

PAUL GURK



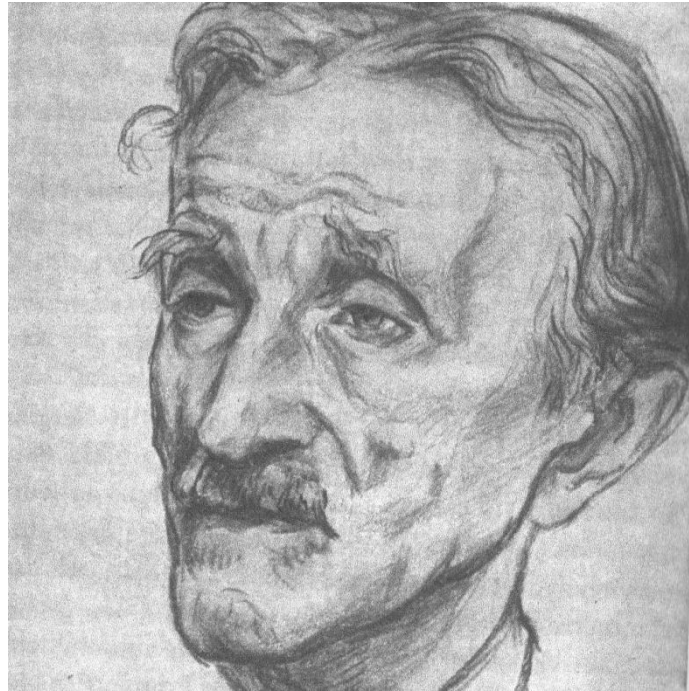
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*THE MYTH OF GREYHUMANITY,
OR OF THE NUMBER 1*

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Paul Gurk 1880-1953 (self-portrait 1949)

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A search at <http://www.corian-verlag.de> gives no result for “Paul Gurk” or “Tuzub37”. (The publisher now specialises in loose-leaf encyclopedias of, among others, SF and fantasy writing.)

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This work should be free of copyright by end 2022 (70 years after the author’s death).

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A

This story will be from that era when humans designate one another by numbers and only animals and flowers call each other by name, provided they are alone.

Says Thrush to Lilac-bush: "What is going on with humans and their whole species, Maybloomer?"

Lilac-bush cautiously adjusts foliage and peeps with budeyes into the grimgrey.

"I must speak softly, Dawnwarbler! Look around, check the boundary that was set up not by flight feathers or by the strength of roots, but by the Grey species. Do you not see the lofty net with its thousands upon thousands of meshes, strung in arcs from iron hook to iron hook, and nourished by sparks? We both dwell in the showprison of the last living beings."

Thrush says: "If I fly too far I bump against the badness, that boundary of electric law. Once Vulture broke away and ripped the boundary. But it was filled with deadly sparks of enslaved and stored-up lightning. Vulture tumbled hard to ground, and lies there, a sacrifice to wilfulness."

Lilac-bush says: "I know, and I saw a human delete him from the register and in the new language of shortcuts wrote: 'Vulture No. 36. Stuffed item available, no need to skin. Feed costs cancelled.'"

Thrush says: "The Machinemen keep us here for a purpose, to feed their reason on our lack of reason, and prove their greatness in the system of the world. Whatever sings or blooms has no use, and takes up space for no return. Now I'm not allowed to sing! If singing drives no turbines, my song is meaningless."

Lilac-bush whispers: "Sing, Thrush! The Grey species, your Keeper No. 1761, will cancel your feed if you no longer match the description!"

Now the boundary net emits flaming sparks. Great fear overcomes the corralled specimens of the last living beings, generated by love. They fall silent. Keeper No. 1761 crosses over and assembles them. His eyes are cold and grey. His face is grey. His clothing is made of light grey metal. He is like platinum.

Humans have become the Grey species. Their nations and races have melded until there is no difference, no merit and no pride in being special. Everyone is the Number 1. From their side-by-side and one-after-the-other comes an endless column in which every member is equal to One. They have filled the Earth. There are precisely as many as can be fed from all the same-sized square-edged fields. In the event of an increase in production, the number of Greyhumans will be increased in line with the capacity of the new machines. Each Greyhuman receives the same amount and is the same size. Throwbacks to the era of a free human system – too small or too big and regarded as unworthy to live – are preserved in spirits, and once classified and described are burned.

Progress progresses by great strides. It tolerates no big leaps or backslidings.

Lion in the showprison of the last living beings roars, but cannot hear his roar. He trembles. He asks the babbling Brook which is still allowed to flow here: "What is it, Brightbabbler, that stops me from hearing my roar?"

Brook speaks in the rise and fall of its sounds of plashing: "So you couldn't hear, you last of the desert furies? The Noisesucker swallows all your speech, so that the Council of Machinemen in the great hole of the high tower with its many holes might be undisturbed in its deliberations! They cannot hear my murmuring, and they don't know that we can understand their new language of facts and shortcuts. But I understand all possible languages, for every word and every language has its origins in my plashing, as the first song and the song of the living upon the Earth. Now up there they clack their numbers and letters."

Lion says: "What has that to do with me, Lullaby? I'm no longer allowed to leap and rend. Now and then, when the sun by some oversight licks down through the great skysmoke, I leap at my shadow or chase the shadows of trees. It is not permitted of us to kill. Only the law of the Grimgreys kills by decree of the majority, devoid of greed, sympathy, anger and every emotion! But if I roar and cannot hear my voice, I choke. It is handed down from my far ancestors who still lived free that all of those born into the prison of bars and regular meals should cry out until the desert quakes and the animals tremble in grim awe."

Now Brook and Lilac-bush confer, they the ones who hear more and see more than the others: "Roar, Lion, even if you cannot hear! Otherwise Keeper No. 238 will come and cancel your feed, because you no longer match the description!"

But Brook adds: "Listen, you last living creatures born of love and not of test tubes: the Grey species is at a turning point. They want to scale a new crest of progress and development. They are Machine-humans, and want to become Human-machines, until they become nothing more than machines. Then they regard themselves as complete and bring their era to the point of total self-adoration."

A rolling metallic roar swallows the voices of the last living creatures in the showprison. They stand rigid with fear. Brook stops babbling. Lion shrinks low. His flanks quake. Thrush clings anxiously to Lilac-bush.

A monster of iron, clad in a coat of rust, rolls up surrounded by a throng of Greys. Just a little distance from the electrified boundary of the thousands upon thousands of humans, the dreadful beast comes to a halt. The Grey creatures move apart. Carts come one by one, and carry away. Magnetic cranes lift, and throw down. A flame darts high. A Greyhuman steps forth. The number on his chest glows electrically. He speaks.

The throng of Greys throws itself down on the flattened ground, and raises arms high in token of adoration. Then the speech of many Greys rings out together, staccato, guttural, harsh, as if a farm implement from the legendary Age of Ploughing is slicing and squealing through a drear stony field.

Now from the numbers in the showprison of the last living beings comes a fearful cautious question: "Tell us, Brook, what are the Greys all saying together? We can understand only a little, and the raw violence in their chorus makes us afraid!"

Brook murmurs: "Listen, all of you! I shall tell it you in our language, which in the intermingled sounds of wind, sun, blood, clouds is the humming of the Earth's motion, and which all understand who still remain in the wheeling of the stars. The Greys have set up an idol, a huge machine-beast from the primal era of this progress that mows its way forward through bodies and brains: they have restored the first combine harvester, that reaps and threshes all at once. This is what they are saying:

We pray to you, O Mowthresher!

From you, a new era arose!

All praise to you, Angel of Progress!

You were the first to reap and thresh all at once, and grind your way forward under your own power.

You superseded hand and foot and the hourly labour of cowering slaves of the soil!

A field of wheat, three men and one machine!

Where twenty reaped, ten tied sheaves, five loaded up the wagons drawn by animals, casual labourers, you were the first, Mowthresher, in that ridiculous age when they sowed and reaped with anxious eye on wind and rain, for drought was a vengeful idol, and hail was an idol!

You began to replace, to convince, and you wrested our new progress!

You carved sacrifices, millions, more than the wars of foretimes, when nations were there, dupes of the clever!

They had no work. Their fields became worthless.

They tore apart the irritant of the state, hanged themselves or died of hunger, since of every four, three were too many, and needs were not matched to the quantity of goods ...

Nevertheless it is to you we pray, Mowthresher, you emblem of progress!

For by your sacrifices you wrested the new age and beat to death the phantoms, customs, myths of gods, discrimination, the ego and individuation, the stupidity of nations, of love and hate, of wealth and poverty, thou herald of equality! –

We bring you fire and flame, so that smoke envelopes you, Mowthresher!"

"What are they burning?" whispers Gazelle.

"They take books from the showprison of lifeless words, the writings of poets and thinkers, sayings of those obscure figures from the first ages of humanity that they called Prophets or Saviours. So they burn memory from the very source whence it sprang, for they do not spring, they march – step by step."

"Terrible is their power!" snorted Lion in fear. "Who can withstand them? Where are their adversaries, so that they do not lose all reason?"

“What I would like to know,” said Brook, still murmuring soft and surreptitiously, “what I would like to know is what they talk about in their language of numbers and letters up there in the big hole in the high tower! I’d like to know their plans, whether we shall be permitted to live, how they will vanquish the last of the blood in their tubes as they progress to Human-machine and to the final consummation of Machine-machine!”

Brook goes to sleep. Lion stretches out. Gazelle has anxious dreams. Thrush buries its head and sings no more. Lilac-bush stands motionless and ceases to send out shoots ...

Keeper No. 1 of the showprison of the last living beings stands there, clad in light metal, grey – and regards the garden. Then his eyelids lower. He wears rubber gloves, and holds a crank. His mouth is round and looks like a socket ...

B

The high tower has a hundred storeys. It is made of poured concrete, and clad in light metal that does not liquefy. There is only one shape of building on the Earth. Poured as a single storey the squares lie in depots miles across underground, ready and waiting to be summoned and fitted together in rowhouses and rowcities. Square holes are left in the poured concrete; these are windows. Elevator shafts run from top to bottom. There are no stairs. The continuous band of the elevator goes from the square opening beneath the high tower up the hundred storeys, along under the termination plate and down again, in a continuous 24-hour shift. On the termination plate is the place where hovercars and airships once landed and flew away. But flight through the air is known to be slow and unsafe, and was done away with many human lifetimes ago. The air has not yet been brought into order. There are eddies, downdrafts, snowstorms, sudden barometric falls, and even now, despite giant machines and remote control, no absolute safety and reliability is on hand. No longer is there any playing with flight. Air and sky are stupid.

Now roads for transport run along under the ground. The last horse died out, also in the showprison of living beings. It was Number 1, and is available stuffed.

Two percent of these lower roads collapse into the Earth. The Earth as yet has no regular alternation of strata determined by prior planning, and now and then relapses into attacks of cramp. But two percent is no more than the calculated quantum of potential irregularities.

In the uppermost big hole in the high tower, the Council for this sector of the Earth Surface System is in continuous session. It numbers one hundred members selected by rote from the ranks of Greyhumans, relieved every six hours, with all decisions by majority vote. At the moment when Thrush and Lilac-bush are

conversing and raising questions, it is the turn of Nos. 62,107 to 62,206 to decide. In 43 minutes it will be the turn of Nos. 62,207 to 62,308.

Any illness-induced hiatus or disturbance to the turntaking and deliberations is almost totally excluded. The metallising of humanity scarcely admits of disease. The age of programmatic inurement and eradication of germs is long past. Epidemics rarely find a breakthrough point. For stiff hinges and oil-depleted joints a Mechanic (Human) is summoned, for dents and deflections a Tinsmith (Human). In serious cases the Technician (Human) appears. If remnants of blood in the tubes give out or rebel, if the little remaining flesh begins to rust, then the Machine-human is thrown onto the light-metal scrapheap, stamped out of the lists, and chemically dissolved into the realm of the inorganic. The expression 'death' is outmoded. So there is no fear of death.

After fifty years, in accordance with the laws on Human Exploitation of the Earth, disposal takes place by stamping out and transposing into the realm of the inorganic. The number of cases in which visible defects arise as an illness in the traditional sense, even among members of the Section Council, never exceeds one in a hundred.

The Council meets in the biggest hole in the high tower. It ascertains how many Machine-humans will be used in the coming year, if the expansion of cultivation and the expansion of human numbers are to keep pace with one another. Lamentable failures in foretimes, when progress and demand overshot one another and the montage of events was badly glued together, are no longer replicated.

Shortly before voting starts an Overseer appears and leads in a Grey, who provokes an interruption. He seems out of order, and on his suit of light metal there are coloured flecks.

An Observer enters and reports a monstrous incident relating to the Grey just brought in. He seeks to suspend voting until the case of the Grey with coloured flecks is decided.

So the Observer has the floor. He reports in the language of numbers and shortcuts.

"I find him during a patrol through my work-field, how he reads in a stack of papers that once were called 'book'. He secretly set up an open square, fenced with the usual light metal but with no electric netting overhead. Here I find on the ground, contrary to regulations, some of the Earth-products that in foretimes were called 'flower' and programmatically eradicated for their lack of necessity and their uselessness. The eyes of this Greyhuman show an extremely unpleasant and forbidden gleam. I find him smeared with coloured soil. He speaks out loud to himself, in illegal solitude, in a rocking tone. His words are different from proper Earthtalk. I take this criminal who has absconded from his shift into custody in the name of the Council and bring him here for sentencing."

The book and the man are observed. None can read the squiggles of writing. Some of these evoke a distant memory of several of the current shortcuts. But they all creep

tangled like a pile of rusted barbed wire. Talk-technician (Old Languages) is summoned and makes his report:

“This is one of the stacks of paper once called ‘book’ from the time before the Greys, when there were still races, nations, and different languages. This Book is No. 2 of two parts among the products preserved in the showprison of dead words.”

Talk-technician (Old Languages) is questioned: “How did this No. 2 come into the hands of the colour-flecked Grey?”

“This second part was deleted five years ago when a rare short circuit caused a fire. No. 2 was considered burned, and so was deleted from the record. But it must in an unknown manner have remained available to be found by the colour-flecked Grey. The colour-flecked Grey has clearly deciphered the ‘book’ and has himself written out word-sequences in that dead language which is called ‘poetry’”.

The Leader of the Sector Council asks: “And so this is a case before us of purposeless and senseless regressive degeneracy. Do we have the disgusting cackle of the last living Poet before us?”

“It is so,” the technician for vanished languages attests.

The colour-flecked Grey, who is confirmed by the technical measurement process to be the last living Poet, is not questioned. He has nothing to say anyway, for he feels the memory of a feeling, long since done away with as inappropriate, which once was called ‘shame’. He holds a hand to his eyes, instead of using it to work.

By every voice it is decided to convey the last living Poet to the showprison of the last living beings, where he will be exhibited to troopwise visits of young Grey motors as a ridiculous undeveloped primitive state of the Grey species. For nothing lifts welcome worthy pride more than tangible evidence of distance, development and progress.

The decision is conveyed to the three Scribes in the lower cube so that a conclusive record may be made. Then the Annual Plan for the economy of machines and humans is discussed further.

C

In this era the Grey species lives in high and even higher buildings above the Earth. The last foretime is called the Underground Age. It is not so long ago that roads for transporting humans and goods ran above ground, but living-towns and factory-towns were underground. They ran on rails, for the unsafe hollow spaces under the Earth required continuous observation and a not infrequent relocation of modalities for fabrication and for living. Descent below a certain number of meters beneath the surface was precluded by the intolerable, ineradicable heat of the deep Earth. It would have been quite possible to breed an asbestos race, but no sequence of experiments

managed to turn burning air breathable. A permanent intake of surface air proved too bulky, costly and dangerous.

And so the light-metal Grey species came about. Access shafts collapse, apart from those excavated and fitted out as enormous elevator housings. Under the Earth, at a depth of 30 to 50 meters, there are now only railways and roads for the transport of wagons driven by electricity supplied from an overhead cable. Electric current is as available as water, and can be tapped everywhere. Rows of sheds for machines and materiel are also brought underground. But the big conference cubes, windowless, seamless, fireproof, are almost all falling into ruin.

Before this Underground Age was the Air Age, the age of flying ships and flying cars. Now fields and towns are on the surface of the Earth. But because every field is used to feed more Greys, every building is a tower block. All that is needed is to build new buildings ever higher. In this way the induction of young Machine-humans into uniformity, seamlessness and common feeling will be achieved. For because the electromagnet is always the same and always has the same effect, because electric current never works differently, so the true Greyhuman has no need of soul, or solitude, or shame, or tedium, or desire, or imagination, or art. It will present not a world of imagination, but only progress in tangible form.

In one of the underground conference cubes squat three Scribes. Everything that happens in Onethird of the Earth Surface System comes to their attention to be recorded; whatever has to be decided outwith the rules is brought by them into conformity. In truth, the three Scribes are the secret, almost invisible steering mechanism, as are the two times three Scribes in the second and third Thirds of the Earth Surface System. They are like the man with the oil can, who in the bloody foretimes of human history went through giant humming transformer halls as the attendant of the switchboards and at the same time their master, and from time to time gave the lowering beast a drop of oil.

Almost no Greys know of the existence of the underground trinity and the threefold trinity. But it is the primary task of the Scribes, as the last remnant of uniqueness and superordination, of blood and dominion even in its most diluted form, to make themselves superfluous.

The first Scribe is called Brain, the second Scribe is called Eye. The third Scribe is called Ear. Brain sits somewhat elevated on a block of steel. Eye and Ear squat to right and left and whisper to him, like Hugin and Munin, the ravens of Wotan, a vanished god reported in ancient stacks of paper leaves in the showprison of dead words.

In an abandoned underground conference cube in the second Third of the Earth Surface System squat three Scribes Nos. 4, 5, and 6.

The fourth Scribe is called Mouth. The fifth Scribe is called Lefthand. The sixth Scribe is called Righthand. Mouth sits somewhat elevated on a steel block. Lefthand

and Righthand squat to left and right and grab at what Mouth says, like the two grabbing, biting components of the pathetic tool that in foretimes was called 'pincers'.

In an abandoned underground conference cube in the third Third of the Earth Surface System squat three Scribes Nos. 7, 8, and 9.

The seventh Scribe is called Stomach. The eighth Scribe is called Leftleg. The ninth Scribe is called Rightleg.

Stomach sits somewhat elevated on a steel block. Leftleg and Rightleg squat to left and right and tread into the floor or send out actively into Greyhumanity whatever Stomach digests or does not digest.

From time to time the nine Scribes come together in one cube that has been blasted into a cliff. Nobody knows about it. The nine Scribes visit it only once. Then it is blasted to rubble. But come the time when the nine squat together and the consummated Machine-human is without a heart, then the Surface System up above ceases operation. The flywheel slows to a stop and waits for an impetus. The electric clock has no current. Then the Grey species is empty, without knowing it, even though it barks out numbers and shortcuts.

The decision of the Sector Council regarding the last captured living Poet has been assigned to the three Scribes Brain, Eye and Ear.

Brain ponders. Eye sees into the distance. Ear hears into the distance.

Eye says: "The Grey is colour-flecked. He is degenerate. Regression to separateness. Colour is separation from grey."

Brain says: "He must have learned it from his grubbing in the stacks of paper leaves. Learning is regression, treason, whenever seeking for what came before today. Learning is to seek forward, a leap forward. Only I, Brain, know of the origin, of every step and leap. I must be superseded, so that humanity can finally become machine."

Ear says: "I hear him mumbling the old language that only we may know. None of the Grey species may know it, this language that is still kin to wind and brook, to birds and earthquakes. But this colour-flecked Grey I hear mumbling in the old language. He is in love with the sounds. The Machine-human in him has regressed, into the softening of foretimes. He has become what in the lamentable age of health-makers and germs was called 'sick'."

Brain says: "What is infectious must be eradicated! It is decreed that the colour-flecked Grey, the last living Poet, be pressured down through the tubes."

Eye and Ear concur.

The tele-signal, using especially short wavelengths in which each wave has a number and so signifies regularity, requests that the colour-flecked Grey be sent down to the cube of Scribes 1, 2, and 3. At the same time, using another wavelength, it is

ordered that Keeper No. 1 of the showprison for the last living beings and Technician (Ancient Thinking) both be sent down. Technician (Ancient Thinking) attends to what in the childhood of humanity was called Culture, and is now incorporated into the history of fossils.

Very soon Keeper No. 1, Technician (Ancient Thinking) and the colour-flecked Grey are pressured down.

In one of the foretimes of the Grey species, in the time of races and classes, when Class said: "I take precedence over Race!" – in that Age they had conduits for letters, water, gas, oil. These conduits are abandoned now. Energy is extracted from the decay of elements over time, produced in graduations and delivered to the machines. There is no spinning, no motion, no inhibiting friction, only decay that breathes out power to be stored in special equipment.

Some of the conduits under the Earth have been expanded. There are tubes narrow and wide, for messages or humans. Many tubes exit in an underground chamber at each of the three conference cubes of the three times three Scribes. Machine-humans and objects are pushed through by enormously compressed air at tremendous speed, and are caught by thick rubber walls. Since everything has a light metal lining, only seldom does a crack or a kink appear. The Machine-humans now have only a little flesh and blood.

The age of paper is past. All records are embossed onto thin plates of unbreakable light metal.

The colour-flecked Grey, Keeper No. 1 from the showprison of the last living beings, and Technician (Ancient Thinking) are brought in. They are still a little affected by the speed, but only a little, as expected from long habituation, and soon revert to the usual four-square state.

Eye says: "When I last looked from afar at the showprison of the last living beings, I saw nothing that resembles this colour-flecked Grey. Has any such false montage been introduced in the meantime?"

Keeper No. 1 replies: "No. Only the last living Poet is registered. But he has piles of white stuff on the chin and is well over 70 planyears old. He will soon become defunct and inorganic, all by himself."

Brain says: "Do you, colour-flecked Grey, detained in accordance with the decision of the Council as the last living Poet and shortly to be conveyed to the showprison of the last living beings, have anything to say to justify or explain your irregular behaviour?"

Colour-flecked Grey lowers his head. He answers now for the first time, and says softly: "No. It is in me. I cannot explain."

Brain says: "Softening, regression."

Ear says: "I hear from afar what the old Philosopher is mumbling. It sounds just like this clacking."

Brain says: "Technician (Ancient Thinking), is it possible that both the colour-flecked Grey who is the last living Poet, and the last living Philosopher were produced with a similar defect in their mechanical structure?"

Technician (Ancient Thinking) replies: "Considered and observed retrospectively, that is to a high degree probable, and so has the highest level of scientific certainty. Just as sense and sense are always similar, so nonsense and nonsense are always closely related. A comparison of the two inmates brought immediate certainty."

Brain sends a request by electric waves for delivery of the last living Philosopher from the showprison. Very soon he is pressured down, and is dazed. Keeper No. 1 sets him upright. He opens a weary eye filled with grief and dejection – and stays silent.

Brain, Eye and Ear observe the strange beast.

Brain asks: "What do you do, Philosopher?"

The old Philosopher replies: "I ask about the word behind the word. It is spoken in numbers. What is number? Who set the numbers? I think. What is thinking? An electric current is there. What is electric current? Who decided up and down? Who created the action of machines? Who stitched together the tangle that is called Law?"

Ear says: "He mumbles just like the last Poet."

Eye says: "His eye has the same coloured glint."

Brain says: "Technician (Ancient Thinking) is right. They are fools of the same kind, machines with a bent hinge that cannot be hammered straight. It is superfluous to preserve the last living Poet when we already have the Philosopher."

Eye says: "I agree. The colour-flecked Grey who is the last living Poet must be transposed to the inorganic state. There is no requirement for showprison in his case."

Ear says: "I agree. Skinning and stuffing are not required. That may happen with the last living Philosopher, once the time comes to eradicate the showprisons of dead words and of the last living things, those beings disgustingly engendered by love, in order to extinguish the last memory of the forerunners of the Grey species."

Brain says: "We are agreed. I add that the last living Poet is to be preserved in the showprison until the day of the Great Gathering of all Greys in this sector of the Earth Surface System. There these two similar colourful creatures from foretimes, Poet and Philosopher, shall stage a showfight of colourful words for the gratification of all Greys. It can then be decided at the same time whether the last Poet will be made inorganic at once, or will be exhibited at the Great Gathering of the whole Third."

Eye and Ear say: "Decided. The decision is to be recorded."

Technician (Ancient Thinking), Keeper No. 1, the last living Philosopher and the last living Poet are sucked back up to their stations.

The last Philosopher is unconscious. It is not the unconsciousness of absorption, oblivious to the exterior world. He is devastated by the conversation with the mighty Scribes and the long-unfamiliar force of the pressure in the transmission tubes. Keeper No. 1 slaps and shakes him. The machine won't start. Tinsmith (Human) is summoned. After much hammering and bending, the last living Philosopher opens his eyes and sees his twin, the last living Poet, who regards him with an expression alien to these days, a throwback to the wretched foretimes of the Grey species, long since ploughed under.

Tinsmith (Human) leaves and climbs into his small vehicle. Keeper No. 1 inspects the two numbers, then he too goes, leaving their supervision to the attendant for this row of the showprison.

The last Philosopher whispers: "I feel the end coming. I shall die a true death, and not taste transposition to the inorganic state. I shall expire in the old language where thought and poetry still were!"

The last Poet says: "Do you still hear the babbling Brook, Philosopher, and the Oriole's piping? We are the last who understand their language. Is it not a mercy that you can expire here among the last living beings, engendered by love?"

The last Philosopher whispers: "In the foretimes, when our kind still flourished, we were always enemies, and quarrelled about boundaries. But the Machine-humans have the right idea, because they stand apart from us and no longer understand us: we are brothers! We are phenomena of the one life, two rays from the same fount of the obscure cause, even if we sparkle differently. Ah, how I decline!"

The last Poet says: "I still worship Word, and Image!"

The last Philosopher says: "I still worship Word, and Concept!"

The last Poet says: "I try to taste the obscure darkness whence came the word, just like a colour!"

The last Philosopher whispers: "I try to taste the obscure darkness whence came thinking, like an austere lily. But I am fading, in decline ..."

The last Poet says: "Farewell, Brother! You die a good death!"

The last Philosopher says: "Farewell ..." But he cannot finish. His face folds to a final smile. The body collapses. He is dead.

Keeper No. 1 is notified. He bangs on the defunct machine. Technician (Human) arranges transposition to the inorganic realm. The three Scribes receive an electric notification.

D

The three mighty Scribes – Brain , Eye and Ear – still squat in the lower conference cube. The hardly sleep. Their sleep can no longer be called sleep. It is no calm and

slow inward weaving, no relaxation of the blood or the redemptive interbraiding of dreams that germinate and proliferate luxuriantly. They collapse with a rattle, and two hours later spurt a concentrated nutritive solution into themselves, like drops of oil.

When they awake and take up their work again – literally take up, for it lies before them as heaped reports on sheets of light metal – Eye says: “The last living Philosopher has gone to the inorganic realm, with no necessity for chemical dissolution. Let this case be on record for as long as History is permitted.”

Ear says: “I did not hear his final jumble of noises that he called speech. I was on my two hours of downshift. But that too must be superseded.”

Brain considers.

Brain says: “The decision with regard to a showfight of words between these two fundamentally similar entities at the Great Gathering can be upheld. There are technical means that make it possible.”

Ear says: “It is so. I have ordered via telewaves that the dialogue between the two deviations be preserved on speech discs.”

Eye says: “We had our downshift sleep. But our decisions as recorded in the minutes will be carried out. This will happen until such time as the Machine-humans are transposed into Human-machines on the way to becoming Machine-machines.”

Brain says: “We must consider as quickly as possible the way to achieve this goal. I have ascertained: the speech discs reproduce the conversation in the irregular foretimely mode of audible uncertainty, emblematic of the immeasurable progress Greyhumanity has made on its way to singularity, programmatic human system, and machinification.”

Eye and Ear concur. It is recorded. Keeper No. 1 receives by telewaves the instruction to feed the last living Poet with one of his feeds designed for this kind of mutant, to enter him on the numbered list, to have the specialist Technician draw up a description, and to preserve him in the showprison of the last living beings until the final call.

Eye makes a further suggestion: that the soliloquies of the last living Poet and his demented exchanges or conversations with other moribund living creatures should also be captured on speech discs.

This supplementary suggestion is approved and minuted.

Brain issues a telewave order for Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) to appear. For the Grey species, there is no longer propagation or procreation in its true sense.

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) has a workhole on the 98th floor of the high tower. He makes use of the moving elevator and is quickly squeezed into the tube and pressured down below.

With no visible impact on his light metal cladding, he steps before the three Scribes and waits. He has a normal face with no tufts of hair. His skull is protected by a crash helmet. The jaw snaps like pincers when it rattles out questions and answers. But the grey, cold eyes of stone lie a little deeper. They have no brows. A deep gully has formed between the eyes.

Brain ponders, and looks at Technician (Human Stock Replenishment).

Brain asks: "What is the state of the technical possibilities with regard to human stock replenishment at the present time? The protocol needs elaboration. The programmatic human system must be pursued in a logical series of steps."

Eye adds: "My seeing from afar now and then lost contact with you. What was the cause?"

The number on the chest of Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) lights up. His arm jerks in greeting and his response clacks:

"In accordance with my duties, experiments have been run on certain chemical reactions in my research space, which are on the way in the very near future to superseding erotic tension processes formerly called 'love' by manufactured and delivered stock replenishment possibilities, because stocks in the test tubes quickly wane and substitution by artificial arousal is insufficient. During these tests the telesight function must be blocked for a while by appropriate metal shielding, or else these substances might be damaged."

Ear says: "It is essential that all waves be made audible, even the telesight current. The security of the protocol demands that every visible and contemplated event be captured by telesound."

Technician for the replenishment of the human stock says: "I believe that Technician (Telesight) in conjunction with Technician (Telesound) will be able to achieve this."

Ear says, with a harsher rattle: "I 'believe'?"

There follows a pause.

Brain ponders and says: "Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) used the expression 'I believe'. He will note that this sequence of sounds is a criminal regression to a long expired childish form of speech-setting. Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) will know that the crime must be expunged by increased zeal in his important experiments with substances."

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) lifts his arm high. The number on his chest no longer glows.

Eye says: "It is requested to minute that Technician (Thought Processes) in conjunction with Technician (Telesound) are to achieve the visibility and audibility of thought processes."

Ear says: "I agree."

Brain says: "I agree. It shall be recorded in the protocol."

Brain regards Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) and presses a button. The number on the Technician's chest lights up. He is alert and attentive.

Brain says: "You said that a certain sequence of tests has been made with the purpose of securing test tube growth via chemical means. This must mean that there is not only an inorganic state once called 'death', but there is also a state that will supersede by chemical reactions the unreliable and often befuddled organic state that is called 'life' and 'growth'. Life becomes inorganic. Death and life are differentiated only by function. If the Greys are mechanical, they live. If they are unmechanical, they are called 'dead' and are scrapped light metal."

Ear says: "That is the goal to which the ear must be bent."

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) jerks an arm and says: "Process and goal are charted infallibly."

Eye says: "Will conclusive success be seen?"

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) says: "Not in this planyear. Tests are to check whether the chemical solution, meaning the solution from the many sequences of tests, leads in the artificially befuddled state formerly called 'love' to the extraction of a test tube solution that is no longer organic but a chemical reaction, and when injected summons up in a further reaction the genesis of a Machine-human. The further goal is genesis by test tube alone and the amorphising of the Grey species. In deranged concepts that were notorious in foretimes, Technician (Ancient Cultures) has discovered comparable theories of this kind, albeit false and inadequately thought-through. The end goal for the current sequence of programmatic tests should be the suppression by chemical means of every difference that might be called 'sex', every kind of procreation, every befuddled state. I am unable to make further conclusions. I do not yet see a way."

Brain says: "Keep working vigorously and according to your shifts. Bring us one case of the kind which is at present being worked on. Appear with Technician (Test Tube Selection)."

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) is pressured back up through the tubes.

Brain thinks after he disappears, and says: "We see the ultimate goal. It is the procreation of machines by machines. Only then is the progress of the Grey species consummated, and its Earthrule secured. Up to that point there is much to be done. Many shifts of Greys will be done with their shift, and will have rusted into the inorganic state. There will be many three times three of Scribes, before every One is the same down to the last screw. Then the exalted power of Number will be revealed, endless and eternal."

Brain, Eye and Ear are silent. Then Brain stamps out the protocol.

The sheets of the protocol are preserved. They can be made into sound by noise discs, and in special cases can reproduce in secret cipher how effective rule over the standardised species of Greys is to be maintained.

Once again a superordinate power is there, unseen. The mass of Samegreys knows nothing of it. Only a few suspect what squats there behind the formula 'Scribe' in the underground conference cube. But at some point the planyear will roll on without Scribes. Every One will be completely the same, everyone truly Number 1, so that even majority decisions and the hundred-strong Councils will fall away, for each and every One is the same as the entire Greyhumanity, and all do the same thing together. Then the time will have come when electric waves pulse through every machine, simultaneously piston-gear and action, flywheel and thought, flickering current and consciousness, simultaneous and the same.

Brain, Eye and Ear wait.

The symbol clangs. The tube quivers. Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) and Technician (Test Tube Selection) are bundled out. Two Machine-humans follow, externally almost identical. The only visible difference is that the number on each chest lights up differently. On one of the Machine-humans it glows evenly, on the other it flickers.

Ear says: "I hear squeaking, as if unoled hinges are rubbing together. What is this?"

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) clacks a reply: "These two still young Machine-human-motors have shown from a particular sequence of test-Greys the biggest quantity of those softening factors that are called flesh and blood. As bothersome as flesh and blood are to the operation of shifts and the Human System Programme, at present their excitation state is still necessary for the purpose of attaining test-tube replenishment possibilities. If the product of the excitation state that is a kind of demi-fabrication can be attained by an admixture of inorganic chemical substances, then remnants of flesh and blood become superfluous, hence damaging, and so can be done away with. That is the next goal setting. Work proceeds along this path."

Ear says: "I just heard about this."

Technician (Human Stock Replacement) jerks, and his hinges squeak. He keeps silent, and waits.

Eye says: "I see the light on the chest of one of the grey Machine-humans shimmer more brightly. What does it mean?"

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) clacks: "The Grey designated as human intook the admixture shortly before being pressured down, and will only now start to shimmer. With simultaneous scattered shimmering the brief soldering process begins that was formerly called 'love' and is still to be used in order to extend the test tube

contents. Nevertheless the new sequence of experiments is forced to end, because the remnant states merge and the extension factors become ever fewer and less reliable. It follows that it will be difficult to set as a goal the desired four machine types of Greyhumanity.”

Brain says: “The transition from Machine-humans to Human-machines must be achieved within this year sequence. The reshaping is necessary, it is a linear advance, and therefore progress. There are no counter-currents, only slackenings. Where there is linearity there is no revolution. Work will continue with the strongest shift operations.”

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) and Technician (Test Tube Selection) each jerk an arm and keep silent.

Eye says: “I see the two experimental Greys are trembling.”

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) raps out: “The excitation state and with it the possibility of obtaining the extension factors has commenced.”

Brain observes the two experimental Greys. They begin to tremble and move jerkily. Their eyes roll irregularly. The arms row. The lips part. Sounds gurgle out, irregular, rising and falling in the drone level of the noise. The two experimental Greys approach one another as if pushed. The numbers on their chests light up brightly and flicker ceaselessly horizontally and vertically. The droning becomes ever louder ...

Ear says: “These sounds are similar to those yelped by the colour-flecked Grey.”

Technician (Human Stock Replenishment) clacks: “The time of the soldering process is nearing.”

Technician (Test Tube Selection) keeps a sharp lookout.

Brain raises a hand.

“Suck the excited experimental Greys back up. Their appearance is unnatural and contradicts progress. Chemical procreation without sex *must* be attained.”

E

The showprison of dead words is found in one of the smallest high buildings. Normally it is kept closed. Its holes are filled with heaps of pages and loose papers. On one storey, components of canvas and wood smeared with colour, formerly called ‘pictures’ are piled atop one another. They present coloured humans in strange bindings, or attempts to deceive by means of insane shortcuts and deflections so that snippets of earth, sometimes with air above, coloured or black, appear on a flat surface.

All the holes are dark. The window squares are screened. Only Technician (Ancient Cultures) creeps in now and then and turns on the lights. Then he squats, shakes his head, makes comparisons holding up a magnifying mirror, and after hours of his shift slinks back out.

Much lies farther back, in the way that History is envisaged nowadays. He sees unknown symbols on the pages, or meaningless pictures. Ever since the Mowthresher was stationed near the showprison of the last living beings, from time to time feedstuff must be obtained for the symbolic flames of value estimation. Then Technician (Ancient Cultures) notices a heap of incomprehensible pagestacks. These are burned before the first Mowthresher.

From time to time a column of Greys visits the mouldiness of backward times. They draw past, lift the eyelids high and grin. Then they occupy the designated corner that leads to their work square. Almost all grin at the same remnants and almost all seem at the same time to be grey and motionless. Only very seldom does the point at which they become currentless and currentful have an effect on any Grey.

Technician (Ancient Cultures) enters the showprison of dead words. For the Grey species, pictures are dead words. The Technician turns on the lights and regards the objects from the colourful foretimes of the human race. He has the concentrated nutrition that enables him to inspect the remnants, seek out those that have become ever more meaningless, and designate them for the flames. But he looks with indifferent contempt on the pagestacks and the smeared canvases.

Handwriting on a tanned animal skin catches his eye. Long rows in a right-angled shape are filled with unknown symbols. Some of them, such as particularly stand at the beginning of a separated part, are coloured. The age when this handwriting was produced must lie very far back, and must still have been befuddled. The written symbols show tumbling uncontrolled curves and make remarkable diversions.

Technician (Ancient Cultures) observes this pagestack, turns this way and that, and tries to detect a similarity with other foretimes secretions known to him. He does not succeed. The culture from which they originate must be too old and too backward.

Since the Technician has already made the vain attempt on three different workdays in conjunction with Technician (Ancient Languages) to identify the symbols and enable their nonsense to be made at least comparatively meaningful in the clacking language of numbers and letters, he designates the handwriting as defunct and condemns it by that symbol to feed the reverential fire before the first Mowthresher.

He sends an electric signal.

Two Greys appear with their small vehicle on the rails that run everywhere. No Grey walks, unless the work process occasionally requires such backsliding. Walking is always diversion and waste.

The Greys cause the separated pieces to be lifted by electrically-driven pincers and thrown into the vehicle. They set off, four sets of points switch automatically, and they dump the cultural relics onto the fire before the first Mowthresher.

The old, old handwriting with the strange symbols twitches in the heat.

Pages writhe in the torment of their destruction. They say: "We die amid the howls of uncomprehending creatures. A myth is here tortured to death in the flames of progress. When reverence yet existed, and knowledge of the unfathomable, when the boundary yet flamed, silence and contemplation circled and the inner spirit received the visit of Intimation, it was ready for the fructifying awe of Infinity: in the age of the first connection with the creation of the Work I was born, and took my shape in the collision with mortality."

"I am a veil behind which Meaning stands, for it is not given to humans, as beings caught in Time, to be eternal, nor to make eternity visible. But light shines through my veil. To burn in light is Life. Only the one whose time is fulfilled by the death of self-immolation has the spark of Meaning and Eternity within!"

"We poor old pages sing as we die the song of the myth of the unsundered human."

The curious ancient symbols suffer in colour. Flames creep along and in and turn them to ashes. They shudder in green, in yellow, in purple, in violet and speak out their thoughts for the last time.

"In the beginning nothing in Creation was sundered.

"From the Grimgrey, from the impenetrable swirl, they entered the Dream of the Creator, the Demiurge, who is touched only by Infinity, so great and powerful is he.

"Demiurge slept and rested from that existence that mixed into him life and unlife, beginning and end, thought and unthought, sense and nonsense, and a countless number of realms and was called Chaos. Chaos is Existence, the sum of all possibilities.

"Now Infinity came gently humming into the sleep of the Demiurge, touched the boundary of sleep and created the creating Dream. Thus the World came about, which was not sundered.

"In it was neither Time nor Substance, no Before and After, no Premise and Consequence, no Cause and Effect. All was unsundered and all-at-once, because it was the Dream of Existence.

"In the circling World of the all-at-once floats the Human, that was neither Man nor Woman but One, and that bore within it the possibility of every gender unsundered, because it was the dream of Chaos. It took root by itself, a succession of kings, and outgrew itself in the creative Dream. In the World was no pain or pleasure, no lust or procreation, no birth or death.

"Then out of the overabundance of Chaos and of Existence came the rift of Becoming, of difference, conflict, substance, time, motion, of steps and sequence, and it sundered unsundered Creation.

"And so arose the Great Alteration: Existence was shattered into Having and Becoming.

“Light and darkness came. They hated one another and sought one another.

“Heaven and Earth came, the circling sweep and countersweep.

“Clouds appeared above, shadows below.

“Stars and nations came together and fled apart. War and Peace interposed themselves between stars and nations.

“Wind arose, and the mutability of meaning.

“There came the arcuate loveliness of flowers, and there came the worm in the root.

“There came the solidity of the Earth and the raging heat of the inner core.

“There came Eros and Anteros, brothers. They hated one another and sought one another.

“Land and Sea separated. They hated one another and sought one another. Waves played around the coasts. Waves devoured Land.

“All-encompassing radiance became the sensuality and grief of Colour.

“The human became sundered, and became Gender.

“Gender sought gender. Gender fled from gender. Genders loved and hated one another. Genders entwined themselves into One, and split themselves into Two. Time intervened between conception and birth, between love and pain. In the knotting of the one brief endless ecstasy, Have and Become melded together in the dreaming creative Existence of Chaos. Then gender fell away from gender, emptied and exhausted, filled with shame, filled with disgust, chased all over the wheeling Earth and hated and sought one another ...

“Every thing and every thought became bloody.

“Creation was ruled by blood and not by the diffuse radiance.

“Time ruled, and whoever said Time, said Blood!

“We lament the shattered World, sundered Humanity! That which was one and all has become one and nothing! It nourishes its hate with its love, and in the deep well of its love lurks hate as a murderous dragon!

“For yet again does Humanity sunder itself, to lurch now between thesis and antithesis, between light and darkness, in its blood are Doubt and the androgyne Being and Becoming, Doubt in its emotions, Doubt in its thoughts, despairing and arrogant all at once, feeling for the safety belt of Number, of Experiment, of Conclusion! What it is able to conclude is open to it, but closed to it is the creative Dream of the Demiurge, the Chaos of Existence!

“We are burning to ashes, we letters of the secret!

“The beast devours us, the beast of no secrets, no reverence, no memory, the beast that devours Becoming without cease, and throws away that which has become!

“Dying here is the myth of the innate, the unsundered Human!”

A pile of ashes lies before Mowthresher. The ashes twitch. Then lie still. A mechanical shovel grabs the burned-out stuff. Monotonously the lines of Greys yell and clack the jumbled numbers and letters of the Song of Mowthresher.

Around this time, Brook in the showprison of the last living creatures holds her breath and bends an ear to her source. She ceases to flow and speaks in jerky consternation: “Beneath me the giantess Earth is moving. The Greys blare and yell their numbers and letters and cannot feel the ground begin to shake. Great Mother is dreaming, and becoming restless. She shifts in her dream, just a little bit, yet hollows are collapsing and I shall be diverted into a new cleft! Soon she will stretch up in wakefulness and shatter the armour!”

Thrush says: “Who can we speak to then? Who will teach us the feelings of a living speech if Brook should die?”

Lilac-bush laments: “Who will water my roots and keep the soil alive?”

But Brook has disappeared.

Keepers observe and confirm. Technician (Earthquakes), who by his apparatus controls the machine called Earth in its functions, ascertains from the inked lines that an insignificant shiver has occurred. In his embossed report he adds that irregularities in the Earth’s work are becoming ever smaller. Clearly the Earth, considered as an astronomical machine, is integrating itself ever more smoothly into the programmatic system of the Grey species.

A few subterranean transport routes have collapsed. Some high buildings have swayed a few millimetres. The Brook in the showprison of the last living beings has disappeared. But it has been described, and so can be dispensed with. But the currently sitting Council decides to replace the Brook by inorganic means, and divert artificial water into Brook’s course.

This is done.

F

The Grey species no longer recognises solitude. The Greys know of neither external nor of internal solitude. The programmatic human system allows of nothing and of no time in which the Grey can be alone. It steps forth in a column, connects up to a shift together, and following the shift falls into a kind of collective mechanical sleep. It is registered, and has no name but only a designation. This consists of one letter and a row of numbers, formed according to production site and sector of the hightown.

Place of production and hightown sector determine the life of the Grey. They are at the same time geography and destiny. The Greys do not know that the designation corresponds exactly to that used in times beyond memory for the graves of the dead in churchyards.

The Greys do not know the word 'solitude', and no longer know a feeling of solitude. The Grey is never alone. He is produced in a line. He works in a mass, eats a mass of concentrated feed, field compressed to a chemical, and has two hours of mass deepsleep. He has only one suit of clothes: of light metal. The woman's colourful way of thinking, in foretimes called Fashion, no longer exists. The Grey species does not read, and does not sing. In programmed shift breaks it can telehear, telesee, and have sound discs. These promote deepsleep! And so among the Greys there are only collective processes and collective reactions.

Since there is no solitude, there is also no private property. For every private property is solitude, because it has to be a segregating and a drawing back. Everything must be had by all, but no one has anything. Accordingly it is also not permitted to have one's own thoughts, to have any thoughts at all, because a thought is always something of one's own. Similarly it is also not permitted to have a feeling, have a feeling of one's own, have any feelings at all, because feeling is always something of one's own. Mass thoughts and mass feelings are conveyed via starter devices and triggered by dispositions arising from the shift system and the assemblage of the Machine-humans.

Colour-flecked Grey, the last living Poet, wanders around in the prison of the last living beings. Now that his seclusion and remoteness has been found out and pilloried, he begins to waste away. He sees birds and flowers, hears the rustling of trees and at night the howl of the last jackal. Here is more colour than he could ever have put together himself in seclusion – but he sees the boundary and the prison. Ever since babbling Brook disappeared, coloured sleep, dreaming, has eluded him.

Now and then as he talks to himself or with the wind that lives in the bushes or with the birds or with the flowers, it seems to him that he can feel something sucking. Something invisible, alien, comes out of the distance and surveilles him. He is frightened then, and keeps to himself. Shame holds his tongue. Shame, that curious feeling from foretimes; its name is unknown now.

Now and then the last Poet writes in the old language, but he senses ever more the prison enclosed in sparks, and grows dejected. Now and then he ponders, and cannot understand why he has fallen so in love with something so inhuman, so against the spirit of the age, as the coloured word. Perhaps he really is just a recidivism, a kind of fossil, and belongs in a showprison. Perhaps it is really and conclusively a nonsense simply to love something!

The last living Poet feels himself sinking slowly into a deep sleep from which he will never emerge. He picks up a fallen lilac twig and writes in the loose sand that is permitted here – unproductive, achieving no work, a slave to the wind. He inscribes irregular lines, no longer looks back at what is written, and does not know what he has done, for Life is slowly receding from him. He has written himself out and falls into a strange organic death ...

Ancient symbols are in the sand, which no Grey except Technician (Old Languages) in association with Technician (Old Cultures) can fully understand:

Autumns fade and springtimes sprout
a thousand thousand times ...
but you see just a glimpse of the scales that swing,
the casting of seed and fruit,
how bitter Winter sweeps husks along
and already you weary of the storm and thawing snow ...
The dust of Earth sends the same clouds arching,
and the wind's anger
shreds the arch of darkening shrouds.
Always the same, ah,
how soft it glistens, the silky fleece of lambs,
the hungercry of a barking fox dies
in November smoke ...
What is the Sun to you, what day and night,
that make you grow and ripen and be older,
you, just one single word of Life?
Only images you see of the Not-to-be-seen,
and an image are you of the Not-composed,
you feel only metaphors
for you are a metaphor! –

But
in every year the Word blooms for you anew
as another image ...

Tinsmith (Human) and Technician (Human) report, in full concurrence after investigating the case, that the transposition of the last living Poet into the inorganic has been achieved. Because the conclusively rusted item was specified for the Sector Gathering and perhaps also for the Great Assemblage of the first Third of the Greyhumans and their programme, the remains of the colour-flecked Grey are first metallised and made decay-resistant.

In response to a wavesummons the Technicians (Old Languages) and (Old Cultures) appear and in coordinated action take an impression of the disordered final

productions of the colour-flecked Grey, and at the same time make the corresponding sound disc.

The stabilised inorganic remains of the last Philosopher who lived and the last Poet who lived are packed in light metal and pressured down underground tubes and deposited at the level of collections for this sector of the programmatic Earth system, namely hightowns C17, C18, C19 and C20. The sound discs of the two relicts and the apparatus for the performance of the showfight of words are already in place.

The day of the Gathering is fixed. For six hours the workload will be lifted and sacrificed to unmachinic togetherness. But votes will have to be enacted for the purpose of forwarding motions to the Onethird Gathering, and from time to time the uniformity of the Greys and the progress of progress towards mechanisation must be established with substantive pride.

The columns of Greys march in, according to norms.

The Gathering-field, in a somewhat elevated location, is flat-tamped and as a rule serves as drying-ground for the weatherproof coating of the endless sheets of light metal used for cladding. The four-square space is enclosed by flat, very wide concrete blocks. These are the platforms where the Grey masses squat after they have marched in, and gaze down upon the speech-choruses.

Two hours are needed for the masses to be fully assembled. Two hours are needed for presentations, speeches and voting. Two hours are needed for departures and transport by underground lines back to the respective hightowns and production sites.

The Grey species has no flags and no symbols. It is sufficient unto itself. It is Greyness itself, progress, the rolling foursquare that knows no reverse, only forwards. It has no softening of feelings, and no confusion of ideas. The pounding of its marching steps makes the Earth tremble. It shakes jolting like a machine at work.

Columns march in from every side, endlessly, for two hours. Foursquare after foursquare squeezes onto the Gathering-field and stomps itself tight. When the giant arena is one single steaming greyness, everything stands silent for a whole minute, feels itself grey, as the power of uniformity, worships itself, and then swaggers to the platforms.

Speech-choirs appear. They are amplified a hundredfold by loudspeakers, and clack precisely in the language of letters and numbers the prayer to Mowthresher. In pauses an electrical noise apparatus howls a single long-echoing note. During the speaking ten giant toothed gearwheels, all the same size, clutch together, clatter, and turn about in unison. The gearwheels are progress, no leaps, wheel by wheel, tooth by tooth.

In lamentable contrast to this exalted choir, the solidified remains of the two colour-flecked Greys, the last Philosopher and the last Poet, are set up facing one

another. At the summons of an electric jolt they raise the arms, shake the head, or stamp the feet and careen clumsily here and there. Their sound discs play at the same time. Huge stone rays hurl into the grey sky the title, in the language of numbers and letters:

Two fools from the foretimes!
Last Philosopher who was left alive!
Last Poet who was left alive!
Showfight of words!

The platform-mass of Greys hears the meaningless quavering speech and sees the awkward incomprehensible crazy movements unsuited to any work process.

A rocking and whispering: "I still worship Word ..."

"I still worship Word, and Concept! ..."

"I try to taste the darkness whence came the word, just like a colour ..."

"I try to taste the darkness whence came thought, like an austere lily. But I am fading, in decline ..."

One of the metallised remains sways so bizarrely and non-right-angled that the united platform-squares echo to a single clacking throaty laughter.

The metallised relict with the long piles of hair on the chin twitches crookedly and lies down askew on the field. Now sound disc whimpers out.

The concrete blocks, respectful and immobile, sustain the barks of laughter.

"Starry blackness of Night!" squawks the sound disc. An incomprehensible mumble trails after it. Then a new disc, in the old nonsensical language with a present-day accent, clacks out the impression taken from the sand of the last Poet's final scribbles. The metallised relicts lie askew and twitch delectably.

Amid howls of applause, two small vehicles appear. Electric claws grab the totally decomposed remains and take them away for acidic destruction. A description is drafted for the showprison of dead words.

Brain, Eye and Ear, the three hidden Scribes, squat in their underground conference cubes. They hear into the distance, see into the distance, and so experience the Gathering of the sector comprising hightowns C17 to C20.

It is proposed and decided that starting from the next shift, the expression "I" shall no longer be used. "I" is a throwback to the time of differentiated, incalculable, disordered personalities. Out of the consciousness of "I" come discord, planlessness, competitiveness, and property. Property as I-ness is forbidden. And so the expression "I" must be done away with too.

The decision is at once received by many sectors and will be confirmed at the three next Onethird Gatherings of grey collective humanity, because it lies on the line of progress. Starting from the next shift, every Grey is to be designated only by the

number displayed on its chest. By lighting up, its existence and its readiness for work are attested.

Brain, Eye and Ear nod. Brain embosses the decision.

For improvement of the protocol, the three mighty Scribes have moved that a decision be taken that history should cease and that memory, being a superfluous burden, an electrical circuit blocker, an oxidiser of Greys, a kind of rust, should no longer exist.

The consummation, and the way to it, requires no looking about, no memory, because it is certainty.

The proposal is agreed, and forwarded to the Onethird Gathering and to the Full Earth Gathering.

Brain embosses.

A slew of specialist Technicians will lose their positions. Insofar as they cannot be incorporated into current work processes, they will have to be transposed into the inorganic realm.

In addition, the showprison of last living beings will be left to decay, and the showprison of dead words will no longer be administered; for there is no doubt that the preliminary decision will be approved by the totality.

The dispersing columns of Greys stomp massively out. Section by section they drop down into the access shafts and fill the rocket-trains driven by atomic decay. For units whose production locations lie nearby, surface transportation by small electric vehicles suffices. At first they run on elevated rails, until they come to the warren of production lines and are led onwards by Earth-current into the huge open maws of the high factories.

Progress advances by unstoppable steps.

G

The Earth is divided into sectors, ordered by letter. In each earthsector a number of hightowns have been constructed, whose Greys are designated by the letter of the hightown sector, and within the sector by a sequential number.

Some of the letter-sectors on the programmatic system maps are blank. Here is the sea, the reluctantly tolerated sea, regarded with suspicion! True, there are still found in the sea some artificially surfaced islands, from the time when these twilight creatures of technology still had airships and staging posts serving partly for peaceful traffic and partly for the dropping of bombs. But ever since hoverers and airships, as

well as warfare activity, have been done away with as obsolete and unsafe and peace reigns eternal – alongside legally-sanctioned transposition into the inorganic state – these islands have fallen into ruin and drift here and there. They are only small, and will be disregarded for field plan purposes as long as the sea is still there.

At this time there are remotely controlled electric ships that can achieve extraordinarily high speeds. Because of friction, rocket ships are not usable on the sea. In the air rocket ships are used only infrequently, because of the insecurity of the totally unprogrammable air movements, and the violent recoil effect even on strongly metallised Greys.

Among the earthsectors, one embarrassing leftover must be pointed out. “B” is still unbuilt on: no hightowns, no precise field plan, no electrified overhead netting, no artificial rain, no electrical fertility, no production stations with small-vehicle tracks, no underground lines, no conference cubes or access shafts with elevators, no pressure tubes and no shortwave installations.

“B” is the territory formerly known as the Roof of the World, a land of enormous mountain chains with snowstorms and collapsing glaciers, with avalanche zones beyond measure. All other mountain ranges in the occupied letters have gradually in the course of the system plan been substantially stripped level, and no longer annoy to any appreciable degree, even though they assert a touch of remoteness in relation to the dominance of the Greys.

“B” lies there like a clod, and huffs icebreath.

The Gathering of Grey humans in the first Third of the Earthplan system takes place. It lasts three days, the Full Gathering lasts nine days.

It is decided that the Person will be forever extinguished, the Number will be permanently fixed as the inner and outer principle of world events and hence world history, and consequently anything irregular, lurching, backward-looking, forward-leaping with a corresponding slight recoil, will be pursued to the utmost corner and transposed into the inorganic.

Subject to the decision of the Full Gathering and the protocol of the nine mighty Scribes, there are no longer any concepts, since concepts are an inadmissible agglomeration and a disturbance to the one-after-another, and signify an idolatrous worship of the word. Concepts contradict the principle of Number.

Words and concepts such as “eternal”, “endless”, “hope”, “fantasy”, “becoming” and which, like the many masks of incomprehension, are called anti-number, are no longer available. They are not tolerated even in the most shameless of the word-relicts of the factual shortcut language of numbers and letters.

The word “God” has not existed since many Grey shifts ago.

There is no “I” and there is no history. Time will commence with the decision of the Full Gathering of the Greys and will begin anew with every shift!

While rocket-trains roar along the underground lines and small vehicles rush to production stations in a blue flurry of sparks, the nine mighty Scribes squat in a deeply hidden conference cube in Sector A.

Here the land of four rivers and the Garden of Eden once lay. But that was long ago, and because it deals with a story before history, is not true. When history is no longer available, myth can at last no longer be conceived. Wordpiles about such things, recorded in forgotten languages, rot away in the dead showprison of dead words. They are indecipherable even by the Technician (Old Languages), who is now due to be dismantled, and so are not available.

Brain, Eye and Ear, Mouth, Righthand and Lefthand, Stomach, Rightleg and Leftleg squat around a giant prism of equal faces, made of glass. It is clad in a layer of light metal and no longer reflects.

The Age of Glass, too, has faded away. Whoever is self, equal to one and expressed uniformly within the mass, has no need to look in a mirror.

The Earth once knew an Age of Glass. A memory of it persists, but will be extinguished from the day of the Full Gathering, along with history. It was a time of the most colourful iciness, uttermost vanity, of adornment by spectral lines, a time when clothes were made of spun glass and books had glass pages and glass bindings. There were no printed letters. All the glass pages were empty. Lines were dropped onto the glass pages by glass colourspreaders, and the binding for each casting was light-batiked by means of polished broken-edged prisms.

The Age of Glass, of movable rooms and houses and movable vanity, is long past. It choked on colourfulness, nerve-defibrillation lines and mind overlays.

The nine Scribes squat three by three facing one another. They stare at one another and at last begin to discuss the matters to be embossed on the protocol.

Mouth says: “Very many Greys are there, and have to be oiled by field-squeezings.”

Brain says: “Their numbers are by far not yet big enough. They are the consummation, or on the way to consummation. There can never be enough progress.”

Eye says: “I see from afar across the whole Earth. I am plugged in to every eye, and receive from every eye created by the mating of physics and chemistry. Thus I see that Brain is correct. But Eye is also correct. Spaces are too small. The Grey species needs room.”

Stomach says: “How far has the sequence of experiments advanced into the production of foodstuffs for the Greys out of chemical substances and crystals that are not organic and do not have to take the damnable illogical detour via root and fruit, milk and blood?”

Ear says: "When we nine confer together, no technicians are to be pressured down. The protocol of the nine must not be interrupted. I hear from afar what the technicians are saying: First, the final ingredient must be expunged from the rapture, from the frenzy of the organic! First, the Human-machine must be consummated! First, the motor must come from the test tube and not from embracing! First there must be no more of the tangled switchbacks called Nature! We are very far along the way to the Model Human. We shall attain the goal. Then the Greys will eat only configurations of elements, and will be driven in the same way as a machine by the fragmentation of atoms. Then the Grey as the Machine-machine will represent the culmination of progress."

Leftleg says: "So I cannot yet trample everything that drains down and comes from the old?"

Rightleg says: "It will come. Many a nine Scribes will have to squat in a cube that will at once be demolished. But there is no stopping progress."

Ear says: "I hear Brain thinking. This the technicians have achieved. Let us wait for Brain's thoughts."

Brain ponders. The other eight Scribes keep silent and watch Brain closely.

Electrical wave-signals fall into the silence. Eye and Ear lookm at one another. Then they nod, and wait for Brain to emerge from his pondering.

New reports arrive. They might be useful for augmenting the protocol. Then all of a sudden emptiness and deepsleep come. The great two-hour shift, the still inescapable interruption of work, the reluctantly tolerated sign of tax-serfdom to the Organic, has arrived in Sector A.

The nine Scribes squat bent forward, head against the prism. Only the chamber is awake and blinking.

Two hours later Eye says: "Reports have arrived. Criminals must be punished. In Sector Y, Hightown 19, a Grey interrupted his shift and gazed out at the sky."

Rightleg says: "There is no sky. There is only a smoke of the Earth. The criminal is mine to punish. His offence occurred in my sector."

The eight Scribes say: "We agree. There is no sky."

Rightleg says: "I stamp my foot. He is transposed to the inorganic realm by acid."

Ear says: "In Sector Q, Hightown 5, a Grey exceeded the time-quota gazing at the shower of sparks from the growth-net, whispered to it in a rocking tone, and neglected the shift."

The nine Scribes all speak at once: "He has placed himself outside the Grey species as colourful. Let him cease to be."

Lefthand says: "The criminal belongs in my sector. I squeeze. He is dismantled to the inorganic."

Stomach says: "What has Brain thought?"

Brain says: "We need room. For the augmentation of the protocol, let it be decided at the Great Gathering of the Earth that all remaining mountains be smoothed down and transposed to the principle of the field. Sector B, the target of my thinking, will be demolished. The meaningless heaps of rock in Sector B must be blown up and ground to dust. They are illogical and offend the thinking of Scribe Brain, in whose district they are located. The dust from the mountains must not fly away, but must be captured. It will be of service to the sequence of experiments on chemical nutrition, and let research be done to see if in these last great obstructions the final necessary substance can be won for test tube conception and the consummation of the programmatic human plan."

Stomach says: "Then Stomach will at last be completely full ..."

Brain concludes: "Then the time will have come when the nine Scribes no longer say 'I' and may rescind themselves as a sign of the uniform consummation and the uniform contribution and value-setting of the Greys."

The nine Scribes all agree. The protocol is updated. Let the Full Gathering of grey humanity decide that there shall be no hills or mountains on the Earth. Everything must be average, and accordingly flat.

To Be Continued ...