker Theater: Movie house on the Upper West Side.

p. 145 *Victimas de Pecado*: Actually *Victimas del Pecado*, the 1950 Mexican film noir.

p. 146 Ingres Gardens: A reference to the neoclassicist Jean-August-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867).

Moonbelly: Conflating the traditional singer Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter, 1889–1949) and avant-garde New York street singer Moondog (Louis Hardin, 1916–99).

Vercingetorix: Leader of the revolt of the Gauls against the Romans in 52 B.C.

p. 149 Sacred Rota: A Vatican tribunal.

p. 151 Hector Guimard: French Art Nouveau architect (1867–1942).

p. 152 Wendell Corey: The film is *Man-Eater of Kumaon* (1948).

p. 153 I accepted. What was the alternative?: “In writing about the two girls in ‘City Life’ who come to the city, I noticed that their choices—which seem to be infinite—are not so open-ended. I don’t think this spirit of ‘resignation,’ as you call it, has to do with any personal passivity; it’s more a sociological observation.”

—Barthelme, in a 1980 interview with Larry McCaffery

### **Kierkegaard Unfair to Schlegel**

Kierkegaard published *The Concept of Irony*, his dissertation at the University of Copenhagen, in 1841; Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lucinde* appeared in 1799.

p. 156 Sierra Maestra: The Cuban mountain range that was Castro’s base of operations during the Cuban Revolution.

p. 157 Or quoted Nietzsche . . . many a bad night: In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche writes that “the thought of suicide is a strong consolation; one can get through many a bad night with it.”

p. 160 the Hitchcock-Truffaut book: *Hitchcock* by François Truffaut, published in 1967.

## **The Falling Dog**

“I was walking down West Eleventh Street one day and this gigantic dog began barking fiercely at me from a third-story window. And so I immediately fantasized that the damn dog was going to jump out the window on top of me. So then I went from the dog to what kind of person it was the dog might fall upon and I obviously came up with a blocked sculptor. There was a time in art, and there’s probably still a time in art, where the artist was sort of expected . . . to produce a new sensation each season. ‘Yawning Man’ . . . is sort of a joking nod in the direction of Ernest Trova, the Chicago sculptor . . . I think he had done a *Falling Man* series.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

*p. 164* Sax Rohmer: Pen name of Arthur Henry Ward (1883–1959), author of the Fu Manchu novels.

Olympia Press: Founded by publisher Maurice Girodias in 1953. It printed both trash erotica and then-controversial fiction by the likes of Terry Sothorn, J. P. Donleavy, and Henry Miller, as well as Nabokov’s *Lolita*.

*p. 165* Baskin: The American painter and sculptor Leonard Baskin (1922–2000).

Bacon: The British painter Francis Bacon (1909–92).

Landseer: The British painter Edwin Landseer (1802–73).

Hogarth: The British painter and engraver (1697–64).

Hals: The Dutch painter Frans Hals (1580?–1666).

## **The Policeman’s Ball**

*p. 169* Pendragon: An ancient British title meaning chief or king (e.g., Uther Pendragon, father of King Arthur).

*p. 170* the force: This story was written well before the 1977 film *Star Wars*.

most honored in the breach and the observance: Hamlet says his uncle Claudius’s chug-a-lugging, saluted by kettledrum and trumpet, is “a custom more honored in the breach than the observance.”

*p. 171* Vercingetorix: See note to “City Life.”

## **The Glass Mountain**

In Polish writer Hermann Kletke’s fairy tale “The Glass Mountain,” anthologized in Andrew Lang’s *The Yellow Fairy Book*, a princess lives in a golden castle on top of a

glass mountain to which one gains admittance by picking a golden apple from the tree in front.

p. 173 Mars yellow . . . ivory black: Oxymoronically named, but actual pigments.

p. 174 Anton Ehrenzweig: From *The Hidden Order of Art* (1967). Barthelme also mentions it in “The Sandman.”

p. 175 M. Pompidou: Georges Pompidou, French premiere during the strikes and riots of 1968.

p. 176 John Masefield: British poet (1878–1967).

### **Critique de la Vie Quotidienne**

Barthelme said this story was salvaged from an unfinished novel. The first volume of *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne*, the classic study of alienation by the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901–91), was published in 1947.

p. 177 *Elle*: At the time this story was written, the magazine was not yet published in English.

“*Femmes enceintes . . . de bifteck cru!*”: Pregnant women, don’t eat raw beefsteak.

Arne Jacobsen: Danish architect and designer (1902–71).

“*Une Maison Qui Capte le Nature.*”: “A house that captures nature.”

p. 179 St. Catherine of Siena . . . Pope Gregory: In 1376, Gregory XI moved the papal see from Avignon to Rome at St. Catherine’s urging.

p. 181 Intimations of mortality: Alludes to Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.”

p. 184 horse pistol: A large pistol carried by horsemen.

Piagetian principles: The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) studied children’s cognitive development; schools run on his principles encourage children to learn by discovery.

### **The Sandman**

p. 186 Goetzmann: A manufacturer of player pianos.

p. 190 Ehrenzweig: Also referred to in “The Glass Mountain.”

p. 191 The world is waiting for the sunrise: The title of the 1919 song by Eugene Lockhart and Ernest Seitz; a pop hit for Les Paul and Mary Ford in 1951.

### **Träumerei**

“Träumerei” (“Dreaming”) is the familiar heartbreaker from Robert Schumann’s piano suite *Kinderszenen* (*Childhood Scenes*).

p. 193 Spontini: Italian composer Gaspare Spontini (1774–1851). His opera *Agnes von Hohenstaufen* debuted in 1827.

Putzi: Franz Liszt’s childhood nickname.

bringing in the sheaves: The title of a nineteenth-century American hymn by Knowles Shaw and George A. Minor.

p. 194 “lights, lights lights!”: See *Hamlet*, III. ii.

dog cart: A small, light carriage which originally had a box under the seat for a dog.

Mascagni . . . Pietro: The Italian composer and conductor (1863–1945) whose best-known opera is the 1890 *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

the persistence of memory: The title of Salvador Dali’s 1931 melting-watch painting.

p. 195 herringvolk: A play on the German herrenvolk, i.e., gentry.

Glazunov: The Russian composer Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936). His 1899 “Hymn After Pushkin” set a text by the poet to music.

p. 196 hock: White Rhine wine.

### **The Rise of Capitalism**

“My mental image of the voice while writing that piece was that of a loudspeaker rigged to a pole in some sort of re-education camp.”

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O’Hara

p. 198 “studiare da un punto . . . codificazione di un”: Study from a formalist and semiological point of view.

p. 199 “It is better to marry than to burn.”: 1 Corinthians 7.

p. 200 *The Rise of Capitalism*, with Simone Simon and Raymond Radiguet: Radiguet's novel *Le Diable au Corps* was made into a film, but with neither Simone Simon nor Radiguet, who never acted and died in 1923.

Casals: The Spanish cellist Pablo Casals (1876–1973).

p. 201 As a flower moves toward the florist . . . good for them: “Not a particularly tender passage,” said Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O’Hara.

p. 202 abulia: Loss of the ability to exercise will.

1789: The beginning of the French Revolution.

### **A City of Churches**

p. 203 Prester: Alludes to the legendary Prester John, a Christian king who was supposed in the Middle Ages to have ruled somewhere in Asia.

St. Anargyri's: The anargyri (Greek for “penniless”) were wandering healers of the early Christian church.

### **Daumier**

p. 208 self-slaughter: See Hamlet's first soliloquy: “O that this too too sullied [or solid] flesh would melt . . . Or that the Everlasting had not fixed/His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.”

Schottische: A folk dance similar to a slower polka.

Messalina: The notoriously lascivious third wife of the Roman emperor Claudius.

p. 211 Ignatius Loyola: Founder of the Society of Jesus (i.e., the Jesuit order).

p. 220 La Fontaine: The French fabulist Jean de la Fontaine (1621–95).

p. 222 banjaxed: Apparently a Barthelmism, analogous to “poleaxed.”

p. 223 Brann the Iconoclast: William Cowper Brann (1855–98), a maverick journalist who spent much of his career in Texas.

Ortolans: Buntings, eaten as a delicacy.

p. 224 daube: Stew. The well-known literary example is Mrs. Ramsay's *boeuf en daube* in *To the Lighthouse*.

## **The Party**

*p. 225* Bonnard: The French painter Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947).

fatigue and disgust: Samuel Beckett ends his second novel, *Watt*, with a series of “Addenda,” noting that this “precious and illuminating material should be carefully studied. Only fatigue and disgust prevented its incorporation.”

*p. 226* *Osservatore Romano*: The Vatican newspaper.

Diet of Worms: The Imperial German Reichstag, which issued an edict in 1521 against Martin Luther.

*p. 227* Mannerism: The sixteenth century style of painting and sculpture distinguished by its conscious artifice.

the Baroque: The more energetic, emotional, and sensual seventeenth-century esthetic.

Kafka . . . Kleist: “I was not in a position to read Kleist in the ’40s. I didn’t even know there was a Heinrich von Kleist. Now I give my students Kleist to read. Kleist is another way of doing things. I didn’t know anything about Kafka at that point, and how can you write without at least knowing that Kafka exists?”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

*p. 228* Richelieu: The French politician, Cardinal, and patron of the arts Armand Jean du Plessis Richelieu (1585–1642), who founded the Académie Française in 1635.

d’Alembert: The French mathematician Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717–63), who collaborated with Denis Diderot on the massive *Encyclopédie*.

## **Eugénie Grandet**

“The Balzac piece is sometimes taken to be, you know, a very smart-ass dismissal of Balzac, whereas I think it is a tiny little homage to Balzac.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

*p. 230* Saumur: In France’s Loire Valley.

*p. 235* quadroons: Not coins, but people with one black grandparent.

bawbee: In Scotland, a halfpenny or other small coin.

## **Nothing: A Preliminary Account**



p. 239 *esse est percipi*: “To be is to be perceived.” The British philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753) postulated that physical existence is an idea in the mind, and that the whole of reality (including human life) exists as ideas in the mind of God.

p. 240 fee simple: Absolute ownership of real estate.

Gorgias: The Greek philosopher (c. 473–375 B.C.) who wrote a lost work called *On Nature or the Non-existent*.

Athos, Porthos, Aramis: The Three Musketeers in the 1844 novel by Alexandre Dumas (Dumas père).

p. 241 hipphilosamus: a Barthelmism

Heidegger: The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who was influenced by Kierkegaard and in turn influenced Sartre.

p. 242 “Do not go gentle into that good night”: The first line of the poem of the same title by Dylan Thomas.

Beckett’s Krapp: The single character in Samuel Beckett’s 1958 *Krapp’s Last Tape*, who records and replays his reflections.

see Shakespeare: In his narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*.

### **A Manual for Sons**

This story appears as a section of Barthelme’s 1975 novel *The Dead Father*.

p. 243 Hiram: The name means “high-born”; the Bible has two or three Hiram or Huram, including the king of Tyre who sent workmen to both David and Solomon.

Saul: The father-in-law and enemy of David; see 1 Samuel.

p. 244 emptor: Latin for “buyer”; as in *caveat emptor*.

p. 245 cloud of unknowing: *The Cloud of Unknowing* is a mystical-contemplative work by an anonymous fourteenth-century Briton.

p. 246 Spanish in cloisters: Alludes to Robert Browning’s “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister” from his 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics*.

p. 247 liver . . . humors: Ancient physicians identified the liver as a source of the “humors,” the four principal liquids of the body that corresponded to different temperaments.

Nonflogitiousness: “Flogitious” doesn’t appear in the O.E.D.; “flagitious” means scandalous.

Zocalo: South American term for marketplace.

*Augenscheinlich*: ostensible

p. 248 heldentenors: Operatic tenors in robustly heroic roles.

p. 251 Flee from the Wrath to Come: See Luke 3:7: “Then he said to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

p. 256 yataghan: A Turkish sword.

p. 257 Knights of the Invisible Empire: the Ku Klux Klan.

whoring after beauty: The same allusion is found in “Träumerei.”

“Publish and be damned!”: The British scientist Jacob Bronowski (1908–74) said, “If a man is a scientist, like me, he’ll always say ‘Publish and be damned.’”

p. 258 *hor concours*: Out of the running.

caber: A long, heavy pole thrown end-over-end in a Scottish game.

p. 259 Remember ye not . . . these things: See 2 Thessalonians 2:5.

p. 260 *gardes-bébés*: Presumably baby gates or window guards.

Rupert’s Land: The old name for Saskatchewan.

Mount Elbrus: The highest peak in Europe, in the Caucasus, in Russia.

agora: Greek marketplace or place of assembly.

p. 262 “Genevieve, Oh Genevieve”: The nineteenth-century parlor song and barbershop quartet favorite “Oh Genevieve.”

p. 263 the great Peripatetic: Aristotle, who supposedly walked while discoursing with students.

bear gardens at Southwark: The last bear garden in the district of London closed in 1682.

### **At the End of the Mechanical Age**

*p. 268* suit of lights: The *traje de luces*, a bullfighter's sequined suit; see "The New Music."

coat of many colors: The coat given to Joseph by his father Jacob in Genesis 37.

*p. 270* epithalamium: A marriage hymn.

*p. 273* the center will not hold: see Yeats's "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold."

*P. 274* A.F. of L.: The American Federation of Labor

### **Rebecca**

*P. 277* *Green Hell*: the 1958 sci-fi film *Monster from Green Hell*, in which irradiated wasps grow to giant size.

*p. 278* Bergson: See "Will You Tell Me"

*p. 279* viridian: bluish-green

### **The Captured Woman**

*p. 288* the O. J. Simpson of our aberration: This story was written when Simpson was merely a famous football player, not a notorious murder suspect.

### **I Bought a Little City**

*p. 290* Galvez Hotel: Located on Seawall Boulevard.

*p. 293* that Orson Welles picture: *Citizen Kane*

*p. 294* writ of mandamus: Commanding that a specified thing be done.

Huey P. Long: He was assassinated in 1935.

### **The Sergeant**

See note to "See the Moon" on Pusan. "I still have—as many people have—this dream where I'm back in the army again, and I keep saying to the people, 'Look, I've already

done this.’ I finally wrote a story about it but it didn’t prevent the dream from coming back.”

—Barthelme, in a 1975 interview with Charles Ruas and Judith Sherman

*p. 298* TDY: temporary duty

*p. 299* IG: inspector general

bird colonel: A full colonel. A lieutenant colonel is a “light bird colonel.”

201 file: personnel file

*p. 301* three stripes and two rockers: a sergeant

*p. 302* General Zachary Taylor: He last served in the army in 1848, when he was elected president.

RA: Regular army, i.e., a lifer.

### **The Great Hug**

*p. 309* Ora Pro Nobis: Pray for us (refrain of litanies to the Virgin Mary).

Sir Isaiah Berlin: British philosopher and historian of ideas (1909–97).

Busoni: Italian neoclassicist composer and piano virtuoso Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924).

*p. 310* embrangle: Actually a verb, meaning to entangle.

Dazed Sachem’s Last Request: Possibly evoking Imogen Robinson Morrell’s historical painting *The First Battle of the Puritans* (1874).

Grace Under Pressure: When Dorothy Parker asked Ernest Hemingway, in a 1929 *New Yorker* interview, what he meant by “guts,” this was his answer.

### **Our Work and Why We Do It**

*p. 312* web: A large roll of paper for feeding a press.

Justified: The lines are all the same length, making the right margin even.

follow copy: Instruction to a copy editor or proofreader not to change an unusual word.

*p. 313* makeready: All work done before running a printing press; also adjustments to make heavy and light areas print with the correct impression.

Registration: Matching the position of lines on opposite sides of a single sheet; printing successive layers of color.

show-through: Printing that is visible though the back of the paper or the next sheet.

the figure 5 writ in gold: Alludes to the 1928 painting *The Figure 5 in Gold*, by the American painter Charles Demuth (1883–1935).

*p. 314* fountain: ink reservoir

donkey engine: A small steam engine.

Jane Street: Located in the West Village. The Sixth Police Precinct headquarters is on West 10th Street.

*p. 315* *Le Figaro*: A French daily newspaper.

*p. 316* laid stock: Machine-made paper that simulates the look of handmade paper, with grids of parallel lines.

slug: A one-piece line of type; a short, sometimes one-word, headline or caption; a strip of metal that adds space between lines.

## **The Crisis**

*p. 318* song of the gondoliers: Perhaps the one by Felix Mendelssohn.

*p. 320* the sexy part of *Tristan und Isolde*: the Act II duet.

*p. 322* Leskov: The Russian storyteller, novelist, and journalist Nikolai Leskov (1831–95).

## **Cortés and Montezuma**

The Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés came to the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City) in 1519, and kidnapped the chieftain Montezuma. “My Montezuma and Cortés are possibly nobler figures than responsible historians would allow, but I hope not implausible. There are conflicting versions as to how Montezuma died. I have him killed by a stone flying from the hand of one of his subjects. The alternative is that the Spaniards killed him. . . . There seems to be little question that Cortés was a master manipulator. Still, he seems to have been genuinely impressed by Montezuma. Bernal [Díaz del Castillo], as you read his account of the Conquest, enlarges in a very respectful

way on Montezuma's qualities, as priest-king at the center of an elaborate religious/political establishment, to which Cortés was wonderfully obtuse. It's as if you marched into present-day Salt Lake City, listened politely and with interest to a concert by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and then whipped out your sword and claimed the state of Utah for Scientology."

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O'Hara

*p. 324* Dona Mariña: The Mexican woman known as La Malinche, baptized Mariña, was Cortés's translator and mistress.

Father Sanchez: Miguel Sanchez, a Mexican priest, wrote the influential account of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1648.

*p. 325* "roaches big as ironing boards": "If I didn't have roaches big as ironing boards in the story, I couldn't show Cortés and Montezuma holding hands, it would be merely sentimental."

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O'Hara

Vera Cruz: The Cempoala Indians, enemies of the Aztecs, helped Cortés establish the coastal base he named Vera Cruz.

Cuitlahuac: Montezuma's brother and successor.

*p. 326* Juan de Escalante: Appointed captain at Vera Cruz by Cortés; killed in 1519.

Cristobál de Olid: A conquistador who tried to set himself up as ruler of Honduras; executed by Cortés.

Pedro de Alvarado: A lieutenant of Cortés's who conquered Guatemala.

de Ordás: Diego de Ordás, another of Cortés's men, later led an expedition up the Orinoco in 1531; his brother Pedro also served with Cortés.

de Tapia: Andres de Tapia, another of Cortés's conquistadors.

Proclamation of Vera Cruz: Probably Cortés's address establishing the colony in 1519. (Though in 1821, Spain's last viceroy in Mexico, Juan O'Donoju, arrived in Vera Cruz and issued a proclamation offering the country full self-government.)

*p. 329* Chalchihuitlicue: Aztec water goddess.

*p. 330* "I am the State!": Alludes to Louis XIV: "L'etat, c'est moi!"

Pitalpitoque . . . Tendile: Sent as ambassadors to Cortés.

Quintalbor: A chief who Bernal said looked like Cortés.

## The New Music

“Reynolds Price in the *Times* said of my story ‘The New Music’ that it was about as new as the toothache. He apparently didn’t get the joke, which is that there is always a new music—the new music shows up about every ten minutes. . . . ‘The New Music’ was originally two stories with the same characters. For the book version I added about six pages of new material, there was more to be said, and combined them. A matter of not getting it right the first time, or even the second time.”

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O’Hara

*p. 332* Odysseus . . . Diomedes: The story of the theft of the Palladium comes from post-Homeric Trojan War narratives.

*p. 334* Pool: Poole is a seaport in Dorsetshire; Pool is probably a Barthelmized Bath.

That lonesome road: Alludes to “The Lonesome Road,” the 1927 pop song by Gene Austin: “Look down, look down that lonesome road/Before you travel on.”

red rock: Probably alludes to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: “Only/There is shadow under this red rock,/(Come in under the shadow of this red rock).”

*p. 335* Great Lyceum: Originally, the grove in Athens where Aristotle taught.

Dark Virgin: Probably the Virgin of Guadalupe (see “Cortés and Montezuma”), but there are Black Madonnas all over the world.

*p. 337* Twi: A West African language.

Eckermann’s *Conversations with Goethe*: Johann Peter Eckermann (1792–1854) was Goethe’s friend, amanuensis, sounding board, and literary executor; he published his three volumes of conversations with the poet and novelist (who died in 1832) between 1836 and 1848. See Barthelme’s story “Conversations with Goethe,” collected in *Forty Stories*.

*p. 338* Momma didn’t ’low: Alludes to the old jazz-hokum showpiece “Momma Don’t Allow,” in which band members solo on various disallowed instruments.

Outside: A jazz musicians’ term meaning a solo outside a given tune’s chord changes, or more generally, in defiance of musical convention.

old rocking chair: Alludes to Hoagy Carmichael’s 1929 song “Rockin’ Chair.”

Eleusinian mysteries: Ancient Greek religious rites in honor of Demeter and Persephone; specific details of the rituals are unknown, but they were obviously related to springtime and fertility.

the art of love: Alludes to Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, the cycle of poems giving advice about love to Rome's young sophisticates, which probably helped cause his banishment in 8 A.D.

*p. 339* diktats: strictures

*p. 341* bawcock: Archaic word for "good fellow."

whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth: See Hebrews 12:6

*Un Coup de Dés*: "A Throw of the Dice," a late poem by the French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98), which used different typefaces and tried to approximate a musical composition.

suits of lights: See note to "At the End of the Mechanical Age."

*p. 342* krummhorn: An early double-reed wind instrument.

*p. 343* Septuagesimal: Septuagesima is the name for the third Sunday before Lent.

Stoics, Epictetus: Stoicism was the school of ancient Greek philosophy teaching freedom from passion and desire. The late Stoic Epictetus (c. 100 A.D.) held that men should approach life as a banquet, taking only moderate portions of what is offered.

*p. 344* Propp the philosopher: Possibly an allusion to the Russian scholar Vladimir Propp (1895–1970), who adapted Russian Formalist narratology to analyze the structure of folktales. His 1928 *Morphology of the Folktale* was suppressed by the Soviet government.

unwraps the sky: Probably alludes to Dryden's "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day": "And music shall untune the sky."

## **The Zombies**

*p. 345* "Beautiful day!"  
"Certainly is!": Also in "See the Moon."

Gris-Grue: A grisly and gruesome invented name.

*p. 346* Baptism . . . Extreme Unction: The Roman Catholic Church's seven sacraments.

*p. 347* patassas: Also batashas, Indian sweets.

houngan: A voodoo priest.



p. 348 silver sled: Possibly an evocation of the blank-eyed Marvel Comics hero Silver Surfer.

### **The King of Jazz**

p. 349 Spicy MacLammermoor: Alludes to Sir Walter Scott's 1819 novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* and its operatic adaptation, Gaetano Donizetti's 1835 *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Bucky . . . Greens: Refers to jazz musicians Bucky Pizzarelli, Zoot Sims, Freddie Green, George Barnes, Thad Jones, Roy Eldridge, Dexter Gordon, Jo Jones, and Willie Cook. "Greens" suggests Barthelme might have known the 1963 album *Mo' Greens Please* by organist Freddie Roach.

"Smoke": Possibly Jerome Kern's 1933 song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes."

p. 351 "Billie's Bounce": A 1945 Charlie Parker blues song (named for Parker's manager Billy Shaw, not singer Billie Holiday) in the key of F.

Maynard: Probably trumpeter Maynard Ferguson.

"Cream": Possibly the 1923 pop song "You're the Cream in My Coffee."

p. 352 fumaroles: Openings in a volcano that let out steam and gases.

Mt. Katmai: A volcano in Alaska whose summit imploded in 1912.

Montane: A cool, moist zone near a timberline.

Cape Sable: Cape Sable Island is off southern Nova Scotia.

Coatimundis: Members of the raccoon family found in Central America.

p. 353 "Flats": Possibly "Hobo Flats," written by Oliver Nelson and popularized in the 1963 recording by the organist Jimmy Smith.

### **Morning**

p. 354 Mowgli: The wild boy in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books* (1894, 1895).

Scriabin: The mystical Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915).

Cuisine Minceur: The light, low-fat "lean cuisine" developed in the 1970s by French chef Michel Guérard.

p. 355 sunset gun: A gun ceremonially fired at sunset.

p. 356 Eternal Return: Nietzsche's theory, in *Also Sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spake Zarathustra)* (1883–85), of the endless recurrence of all possible events.

“One O’Clock Jump”: The Count Basie theme song, recorded in 1937.

Bomba the Jungle Boy: A series of boys' adventure books by the pseudonymous Roy Rockwood (probably Howard Garis) that began in 1928.

Inventions & Sinfonias: J. S. Bach's 1723 keyboard works, also known as the *Two and Three Part Inventions*.

p. 357 caracoling: A half-turn on horseback.

sunfishing: When a horse turns its body violently from side to side, turning its belly toward the sun.

ixias: South American plants of the iris family.

p. 358 All women are mortal: In Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the title character recalls the famous syllogism “All men are mortal, Caius is a man, therefore Caius is mortal.”

### **The Death of Edward Lear**

“Charming into ferocious, Edward Lear into King Lear.”

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O'Hara

The nonsense poet and artist Edward Lear died in San Remo on the Italian Riviera on January 30, 1888, at 2:30 A.M. The style and tone of this story may derive from a reminiscence by Henry Strachey of a visit to the aged Lear in 1882. Lear's actual death is described by his biographer Susan Chitty in *That Singular Person Called Lear*: “Dr. Hill Hassall and the Rev. H. S. Verschoyle . . . were with him on the night of 29 January, 1888. Mrs. Hassall was also present until midnight when her husband requested her to leave, ‘fearing the last scene might be too much for me.’ Lear by then was sinking into unconsciousness, recognizing nobody, ‘the good, great heart simply slowly ceasing to beat.’ Half an hour after midnight Lear called Guiseppe and commended himself, not to God, but to his friends. ‘I feel that I am dying,’ he said (in Italian). ‘You will render me a sacred service in telling my friends and relations that my last thoughts were for them.’ Two hours later he died peacefully.”

p. 359 Old men must die: Prologue to “Becket.”

For men may come: From “The Brook.”

p. 360 Giuseppe Orsini: Chitty says that at first “Lear had not cared for him, insisting that he looked like Daniel O’Connell and was smelly to boot . . . But Guiseppe had advantages. He was a pigeon-fancier and soon populated the terrace with twelve of them.” Mr. Lear now sang a text of Tennyson’s in a setting of his own—see Strachey: “Mr. Lear was by temperament melancholy . . . In the evenings he often sang . . . His voice had gone, but the refinement and expression were remarkable. Unfortunately, his playing was by ear, so that many of the really beautiful songs he composed were lost. One such still haunts me, the words, Tennyson’s ‘In the Gardens at Swainston,’ were set to most touching and appropriate music.”

p. 361 an enormous oil . . . depicting Mount Athos: See Strachey: “Downstairs he had a gallery lighted from the top, which had many beautiful water-colours along the walls, and one great canvas of Mount Athos, which seemed finished, but which he was always making experiments upon in white chalk.”

### **The Abduction from the Seraglio**

“Another story I did come from an assignment that I had given a class, which was to do a version of Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*. I had set it up in such a way that they had to make certain changes in the situation, so I got interested in these, and I did it myself.”

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with Jo Brans.

In the 1782 opera, the hero Belmonte abducts his fiancée Constanza from the harem of the Pasha Selim.

p. 363 Butler building: A prefab metal building from the Butler Manufacturing Company of Kansas City.

p. 364 the art of the possible: Alludes to German chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815–98): “Politics is the art of the possible.”

Happy dust: cocaine

p. 365 River Oaks: Located near Dallas-Fort Worth.

*Texas Observer*: The daily newspaper published in Austin.

p. 366 Temple, Texas: Located in central Texas, between Waco and Austin.

### **On the Steps of the Conservatory**

a loaf or a fish: see Matthew 15

Coushatta Indian: The Coushatta tribe lived in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

## The Leap

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (1846), Kierkegaard rejects the notion of a ladder of logical steps to spiritual certainty in favor of a “leap of faith” toward the Absolute.

p. 374 the wine of possibility: See Kierkegaard’s 1843 *Either/Or*: “What wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!”

cank: An old thieves’ term meaning silent; also a British Midlands dialect term meaning to chat or gossip.

p. 375 “I think that I shall never see”: From Joyce Kilmer’s 1913 poem “Trees.”

p. 376 Alice Babs: The Swedish singer (born Alice Nilson, in 1924) who toured the United States in the early ’60s with a jazz trio called the Swe-Danes and collaborated with Duke Ellington, who called her “a composer’s dream.”

Sweet Emma Barrett: The New Orleans pianist and singer (1897–1963), called the Bell Gal because she wore bells on her garters.

*Das Lied von der Erde*: “The Song of the Earth”: Gustave Mahler’s 1909 symphonic work that set translations of Chinese poems for two singers to music.

multiplying as per instruction: See Genesis 1:28.

in doubtless electronic ongoing all-seeing everlasting congress assembled: Alludes to the headline of the *Declaration of Independence*: “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress Assembled.”

p. 377 Cardinal Spellman: Francis Cardinal Spellman (1889–1967), Archbishop of New York and a conservative churchman who supported the Vietnam War.

Leibniz: The German philosopher Gottfried Leibnitz (1646–1716) who believed in a “pre-established harmony” of matter and spirit.

William of Ockham: The English scholastic philosopher (ca. 1285–1349) who held that abstractions were not valid knowledge and that reasoning must be based on empirical evidence.

Maimonides: Also known as Moses ben Maimod (1135–1204), the Jewish philosopher and physician whose *Guide to the Perplexed* (1190) attempts to reconcile Judaism and Aristotelian rationalism.

The Vienna Circle: The group of philosophers active in Vienna in the 1920s and '30s, including Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath, and Rudolf Carnap. They were influenced by Wittgenstein (see note to "See the Moon") and instrumental in promoting logical positivism, the school of thought which holds that ideas and concepts depend upon language.

The Frankfurt School: The group of eclectic post-Marxist philosophers and social scientists based in Frankfurt in the 1920s, including Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse.

Manichaeus: Also known as Mani (215–76), the Persian philosopher who taught that humanity embodies a primal struggle between light and darkness and that the material world is the realm of Satan.

Peirce: The American philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) who applied scientific principles to philosophical method; a founder of pragmatism and a precursor of modern semiotics.

Occasionalism: The theory of the French philosopher Nicholas Malebranche (1638–1715) that spirit and matter, mind and body, interact only by the continuous intervention of God.

self-slaughter: See note to "Daumier."

*p. 378* preen glands: Oil-secreting glands near the base of a bird's tail.

We hang . . . boils below us: Probably evoking the Puritan divine Jonathan Edwards's 1741 sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God": "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you . . . You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder."

*p. 379* Purity of heart is to will one thing: The title of an 1847 discourse by Kierkegaard.

Walkin' my baby back home: Title of a 1930 pop song written by Roy Turk and Fred Ahlert; a hit recording for both Nat King Cole and Johnny Ray in 1952.

## **Aria**

In a 1981 interview with Jo Brans, Barthelme identifies this piece as "a woman's monologue."

*p. 381* Man Mountain Dean: Stage name of bearded, overall wearing, three hundred-pound professional wrestler/movie actor Frank Simmons Leavitt (1891–1953).

the salt losing its savor: See Matthew 5:13: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?”

the fowls of the air: See Matthew 6:26–8: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them.”

*p. 382 williwaw*: A sudden cold wind in far northern or southern latitudes; a state of turmoil (also, the title of a 1946 novel by Gore Vidal).

Sunderland pink: A glossy metallic pink luster glaze used in nineteenth-century England.

*p. 383 Malraux*: French novelist and critic André Malraux (1901–76), much concerned with the ennoblement of mankind.

### **The Emerald**

*p. 388* Two hundred a week and found: Plus food and lodging.

*p. 389* mage: magician

*p. 390* Merano: Located in northern Italy, near the Swiss and Austrian borders.

Carthusian: An order of monks sworn to silence and who wore hair shirts.

*p. 392* Antwerp: A center for the trade in diamonds and other precious stones.

Thalers: Silver coins issued by old German states.

*p. 394* gotch eye: In animals, especially horses, one eye that doesn't set in focus with the other.

*p. 399* Lily the media person: Barthleme wrote several satirical pieces under the name of Lily McNeil.

*p. 400* bryony: A vine that has large roots, as does the mandrake.

*p. 401* imperator: emperor

sepsis: infection

*p. 402* *Ab ovo*: Latin, “from the egg.”

*p. 403* Ya Ya Oil: A magic oil to increase fertility and potency.

Anger Oil: Used to turn away someone's anger.

Lost & Away Oil: Used to get rid of someone (includes dirt from a crossroad).

Confusion Oil: Used to bring confusion to those working against you.

Weed of Misfortune: Used to make your enemies lose everything they own.

War Water: Iron rust suspended in water; break a bottle over an enemy's doorstep to bring strife and sorrow.

Understand, ye sons of the wise . . . crieth out to you!: From the *Golden Tractate* of the legendary alchemist Hermes Trismegistus.

Dwale: Another name for belladonna or deadly nightshade.

Orris: A European iris whose root is powdered; used in love potions.

Mote: Archaic word for "may."

come-alongs: Small winchlike hand tools using steel cables; used for pulling objects.

*p. 404* Aldrin, Endrin, Lindane, Dieldrin: hazardous pesticides

1, 1, 2, 2-tetrachloroethylene: PCE, a toxic dry-cleaning solvent.

*p. 405* gollywobbles: heebie-jeebies

it was a dark and stormy night: From the notorious first sentence of Edward George Bulwer-Lytton's 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*: "It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind . . ."

paxwax: Dialect term for the ligament at the back of the neck in many mammals, which helps support the head.

*p. 408* Ghost Dances: Late nineteenth-century American Indians performed these dances to reunite with friends and family in the spirit world.

*p. 411* spodumenes: Lithium aluminum silicate, a gemstone.

sardonyx: A banded variety of quartz.

peridots: Green gemstones, also called olivine.

padparadscha sapphire: A pink-orange sapphire.

chrysoberyls: A class of gemstones that includes alexandrite, which changes color from green to violet-red, and cat's eye.

cabochons: Highly polished, convex uncut gemstones.

### How I Write My Songs

*p. 413* as Kipling said: Possibly an evocation of his lines from "L'Envoy," carved above the entrance to the Gallery of Modern Art in Columbus Circle (see note to "The Balloon"): "Each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,/ Shall draw the Thing as he sees It, for the God of Things as They Are!"

*p. 415* "If the good Lord's willin' and the creek don't rise": Folksy catchphrase used by both Hank Williams and Tennessee Ernie Ford.

*p. 416* da da da da *da*/Whomp, whomp: In his 1955 recording of "Mannish Boy," Muddy Waters uses this instrumental refrain and pronounces "man" as "mane."

### The Emperor

"I've just done a piece about a Chinese emperor, the so-called First Emperor, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti. This came directly from my wife's research for a piece she was doing on medical politics in Chinatown—she had accumulated all sorts of material on Chinese culture, Chinese history, and I began picking through it, jackdawlike. This was the emperor who surrounded his tomb with that vast army of almost full-scale terra-cotta soldiers. . . . The scale of the discovery gives you some clear hints as to the size of the man's imagination. . . . I got a sense of the emperor hurrying from palace to palace, I gave him two hundred some-odd palaces, scampering, almost, tending to his projects, intrigues, machinations. He's horribly, horribly pressed for time, both actually and in the sense that many of his projects are strategies against mortality. The tomb itself is a strategy, as is his imposition of design on the lives of his people, his specifications as to how wide hats shall be and so forth. 'The Emperor' might be considered as another version of the story I did about Cortés and Montezuma, and both as footnotes to *The Dead Father*, another emperor."

—Barthelme, in a 1981 interview with J. D. O'Hara

*p. 424* Hsu Fu: Sent by the First Emperor to sail westward; his supposed grave is in Japan.

Ching K'o: Attempted to assassinate the future First Emperor.

*p. 425* celadon: Chinese pottery with a greenish glaze.

*p. 426* picul: A large unit of weight, about 133 pounds.



Kirin Gate: Probably alludes to the popular Japanese beer.

## **Thailand**

*p. 428* Krian War . . . Chorwon Valley: See note to “See the Moon.”

Mekong: Thai rum

Gilda: Refers to the 1946 film in which Rita Hayworth sings “Put the Blame on Mame” in a low-cut dress.

on the side of a hill: See note to “See the Moon.”

*p. 430* DivArty: Division Artillery

*p. 431* Brooke Medical Center: The Army medical center at Fort Sam Houston.

OD: olive drab

*Requiescat in pace*: Latin for “may he rest in peace.”

## **Heroes**

*p. 434* a clear glass . . . darkly: See 1 Corinthians 13:12: “Now we see through a glass, darkly.”

*p. 435* like blind men feeling the iceberg: Alludes to the Indian fable of the blind men describing various parts of an elephant.

*p. 437* “You shall not crucify . . . cross of gold”: From the speech by William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925) at the 1896 Democratic Convention in Chicago, against retaining the gold standard for currency.

## **Bishop**

*p. 438* John Frederick Peto: American still-life painter (1854–1907); discovered by the art historian Alfred Frankenstein in the 1940s.

William Michael Harnett: Harnett (1848–92) was a better-known still-life painter championed by Frankenstein.

*p. 441* Henry Fonda as Colonel Thursday: In John Ford’s 1948 film *Fort Apache*.

Robert Young: The has-been actor did TV commercials for Sanka.

*p. 442* Poulenc: The French composer Francis Poulenc (1899–1963).

Bob Wills: See Introduction.

Jim Dine: American pop artist, born in 1935.

de Chirico: The Italian surrealist (or “metaphysical”) painter Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978).

Bellmer: The Polish-French surrealist painter Hans Bellmer (1902–75).

Richard Hamilton: British pop artist born, in 1922.

Caliche: A layer of soil cemented together by lime.

### **Grandmother’s House**

*p. 444* gamomania: An obsession with issuing marriage proposals.

*p. 445* Little Luke: Possibly alludes to the boy character on the popular TV series *The Real McCoys* (1957–63).

*p. 446* Bergen: See notes to “The Balloon.”

*p. 447* Ever interfere with a gypsy?: Probably alludes to Hemingway’s story “The Light of the World”: “‘Ever interfere with a cook?’ he said to me. ‘No.’ ‘You can interfere with this one,’ he looked at the cook. ‘He likes it.’”

the great Gaudí church in Barcelona: Gaudí (1852–1926) died before he could finish this giant cathedral, which remains incomplete.

*p. 448* *in nomine Domini*: Latin for “in the name of the Lord.”

*p. 450* blood on the saddle: Title of the 1960 song by Tex Ritter: “There was blood on the saddle and blood all around/And a great big puddle of blood on the ground.”