

The Seduction of the Outer Zones

Dick Bonker

"Perhaps the play is also incidental." --S. Claspe

A CHROMATIC FANTASY IN ONE ACT

Cast of Characters:

FLUTE BOY

RENE LOPINARSINOPOLIS

ROUE SIPENARSOLENTESIS

ROUGET PARTHENOGENOSIS

} Professors of Geology

STREET MUSICIANS--A pickup group

EXPOSITORY SINGER--And Narrator

GIBBOUS EARTH--Gorgeous in her blue and green mantle

PLUTO--An Eccentric Distant Planet

SELENA THE SILVERY MOON

MAN IN THE MOON--Buck Naked

GOLDEN HOOP OF PARADISE

A PERFECT SPHERE

Approximately 3,300 words; 254 speeches.

(The performing area is empty except for a single chair downstage center.

The Flute Boy enters with instruments, bows to the audience, sits. Commences elaborate preparations to perform.

The Street Musicians file in with folding chairs and position themselves to one side, sit.

The Expository Singer enters with music stand. She positions her-

self standing on the opposite side from the Street Musicians. Places music on stand. Clears throat. Gives the down beat to the Flute Boy.

Flute Boy plays a simple phrase. Stands up, bows. The Geologists applaud weakly. Exit Flute Boy.)

RENE L: *(Stepping forward.)* Apostrophe!

ROUE S: *(Stepping forward.)* Semicolon!

ROUGET P: *(Trying to step forward but blocked by the Flute Boy's empty chair.)* Asterick! *(The other two turn and look at him.)* Sorry.

RENE L: In a quiet bower for only we.

ROUE S: Full of sweet breathing

ROUGET P: Old dreams of wealth.

RENE L: Let it not pass from nothingness into the void.

ROUGET S: Sweet, sullied Earth.

RENE L: That's "solid" Earth. Sullied won't melt.

ROUGET L: Sorry.

ROUE P: Her shoulders glazed with frost

RENE L: Like a pomegranate from an ice chest.

ROUGET P: Exactly. What a happy simile.

RENE L: Ha, ha. I fooled you. Pomegranates are red.

ROUE S: My pomegranates are blue.

ROUGET P: And seedless.

ROUE S: Plunging cataracts about her loins

ROUGET P: Precisely.

RENE L: Wreathed in ever-thickening mists.

ROUE S: Her unreaped armpits.

ROUGET P: How appropos.

RENE L: The newly minted moon a foolish sycophant.

ROUE S: O, sweet suggestive Earth.

RENE L: We celebrate thee and elevate thee.

RENE, ROUE, ROUGET P: O Geology, earth-mother of all the sciences.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: It is dawn and the Earth is singing
From moist canyons to the dry desert dunes.

(She signals the Street Musicians to play.)

Modal Overture and Dance.

(The Street Musicians improvise a short piece in the Dorian mode. The Gibbous Earth enters with her Typical Dance of the Gibbous Earth. At the conclusion of the dance, she sits in the Flute Boy's chair and crosses her legs demurely.)

EXPOSITORY SINGER: Three geologists have come on a journey
From distant places; with them their instruments.
Wishing to plumb the core of the mystery
of our Earth in her blue and green mantle.

RENE L: Let us, while we may, weigh and gauge this Earth of ours,
that we may know her.

ROUE S: We shall judge her masses and tick her off, count the pints,

thrust set square and sextant upon her, tape her and chain her and draw graticules upon her surface.

ROUGET P: Yes, with longeurs and attitudes.

RENE L: Ah, yes, brothers, let us have an apostrophe to earth.

ROUE S: But I would have a semicolon.

ROUGET P: And I, an asterisk.

RENE L: No quarreling, gentlemen. No quarreling. There is indeed enough for all. If we play our cards right.

ROUE S: (*Appraising the Gibbous Earth.*) Indeed there is.

ROUGET P: There is, indeed.

ROUE S: Let us grab the opportunity by the tits.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: (*Raises her hand. The Geologists stop in mid gesture. The Street Musicians play a few notes and stop as they realize the Expository Singer wishes to speak.*) Our tale is a tragic one. I will now sing the "Twelve Tone Song of Disillusionment."

Academic divertissements
Are but one trail
That lead but to
The abstract grave.

(*She signals the Geologists to resume.*)

ROUGET P: (*Glaring at the Musicians.*) I detect twelve-tone music. It is so . . . academic.

ROUE S: And I, thirteen-tone music.

RENE L: The problem, gentlemen, is the equal temperament system itself.

ROUE S: Whoever thought up that silly little plan?

ROUGET P: Personally, I prefer bagpipe music.

RENE L: Gentlemen, the name of the game is--geology, morphology, paleontology.

ROUE S: Hydrology, pneumonology, mineralogy.

ROUGET P: Fluorite, obsidian, hornblende, othoclase.

ROUE S: Now that you have got your rocks off, copper and silver and platinum.

RENE L: Brimstone and fool's gold.

ROUGET P: No more, brethren. I am overwhelmed.

ROUE S: (*To the Gibbous Earth.*) Proud creature of peaks and fissures, let us plumb your deeps.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Who, me?

RENE L: Allow me to detonate in your bowels so that I may record your seismic waves. (*A demure smile from the Gibbous Earth.*)

ROUGET P: Allow me to take you on my knees so that I may outline your topography.

ROUE S: Au contraire, colleagues, let me erect my rig to drill for oil.

RENE L: We will penetrate your mantle to see what magmas lie below.

GIBBOUS EARTH: (*Aside.*) What crust?

RENE L: I can restrain myself no longer. Dear colleagues, I give you the Earth. (*Mild applause from the Geologists.*) Since there are at least three hundred and sixty degrees in a circle and a minimum of

three hundred and sixty circles on a sphere, . . . (*He climbs up on a convenient bench and mimes a lecture.*)

EXPOSITORY SINGER: (*While Rene L mimes the lecture, she sings the Structure Song.*)

Crust, mantle and core together weigh
More than six billion trillion tons.
On the average our earth is more dense
By nearly five and six-tenths
Than water.

(*The Geologist finishes his lecture and climbs down. Everyone applauds.*)

RENE L: And now to the examination. (*The Geologists converge onto the Gibbous Earth.*)

ROUE S: The introspectis.

ROUET P: The exagmination. (*They whip out magnifying glasses and examine their subject while she several poses like a photographer's model.*)

ROUE S: Look at this, Rouget Parthenogenesis. An eroded plunging fold!

ROUET P: This wandering stream, Roue Siperarsolentesis, has made penepains of her eskers. There's scarcely any glacial deposit left.

ROUE S: Don't blame the Earth. It's not her fault. (*Rene L winces.*)

ROUET P: The onus is on you, dear colleague, to justify your position.

ROUE S: I beg to differ, old colleague. The onus is on her. Turn around, dear, and show it to us.

RENE L: (*Appalled at the bad puns.*) I believe I am about to develop a terminal moraine headache.

ROUGET P: One that aspirin will not cure?

(Selena the Silvery Moon saunters in and goes into orbit around the Gibbous Earth.)

RENE L: By Jove, what's that!

EXPOSITORY SINGER: The silvery moon with silvery shoon. *(Selena the Silvery Moon stops and does a few dance steps in place.)*

ROUGET P: "Shoon" is not a word.

ROUE S: Poo. The lengths some people go to make a rhyme.

RENE L: I should point out that "shoon" is a word; the plural of shoe.

ROUE S: She's barefoot.

RENE L: The idea of a shoe if not the shoe itself. Sort of a zero state of shoe.

ROUE S: Get her out of here.

RENE L: She's useful. She reflects light.

ROUE S: But only at night. I'll take the sun any day.

RENE L: That's the point, old colleague. It is dark at night. Whereas, the lazy sun shines only in the daytime when it is light anyway.

ROUGET P: Actually, she is blue on the opposite side so we can't see her in the daytime.

ROUE S: How come we never see her backside.

ROUGET P: Modesty.

RENE L: Actually, it is because she rotates at the same rate she revolves.

ROUE S: She can rotate right out of my orbit. (*Selena the Silvery Moon dances out.*)

RENE L: You've offended her.

ROUGET P: The moon will be back, never fear. These things take time. (*Selena the Silvery Moon reenters waltzing with a naked man.*) Who's that?

EXPOSITORY SINGER: The Man In The Moon.

(*The Street Musicians play the Man In The Moon Waltz. After a few measures, a loud discord is heard. The dancers fly offstage in opposite directions.*)

ROUE S: I'm glad that's over.

ROUGET P: Send in the bagpipes.

ROUE S: (*The Geologists return to the examination of the Gibbous Earth.*) Coal.

ROUGET P: Very Useful.

ROUE S: Gold.

ROUGET P: Very exciting. What's that odor?

ROUE S: Helium gas.

RENE L: Helium was first discovered in the sun. It is odorless, colorless, and tasteless.

ROUE S: So are you. Especially the latter two.

ROUGET P: Of course it is odorless and tasteless if it is that far away in the sun.

ROUE S: But not colorless. By their spectrum ye shall know them.

RENE L: The earth has a spectrum, too.

ROUE S: Show us your spectrum, dear. (*The Gibbous Earth smiles demurely.*)

ROUGET P: Where is it?

ROUE S: Right (he touches her on the chest) here. (*A jet of oil shoots up.*) A gusher, a gusher, oh god!

EXPOSITORY SINGER: The Ecstasy Dance for Geologist and Percussion. (*The Street Musicians strike up a tune. The Geologists dance ridiculously. The Earth stands up and sing.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: (*During the following song, the Geologists become increasingly nauseous, stagger and fall, finally crawling to a bucket and vomiting profusely.*)

“The Song of the Earth”

Oh dee uh plummet
Er in de birds
Is a faintin inna
Hot sun, boy, boy
When dem weedos
Conjure up a storm
Winner grazopper
Shooten up de arm

An by gar--A freakin daffodil!

(*The Gibbous Earth holds forth a faded plastic rose.*)

(*Enter Pluto, the most distant planet. He orbits the Earth at an inconvenient distance.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: (*To Pluto.*) Conjugate with me.

PLUTO: Can't. Too far out.

RENE L: (*Standing.*) Actually, that is not the case.

ROUE S: (*Standing.*) What is the case, then.

ROUGET P: (*Standing.*) Explicate.

RENE L: It's a matter of perspective.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: Mr. Pluto, if you will cease your eccentric circumlocutions, we may hear the reasons advanced by their professors. (*Pluto stops. The Gibbous Earth sits down and crosses her legs.*)

“Song of Conjugation”

RENE L: Gin a body meet a body
Comin' through the sky
Gin a body strike a body
Need a body fly?

ROUE S: Ev'ry body has a buddy
Flyin' through the sky
If a buddy bump a body
Should that buddy die?

ROUGET P: Isaac's Laws are surely bonny
But they don't apply
When you pass a simple speckle
Flying through the sky.

RENE L: It's a matter of perspective
Cruisin' through the void
What you see is what it missed
And that's my final word.

ROUE S and ROUGET P: His final word.

(*End of the Song of Conjugation.*)

EXPOSITORY SINGER: The Big Bang explained.

PLUTO: It's cold out here.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Then, dear Pluto, our love is not to be.

PLUTO: Looks that way

GIBBOUS EARTH: Fare thee well.

(Pluto enters a hyperbolic orbit and vanishes from the solar system.)

GIBBOUS EARTH: To discover a planet and then lose him.

RENE L: Appearance is deceiving. Pluto will return on the next cycle, never fear.

ROUE S: We didn't fear.

ROUGET P: It is more like astonishment.

ROUE S: Dare we hint at blasphemy.

ROUGET P: Resurrection by revolution.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: And so the planet Pluto takes his leave of us to pursue his affairs in distant space.

GIBBOUS EARTH: But meanwhile, we have me.

RENE L: Frankly, dear colleagues, I find this Earth entirely too . . . aggregatable.

ROUE S: I agree.

ROUGET P: You mean, lumpy.

RENE L: Put crudely--yes.

ROUE S: She's unconstant.

ROUGET P: You mean, incontinent.

RENE L: We should call in a sphere.

ROUE S: Start with a hoop. Or a dot.

ROUGET P: Brilliant, my dear Roue Sipenarsolentesis.

ROUE S: Your servant, dear Rouget Parthenogenesis.

ROUE S: Do you agree with the majority, Rene Lopinarsinopolis?

RENE L: (*To the Expository Singer.*) Would you have a hoop in stock?

GIBBOUS EARTH: What about me?

RENE L: You are not a voting member.

ROUE S: You are merely an example of the shadow cast on Plato's wall of the real Earth.

GIBBOUS EARTH: I call it an example of myopia.

RENE L: I'll have you know I have perfect vision, young lady.

ROUGET P: He will have you know he is clear-headed. (*I.e., bald.*)

ROUE S: He will have you know.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: The Golden Hoop of Parmenides. (*Enter the Golden Hoop, bowing and curtsying.*) She is constructed of the purest of gold alloys.

GOLDEN HOOP: Tee hee.

RENE L: Shouldn't that be "alloys"?

ROUE S: You can't make a homophonic spelling clear on stage.

RENE L: Want to wager?

ROUE S: Certainly not.

RENE L: Put your argent in your bouche.

ROUE S: Ten drachmas.

RENE L: Done. (*Displays a sign "A - L - L - O - I - E - S".*)

ROUE S: No fair! you cheated. (*Rene L turns over the sign to reveal "F - A - R - E" printed on the obverse. Roue S hands Rene L a banknote.*)

RENE L: That and a fortune will get me a ride on the subway.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: (*Clears her throat.*) About the Golden Hoop of Paradise.

RENE L: You said "Parminides."

EXPOSITORY SINGER: I meant "Paradise."

RENE L: Say what you mean.

ROUE S: Always be precise.

ROUGET P: Eschew obfuscation.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Gesundheit!

(*The Geologists inspect the Golden Hoop closely.*)

RENE L: I am afraid we cannot accept this hoop.

GIBBOUS EARTH: And why is that?

RENE L: A perfect hoop would have no thickness.

ROUE S: A perfect hoop would have diameter, but no width.

ROUGET P: There would be nothing but a golden glow.

RENE L: Indeed, nothing but the memory of its glow. (*The Golden Hoop vanishes abruptly.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: There, now, you've insulted the Hoop.

ROUGET P: (*Not noticing the disappearance of the Hoop.*) Substance without dimension is the ideal.

RENE L: On the contrary, I would say perfection is dimension without substance.

ROUE S: There's much to be said about it.

ROUGET P: The more said, the better.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: Gentlemen, the Perfect Sphere. (*Enter the Perfect Sphere with her Spherical Hop, accompanied by the Street Musicians. The Perfect Sphere is, of course, Selena the Silvery Moon in disguise.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: She can't dance.

PERFECT SPHERE: Row, row, row your boat, generally down the stream, merely, merely, merely, merely, merely, merely, merely. . . .

GIBBOUS EARTH: She can't sing, either.

PERFECT SPHERE: I don't have to. I'm perfect.

GIBBOUS EARTH: She doesn't even have a mons veneris.

ROUE S: Classical beauty does not require appurtenances.

RENE L: The perfection is in the line, you see.

GIBBOUS EARTH: The glory hole of grease meets the grand whore of Rome.

PERFECT SPHERE: That goes twice for you.

RENE L: The classical platonic sphere is considered the perfect solid.

GIBBOUS EARTH: She looks more like a spheroid to me.

ROUGET P: (*Greatly shocked.*) A spheroid!

EXPOSITORY SINGER: A particular embodiment of a sphere as expressed in the real world.

PROFESSORS OF GEOLOGY: Who asked you.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: It's in the script.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Poo. A mere spheroid.

Perfect Sphere: Am not.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Are too.

PERFECT SPHERE: D-two.

ROUE S: How true.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: I feel a song coming on.

“Song of Perfect Roundness”

Once upon a midnight clear
The Moon became a perfect sphere
A sphere that had no edge in sight
Round it was and shining bright.

(The Street Musicians improvise a few riffs.)

Oh, Sphere, I cried, come down and play.
She sang, “I’ll come another day.
“If you touch me, I will lose
“My silvery sheen of shaded blues.”

GIBBOUS EARTH: Translation. It's her time of month.

PERFECT SPHERE: Ovoid bitch!

(They fight. The Street Musicians play discords. The Gibbous Earth wins the fight and ejects the Perfect Sphere.)

GIBBOUS EARTH: No staying power.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: And now, for your intellectual delectation, a serious discussion of objectivity.

(During the following triologue, the Professors of Geology perform "Actions," which are improvised sequences of business, and which may or may not be echoed by the Street Musicians.)

RENE L: An Object is equal to the sum of its Attributes. (Action.)

ROUE S: In that you are wrong, Rene Lopenarsinopolis. An Object is more than the sum of its Attributes. (Action.)

ROUGET P: In counter to you both, Roue Sipenarsolentesis and Rene Lopenarsinopolis, an Object has no Attributes at all. (Action.)

RENE L: I beg to differ, Rouget Whats-your-name, every Object must have at least one Attribute. (Action.)

ROUGET P: And what could that be, Rene Loop-the-loop?

RENE L: It has the property of being an object.

ROUE S: He's got you there.

ROUGET P: A Property is not an Attribute.

ROUE S: What do you say to that, Mister Lopenarsolentesis.

RENE L: If that be the case, Mister Whatsis-name, how is it that we may classify all Objects according to their Attributes, such as weight, color, density, frangibility, specific heat refractive index, and so on and so on and so on. (Action.)

ROUE S: I'm Wise-ass. He's Whatsis-name.

ROUGET P: You fail to appreciate my point, Mister Loop-the-loop. And Mister Wise-ass. If an Object is a set of Attributes, when we put them all together, we possess in our hot little hands, not an Object, mind you, but merely a paper list of Attributes. Categorization is in the mind of the observer. (*Action.*) If there is no mind there are no Attributes. (*Action.*)

EXPOSITORY SINGER: If a tree falls in the forest--

STREET MUSICIANS: And there ain't no body 'round--

GIBBOUS EARTH: You don't chop up that durn old log--

STREET MUSICIANS: And you freeze all winter long.

EXPOSITORY SINGER: Put some wood in your wood box--

STREET MUSICIANS: Before it gets too cold--

GIBBOUS EARTH: You'll die before sunrise--

STREET MUSICIANS: And you won't ever make a sound. (*A final plunk. The Street Musicians begin to pack and leave one by one during the following.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: What about tits, Gentlemen?

RENE L: Where there is visible vapor with blackish mixtures of gases and suspended particles, there is the process of combustion.

ROUE S: Where there is wool over the eyes, there is a way.

ROUGET P: Show me a pig in clover and I'll show you pussy-whipped and pound-foolish.

RENE L: A door closes on both sides if it doesn't have a window.

ROUGET P: A sill without a window is like a day without a pane.

ROUE S: You've got to believe in turtles or they won't work.

ROUGET P: Certain land-tied islands take the form of a cusped spit.

GIBBOUS EARTH: Doesn't anyone like me the way I am?

RENE L: Shore lines of emergence are generally characterized by a nearly flat coastal plane covered with unconsolidated marine sediments.

ROUE S: To stabilize beaches or to induce prograding, a series of groins may be built perpendicular to the shore athwart the shore drift.

GIBBOUS EARTH: This is my hair.

RENE L: Fine filaments of comet tail.

ROUE S: She put the coma in Berenice.

ROUGET P: Autumn's crown of glory.

GIBBOUS EARTH: These are my eyes.

RENE L: Pools of sequestered innocence.

ROUE S: Hesperus's orbs.

ROUGET P: Mirrors of the soul.

GIBBOUS EARTH: There is more lower down.

RENE L: She walks in beauty light the night. (*Poses thoughtfully.*)

ROUE S: Once a night is enough. (*Action.*)

ROUGET P: Enough is never enough. (*Action.*)

EXPOSITORY SINGER: As you see, the Professors are caught up in their own conceptions. It is time for my exit. (*She walks slowly out.*)

GIBBOUS EARTH: (*Sadly.*) This is my obituary. (*She picks up the faded plastic rose and hands it to Rene Lopenarsinopolis, who immediately begins counting the petals. Exit the Gibbous Earth.*)

RENE L: (*Arriving at a conclusion.*) A rose! (*He holds it aloft.*)

ROUE S: By any other . . .

ROUGET P: Name . . .

RENE L: Procrastinates the transfinite.

(*The Professors of Geology bow and exit.*)